

DIANE HARKEY



It's Your Money - Proposition 13 - Newly Defined for March 2020 election

The popular Proposition 13 was the landmark 1978, truly grassroots initiative that provided certainty by limiting property tax increases in California to 1% of assessed value, and a maximum increase in that value of 2% per year. Prior to its passage, annual property tax increases escalated such that people who could afford to buy, lease or rent a home, apartment or business property, were suddenly faced with huge tax and/or rent increases that forced them out of their homes, apartments and businesses.

The 2020 Proposition 13 will actually increase property taxes if you want to access any of the funds. Yes, we are long overdue to upgrade our 40 year old schools, but with budget surpluses and well-stocked reserves, why not begin now with excess funds on hand, not more taxes and debt? Why do we have to wait until facilities become decrepit and “portable units” become part of the permanent landscape?

To access some of this “free money” your local school districts need to match fund – hence the local bond measures on your ballot that will increase your property taxes directly through assessment, with no guaranty that the projects you support will be completed. Unfortunately, unlike Measure “M” taxes that I have supported, which are set aside for local transportation projects, there is no promise and audit/review and report to see if what you thought you paid for actually was completed in the facilities bonds.

And... statewide there’s no end in sight. Academics say that addressing a backlog of facility upgrades needed would cost about \$117 billion over the next 10 years. So, while you are still paying for this bond (35 years), many more are sure to be added. It’s your money.

It’s Your Neighborhood

While politicians introduce bills each legislative session making big promises little seems to be accomplished in Sacramento except press for the politician, and excuses as to why the favored legislation did not pass. But...there are some good things happening at the local level and some action you can take to protect your neighborhoods:

Get Involved - Keep California Safe Act - Approved for the November ballot, the *“Reducing Crime and Keeping California Safe Act of 2020”* fixes four specific flaws contained in recent criminal justice reforms - addressing violent crime classification and serial theft, as well as parole reform and DNA collection. The “voter-approved” Prop 57, 47 and the Legislator approved prison realignment bill AB109, were misrepresented as cost-saving and compassionate and continue to place communities and victims at risk.

Keep California Safe Act has public safety, crime victims and others coming together for true reform. Check out the website and sign up to get information and advocate for reforms to keep your neighborhood safe: <https://keepcalsafe.org>

Regulating Sober Living homes is a case in point, of the legislature’s inability to act on behalf of their residents no matter how many bills are introduced. Out of 25 bills affecting sober living homes introduced since the 1998-99 legislative session, only three reached the Governor’s desk — and those were vetoed. This 2018-20 legislative session scored no better. According to reports, there are two major associations lobbying in California, The Sober Living Network and the California Consortium of Addiction Programs and Professionals, as well as a legal network of lobbyists that compete with constituents for your Legislator’s time.

Hence, costly legal battles are the only venue for most cities, and many have been lost. However, the city of Dana Point recently scored a legal victory on an abusive operator (over 6 residents) [view the article](#)

here: <https://www.danapointtimes.com/getting-clean-city-pursues-legal-methods-clean-house-comes-sober-living/>

And... the County of Orange Supervisors recently passed legislation to limit the distance between residence/facilities of more than 7 persons to 1,000 feet (the bill does not address those under 7 residents per home, considered a family). Also, the Sups added criteria instructing operators as to what they must do before they evict a resident or turn them out after insurance has expired. While not perfect, it is a step in the right direction for the unincorporated areas. View the article

here: <http://ocregister.ca.newsmemory.com/?publink=i47bb6e0a>

Homelessness: The Governor's budget has allocated \$1 Billion to fight homelessness, which is sure to attract government and business interests requesting grants and assistance. But, mental illness, financial upheaval, and those that have a preference to live on the street due to chronic addiction and/or lifestyle are issues that must be addressed with different solutions. Living on the street or without proper sanitation is a public health danger, which is why vagrancy laws were enacted. Misplaced compassion in this area puts all of us at risk. But as more communities and their law enforcement come under fire for trying to enforce laws, it's important that we examine first what can/could be done for those that need or want our help.

Mental illness - This is an area of which I am very passionate and familiar due to our own family crisis. Due to my preparation, documentation, our local sheriffs and County of Orange agency and legal guidance, we have had a happy ending. However, the process spanned 5 years and we were lucky, where so many are not.

