



Too often, tax increases seem to be the easy and automatic backstop for every problem. We are already taxed over and over on the same dollars we earn and depend on to live, especially in California. Cost of living has skyrocketed and it's becoming harder and harder for many Sutter County families to make ends meet. At the same time, I recognize that there are fundamental functions of county government that have gotten more expensive and additional resources are needed if we want a safe community and decent roads.

I've thought a lot about this and done my homework. **My conclusion is that the Board of Supervisors has some work to do before asking voters to pass a tax increase.** This includes:

1. Regaining trust and improving communication with residents
2. Maximizing new revenue opportunities
3. Collaborating with the City of Yuba City
4. Creating a Self-Sustaining Special Fire District (CSA-F)

Please take the time to read some of the information I put together below. I am passionate about our community and believe that we can do better. Plain and simple.

1. REGAINING TRUST AND IMPROVING COMMUNICATION WITH RESIDENTS

- a. **Soaring Unfunded Liabilities-** Back in 2016, [voters were sold on a plan](#) to reduce Sutter County's \$130 million unfunded pension liability. Unfortunately, this promise made to Suter County taxpayers has failed and the county's debt has grown substantially. The county's unfunded pension liability has now ballooned to somewhere between \$200-\$270 million. If the Board of Supervisors are going to ask voters to approve a tax increase, they should be forthcoming about the county's debt and come up with a realistic plan of how to tackle it. And if the county anticipates new tax dollars being used to pay down this debt or cover costs, it should be open and honest about it.
- b. **Taxpayers Left in the Dark-** It's frustrating when you don't hear from your elected representatives until it comes time for re-election. Unfortunately, that is commonly the case. In the 5th District, residents recently went nearly two years without any sort of proactive communication from their County Supervisor. If the Board of Supervisors are going to ask us to pay more in taxes, they need to keep taxpayers aware and involved. In the 5th District, there are many issues and projects that taxpayers deserve to be kept informed on. These include important projects like the proposed truck yard in Robbins, the homeless site near Lake Minden, the HWY 99/Oswald interchange, the Sutter Pointe Development, the Kmart purchase, land purchases, etc. I hear constant complaints about the lack of communication from the county - and its eroding trust in government.
- c. **The Kmart Conundrum-** I believe that Sutter County's decision to purchase the former Kmart property has proven to be a mistake. Back in 2017, a representative for the Board of Supervisors declared that county departments would be moving into the space in "soon as a year." More than six years later, the property remains vacant. Millions in taxpayer dollars and countless hours of staff time have been spent on this boondoggle. I can appreciate the good intentions and bold vision here. But from what I can see, the financial accounting and transparency of this decision have been questionable at best. I am glad the Supervisors have finally listened to public outcry and are taking steps to abandon this project.
- d. **Unpublished Grand Jury Report-** In 2018, all 17 of the Sutter County Grand Jurors resigned in protest stating they were prevented from fulfilling their duty as the watchdog of county government. Like many Sutter County residents, this still bothers me. We deserve to know what

happened. Thousands of hours and over \$100,000 in taxpayer funds were invested into this effort, yet no Grand Jury report was ever published. Something went terribly wrong and taxpayers still have unanswered questions. Why did the Board of Supervisors wait so long to ask the Attorney General to investigate what went wrong? Has the Board of Supervisors followed up with the Attorney General for an update on his investigation? This isn't going away. And the trust lost through this unfortunate series of events remains a problem in Sutter County.

2. MAXIMIZING NEW REVENUE OPPORTUNITIES

- a. **Losing Funding Due to Live Oak Contract-** The City of Live Oak does not have its own police department. Instead, it contracts with the Sutter County Sheriff's Office for law enforcement service. The contract between the two local governments is outdated and our Sheriff's Office only recoups 80% of what it costs to serve the City of Live Oak. If Live Oak were to pay for 100% of the operational costs, it would add nearly \$2.5 million to the county's budget. But Live Oak recently voted down Sheriff Barnes' request to increase its reimbursement to the county. This matters to District 5 voters, especially those in the rural areas. A recent study of the Sheriff's Department details how rural areas of the county suffer from 'excessively long response times' of over 19 minutes for immediate dispatch calls. Meanwhile, the response time for these calls in Live Oak clock in under 9 minutes. This is unacceptable. I give a lot of credit to Sheriff Barnes for his tireless efforts leading and advocating for the Sheriff's Office. But he shouldn't have to do it alone. As your County Supervisor, I would educate District 5 voters on this situation and rally residents to have our Sheriff's back at Live Oak city hall, the Board of Supervisors chambers and anywhere else he needs support.
- b. **Economic Development in Jeopardy-** The Board of Supervisors has approved a plan to make the Natomas Basin in South Sutter County a future source of jobs and housing for the county. Sutter County officials say their plan would "produce millions of dollars in sales tax revenue." But a recent [Grand Jury report](#) explains how the Board of Supervisors may be jeopardizing this revenue opportunity due to their "lack of representation at meetings and poor communication." The report states that when four of the five Sutter County representatives resigned from the Natomas Basin Conservancy Board, it took our Board of Supervisors nearly an entire year to appoint new representation. We're talking about a Board that oversees 53,000 acres of land, impacts the fate of 20,000 jobs and millions of dollars in new tax revenue. Yet, Sutter County chose not to have a seat at the table. To me, this is irresponsible. Who stands to benefit from our county's mistake? Sacramento. But Sutter County does not seem to be taking the Grand Jury seriously. The Supervisors response was to reject 4 of the 6 recommendations from the Grand Jury report and two of the appointments to this critical board remain vacant.
- c. **Grant Writer Suggestion Ignored-** In 2023, the [Sutter County Grand Jury recommended](#) that the Board of Supervisors should create a Public Safety Grant Writing position to research possible funding opportunities for facility improvements. In 2022, an [in-depth analysis](#) of the Sheriff's Office by an outside firm came to a similar conclusion about the need to hire a professional grant writer. Sheriff Barnes agreed with the Grand Jury report, stating that he recommends the County adds a "Public Safety" grant writing position that would help the Sheriff's Office, County Fire as well as the Probation Department and District Attorney's Office. Despite this call for action by the *Grand Jury and Sheriff Barnes*, the Board of Supervisors has not created the grant writer position. How many millions of dollars is Sutter County missing out on?

