



2011 State of the County Address

President Dave Cortese

January 25, 2011

Good morning and thank you for being here. This is quite an honor. I'm humbled by your presence and delighted to be here. What a challenging time...what an era of uncertainty and change in which to be delivering a speech like this.

Today I want to talk to you about three things:

1. The County's fiscal condition and what our needs are going forward
2. Some notable past accomplishments
3. And some exciting new initiatives

FISCAL CONDITION

With that backdrop, let me address the following question first...

What is the condition of our County in terms of our ability to deliver needed services to our nearly 2 million residents?

We've heard all the descriptions of our economic condition and we've learned some new terminology over the past couple of years that some of us have had to add to our vocabulary—stimulus money, shovel-ready projects, 2000 pages of Federal health care laws, two-tier pension plans, and even banned happy meals. For those of us in public service, this marks a period of retooling NOT what government DOES but HOW it does it.

In the two short years since my election two county budget cycles have come and gone. Believe it or not, in that short time we have closed a budget gap totaling more than \$551M. In the face of Governor Jerry Brown's first budget, we will be required to do even more. Current projections suggest that between now and June we will have to close another \$200M gap. And with the help of SEIU, CEMA and our other employee groups, we will do it with the least amount of pain possible....And we will respond as we always have, on time and with a balanced budget come June 30.

When Governor Brown announced his candidacy last March he said, "We have to downsize state government and return authority to our cities, counties, and local schools.

" Well, Governor Brown, I couldn't agree with you more. I'd like to ask that you let us work with you in restoring the balance of local authority. But Governor Brown, if you're listening, let me say this. Don't make the 58 county governments in this state the defacto governors of the state. Don't pass along to us the unfunded fiscal and moral responsibility of housing inmates, feeding seniors, caring for the homebound, keeping emergency rooms open, providing mental health services, retraining workers and

maintaining access to open space. That would not be budgeting...that would be abdication of leadership. Instead, we ask to be full partners in the task of reinventing government and how these responsibilities are met. Governor Brown, you know Silicon Valley. Work with us and we will work with you.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

I said I'd talk about past accomplishments. Last year under the leadership of Supervisor Ken Yeager we took on several major initiatives. Some of them were groundbreaking nationally—a policy not to incarcerate children under the age of 13, implementation of some of the most stringent tobacco regulations in the country, a child obesity ordinance (aka the Happy Meal ordinance), accepting voter registration electronically, a Valley Medical Center seismic project, plans for a clinic at the SJ medical hospital site, new solar power purchase agreements and installations, new environmental stewardship goals, challenging the Arizona immigration law, consolidating our jail operations, adding public defenders to represent people with misdemeanors, prioritizing the child welfare population, adopting the so-called Harvard study in conjunction with La Raza Roundtable to focus on the over-representation of Latinos and others in the system, and we are midway through the process of creating a new park-acquisition strategy.

But let's go even further back. This county has a great legacy. I believe that the past county supervisors, collectively, have a great legacy. And our employees have made huge sacrifices and contributions over the years. Many of them are here today. It's about time to properly document and record the history of our county and the accomplishments of our past supervisors. That's why I have created the county archives task force with my office and the county executive. I have already met with each and every living former county supervisor and asked each of them for their cooperation with this effort. One of the first work products of this task force will be interviews with all the former county supervisors, documenting the expansive history of our county from the valley of hearts delight to the valley of innovation. These stories will be made available to teachers, students, and residents simply by clicking a link on our web site. I'd like to thank CreaTV for partnering with us in this effort. Suzanne St. John-Crane, please stand so we can acknowledge you.

NEW INITIATIVES

Well, we've covered our fiscal condition and past accomplishments. Now let's talk about new initiatives. In 1959, the United Nations made the following declaration: "Humankind owes to the child, the best that it has to give." Let me repeat that: "Humankind owes to the child, the best that it has to give." Owes is a pretty strong word. Over five decades later, we have to ask ourselves, have we given our best as a society, as a community, as a county government? Are we giving our best today? What can we do better, starting this year to deliver on that decades old debt? In about a week we will celebrate the lunar new year, ushering in the year of the rabbit. Well, as president of the Board of Supervisor, I'm declaring this year the Year of the Child.

