



The Jacob Journal

Happy Holidays from Chairwoman Dianne Jacob

November/December 2004

County Leaves Power Grid, Saves a Bundle

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
Rolando
San Carlos
San Pasqual
Santa Ysabel
Shelter Valley
Spring Valley
Tecate
Tierra del Sol
Vallecitos
Wynola

Serving the Indian Reservations of:
Barona
Campo
Cosmit
Cuyapaipie
Inaja
Jamul
La Posta
Manzanita
Mesa Grande
Santa Ysabel
Sycuan
Viejas

Direct Access contract is helping power public facilities for less

By dropping San Diego Gas and Electric (SDG&E) as its primary energy provider, the County of San Diego has saved hundreds of thousands of dollars on its power bills and is poised to save even more.

The roots of the County's efforts to seek cheaper power date back to California's energy crisis more than three years ago, when the legislature's failed experiment with a deregulated energy marketplace sent energy prices soaring.

No California County felt the sting of those prices more than San Diego. At the time, the State's deregulation legislation gave San Diego customers no protection from the haywire market, and SDG&E simply passed those sky-high prices onto users.

As energy bills tripled, then quadrupled, local businesses teetered on the brink of bankruptcy; some businesses closed. Low income ratepayers, particularly fixed-income seniors, struggled to keep their lights on and pay for necessary medications.

After angry protests from San Diegans, which I'm proud to say I helped organize, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC)— the government entity that handles energy issues for the State— finally got wise and moved to shelter customers.

Help from the CPUC came in the form of a band aid rather than a long-term fix. The Commission barred SDG&E and other utilities from passing high costs onto consumers, but the utilities themselves were going broke buying power at exorbitant prices.

It was then that the State tried to calm the waters by assuming power-buying responsibilities for the utilities. By entering into long-term contracts with wholesalers, the State was able to tame the out-of-control market, but another problem developed. Those contracts were negotiated during the height of the crisis, at a time when prices were well above fair market value.

Of course, we now know those prices were mostly artificial, having everything to do with greed and little to do with supply and demand. Confidential memos and taped phone calls of energy traders have since revealed what many suspected. Unscrupulous wholesalers such as Enron were gaming the market to drive up prices and turn record profits.

San Diego County has filed a lawsuit against those companies to hold them accountable for illegal activities, but sadly SDG&E remains chained to the State's overpriced energy contracts. San Diego County, however, is different. We saw a chance to break free from overpriced power and we took it. It's called Direct Access, and it's working.

"We saw a chance to break free from overpriced power and we took it. It's called Direct Access and it's working."

- Dianne Jacob



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The Dos and Don'ts of Flu Season

Our nation and our region are in short supply of flu vaccine this year. A contamination mishap in an overseas lab is to blame. The County's Health and Human Services Agency needs your help to ensure that San Diegans with serious medical conditions and those who are at high-risk of contracting the flu receive the vaccine first.

Priority groups include: children ages six to 23 months, adults over age 65, those ages two through 64 with chronic diseases, nursing home residents, healthcare workers, pregnant women and those in close contact with children under six months of age.

If you fall into a high risk category and have not yet had your shot, please call (877) 358-0202.

The rest of us aren't helpless to protect ourselves this year. Here are some ways you can keep from spreading colds and flu:

- **Wash your hands frequently with antibacterial products**
- **Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue**
- **Stay away from people who are sick**
- **Keep hands away from eyes, nose and mouth**
- **Don't go to work sick**



Energy Savings

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In January of 2001, the CPUC allowed large scale energy users to shop around for cheaper power by entering into contracts with private providers. San Diego County jumped at the chance, viewing Direct Access as a cushion to soften the financial blow of the crisis created by the legislature.

We weren't alone. Many of the region's largest companies pursued energy outside the grid too. There was so much interest in Direct Access that at one point, the CPUC considered voiding contracts not finalized by a certain date.

I actually traveled to CPUC offices in San Francisco to argue that the arbitrary cut-off was unfair. That journey succeeded in protecting the County's contract which was finalized in 2003.

Two years later, the contract is paying off. Constellation New Energy, not SDG&E, powers

16 public buildings that account for 60 percent of the County's power usage. So far, we've saved more than \$600,000, or about six percent of our electric costs, compared to what costs would have been with SDG&E as our provider.

"We've saved more than \$600,000. That's about six percent of our electric costs."

And, there's even better news. Since our contract was first signed, there are a wide variety of wholesalers peddling power on the market. That competition is driving down prices and driving up the County's chances of getting an even better deal in the future.

Our exiting contract expires on June 30 of next year. In the meantime, you can bet we'll be shopping around for the very best deal for taxpayers. Direct Access is keeping our lights on for less, and I'd like to keep it that way!



A New Beginning for Teens in Spring Valley

With shovels in hand, Spring Valley young people, community leaders and Supervisor Jacob broke ground on the community's new gym and teen center near La Presa Middle School.

For years, the community has worked to pull together funding for the 2,000 square foot center and the 15,000 square foot gym. The \$3.2 million project is being built with a combination of funding from the County, State and Federal governments. The land



It's A Start: Supervisor Jacob and friends break ground on the Spring Valley Gym and Teen Center.

was donated by the La Mesa/Spring Valley School District.

When complete, the teen center

will be a place that teens can call their own. They can dance, talk, and learn about art and music. The gym will be used by middle school students and the County Department of Parks and Recreation will operate athletic programs after-hours.

Congratulations should go to Parks Advisory Chairwoman Marilyn Wilkenson, Barbara Warner of the Youth and Families Coalition, Renelle Nailon from the Spring Valley Community Center, and many others who made it happen!

Team Jacob is Here to Help

Got a question, concern, idea or complaint? Below is a list of Supervisor Jacob's policy staff and the broader issues they handle.

Remember, our phone number is (619) 531-5522.

- Caroline Braun: animal services, chambers of commerce, community meetings, Commission on the Status of Women.
- Jeff Collins: law enforcement, border, fire protection, disaster preparedness, emergency medical services, airports, Treasurer/Tax Collector and Assessor, Registrar of Voters.
- Erin Farris: health services, children's issues, child support, mental health, social services, seniors, libraries, parks and recreation, trails, tourism, economic development.
- Darren Gretler: planning and land use, fire recovery and rebuilding, Indian affairs, public works, roads and construction, storm water, transportation, storm water.
- Jennifer Stone: energy, Meth Strike Force, media inquiries.
- Adam Wilson: codes enforcement, environmental health, sanitation, household hazardous waste, veterans' affairs, military issues, revitalization projects, mobile home issues.

Breaking Ground on Better Care

Please join Supervisor Jacob and the County Department of Aging and Independence Services at a ceremony to celebrate the groundbreaking of the new Edgemoor Skilled nursing facility in Santee. When complete, the new facility will replace the outdated old Edgemoor Hospital, home to County residents with severe disabilities needing constant care.

**Edgemoor Groundbreaking
December 8, 2004
10:30 a.m.
Edgemoor Drive, Santee**

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We hope to hear from you soon!

NOV-04

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