

The Jacob Journal

A Newsletter from Supervisor Dianne Jacob

October 2003

Serving the Cities of:
El Cajon
La Mesa
Lemon Grove
Poway
Santee

Serving the communities of:
Agua Caliente
Allied Gardens
Alpine
Barrett
Blossom Valley
Bostonia
Boulevard
Campo
Canebrake
Casa de Oro
Crest
Cuyamaca
Dehesa
Del Cerro
Descanso
Dulzura
Eucalyptus Hills
Fernbrook
Flinn Springs
Granite Hills
Grantville
Guatay
Harbison Canyon
Jacumba
Jamul
Julian
Lake Morena
Lakeside
Mount Helix
Pine Hills
Pine Valley
Potrero
Ramona
Rancho San Diego
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Shelter Valley
Spring Valley
Tecate
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Vallecitos
Wynola

Serving the Indian Reservations of:
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Campo
Cosmit
Cuyapaipe
Inaja
Jamul
La Posta
Manzanita
Mesa Grand
Santa Ysabel
Sycuan
Viejas

The Right Time to Stop Wrong-Way Drivers

The Eastern portion of Interstate 8 from Pine Valley to Jacumba is notorious for gruesome vehicle crashes involving illegal immigrant smugglers. For years, ruthless human traffickers have packed people into trucks and vans and dangerously sped through the corridor.

With zero regard for others on the road, smugglers drive recklessly on purpose to discourage pursuit by law enforcement.

Vehicles frequently crash, overturn and, too often, collide with innocent drivers and passengers, some who never make it home to friends and families.

As if hair-raising speeds and erratic driving weren't enough, over the last year, area residents have noticed a disturbing new trend near the Border Patrol checkpoint just west of Buckman Springs Road. Night after night, smugglers try to skirt the checkpoint by crossing over into eastbound traffic and driving the wrong way along Interstate 8.

With their headlights turned off, smugglers often drive the wrong way up Interstate off-ramps or barrel down the steep median, head-on into oncoming traffic. They are killing loved ones and terrorizing all who drive the 26-mile stretch of Interstate 8 from the checkpoint to Imperial County.

Last year, Border Patrol agents decided it was time for a life-saving barrier to separate the eastbound and westbound traffic. Agents asked CalTrans to install a median guardrail from the checkpoint to the Buckman Springs exit. Agents also requested enhanced lighting and an observation camera near the checkpoint to deter smugglers. Though these solutions are relatively cost-effective and low-tech, the guardrail is not yet in place.

This summer, I appealed to CalTrans to prioritize the guardrail and other safety measures, such as wrong-way spike strips, to thwart smugglers. Though CalTrans pledged to address the matter, the road remains the same—deadly.

Last month, the California Highway Patrol confirmed what petrified residents have experienced for more than a year—a

surge in the number of incidents involving wrong-way drivers along Interstate 8.

"It's becoming a nightly occurrence... an epidemic," Officer Leslie Ann Lazo of the CHP told the *Eastern Empire Guardian*. "I think they learned they can get away with it," she told the *Washington Times*. "It's a recipe for disaster."

Fed up with the inertia of CalTrans and infuriated by their own near-misses with wrong-way drivers, area residents now are demanding action.

On a recent Saturday, residents and I gathered along dusty Buckman Springs Road

"They are killing loved ones and terrorizing all who drive the 26-mile stretch of Interstate 8 from the checkpoint to Imperial County."

***-Supervisor
Dianne Jacob***



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Jacob Fuming Over State's Unfair Fire Tax

Last year, California declared states of emergency in three of its counties, including San Diego, because of severe fire danger brought about by a massive bark beetle infestation. Now, that same state is set to trim the budget of the California Department of Forestry by \$52 million.

Some might say that cutting dollars from a public safety agency during a public safety crisis is hypocritical and even negligent. I strongly agree, but that's not the end of California's careless and unfair planning when it comes to fire protection.

To pay for the \$52 million cut, the State has plans to charge many property owners in unincorporated areas an annual fee of \$35 per parcel— never mind that property owners already pay for fire protection through property taxes and some of the highest state income taxes in the nation. As early as this month, the State is set to approve the fee. Once in effect, the owners of an estimated 87,000 parcels of property in San Diego County will be forced to pay twice for fire protection. Tinkering with the State's fire budget in the middle of a record drought is dangerous. Forcing a group of property owners to subsidize the State's fire agency is unjust. Stay tuned for more information about this unfair fee!

