

Bureaucracy...

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environmental studies, a juicy plum in itself. The \$35 million for relicensing alone is twenty-five-percent of the original cost of the entire project, which was funded for a \$140 million bond. Government has not become more efficient since 1961.

Many joint power authorities (JPA), such as the proposed Middle Fork Project Finance Authority, are required because the projects overlap established boundaries of the local governments involved. However, Placer County and PCWA have the same boundaries making Middle Fork Project Finance Authority totally unnecessary. The only reason for the authority was indicated during the January 10 meeting when the combined boards agreed to split the profits 50-50 and agreed to have discussions refining formation without all ten members of the full boards.

At best, JPA's are necessary evils, governed by boards composed of officials of two or more public entities. Although board members are elected officials they attend authority meetings as representatives of the public entity, not as elected officials. Therefore, when making decisions, they generally are more influenced by institutional mind-sets than by public pressure and are less subject to public scrutiny.

Furthermore, Placer County voters will not be represented equally by the proposed four-member board of the Middle Fork Project Finance Authority, composed of two members from each board. The boundaries of the County Supervisorial District is the same as the boundaries of PCWA districts. Therefore, one or two districts may have two votes on the authority and at least one district will not be represented. Placer residents would be better served if each district had one representative. The public would *best* be served without a Middle Fork Project Finance Authority.

—Dan Sokol

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have an exemption for homes that were all-wood interiors or constructed *without* the use of lead-based paint. Rubber and latex formulated paint contains no lead, for instance. As proposed, the rule does not contain such an exception.

The public has until April 10, 2006 to submit comments on the proposal. The EPA will consider public input and

Homeland...

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and Space Administration receiving homeland security funds? Even more important, though, is Congress' failure to match the consolidation of DHS with the consolidation of its oversight of the DHS' constituent parts. Even after the combination of more than two dozen agencies, congressional committee chairs have been unwilling to relinquish much of their jurisdiction over the 22 agencies and activities transferred to DHS. As a result, last year alone the leaders of DHS had to appear before 88 congressional committees and subcommittees. How much security work can DHS accomplish when it must appear and testify before so many committees, all usually asking the same questions?

To make matters worse, Congress provides *every state* with a guaranteed minimum amount of grant money regardless of risk. As a result, rural, less-populated areas receive a disproportionate amount of money. Of the top 10 grant recipients, only the District of Columbia also appears on a list of the 10 places most at risk of attack.

The theory underlying the grant distribution formula is that terrorists could strike anywhere. That's true. But not every target is equally likely or equally important. By trying to protect us everywhere, Congress ensures that we're adequately protected almost nowhere.

The waste of homeland security funds doesn't occur exclusively in low-risk areas. Washington, D.C., one of the most at-risk areas in the nation, used the region's first wave of homeland security aid as "seed money" for a computerized car towing system Mayor Anthony Williams had promised for three years to help combat fraud by private towing companies. The city also used \$100,000 to fund the mayor's popular summer jobs program.

Whether it's "homeland" pork or "Placer" pork it all provides a self-serving motive. This is not an efficient way for government programs to operate.

—Wally Reemelin
Excerpts, Reason Magazine

issue a final rule. To learn more about risk-minimizing, call (800) 424-LEAD or go online to www.epa.gov/lead.

First phase of the rule would apply to owner-occupied housing built before 1960, and homes built between 1960 and 1978 where a child has been found to have high levels of lead in their blood, as well as rental housing built during that period.

—Wally Reemelin
Excerpts, Wall Street Journal

Fire Districts...

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Placer Consolidated Chief Randy Smith stated that any funding boost would be of great aid to their rescue and fire-fighting ability. Consolidated is currently negotiating to merge with the county CDF.

The League of Placer County Taxpayer's proposal of the county-wide sales tax was based on the concept that all county residents would benefit by having faster fire and rescue protection response no matter where in the county the need would arise. Emergency calls for aid are seventy-percent for health emergencies, such as road accidents, heart attacks, and household emergencies. The small tax would act like the premium of an emergency insurance policy for all those subject to the tax.

For example: Buying a \$40 sweater or a pair of jeans would only add a nickel to the price for the insurance, and on the purchase of a \$20,000 auto it would add just \$25 for insurance. Visitors and travelers through Placer County would pay about fifteen-percent of the tax with their purchases and overnight stays in the cities within Placer.

The county's rejection of a tax funding proposal for fire and rescue protection unless "tax revenues generated in the city should stay in the city," has a hollow ring. Of the current seven and one quarter-percent tax paid in Placer County cities only *one-percent* is returned to each city. The league proposal would return from ten to four-percent

of the tax revenues to cities—a *much better deal*. The real issue is that fat cat cities are fairly secure with their fire funding from property taxes and they seem unwilling to financially share aid with rural fire districts.

The Placer County Fire Chiefs Association is pinning their hopes on receiving additional funding from Proposition 172, which was approved several years ago to provide extra funds for police, fire, and other public service groups. In Placer County the Deputy Sheriffs Association has scarfed up most of the 172 funds as it was more politically agile than the fire association. There is a June ballot measure in Orange County to increase 172 funding for fire departments that Placer fire districts are eagerly watching.

This, perhaps, is a slim reed to place hopes on. Funds from 172 are subject to the whim of the legislature as well as the voters and are not subject to growth with future needs. One desirable feature of the league's tax was that the funds would grow with population increase to meet the growing needs of residents and would not be subject to legislative interference.

The league proposal was not meant to meet the "total needs" of fire agencies, but to bring rural districts funding and competence of service to a higher level to better serve the public. The league is convinced that the public would not support any greater funding for fire districts. Perhaps the city fire districts should rethink the leagues proposal.

—Wally Reemelin

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