

December 29, 2019

Letter to the Caucus

HELLO 2020!

310 DAYS UNTIL TUESDAY NOVEMBER 3RD

Dear Fellow Rural Caucus Members, I am very excited and optimistic about 2020. I hope you are, too and

that you got re-energized during the Holidays. We have much to accomplish!

Job #1: Defeat Donald Trump. I know that's obvious, but visualization is always positive. **Unity** will be key. I have made a personal vow to give my utmost to our nominee ... whomever.

It is equally imperative we defend the 46

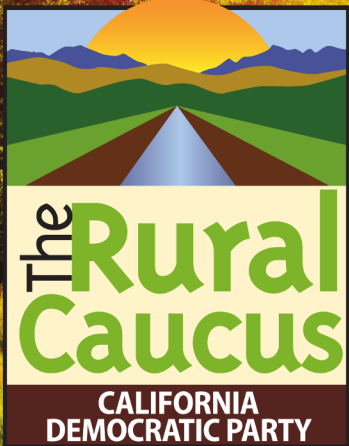
Congressional seats we won in the midterms. I believe we can add to our majority, provided we **get out the vote**. **Go Audrey Denny and Brynne Kennedy!**

We need to maintain our super-majority in the State Legislature and carry our very own **Elizabeth Betancourt** into the Assembly.

The primary role of the Rural Caucus, as an arm of the Party, is to help our Counties with electioneering in every way we can. This year we have very **specific metrics** laid out in the **Work Plan** that we submitted to the CDP Rules Committee for our Caucus re-certification: It is very ambitious. Please [click here](#) to read it. I hope you will feel inspired, motivated, excited and eager to get it done.

Winning won't be easy, but we are certainly up to the challenge.

GET
OUT
THE VOTE



CALIFORNIA REPUBLIC

BROADBAND FOR ALL

We are making progress

According to Lenny Mendonca, Chief Economic and Business Advisor to Governor Gavin Newsom and Director of the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz), **Rural Broadband** is a top priority in the Governor's Office and a team is being put in place to effectuate a plan, which means, we need to continue to lean in at every opportunity to ensure **"Broadband for All"** is developed and executed.

We want to be sure that agriculture and our rural communities are well represented.



Presumably the California Broadband Council (CBC) will be key and will receive direction from the Governor's Office.

The CBC was established in 2010 by legislation (S.B. 1462 – Padilla) to cut across

the silos and coordinate the efforts of various state agencies - Department of Transportation, Department of Education, CalOES, CPUC, etc. - meeting three times a year.

It will now include Secretary of Agriculture Karen Ross, the State Librarian and the Governor's Tribal Advisor, thanks to new legislation that goes into effect January 1st.

On January 10th, the Governor will submit his 2020-21 budget, which hopefully will include funds for Broadband infrastructure.

In the state legislature, we are helping get two bills off the ground: One possibly in the senate to secure funds for the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to network five of the state fairgrounds - as prioritized by California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) - for public safety grade, open access communications for emergency purposes. **As we know all too well, our fairgrounds increasingly are being pressed into service as staging grounds, evacuation centers. Getting five key fairgrounds wired would be a solid accomplishment and would serve as proof of concept.**

On the Assembly side, Asm Robert Rivas has agreed to author a bill to light up the Fairgrounds. **Mary Kaems**, Policy Consultant to the Speaker (and Rural Caucus member), is shepherding this through the process. **Tracy Rhine** at Rural Counties Representatives of California (RCRC) is actively engaged. **Lt. Governor Eleni Kounalakis** (also a Rural Caucus member) has said she would support legislation as President of the State Senate and as she campaigned on expanding rural broadband.

[Email me](#) for a newly updated "State of Play" for California Broadband. This is a "living document" in the sense that it is continuously edited and updated. The first iteration was a letter I wrote to then candidate Gavin Newsom in August 2018.

Persistence!

WATER ISSUES

California's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), signed into law in 2014 by Jerry Brown, becomes a **reality** on January 31st when the local Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) in the most severely

over-drafted water basins have to submit their sustainability plans, setting limits on how much groundwater can be pumped out of wells over the next 20 years.

The law is an absolute necessity, but the economic impact will be hard on rural

communities that depend on agriculture, some of them already disadvantaged.

The Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) estimates 500,000 acres of irrigated cropland will be removed from production. Other estimates place this significantly higher.

The job loss will be painful. And, so far, no policy is in place to mitigate the consequences.

This is one of the key issues being addressed by the Rural Caucus Water Policy Discussion Group. **First and foremost is ensuring low income families receive support during the economic transition when productive agricultural land is fallowed.**

WILDFIRE INSURANCE

ICYMI: On December 19th, Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara announced more Zip codes where insurers cannot drop homeowners for wildfire risk, **protecting one million**

homes from insurance non-renewal for at least one year from the date when those areas were declared a disaster. This thanks to a bill Lara authored when he was in the Assembly that just went into effect this year. Caveat: the bill covers 2019 wildfires; sadly not 2018 and 2017. But it is a step in the right direction.