Are you an unincorporated property owner who soon will be paying twice for fire protection? I want to hear from you! Please call (619) 531-5522 to register your opposition to this unfair fee!

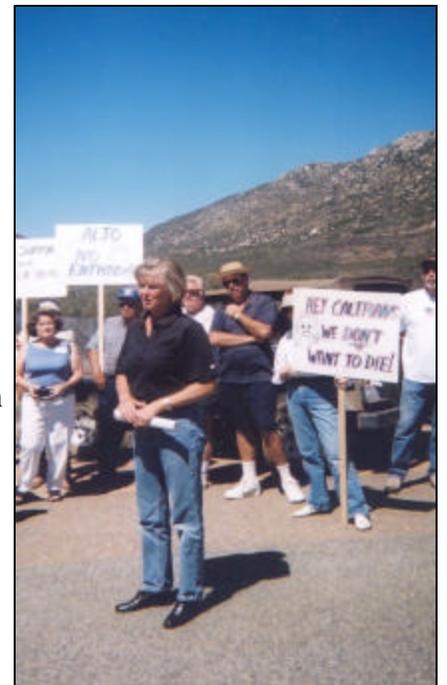
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at the westbound on-ramp to Interstate 8. It was our loud yet peaceful way of asking CalTrans to install the guardrail and other safety measures right away. With shouts, signs and support from the Border Patrol and CHP, we made our voices heard.

One of those voices belongs to Maria Amaya. More than a year ago, the Campo resident was driving with her young son along Interstate 8 when she noticed a darkened van speeding straight toward her car. As Maria swerved to avoid a head-on crash, the van slammed into her door. Maria and her son survived but the bloody scene of the crash will haunt her forever. Four of the 26 illegal immigrants in the van were killed. Witnesses said the Interstate looked like a war zone.

Experiences like Maria Amaya's are happening over and over to drivers along Interstate 8. Repeatedly, CalTrans has been made aware of feasible solutions to stop the carnage and save lives. Pledges to research the problem are no help to residents who find themselves dodging wrong-way drivers on their way to their homes. The longer CalTrans drags its feet, the greater the potential for additional deaths.

You can help! Call CalTrans and urge the State to put up a guardrail along the 26-mile stretch of Interstate 8 from the Border Patrol checkpoint to the Imperial County line. CalTrans San Diego: (619) 688-6670.



Life-saving solution: A surge in illegal immigrant smugglers driving the wrong-way on Interstate 8 has East County residents calling on CalTrans to install a median guardrail immediately.

Citizen Teams Help Shoulder Burden of Major Disasters



Supervisor Jacob is proud to chair the San Diego County Citizen Corps Council, a multi-agency emergency preparedness group initiated by the federal government to help communities prepare for large disasters.

On the second anniversary of 9-11, she was equally as proud to help the Council launch an exciting new effort to turn ordinary San Diegans into teams of disaster response volunteers.

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) programs are forming in communities throughout the region. CERT members are specially trained to assist with basic emergency response skills in the event of a large disaster until professional help arrives. If first responders become overwhelmed during a big disaster, CERT members will serve as important back-up resources to meet the needs of communities.

Whether it's triage at a disaster scene or tending to minor emergencies while first responders are occupied, CERT members will be integrated into the overall response capabilities for communities.

Using specially certified CERT trainers, the Citizen Corps Council is partnering with fire departments and other first response agencies to establish lasting CERT programs around the County. The Council has made it a goal to create at least two new teams by the end of 2003.

Fire departments in the cities of El Cajon, Santee and La Mesa are recruiting members of churches, businesses, schools and various community groups to take part in CERT training. CERT training teaches first aid, basic fire suppression strategies and other organizational skills for emergency situations.



Lending a Hand: Supervisor Jacob and the Citizen Corps Council want to help ordinary San Diegans help others during large scale disasters.

Interested in joining a CERT program? Contact your local fire department or the San Diego County Office of Emergency Services at (858) 565-3490.

Join me for Coffee and Conversation

October 24, 2003 at 8:30 a.m.

Tabloid Coffee

9225 Carlton Hills Blvd., #27

Santee

Get The Jacob Journal!

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We hope to hear from you soon!

OCT-03

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