



Federal Glover: Glimmers of light flicker in New Year

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For the Contra Costa Times

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I'M NOT SORRY to see 2009 end, but the New Year doesn't seem to be offering any relief.

This year, 2010, marks my 10th year as your county supervisor. Last year was one of the toughest years I have had as an elected official. I know District V residents are feeling the full brunt of the nation's recession.

This year, more homeowners will face the prospect of losing their homes through foreclosures; the job losses will continue, at least through the first part of the year; California and Contra Costa County will face more budget shortfalls even as the need for services increases; the Delta will remain under siege as the state seeks ways to pay for its ambitious projects; health care reform is falling short of what we need; and midterm elections, local and state campaigns mean the rhetoric is going to amp up, further polarizing us as a community and a nation.

Amid the gloom and doom, glimmers of light are flickering.

Our representatives in Washington and Sacramento are finally trying to put some pressure on lending institutions to be more forgiving of those who fell to the false promises of subprime loans. Banks and other lenders claim to be responding, but the ultimate test will be felt in our neighborhoods, not

in their board rooms.

Last year's budget cuts at all levels of government will just start having their impact in 2010. Unless there is a sudden increase in revenues, this means county agencies will have to adjust by doing more with less.

Every single county department's budgets have been reduced, and further cuts may be in the offering. Some of the sting of the cuts has been lessened a little bit by the federal dollars making it down to Main Street. How much stimulus money comes to the county is still to be determined.

County departments have asked for federal grants everywhere they could, and responses have been sporadic.

I can't say enough about the county workers' dedication to serving the people. While enduring their own personal stress, attacks from the media and despite wage cutbacks, you still see volunteering at immunization clinics and at various holiday food programs, giving tax advice and donating to food pantries.

My doubts about the Delta water legislation still persist despite its passage. The health of the Delta, the source of most of the county's drinking water, is still in jeopardy, and it might get worse.

However, I believe the initial \$11 billion cost (which has been upped to \$14 billion) of implementation is more than the voters can swallow. With the state facing a debt approaching \$100 billion, voters are in no mood to increase California's debt.

On the housing front, more mortgages are expected

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to default this year. Hopefully, lenders will see the wisdom in working with homeowners to keep them in their homes rather than taking over their loans.

The good news is that home sales surged 7.4 percent in November, the highest level in nearly three years. A lot of that is due to federal support stemming from The American Recovery Program (TARP) and a generous tax credit program for first-time homebuyers that has been extended this year.

As of this writing (before Christmas), it looks like health care reform will take place. The bad news is that the bill is seriously flawed and will require fixes for years to come. The bill has been watered down so much that this is not what is best for the American people. Instead, we have a bill that is far short of what we need and what the vast majority of Americans wanted.

What's the old saying? Two things you never want to witness: making sausage and making legislation.

But "... it is a step in the right direction. Flawed as it is, whatever is hammered out between the Senate and House versions will be better than what we have now. It will insure millions of people who don't have health insurance right now. However, it fails to address the fundamental shortcoming of a health system that is one of the world's most expensive and least efficient.

There's hope on the local front, too. About 50 percent of the TARP money still has to filter down to Main Street. Figures of the new jobless are expected to level out midyear and see an increase in job formation in the latter part of 2010.

As a member of MTC, CCTA and Transplan, I helped protect the funding for the eBART extension to Antioch despite state attempts to transfer the money t

o other uses. Highway 4 work will be under way again after purchasing rights of way for widening.

The Board of Supervisors is making tough decisions now (and taking its lumps) in order to ease the harsh impacts in the future.

From President Obama down to city officials, it is not an easy time to be a public figure, and office holders will feel the voters' frustration.

The coming election will undoubtedly focus on some of the topics mentioned above and others such as the Antioch school district's finances, the fate of redevelopment money the state is trying to hijack, how climate change will alter the way we live, how California maintains its role as the nexus of innovation as the state's college and university system is dismantled, and the very real possibility that dissatisfied Californians will seek a more sensible way of governing our state than the way it is being run aground today.

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