Juvenile Justice

In 2008 when I was running for county supervisor, someone asked me what was my BHAG. Do you know what that is? It's a BIG, HAIRY AUDACIOUS GOAL. It's a way of asking, what would you like to

leave as your legacy. I said, "I want to put Juvenile Hall out of business." Juvenile Hall as we now know it should be made obsolete. And I'd like to transition the highly skilled employees there out into the community to work on prevention and intervention instead of locking our kids up. So here's the plan. Last year, we made Juvenile Hall off limits to children younger than 13. We put a stake in the ground and the system has responded. Thank you to all involved, including the courts, Probation Chief Sheila Mitchell, and a number of nonprofits like Sparky Harlan at the Bill Wilson Center who came up with much better options for these kids. And I want to thank Karen da Sa from the Merc. She deserves credit for drawing our attention to the issue in the first place. This year we will be even bolder in restructuring our Juvenile Justice system, shifting the emphasis from punishment to reform. **We have outlined four major initiatives in support of this transformation.** **First**, we will ask the court system and our own probation department to phase out the jailing of children ages 13, 14, 15, except in cases of the most violent crimes. We'll start with 13 year-olds, whose needs are profound and specialized beyond what Juvenile Hall was created to provide.

Second, we will continue to innovate in creating new systems for pre-trial diversions of minors. Kudos to probation chief Sheila Mitchell and county executive Jeff Smith for already exploring a direct referral program for use by our probation department, which will work with our local police department, especially SJPD which is our largest customer. First time youth offenders will be screened and directed to community based organizations for appropriate intervention and follow up care BEFORE they are formally arrested. This keeps them out of the system entirely. This diversion program would serve over 3,000 youth per year, which is one third of all youth arrests in the county. With the cooperation of our local law enforcement agencies, we will have one of the best intervention programs anywhere.

Restorative Justice

Last year, county officials put on an annual conference called Beyond the Bench, where they featured a restorative justice program out of Alameda County called the McCullum Youth Court. The McCullum Youth Court takes first time offenders and allows them the opportunity to be tried by a jury of their peers rather than by the formal court system. I was overwhelmingly impressed with the program. There is much to be said for youth acting as judge and jury, deciding their own fates, that has a very different impact on how a young person views crime. For that reason, I will ask the Board of Supervisors to support the formation of a Santa Clara County youth court, similar to the court operating in Alameda County. This form of diversion will empower previous youth offenders to hold accountable their fellow youth, and have the added benefit of exposing youth to the workings of the criminal justice system and hopefully inspire our next generation of attorneys, judges and probation officers.

Third, we will continue to correct and transform the over-representation of minorities in the system. I would like to thank La Raza Roundtable – Victor Garza, Sal Alvarez and Serena Alvarez - for bringing the county into an interest based dialogue around this painful issue. Only through identifying and building upon our shared interests will we be successful in addressing this major civil rights challenge facing us today.

Lastly, we need to move forward to separate our adult and juvenile probation systems. That way we can better train our employees, develop greater expertise, and focus on the underlying issues of prevention and intervention. My thanks to Vice President Shirakawa for beginning this difficult

conversation last year. I do not know which model we will ultimately agree upon, but together we must get this done.

Support for Schools

Of course there are many things we can do to support our young people well before they reach the juvenile justice system and for that we will work more closely with our schools. With the help of a new mental health grant, we will reinvent School-Linked Services –some people call it school based services) a formal collaboration between county government, nonprofits, and our school districts. School-linked services simply redistributes services—such as drug and alcohol intervention, mental health counseling and case management, probation, public health and mentoring—and places them right on our local school campuses where youth and families will have easy access to them. I thank former county supervisor Diane McKenna who launched the first school-linked services program in the 1990's when I was a school board member. Back then, it didn't take long to see the results of the program, most noticeably in graduation rates that topped 90%. The program worked because it gave us an opportunity to support our youth holistically, rather than in isolated silos.

In spite of the great efforts of past supervisors like Blanca Alvarado and Joe Simitian (and others) who worked diligently to keep school-linked services alive, the program has slowly been dismantled over the years. And meanwhile we are seeing double digit drop-out rates, a juvenile hall that is busting at the seams, wide-spread public health concerns that could have been isolated early on, and sadly a dramatic increase in teen suicides. One of my first disappointments as a county supervisor was seeing the last little piece of the school linked services budget eliminated last year. It's time to get back to what we know works for our kids. And this time we'll expand School Linked Services to include zero to five year olds, leveraging our partnership with First 5.

Last year, the Silicon Valley Education Foundation, in conjunction with the East Side Union High School District, lead the effort to bring A-G curriculum or college prep requirements to that district. There are some critics of this policy who say that not every student wants to be on a path to college. I understand that. But like my former fellow School board member Jeff Ota said, (a college professor and a NASA engineer, at 24 years old at the time) when we were trying to push college prep requirements in the district back in the 90's, he looked our critics in the eye and said, "Algebra is not rocket science. Trust me. I am a rocket scientist." There is absolutely no reason that every single one of our children should not be prepared to pass an Algebra courses and all the A-G requirements. For that reason, I am going to ask the Board of Supervisors to adopt a resolution encouraging the endorsement and adoption of A-G requirements in every school district in this county. I know Muhammed Chaudhry, the CEO of the Silicon Valley Education Foundation, is here with some of his board members, as is Dan Moser, superintendent of the East Side Union High School District.

