



The Jacob Journal

A Newsletter from Supervisor Dianne Jacob

September 2005

Restoring Order Along the U.S.- Mexico Border

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
Cuyapaipe
Inaja
Jamul
La Posta
Manzanita
Mesa Grande
Santa Ysabel
Sycuan
Viejas

Jacob deeply concerned about national security after recent tour of border area

This month, as America marks the anniversary of the 9-11 terror attacks, we turn our thoughts to the victims, families and heroes of that harrowing day. We also think of U.S. military personnel now fighting violent fanatics overseas and are humbled by their continuing sacrifice.

Four years after the appalling attacks, a glaring threat to national security remains largely unaddressed here at home.

Despite the best efforts of the Border Patrol, whose San Diego-based agents have seen their numbers dwindle in recent years, thousands of individuals continue to pour across the U.S.-Mexico Border. Are they terrorists? Tourists? Job seekers? Drug runners? Lawbreakers? America can't be sure.

Last month, I had a front row seat to a scene that plays out hour after hour, day after day in San Diego County's backyard. In an SUV, Border agents seemed oddly calm to me as our caravan was pelted by rocks, a routine occurrence patrolling the border.

Outside the vehicle, men waited for the

right moment to cross. Their ultimate intentions were anyone's guess.

That the federal government continues to shirk its responsibility to control this steady stream of illegal traffic is a disgrace to those whose lives changed forever on 9-11, especially when the changes that are needed are not murky or out-of reach.

"That the federal government continues to shirk its responsibility to control this steady stream of illegal traffic is a disgrace to those whose lives changed forever on 9-11..."

Changes have been called for by the bipartisan 9-11 Commission, clamored for by Border Patrol agents, outlined by security experts, trumpeted by officials whose voices continue to be ignored and begged for by residents of San Diego County and beyond.

Hiring more agents and equipping them with the technology they need to control the porous border is one critical way to find out where crossers are going and why. Yet, like most other efforts to control the border, the federal government hasn't shown the will to implement changes. Below are some of the ways the government should take action.

More Agents, More Technology

Staffing for agents in San Diego is down from 2,274 a decade ago to just over 1,500 this fall. Apprehensions are down since the mid-1990s but more than 48,000 people have been caught crossing illegally since October 2004. That's just the individuals getting caught. Cameras that can help monitor the situation are going up in the western area, but not fast enough. The cameras planned for eastern San Diego County aren't scheduled to go up for a couple of years.



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On the Line: An aerial view of the fence along the U.S.-Mexico Border. Over the years, plans to improve the fence have been delayed. Jacob and others say they are frustrated by the federal government's steadfast refusal to prioritize Border security.

Finish the Fence

The 14-mile triple border fence from the San Ysidro Mountains to the Pacific Ocean is a national security must. Until recently, construction of several critical miles of fence had been stalled by the Coastal Commission, which claimed that the project would harm the environment. Fortunately, the Department of Homeland Security overrode regulators and the project has been given the green light. Where the project is complete, apprehensions of illegal crossers have dropped 80 percent and habitat is recovering from destructive foot traffic.

This positive development is a start. It should spur the feds to fix existing gaps along the fence especially in East San Diego County near the Imperial County line. A supervising agent said of

the incomplete fence: "This would be a prime way to try to bring in somebody who might have a terrorist bent."

Tamper-proof IDs

When California experienced a spike in the production of fake drivers licenses, the State got smart, employed modern technology and created a tamper proof I.D. card. Problems with the phonies decreased. Four years after 9-11, the federal government still hasn't updated its Social Security card, despite constant urging from San Diego County.

Beef up Prosecution

Additional staffing is needed in the U.S. Attorney's office to prosecute low level offenders. Many illegal crossers with small amounts of narcotics simply are being returned to Mexico. The District Attorney is being paid by the feds to handle some cases but

too many are being ignored.

Guest Worker Program

The vast majority of Border crossers are seeking jobs to create a better life, says the Border Patrol. An improved guest worker program would allow job seekers to work with dignity under safe conditions.

Follow the Law

America should be punishing companies that hire illegal aliens. Laws on the books are not being enforced.

Time Ticks By

Frustrated by inaction, officials in Border states have proclaimed states of emergency to raise awareness about Border security. Volunteer civilian patrols have staged events hoping the feds will listen. Ruthless smugglers still terrorize remote San Diego roadways by driving on the wrong side of the road to evade arrest.

It is a national embarrassment that so much time has passed since 9-11 and so little has been done to prioritize Border security. The 9-11 Commission reported that one of the biggest failures in the years before 9-11 was a failure of imagination. That is, the failure to imagine and prepare for planes striking U.S. landmarks. Are we failing to imagine biological weapons smuggled into the U.S. alongside drugs? Are we failing to imagine a terrorist network paying a poor family to turn their son into a suicide bomber? If that sounds alarmist, just think back to the images of those planes hitting the towers. It's a post 9-11 world. The feds must adapt.

County Suing Sempra Over Asbestos-Removal Violations

The County is suing Sempra Energy and its subsidiary SDG&E in San Diego Superior Court for violating laws governing the removal of asbestos-containing material during a clean up operation in Lemon Grove several years ago.

The Board of Supervisors authorized the lawsuit, which is being brought by the County Air Pollution Control District and County Department of Environmental Health.

The County considers the violations significant because of the serious public health risks associated with the mishandling of asbestos material.

The lawsuit seeks significant civil penalties amounting to hundreds of thousands of dollars based upon the numerous delays of asbestos violations.

The lawsuit addresses the activities of Sempra and SDG&E while the companies were shutting down the Encanto Gas Holder site in Lemon Grove in 2001.

When shutting down the site, Sempra and SDG&E removed 9.23 miles of buried pipes that were insulated with asbestos material.

While stripping insulation from the pipes, Sempra and SDG&E did not properly remove the asbestos and did not take precautions to keep the asbestos from becoming airborne, according to the lawsuit.

Asbestos is hazardous if it is not removed properly and becomes airborne. If asbestos is inhaled, it can lead to cancer and respiratory diseases.

The County notes that the pipe-stripping work was performed next to a residential community and that several residents have expressed concern about health risks they might face from the work.

The Encanto Gas Holder site in Lemon Grove has since been cleaned up under State supervision.

“The County is committed to holding accountable those who knowingly and wittingly jeopardize the health and safety of the public,” Supervisor Jacob told reporters after the suit was filed late last month. She personally met with concerned residents and urged the County to fully investigate their concerns.

“All communities are to be treated with the utmost care and respect when it comes to projects that might negatively impact the health of residents,” Jacob said.



COFFEE AND CONVERSATION

Supervisor Jacob invites you to an informal coffee to share your thoughts and ideas.

Friday, September 23 at 8:30 AM
Rancho San Diego Library
11555 Via Rancho San Diego

Friday, October 28 at 8:30 AM
Barrett Junction Café,
Highway 94, Dulzura

Emergency Website Provides Info in Real Time

Hurricane Katrina has many local families thinking about evacuation plans. Should a large disaster on par with Katrina strike our region, a new website will provide evacuation information in “real time” for those with Internet access.

The County Office of Emergency Services will activate the site. It will be reserved for events posing widespread destruction, so it won’t be operational during smaller fires and isolated incidents. Evacuation orders, shelter information and other relevant details will be posted.

The website is: www.sdcountyemergency.com

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We hope to hear from you soon!

Sep-05

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