9.17

During the oral communication section of the agenda for Tuesday, March 29, 2011, Gary Grant spoke in opposition to RDA.

ATTACHMENTS FILED WITH CLERK OF THE BOARD

X

Riverside County Board of Supervisors
Request to Speak

Submit request to Clerk of Board (right of podium), Speakers are entitled to three (3) minutes, subject Board Rules listed on the reverse side of this form.

SPEAKER'S NAME: GARRY GRANT

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(only if follow-up mail response requested)

City: PERRIS. **Zip:** 92570.

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Date: MAR 29TH 01 **Agenda #** PUBLIC COMM

PLEASE STATE YOUR POSITION BELOW:

Position on "Regular" (non-appealed) Agenda Item:

______**Support** _______**Oppose** _______**Neutral**

Note: If you are here for an agenda item that is filed for "Appeal", please state separately your position on the appeal below:

_______**Support** _______**Oppose** _______**Neutral**

I give my 3 minutes to:____________________________

OUR VIEWS

P.E.

Debt disaster

The state is correct to resist selling unnecessary bonds already authorized by voters. And Gov. Jerry Brown is right that voters should avoid approving more borrowing unless it would fulfill an absolutely critical state need.

The amount of California's outstanding bonds has nearly tripled from $31 billion to $89 billion in the last decade. This figure does not include another $38 billion in bonds the state hasn't sold yet.

This year, the state will spend $6.6 billion on debt repayments — more than double the annual rate of a decade ago. One of the fastest-growing parts of the budget, these annual payments are expected to jump to $9.1 billion by 2013. This will consume about 9 percent of the general fund — a nearly tenfold increase over the rate in the late 1980s.

These debt payments are taking an ever-larger bite of a general fund in chronic deficit, consuming billions of dollars the state could otherwise spend on public services. The state faces an annual discrepancy between spending and revenue of about $20 billion. The higher the debt payments climb, the less money the state has for a range of programs and services, including higher education, services for the developmentally disabled, and the state's health insurance program for the poor. All of these programs and many others face cuts this year.

Rising state costs, including debt payments — along with resistance to program cuts from residents and interest groups — also intensify the pressure to raise taxes on income, vehicles, retail sales and more.

This financial mismanagement is driving up the interest rates the state pays, making borrowing even more expensive for taxpayers. A result of its high debt levels, budget deficits and inability to pass balanced budgets on time, California has the lowest credit rating of any state. The state pays higher interest rates on its bonds than most states do because bondholders deem California riskier to lend to. This costs taxpayers billions of extra dollars over time.

> Voters need to remember that bonds are not akin to free money just because they don't directly raise taxes.

Going forward, legislators and voters need to set priorities for spending and keep bonds lean and focused — allowing borrowing only to fund vital long-term capital improvement needs. Such needs might include investments in state highway expansion and new school facilities. But wise debt spending does not include such niceties as the $10 billion high-speed rail bond passed in 2008 or the $3 billion stem-cell research measure approved in 2004. Likewise, at a time when the state is mired in debt and deficits, legislators have placed an $11 billion water bond on the November 2012 ballot that is hopelessly bloated with wasteful pork — even as the state still has unspent money from a 2006 water bond.

Voters need to remember that bonds are not akin to free money just because they don't directly raise taxes. It's time to cut up the bond credit card, start paying down the bills and put an end to this debt addiction.

Received By Gary Grant 03.29.2011

'IE' shame?

Labels matter far less than reality. Improving the Inland region's image requires more than devising a better brand name. Instead, the area needs to address the ills that contribute to negative perceptions, and build on its existing strengths. And that task will require a cooperative regional effort in place of disjointed local campaigns.

The fastest-growing region in the state does not know what to call itself, but increasingly shies away from the old term "Inland Empire." That moniker is widely recognized, but many in Riverside and San Bernardino counties view the name as baggage, evoking images of smog, traffic and crime — a cultural wasteland of soulless suburban sprawl.

The Inland region does not need better marketing, but a more compelling product to sell.

The reality, of course, is far more complex than such simplistic stereotypes. The Inland area has potentially powerful assets as well as significant weaknesses, a mix that outsiders' casual disdain often ignores.

But merely renaming the region will not magically boost its reputation, any more than Moreno Valley dubbing half the city Rancho Belago was a game-changer. Inland Southern California does not need better marketing, but a more compelling product to sell.

No one should discount the area's strong points. Riverside and San Bernardino counties now have a combined population of more than 4.2 million, making the area more populous than half of the nation's 50 states. Those numbers should mean increased political clout, along with the competitive advantages of a ready market for goods and services and a large pool of workers. The region's cheap, available land also gives industry room to expand and makes homes more affordable.

Still, there are valid reasons for the negative stereotypes, and those perceptions will only fade when the region addresses some fundamental flaws. The Inland area, for example, suffered from decades of poorly planned growth that let housing outstrip the availability of roads, schools and other public amenities.

Clever marketing and cut-rate land will never be enough if the region is also not an attractive place for people to live and work. Few will wish to embrace an area with clogged traffic, crowded schools and substandard public services — and without decent libraries, parks and other civic institutions.

Businesses also need well-trained workers for increasingly complex jobs. Yet the Inland area lags the rest of the state in rates of college attendance, despite the presence of two California university campuses, private universities and numerous community colleges.

And repeated episodes of high-profile corruption, particularly in San Bernardino County government, hardly create an image of official competence and civic sophistication.

Fixing such shortcomings requires more than isolated efforts by a few cities, however. These issues require a unified, regional approach, not a collection of uncoordinated efforts by various cities unwilling to recognize how much they have in common.

Improving college attendance, for example, is not something only of interest to a few communities, but a regionwide imperative. So is easing the burden from international trade, which flows inland from Southern California ports, generating traffic congestion and air pollution. Likewise, creating a more diverse economy, instead of one too heavily dependent on construction, is not a job for only part of the region.

Tackle those needs effectively and image worries will vanish. That strategy requires thoughtful governance and coordinated effort, certainly. But no new name will matter without tangible regional improvements, as well.