I'd like you to stand so we can acknowledge you both for your great work in preparing our young people for the brightest possible future.

Child-Impact-Based Decision Making

A common theme here is the importance of supporting a child and his or her family, early on from public health, mental health, economic and social perspectives. Stable families build stable communities. It's

that simple. Therefore, every decision we make at the county should be in the context of its effect on children and families. I think there are two ways to remind ourselves to do that at each and every board meeting. One of the ways is to do that, which I will be proposing, is that child impact statements be included as part of every decision made by the Board of Supervisors. It will reveal the unintended consequences of our decision and will hopefully ensure that the board makes sound holistic decisions for the good of the community. Thank you Dana Bunnett, from Kids in Common, for partnering with us on this important tool to measure the impact of our decisions.

How else can we remind ourselves about child impact? The County Office of Human Relations currently oversees a youth task force in this county. I spoke with the Office of Human Relations, and they agreed that that task force should report directly to the Board of Supervisors. We will work with those youth to do relevant policy research, to assert themselves as leaders in this community, and more importantly, to give us valuable input in our own decision making process from a youth perspective. And so we don't ever forget to call on them, I am going to invite the youth task force to rotate one of its members to join us at Board or committee meetings so that the chair can call upon that youth representative for discussion on any motion that we entertain that might have an impact on the youth of this county.

Economic Development

So clearly we will have a robust agenda this year, during the Year of the Child. But, our children cannot prosper if their families are not prospering. We need to do our part to get families working again. That's why this year, for the first time in county history, we'll convene economic summits with leaders in health care and green tech so we can further position our county to help pave the way for job growth in these challenging times. Our health care system in this valley employs over 7,500 people. Healthcare is one of the only industries in the country that continued to grow last year. We need to get our private sector partners in here to tell us how we can work together more effectively, in a way that provides additional jobs here locally. I'd like to ask Supervisor Mike Wasserman to work with me on this effort. I think he's well suited to work on this.

Seniors

To declare a Year of the Child does not mean that we forget about our seniors. The county needs to make sure that we have services in place to meet the growing needs of our senior community—from elder abuse to financial independence to specialized health care. But my most important pledge to seniors is this... Last year, Santa Clara County, in conjunction with local partners, provided over 4,000 meals to seniors a day. We have never cut that program, and my pledge is that we will not cut even a penny out of that program this year. We want to take senior issues a step further this year. That's why Supervisors Liz Kniss and George Shirakawa will be working together to champion the creation of a Santa Clara County Seniors' Agenda. The aim of the agenda will be to weave together a framework, vision and goals that will serve to guide us along with our partners in the community to embrace the aging as treasured members of our society. An area I plan to work on personally is to document and respond to the growing mental health issues of seniors. My office will work with members of the mental health board to put on the county's first summit on the mental health care needs of our senior population. We'll use the information from this summit to make recommendations on how to address the growing mental health crisis.

Public Health by Ethnic Sector

Last but not least is the area of public health. Last year we budgeted additional funds for our Public Health Department. That funding will this year allow health assessments to be done. This year I will ask my board colleagues to support community health assessments focused on specific ethnicities, starting with the Vietnamese demographic. Santa Clara County's population contains nearly 10% Vietnamese, the largest population outside of Vietnam. We know there are high rates of cigarette use and cervical cancer among them. Now is the time to embark on a specific survey of this population's health, and working with a coalition of Vietnamese health organizations to prepare a set of strategies for reducing these health risks. Special thanks to Ngoc Bui-Tong and the Reach organization for the work they have already done in partnership with our public health department.

CONCLUSION

I know what you're thinking. Okay Dave, that's a lot and you just got done telling us that we are facing another \$200M in cuts in the next few months, so how are you going to do all that. The short answer is that most everything here is less about dollars and more a matter of philosophy and doing things differently. It's how we deploy our people, not how many we deploy. The interesting thing about talking with the past county supervisors is how they each said that their biggest challenge on every past initiative were the critics who said, "We can't do that because we don't have the money...or the resources." This came up over and over again with former Supervisors Cortese, Diridon, McCorquadale and Gonzales among others. If they had let that stop them, we would not have the Transit System, the Park System and the Park Charter Fund and thousands of acres of open space, The Housing Authority, VMC, and so many of the other initiatives that have improved our quality of life. While we are doing our budget reductions, we cannot lose our vision. What really came through talking the former Supervisors was the "CAN DO SPIRIT" they brought to the county. I am asking all of us, to rededicate our selves to that "Can DO Spirit" one more time as we meet the challenges before us.

I want to thank you again as residents and citizens for being our full partners in this democratic process. On behalf of the entire board, we look forward to serving you this year.