It's past time to loosen some of the "privacy" laws so that families can actually help their loved one sooner rather than later, which may be too late.

Waiting for enough evidence to call 911 for an arrest under code 5150, or involuntary treatment and proving a person is a danger to him/herself or others can yield a 3-day commitment to a hospital. Extending that confinement via code 5250 which allows for 14 days is difficult to obtain due to the high standard, and still not sufficient to help those suffering mental illness. While the diagnosis may be made quickly, the medication prescribed to treat the patient, who is not yet stabilized, is often discontinued once the brief hospital stay is over. Obtaining conservatorship for longer range treatment is a huge legal hurdle that most families can't meet or don't know how to navigate.

As such the pattern continues, each episode may become more severe for the patient, as families once willing to help a loved one are unable to cope with the repeated trauma, and lose track of their sibling, child, spouse or parent who may end up living on the street.

During my time in the state office, I traveled my district and beyond to see what could be done. I found that depression, traumatic brain injury, PTSD

from military service or merely overloading of daily stress can be “treated” if diagnosed. UCSD and other universities are also studying “cures” for certain types of mental illness, which should be viewed like any other illness. Our military is taking the issue seriously with new facilities, research, and treatment on base at Camp Pendleton. But all the diagnoses, medication or cures are to no avail if the patient is too sick to know he/she needs help before law enforcement is called. We need legislation that allows those who care to help those who need, and a more realistic hospitalization and treatment approach for those that truly need our help, saving lives and dollars.

Financial Upheaval – Spiraling costs, divorce, lack of job stability and other concerns affect all of us either directly or indirectly at one time or another. Building housing “projects” or allowing tent cities is not a sustainable solution. Again, while in-state office I discovered several options for those needing help and without or beyond a family support system. I’ve listed a few non-profits of which I am personally familiar:

One model, Solutions for Change in San Diego County (www.solutionsforchange.org) assists families to break the cycle and prepare for an independent future. There are many others but this specific program has had excellent results and has wide community support.

In Orange County, Families Forward (www.familiesforward.org) runs a similar program with excellent results. Home Aide (www.homeaidoc.org) partners with numerous state and county services and others and serves a variety of needs. There are numerous other groups serving specific populations that are doing remarkable work to help families and individuals become self-sufficient.

On the state level, CalWORKS can provide voucher assistance for housing for up to 16 days or prevent an eviction temporarily while the person/family secures permanent housing. The counties have shelter beds available in numerous locations and a nationwide directory lists that lists numerous facilities in local areas for temporary assistance. <https://www.homelesshelterdirectory.org/>

Chronic Addiction or lifestyle choice: There are many groups, organizations and government agencies involved, with no solution in sight. Long-term treatment, which seems to be the most successful, is expensive and tough to enforce. Again, a family network and support groups are necessary. Research to ensure the help you chose is effective and has a long term follow-up program to offer support for the addicted as well as the family network. In closing, if living on the street is merely a lifestyle choice – find a friend with a backyard.

There are many more resources available with state and local funding, as well as a variety of non-profit organizations dedicated to serving specific needs and populations, no matter the circumstances, as well as for those that want to help. Get involved – it’s your neighborhood.

Think Locally - Act Globally - the key to our democracy

The catchy little bumper sticker which has these priorities reversed is very poor advice. That “all politics is local” could not be truer than today, witnessing the populism and protest around the world. People are rejecting centralized unelected governing bodies enacting a never-ending stream of regulations and mandates upon the electorate.

In the USA, we are supposed to have a representative democracy, which unfortunately is often forgotten for expediency during the ‘crisis dominated’ election cycles. People we elect make promises they can’t keep, get persuaded by national, statewide, regional or unelected boards, and forget who brought them to the dance - the voters in their district.

Your representatives at the city, county, state or national level should represent their constituents to the governing body, not represent the governing body to their constituents. Everyone deserves a seat at the table, that how consensus is built, better policies come forth, and representative democracy survives. So, think locally to represent globally.

In Closing : Thank you again for your readership and support. Be sure to look for your ballot and cast a vote before or on March 3, 2020 primary. Every vote matters. If you have any questions or suggestions please email me at diane@dianeharkey.com

Visit my website at www.DianeHarkey.com and I don’t have staff to help me man my Facebook and twitter so forget the social media and enjoy your life!

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