

# Fresno Mayor Ashley Swearengin

Dear Neighbor,

If you're like me, then you are tired of 'politics as usual.' I know I am. That's why recent activities by a local labor union are so frustrating...and harmful to our communities.

Like most regions in California, the San Joaquin Valley continues to struggle with a slow economy, and local governments face continued budget shortfalls that require constant attention.

That's why, now more than ever, it's essential that governments find new ways to maximize taxpayer dollars and create efficiencies wherever possible. That was the thinking behind the 'fact finding' effort regarding policing duties in the county islands.

Fresno City police officers are already in and around the county islands, and they answer thousands of calls for service in those islands every single year. So, we wanted to know if it made economic and public safety sense for the Fresno Police Department to answer all dispatch calls in county islands.

For example, could this change free up resources in the Sheriffs Department for other public safety needs, like re-opening beds in the county jail that are currently closed because of a lack of funding? If so, that would allow both city police and sheriffs to keep criminals behind bars rather than seeing them released for lack of jail space.

Through our fact-finding efforts, we sought to answer these and other questions before making any recommendation for the public's consideration.

But, three weeks ago, the Deputy Sheriffs union launched a hard hitting political attack campaign against the idea, including sending four scathing mailers that smeared the Fresno City Police Department and sought to scare county island residents about criminals on the prowl in their neighborhoods.

Now, I'm not a career politician, so I fully confess that I don't always understand the political mindset when it comes to attacks like these. But, don't we want to first examine the data before any recommendation is made? I came out of the business community where

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gathering facts and analyzing data is the norm. So, imagine my surprise when the Deputy Sheriffs union sought to shut down any fact-finding or discussion by using these ham-fisted bully tactics. If this is the government norm, then it's no wonder so many governments are in bad shape!

One particularly egregious charge made by the Deputy Sheriffs union is that I am secretly working to annex county islands, such as the Fig Garden and Sunnyside areas. That's just simply not true, and it's an unfair attack motivated by the union's fear that it will lose members. The union president even admitted that they are launching these attacks, not out of concern for the public's safety, but because they are worried about losing membership.

Instead of spending scarce dollars to spread fear among the very people they are sworn to protect, the Deputy Sheriffs union should be helping to find ways the county can save taxpayer dollars and survive the tough economy. Sharing policing duties in the county islands may or may not be part of the solution to the existing budget problems, but we should at least look at the data before drawing a conclusion.

Budget shortfalls forced our city to make even more job cuts last week. I know the county budget faces similar challenges. I'm sure county officials agree that the path to a strong community begins with cooperation and prudent fiscal policies that cut costs and save tax dollars.

County officials should join the City of Fresno in a transparent discussion regarding any and all ways to maximize law enforcement efficiencies. The process should be open, fair, and honest. Each department should provide statistics on response times and staffing levels and provide other data so we have the complete facts at hand.

And the process shouldn't involve bully tactics designed to shut down discussion.

For a better Fresno,



Ashley Swearengin

PS. I've included an editorial from the Fresno Bee about what they describe as the "shameful" tactics by the Deputy Sheriffs labor union.