

Final

State of the County Speech
Jim Beall, Chair
Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors
January 14, 1996

Good evening and Happy New Year to everyone.

It is an honor to give my first State of the County address to familiar colleagues, good friends and good family.

This is a very important evening because tonight represents a new beginning for Santa Clara County. And as we begin we have much to be proud of:

Whether in technology or innovative public policy, Santa Clara County is pushing the envelope.... we are literally redefining the cutting edge.

We begin this year with a great deal of hope:

- The surging economy has rebooted Silicon Valley and business is booming.
- In a recent poll, 87% of Santa Clara County residents rated the quality of life here as good -- higher than any other Bay Area County.

The County has taken important steps to remain one of the best managed counties in the nation. We've created solutions that are both practical and compassionate such as:

- increasing funding to protect victims of domestic violence and
- developing the mental health jail diversion program and drug courts
- fully funding our retiree health program

We have much to be proud of, and I would like to acknowledge our County Administrator Richard Wittenburg for his assistance.

In 1997, our challenge will be to be even more innovative and creative. We have to insure prosperity and work opportunities are available to every family in Santa Clara County.

I see two linked themes emerging this year:

The first is **partnership**:

- **Partnerships with the community,**
- **Partnerships with local, state and federal government leaders,**
and
- **Partnerships with businesses.**

The second theme is **'prevention'**.

Prevention in everything we do. Prevention activities not only improve the quality of life, but are the morally and fiscally sound way to govern.

Prevention is all-inclusive, directed at empowering **each of us** to become a productive member of society.

What I'd like to do here is touch on **five priorities** for the county this year:

The first is **transportation**

Transportation is the key to our continued economic success. Our transportation systems must run as efficiently and quickly as the microprocessors that we design for the world.

I want to suggest that transportation is the number one priority for the region and number one for our county.

12 years ago, voters entrusted us with more than \$1.2 billion for transportation projects. I am proud that we brought those projects in **on time and on budget**.

I am pleased to announce that with the passage of Measure B, the county has additional financial resources in our general fund. We have authorized bonds to begin improvements along Highway 87, fix potholes and plan for a connection to BART service.

Another key priority is Crime Prevention

People deserve to feel safe -- in their homes, in their neighborhoods and at work. The continued rise of violence, especially among young people is very disturbing.

Stopping crime and violence requires a collaborative approach by law enforcement, the schools and families, the courts and social service agencies.

This year we will work with the Public Health Department to develop a community action plan for violence prevention. The operative word here is **community** action plan. This means including Santa Clara County residents in every aspect of the plan.

This plan must include:

- working with the Children and Families Committee and the Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council to coordinate school and community-based efforts to reduce and prevent violence.

- coordinating local efforts to combat gun violence, working with the Police Chiefs Association, the community and the Public Safety and Justice Committee.
- and, preventing workplace violence - No one should go to work whether at the County or a local business in fear of violence. We will undertake an innovative prevention program, starting right here at the county.

A third priority are Public/Private Partnerships for a Healthy Santa Clara Valley

Today 200,000 hard working, honest county residents are without health insurance. We usually see them when they become seriously ill and come to the county hospital -- a cost of \$69 million dollars to the county last year.

Before we have to take the County budget to the fiscal ER we need to meet the challenge of providing health care to **all** of our community, Every employer needs to offer basic health insurance to its workers.

This is especially true for low wage workers and contract employees. This year I will convene, not a 'round' but 'operating' table of businesses, hospitals, non-profits and local government leaders to put our heads together to develop some options. The economic vitality of the county requires a healthy workforce.

I am not promising a cure, but at least I can promise the start of treatment.

Another key priority will be welfare.

Under the new federal welfare law, this year we must focus even more on helping the poor move from welfare to work.

The new federal welfare law is perhaps our biggest challenge. How do we cope with cuts in funding for poor families, the elderly and disabled in a practical and compassionate way?

As usual, Santa Clara is a step ahead of other counties in developing solutions.

Starting a year ago, a cross section of our community came together to develop the Employment Support Initiative.

By including the public 'in', we were able to tap the knowledge and commitment of everyone to develop policy recommendations for the county Social Services Agency, and put together a concept paper based on the resources available right here in this county. I would like to thank the nearly 250 people who served on the committee or who shared their ideas on this issue.

