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HARNESSING TECHNOLOGY TO BETTER SERVE THE COMMUNITY

There's no question that government isn't always able to provide the quality of services citizens deserve for the amount of taxes they pay. I want to change that. My record over the last 13 years in elective office has been a consistent one of opposing tax increases and supporting greater efficiency and better quality in services government provides to residents. The explosive growth of technology is providing local governments the opportunity to give more bang for the taxpayer's buck. I want San Bernardino County to be at the cutting edge of giving back to the people through technology.

Just take a look at what other jurisdictions are doing right now to get more done for the people without increasing the number of public employees or their budgets. In the City of Los Angeles, teams from the city sanitation department were given smartphone and video equipment and tasked with documenting illegal dumping, abandoned bulky items and other trash problems. They used an app to identify and prioritize problems that needed immediate attention. Even more impressive was that they were able to view and grade all 22,000 miles of the city's streets and alleyways in a matter of months and put it on a map. According to Lillian Coral, the city's chief data officer, the mobile data collection project resulted in an 80% reduction in areas scored "not clean" in its first year of operation. This amounts to a big improvement in the quality of services delivered to city residents at no extra cost to them.

In Boston, Massachusetts, the city's traffic management center teamed up with Waze, a Google based traffic navigation app to supplement live feeds from its network of traffic cameras and street sensors to get a clearer picture of what's happening on city streets at any given moment in time. This information allows officials to respond quicker to accidents or double parked trucks blocking traffic. It also allows individuals using Waze to have a better understanding of how to avoid traffic problems and get where they are going quicker, thus aiding the flow of goods and services and improving the quality of peoples' lives. A measurable improvement in services provided through smart application of technology at no additional cost to the taxpayers.

Closer to home, San Bernardino County approved a virtual inspection program for county residents so people wanting to make home improvements such as new roofs, installation of solar equipment and similar projects can have county inspectors examine and approve their projects online, thereby saving them time and money while getting the job done faster. This initiative had my full support, and I'm actively seeking other areas where your county government can get the job done with less intrusion in people's personal lives and at a lower cost to them.

The idea of using technology to improve local government services is not a new one. It arguably dates to the first installation of automated electric traffic signals in Houston, Texas in 1922. Controversial at the time for replacing traffic control officers with newfangled automated technology, traffic lights are considered basic and essential today to controlling the millions of car and trucks traveling every day on our streets and highways. Today, street cameras and sensors enhance this coordination process and synchronize the street lights to improve traffic flow and public safety. Storing data from millions of sensors in "the cloud" has dramatically lowered the cost of data storage and increased the layers of data that can be combined to improve services to residents and lower costs.

Locally, one such mechanism for improving services and lowering costs is the humble street light. Each one provides a mini data platform that can be used by local governments to enhance services and provide local governments with income from leasing the pole for data transmission services to private companies. Maintaining local government control over these poles is important in providing flexibility, and in keeping local control of local, publicly owned equipment. Current measures in Sacramento to strip local governments of control over these poles and turn them into some sort of utility are shortsighted and harmful to local government. We need to decentralize government, not consolidate more power at the state and/or federal levels.

Technology is advancing exponentially and we need to keep up with it. I advanced the idea at the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) to create a new Open Data, Big Data Committee, of which I am a founding member, so local governments throughout southern California would have a one stop shop for accessing the plethora of available technological opportunities. As Chairman of the SCAG Transportation Committee, I seek to combine technology into transportation advancements so taxpayers get more services for every tax dollar they pay.

Technology can be used today to make government more responsive and better able to serve people. I'm committed to leading that effort as part of my commitment to you, the taxpayers I have the privilege to serve.

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