We should see new bills (in 2020) that extend coverage, address affordability, help with community wildfire-mitigation, set standards for "defensible space" and fund incentives for homeowners to achieve those standards.

Already in the hopper is SB 45 (Allen, Portantino, Stern - with **Mike McGuire** as co-author), which will be on the March ballot. It is for a total of \$4 billion with \$1.6B for wildfire prevention and \$1.1B for safe drinking water.

CENSUS 2020

The census is the sole basis for allocating the 435 seats in the US House of Representatives. California is likely to maintain our 53 seats. But if the census does a poor job of reaching hard-to-count populations and immigrant communities, it could miss more than 1.6 million residents—and the state could easily lose a seat. The census will also be used to redraw district lines; its accuracy is essential to correctly representing local communities. An under-count puts federal funding at risk.

We can help with outreach and make sure we are all counted.

[Click here](#) for Census 2020 contacts by county. For more information, please contact Rural Caucus Treasurer **Lise Talbott**, who is actively engaged in her community.

"HIGHLIGHT" OF THE CONVENTION

We had a great Convention. It was standing room only for the Rural Caucus meeting. The energy in the room was exhilarating.

Hands down, the "highlight" was Regional Chair **Glenn Glazer's** reading of his manifesto about PG&E ... by flashlight.

It was dramatic and impactful and drove home the point that PG&E's Public Safety Power Shutoffs are unacceptable.

Glenn made three main points:

First was a review of the horrifying history of PG&E, from 1952 and the poisoning of Hinkley, California to today.

The second part of the speech examined where we are now and how PG&E's negligence got us here. His point: "While PG&E may claim in a twisted logic sort of way that PSPSs are "necessary" that's only true because of their prior lack of maintenance and modernization of their infrastructure."

The concluding part was a look at the various solutions that have been proposed, including investor buyout,



micro grids, the San Jose proposal to convert PG&E into a non-profit cooperative and, preferably, a state takeover.

**HOLDING
PG&E
ACCOUNTABLE**

The fate of PG&E will be decided by the bankruptcy court. It must emerge from bankruptcy by the end of June to participate in the state's go-forward wildfire fund - billions of dollars to help utilities pay for future wildfire claims. The law also requires PG&E to spend at least \$5 billion on safety improvements to access the fund.

A major concern is ensuring,

however the utility is restructured, that Rural California is protected. **Too often, our rural communities are left with next to no assets and the lion's share of risk.**

IMPORTANT DEADLINE:

The deadline for wildfire victims to file claims against PG&E is Tuesday **December 31st**.

During the holidays, a court appointed envoy, his staff, volunteers, community groups and churches have all been racing to find as many eligible victims as possible. Efforts include taping fliers to boxes at a neighborhood pizzeria, meeting with wildfire response agencies and working the food line at the church. **Here is a link to the official website:**

www.officialfireclaims.com

RECOMMENDED READING

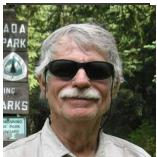
RURAL PLANK REVISIONS

**THE RURAL PLANK IS OUR ROADMAP
EVERYONE SHOULD READ IT
IT IS ON OUR CAUCUS WEBSITE**

Also [on our website](#) is a two-page "Layman's Guide to Lobbying", written by Regional Chair **Dean Rewerts**

I highly recommend a guest column in the Mountain Democrat: "The Camp Fire - One Year Later and the Impact Continues" by **Josh Eldler**, Chair of the El Dorado County Democrats and ER doctor at UC Davis Health. ([Click here](#))

COMMITTEES AND DISCUSSION GROUPS TO JOIN



WATER POLICY DISCUSSION GROUP

The group's objective is to exercise influence on California water policy by means of the structures and activities of the California Democratic Party, the object being a fair and sustainable system.

[Contact Discussion Group Chair Mike Smith by clicking here.](#)



CANNABIS COMMITTEE

Join the conversation on Facebook and by contacting Committee Chair Helene Rouvier. [Click here for the link to the Facebook Group.](#)



RURAL HEALTH DISCUSSION GROUP

This discussion group is just in the beginning stages. Rural Health Care is such an important issue ... and it is key to our work on expanding Rural Broadband for telemedicine. To join, please contact Kim Munson. [Click here for her email.](#)

JANUARY

1/1 New statutes take effect

1/6 State Legislature reconvenes

1/10 Governor submits 2020-21 budget

1/18 Women's March

1/20 Martin Luther King Day

1/22 CPUC En Banc: "The Future of California's Communications Grid" in San Francisco

1/31 Last day for each house of the Legislature to pass bills introduced during the first year of the 2019-2020 session

FEBRUARY

2/3 Primary vote by mail begins

2/17 Deadline for Primary voter registration

2/21 Last day for new legislation to be introduced in the Legislature

MARCH

3/3 California Primary

3/7 Sonoma County Dems Crab Feed with Senate Pro Tem Toni Atkins

3/20 CDP Executive Board Meeting in Visalia

APRIL

4/1 Census Day

4/22 Earth Day 50th Anniversary with protests planned at banks that lend to the fossil fuel industry.