



Tuesday October 6th 2009 Meeting Minutes:

1. Joni Eisen called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm.
2. The agenda and Sept 2009 minutes were approved. This month we skipped officer reports.
3. **Open Mic: Candidates for Supervisor of District 10**

This month we held our second of many open mics for District 10 Supervisor Candidates to introduce themselves. The speaking order was drawn by lot; the speakers in order were:

Marie Franklin
Kristine Enea
Dr. James Calloway

For audio of the candidates, go to our website: http://www.phdemclub.org/?page_id=950.

4. **Special Guest: Assemblyman Tom Ammiano** started off with a short history of the district-based Supervisor elections and how they impact us; they really allow neighborhoods to get their voices heard on the Board of Supervisors. Tom described Governor Schwarzenegger as simply not engaged; his celebrity got him elected but doesn't help him as Governor. Tom is for extending term limits so your representatives can earn "street cred" over time. It takes time to learn the job and the way things are now representatives are constantly posturing for election to another office. This leads to voting not for the good of their district but to appeal to a state-wide electorate (because they may have their eyes on a state-wide office after they term out). The 2/3 budget rule needs to go - the Republicans all vote in a block and a significant number of Democrats are more conservative so we never can reach the 2/3 vote. We need prison reform - it's very related to the budget. Problem areas are the 3 strikes law, determinate sentencing, and the drug laws. All lead to prison overcrowding which in turn leads to more violence in our prisons. On sentencing reform: have sentencing that is more appropriate to the crime, give early release to non-violent & extremely infirm prisoners, reduce parole officers load from 85 to 45 cases at a time. It got killed by Gov. Schwarzenegger's inability to control his party and some conservative Dems. On marijuana sentencing: again our prisons are overcrowded and we are under a court order to reduce the prison population; just reforming marijuana sentencing will reduce the number of people

incarcerated. And finally, on water rights: Gov. Schwarzenegger has thrown a hissy fit and says he will sign NONE of the passed legislation on his desk unless we get a water bill by next Friday. This is a crazy position, because the water rights issues are too complicated to be rushed. Tom took several audience questions including some contentious Helipad questions. The audio is on http://www.phdemclub.org/?page_id=950.

5. **Special Guest: Senator Mark Leno** started off saying that Governor Schwarzenegger is a plague on California. How is it legal for the Governor to extort a water bill from the legislature? He's bullying us. Mark wants to write it into statute that a Governor cannot do this. On Prison Reform - the Governor came up with a list of 25 "wobbler" crimes, that is crimes that can be either misdemeanors or felonies depending on circumstances, he wanted to change to always being misdemeanors. The Senate cut that list down to 3. The Assembly cut it to 0. Our current sentencing makes no sense. For example grand larceny is defined as \$400 - set decades ago and not adjusted for inflation. We need a sentencing commission. Republicans say that if we make one the representatives are abrogating their responsibility for setting sentences. The Republicans are paranoid to ever be seen as soft on crime. For example, a bill to redefine incarceration to "punishment and rehabilitation" had to be renamed to "punishment and preparation to re-introduce into society" because rehabilitation sounds soft on crime. Another nonsensical example: possession of an ounce of marijuana is always prosecuted as an infraction not a misdemeanor (meaning just a fine, no jail), but has to go to trial because it's still on the books as a misdemeanor. This wastes court time because even convicted by jury the offender just pays a fine. A sentencing commission takes the political shadow off the issues and lets the job get done in a sensible way. Alternative custody can reduce our overcrowded prison population - a GPS bracelet and serious parole for non-violent, non-sex offender, good behavior candidates. If we don't set up a sentencing commission the court will just force us to release the excess prison population and who knows what the results will be. On Health Care (SB 810) - California has the only state legislature to put single-payer on the Governor's desk. It is not socialized medicine, it is a public/private partnership. Public payment for services provided by the private sector. We waste 1/3 of all health dollars on administrative costs and profits to insurance companies. We are #37 in the world in quality of care, just ahead of Slovenia. We spend 17.5% of GDP on health care in the US. The only real reform is single payer. It's within our power to kick out the insurance industry. For the Republicans, it's just about defeating the President - not about policy. Mark then recognized Tom Ammiano for all his great work on the Healthy San Francisco program. On the Budget - there are a lot of reasons why we are so dysfunctional. Any Republican that votes for any tax gets thrown into a recall election by the followers of right-wing radio shock jocks. **Two different** 2/3 thresholds are big part of the problem: 1) for the budget, Depression-Era thinking led to a rule that if we grew the budget more than 5% a year, 2/3 vote would be required instead of a simple majority. Then decades later the 5% growth part of the rule was removed. 2) the passage of any new tax also requires a 2/3 vote. On the possibility of a Constitutional Convention - there are problems; already some are proposing "everything on the table but Prop 13" which is troublesome. And even if it happens it won't cure anything until 4 to 6 years out at the earliest. We need change the 2/3 requirement through voter approved propositions. We also need to amend term limits to get more experienced legislatures; but this time make sure the proposed changes will not benefit any sitting office holders or it will fail as it did last time. Mark took several audience questions. The audio of it all is on http://www.phdemclub.org/?page_id=950.

6. **Next Meeting Nov 3** Topic TBA. Meeting will be held in another room than the theater, which will be a polling place for the Municipal Election.

Quint King, Secretary