3. COLLABORATING WITH THE CITY OF YUBA CITY

- a. **A Brief Overview-** In August of 2022, the Sutter County Board of Supervisors unanimously supported a \$20 million tax increase via a one cent sales tax. The Measure A proposal was a General Sales Tax, meaning the new taxes generated would be sent to the County's General Fund without restrictions on how the money could be spent. Ultimately, Measure A was narrowly defeated countywide, with 56% of voters in the rural parts of District 5 in opposition. If the

measure had passed with a tax sharing agreement, Sutter County would have generated approximately \$9.6 million annually in new revenue.

- b. **Partnership Falls Apart-** This [article in the Appeal Democrat](#) goes into detail about the discussions between Yuba City and Sutter County leading up to the county's decision to place Measure A on the ballot. The county and city were working towards creating an agreement of how to share Measure A funds. But disagreements between the county and the city about timing, percentages and other issues caused a disruption in the partnership. In what sounds to be a heated moment, our District 5 Supervisor approached a representative from Yuba City and stated there was "no way would he recommend the city get a dime of that money."
- c. **Current State of Affairs-** From my outsider perspective, the partnership between Sutter County and Yuba City appears to be broken. Each are independently pursuing separate sales tax measures for the November 2024 election. The City of Yuba City voted recently to proceed with a sales tax measure that would apply only within the city limits. Councilmembers have publicly indicated that the city's measure is likely to be a 'general tax', meaning a majority vote is needed and revenue would be directed to the city's general fund. In October, Sutter County voted unanimously to move forward with their own separate countywide sales tax measure. It would apply to the unincorporated areas of Sutter County along with the areas within the city limits. The Supervisors are pursuing a 'specific tax' this time, meaning it would require a 2/3 vote and the revenue could only be spent on specific priorities like public safety and roads. Under this scenario, voters in Yuba City will be asked to vote on two separate tax measures in November. Assuming both measures are 1% sales tax increases, we'll be paying an extra 2% sales tax in the city limits should they both pass.
- d. **Collaboration is Needed-** The Appeal Democrat stated recently in an Editorial that it's time for our elected officials to push their egos and personal feelings to the side and work on a solution that is best for everyone. I couldn't agree more. And it's one of the main reasons that I am running for County Supervisor. We have many challenges to overcome in Sutter County in order to improve the quality of life for our residents and make this a desirable place to live, work and raise a family. People have seen my passion and reputation for bringing people together to solve problems and get things done. I've got a lifetime of building relationships in the city, in the county and across the river that I'll bring to the table as your next District 5 Supervisor.

4. CREATING A SELF-SUSTAINING SPECIAL FIRE DISTRICT (CSA-F)

- a. **A Brief Overview-** In 1996 the Live Oak Fire Department, the Oswald-Tudor Fire Department, and the Sutter Fire Department consolidated to form a special fire district known as CSA-F. This special district provides fire protection and medical response to approximately 250 square miles of Sutter County, including portions of District 5. When this special district was created, there was no intention of needing financial support from Sutter County's general fund or other outside funding sources. But the CSA-F expenses have grown over time and the revenue generated annually from the CSA-F special parcel tax no longer covers the district's operational costs. To fill this shortfall, the Board of Supervisors has allocated more than \$3.5 million to CSA-F in the past three years from the General Fund and other sources.
- b. **A Better Approach-** The County should not be using the General Fund or revenue generated by a new sales tax to fund CSA-F fire protection. Instead, the beneficiaries of the special district should bear the burden of its operational costs. Taking this approach would keep \$1.3 million in the General Fund, ensure our rural areas have the fire protection they need and it would keep with the original intent of creating a self-sustaining district with a guaranteed funding source for fire protection.