

Hello, this is Tom Cookman with a Community Comment.

The 2014/2015 Humboldt County Budget is a little over 305 million dollars and is projected to have a deficit of 2.7 million dollars. I have been paying close attention to what our elected Supervisors are suggesting to close this deficit. I am very disaappointed that, like most politicians, they want to raise taxes. The Welfare Department, oops, I mean the Health and Human Services Department is almost 52% of the entire budget. This Department alone has a budget of over 150 million dollars and has an increase for next year of 3.3 million. The easiest solution to the deficit is to give the Welfare Department only a 600 thousand dollar increase over last year, this one thing would balance the budget. Every recipient that receives my tax dollar should be required to pass a drug test. How is testing for illegal drugs before a person gets a handout a violation of their rights? What about my rights? Isn't it a violation of my rights to take more of my hard earned dollars and give it to those who do not work? I would like our Board of Supervisors to implement procedures to separate the poor from the lazy. I have family members who never look for work; they sit around on their dead fat you know what all day smoking pot and/or doing meth and they get money from our Welfare Department. This laziness is the part that infuriates many of us who are actually working. When the Board of Supervisors discusses raising taxes so essential services like police and fire protection won't be cut is an insult to our intelligence. Scaring our tax paying citizens, with the threat of losing police and fire protection, into voting for a tax increase, while over half of our budget is used for handouts, is disgusting. If this is the approach by our Supervisors, I will never support any of them again. Enough is enough. Since our budget deficit is 2.7 million dollars and the Welfare

Department has an increase of 3.3, why don't we put a measure on the ballot to increase sales tax and call it a Welfare Department Tax, because that is exactly what it is going to be. I wonder if the residents of Humboldt County would vote for that.

Another idea I hear tossed around is an excess energy tax directed at the indoor marijuana growers similar to what Arcata passed. I'm sure everyone of us understands, whether we like it or not, the tremendous amount of revenue that is generated in Humboldt County by the marijuana industry. The sales tax revenue the marijuana growers bring into the County coffers is substantial. When Arcata passed the energy tax, they saw a mass exodus of growers out of the city limits. This is fine and dandy, but it didn't bring in the huge revenue boost anticipated. The same thing would happen if we passed a County wide excess energy users tax. The indoor marijuana growers would pack up and move to Colorado or Washington. If the Board of Supervisors wants to reduce the number of growers in our County, this is a viable approach. If they think the growers are going to just absorb this tax, they are wrong. They will pack up and move, and the actual tax revenue Humboldt County collects will decline. The hundreds of legal businesses who have customers who are in the indoor grow industry will see a dramatic decrease in sales. I'm not saying this is a bad thing, but marijuana is by far the number one industry in Humboldt County. In years past, timber and fishing were the backbone of our economy. The environmental movement has crippled these renewable resource based businesses. The knee jerk reaction to raise taxes to eliminate our budget deficit by our elected officials is short-sighted. As for me, I cannot support politicians with this approach to solving financial deficits.

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