We will also launch a new, expanded Housing Trust Fund to help meet the need for affordable housing.

As I listened to Governor Pete Wilson's State of the State speech last week and reviewed the state budget released a few days ago, I became increasingly concerned about how we will insure that the elderly, children and the disabled are protected from the draconian cuts in aid to the poor. I am concerned about how we will help adults prepare to return to the workforce.

On the plus side, I give the Governor credit for committing to give counties the flexibility to design welfare to work programs that will fit **Santa Clara's unique work needs to a 'T'**.

But I see three problem areas that could stand in the way:

The first **'T'** is **Transportation** funding - The state budget lacks adequate funding to insure that people can get to their jobs.

The second **'T'** is **Training** for jobs. We are blessed to be a job rich county. The jobs are here, the people are here. Yet the Governor's budget doesn't begin to fund job training needs for real jobs that will help people stay off of welfare. Today we have a waiting list of 10,000 people on welfare who **want** job training and **want** to go back to work. Yet the Governor's budget only provides funding to train 1500 additional people. This makes no sense.

The third **'T'** is **Toddler and Child Care**. In order for most welfare recipients to go to work, we need to find safe, quality child care. Under the Governor's budget, we're at least \$10 million short of what's needed to do the job.

I am pleased that the Governor doesn't want to eliminate benefits to legal immigrants. However, I am deeply worried about the impact on the elderly and disabled and the lack of funds for health care. The Governor's budget will cut home support services to 1500 elderly and disabled people in our county. Services that let them remain in their own homes and neighborhoods instead of warehousing them in expensive nursing homes

What does it say about our values if we cut lifeline services to them? **Well, we're *not* that kind of community.**

If we are going to have the flexibility to create a plan that **fits us to a 'T'**, the state has to fund us to do a good job with transportation, training and toddler and child care. I ask each of you to work with me to lobby the Legislature on these issues.

The Employment Support Initiative adopted today clearly demonstrates we know how to do the job.

So to the Governor, my message is: **empower us with the resources to empower others.**

To make the best use of our resources we need a Lean and Clean County Government

Our county has instituted a number of programs to help us serve the public *better* and *cheaper*. This year we will open up government to the people by creating:

Board Committees To Get The Job Done

I am pleased to announce that today the Board agreed to consolidate the policy committees around 5 major policy areas. This will build on the spirit of efficiency and collaboration we see already on the new board.

Each committee will be chaired by one Boardmember, utilizing the special areas of expertise they bring to the board.

I am proud to announce my colleagues will be serving as chair of the following committees.

- Finance: Joe Simitian
 - Children and Families: Blanca Alvarado
 - Public Safety and Justice: Pete McHugh
- and I will chair the Health and Hospital Committee.

The Land Use, Environment, Transportation and Housing Committee will be chaired by the supervisor to be elected from District One.

However, we can't do it alone We want your ideas, your skills and your energy.

This year we'll work hard to bring the county to the people. I will recommend that we hold some board meetings at night and others in the neighborhoods. I am also pleased that board agendas and materials will soon be available free on the internet. Whether at work, at home or in the library, everyone will know what is being considered by the board.

Now, providing good services is only part of the equation. We must maintain our good credit and our fiscal solvency.

The only way that we will be able to meet the increasing financial pressures of the coming year is to keep the county in strong financial health. This means meeting our obligations to pay for Retiree Health and Workers Compensation, rather than going into debt as we have in the past. When I was first elected two

years ago, this was one of the first projects Blanca and I took on and I am pleased that have reduced overhead despite shrinking budgets.

By keeping our financial house in order, we can increase our bond ratings and retain the trust of taxpayers who give us their hard earned money. I look forward to working with Joe, Pete and Blanca to pinch every penny so that we have money to pay for basic services.

At the beginning of my presentation, I mentioned that Santa Clara County, that Silicon Valley, was pushing the envelope, that we are on the cutting edge of the world. I want to leave us with a thought on why we are so phenomenally successful...

our secret is....because we work hard....
really hard....

I challenge us, and the fine men and women who work with us in the County:
to work **harder** than the people we serve,
to work **longer** than those in Sacramento and Washington that would stand in the way of our success and to
work **more passionately** towards these goals.

Thank you and good night.