

Community Comment
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~~A working government~~

This new year brings old and new challenges for returning and new government officials.

At the local level, many of the same old issues are still on the table. It seems most local government issues are related to where and how we live. We expect water and sewer services to be flawless. We expect our roads to be kept in decent shape and new connections as needed. We expect a well trained and respected police department and fire services. And we expect our elected officials to be making decisions that provide these and other services at the best possible price. The local level is all about community maintenance and problem solving. ~~We all know that these services come at a price. And~~ there is the additional cost of ongoing maintenance and capital improvements over the long term. The taxes we all pay, pay for some of the services but not all. There are federal and state grants and loans that help reduce the costs for some things. But these programs do not sustain themselves without reasonable increases over time. When council or board members talk about raising more revenue, we need to listen. Most of our local elected officials are also our friends and neighbors. They will pay the same increase. Our quality of life is very good and that comes at a price. I haven't noticed much going down in price lately except oil. That's good for gas prices but there are consequences for the world economy. We do not live in a simple world and we are all interconnected whether we like it or not.

The State of California has the best balanced budget it's seen in years. But there are long term issues still to wrestle with. Governor Brown was easily re-elected to a fourth term. His success seems to come from being more practical than ideological. Jobs are up, unemployment is down. More money is flowing to our schools than we've seen for many years. But, we have some catching up to do and it won't be easy. I am one of those who likes the idea of high speed rail in the state. I think it should be a priority for the country as well. If you have traveled to Europe or Japan, you know how efficient it can be. The skies are becoming more and more crowded every year. Rail is much more efficient and connect us to more places. Look at how much trouble we are having getting another airline to Humboldt County.

At the Federal level, the Republican Party now controls the house and the senate. They can pass any legislation they want. Now we will find out if their ideas can cross at least some party lines and if these ideas provide real and practical solutions for the issues of the country. If they do, I hope President Obama signs them into law. If not, I hope he veto's them. We all need to remember that just passing new laws doesn't necessarily mean they are good for the country as a whole. Our representatives and senators need to remember that they represent more than their district or state. They represent America first. That's a big job. We'll see if they are up to it.

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Running our local government, our state , or the federal government is difficult at best. As we grow in population, it makes it more complicated, not less. Your voice is needed so our reps know our desires and values. Make this year the year you contribute to the solutions that we need at all levels of this government by the people. It is ours but only if we make it so.

This has been Sam Pennisi for community comment.