

Transcript of Gov. Schwarzenegger Joining Mayor Johnson to Announce Steps to Help Homeless

SECRETARY BAKER:

Hi. Good morning and welcome to Cal Expo. I'm going to begin -- my name is Karen Baker, I'm the Secretary of Service and Volunteering here for the state of California and I want to begin by really thanking so many volunteers here and across the state that are making a difference in the lives of those facing really difficult times. We have behind us some of the wonderful AmeriCorps members, the AmeriCorps NCCC members, volunteers from California and even all the way from Oregon, that are helping in this community and are really making a difference.

I also want to thank Tim Brown, Secretary A.G. Kawamura, Leo McFarland from Volunteers of America, Rex Hime of Cal Expo, Norb Bartosik from Cal Expo -- I hope I got that right -- wonderful Patti Garamendi, who has been just such an amazing, passionate person in this volunteer arena as well.

And then, of course, the people that have been able to really make today's volunteer project possible and is always there for us in public-private partnerships, Damon Rice from Safeway -- Safeway, a great partner -- the California Grocers Association and Save Mart. These are just wonderful, wonderful, private companies that get it and come to the table to assist.



Governor Schwarzenegger announces steps he and Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson are taking to help Sacramento's homeless. From left to right: Governor Schwarzenegger, Mayor Johnson and Secretary for Service and Volunteering Karen Baker (Photo by Peter Grigsby, Office of the Governor.)

What we're here to really talk about is real compassionate strategies that this mayor and our Governor are working as a team to really bring to Sacramento. I know First Lady Maria Shriver wasn't able to make it today but as you may know about her WE Connect program, she's interested in forging really important linkages here in Sacramento so that we can continue to assist even more low-income folks.

I know that there are many people that weren't able to make it here today to volunteer but that might be interested in opportunities and we just want to let folks know throughout California, if you care about this poverty issue, there are opportunities. We need thousands of folks and you can get plugged in at CaliforniaVolunteers.org.

Thank you so much. And now I'm going to go ahead and turn it over to the wonderful governor of the state of California, Arnold Schwarzenegger. (Applause)

GOVERNOR SCHWARZENEGGER:

Thank you very much, Karen, for doing such a great job and also introducing everyone so I can put those cards away with all the names on it. That's terrific.



Governor Schwarzenegger, Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson and Secretary for Service and Volunteering Karen Baker tour the Winter Shelter for the homeless at Cal Expo. (Photo by Peter Grigsby, Office of the Governor.)

But I want to say thank you also to everyone that is here today. And I definitely want to say a big thank you to Mayor Johnson, because he has shown tremendous leadership on this issue of homelessness and the tent city and he has been working very hard on that. And this is, of course, a problem that he has inherited, because as you know, we have had the homeless and this tent city for many, many years. But when Mayor Johnson took over the mayorship he

immediately took charge of that, took ownership and started working on that and we really appreciate it.

Because of his compassion he has brought together the community to find answers and, of course, he also came to me and asked me to partner with him on this. And I have told him that I will partner with him on this, that I'm a big believer in helping the homeless and doing something about this tent city.

And we went out to the tent city, walked around there, we talked to the homeless and had meetings, many meetings, to see what we could do. And one thing we came away with is that they deserve more secure and more hygienic conditions. They deserve dry shelter, reliable health care and warm meals.

So that was the challenge. How do we provide that? We cannot look away and pretend like this does not happen, because it is happening and we must take action. And that is why we are doing all we can to do right by the people who are living in these difficult circumstances in these difficult times. These are people that have not chosen to be in this condition. It's because the economy is down, a lot of them lost jobs, their money, their belongings and everything.

My office has been working, of course, now with the mayor and with Cal Expo to extend the contract, which was about to expire here, to allow the homeless people to stay here at night. Together we are making now changes that will help the people of the tent city. We have to now find a way to bring them here and we have all the help in the world. I think couples will be able to remain together, pets will have a place to stay, there will be storage for belongings, the hours will be extended and the number of beds will be expanded by 50.

I also personally delivered a letter to President Obama last week when I had my meeting at the White House to request that part of the economic stimulus funds for the homeless to be fast-tracked for the city of Sacramento so that we can get money for this move of the tent city.

And my office is also continuing to work with the city of Sacramento. I have to say that the people here in this town are really extraordinary. They're smart, they're innovative and they have long-term solutions and they're working on that right now.



Governor Schwarzenegger and Mayor Johnson watch volunteers putting together toiletry kits for the homeless. (Photo by Peter Grigsby, Office of the Governor.)

I want to recognize also the many people that have come together here. I mean, we started really intensely talking about this last week and this week we are already creating the actions. And the only reason why we are able to do that is because we have groups like the Volunteers of America, St. John's Shelter and the Aid-in-Kind, Keys to Hope, Salvation Army, Cal Expo and so many others, nonprofits and businesses, as you have heard, Safeway and the Grocers Association and the list goes on and on and on. And we want to thank also the homeless that are working with us and having trust in us to let them be helped.

We also want to say thank you to my wife Maria, who is going up and down the state with her WE Connect campaign to help homeless and help poor people to connect and to get some of this federal money that is available. So she is always also very eager and she is going to work very closely with the mayor on this issue.

We're all pushing very hard and working together to cut through the bureaucracy, because people are hungry now, people are living in tents now, people have no place to stay now and people need running water now. So this is why we need to create the action now and we have to find the answers, the permanent answers for homelessness. And so we will help them and we will take care of them.

With that, thank you very much. And now I would like to bring out here to the microphone my partner, Mayor Johnson. Please welcome him. (Applause)

MAYOR JOHNSON:

I too would like to first of all just thank the Governor for being a partner with the capital city of

Sacramento. This is an unprecedented challenge that we're facing in terms of the homeless issue. It's something that's been going on for many, many years but the Governor said he didn't want to sit on the sidelines, that he wanted to be involved and help create solutions for our community. So again, with all the AmeriCorps members and people behind us, let's give the Governor another round of applause for his leadership. (Applause)

I'd like to also thank Karen Baker from CaliforniaVolunteers for her leadership, certainly the AmeriCorps members who are here. I've also been told there are AmeriCorps members from Oregon that are in town participating as well, so it's not just the state of California who are volunteering but certainly Oregon as well.

I'd like to thank Assistant City Manager Cassandra Jennings, city staff and all the members of the task force who really came together. We harnessed a lot of energy and created tangible strategies and solutions. This is a problem that, when I came into the office, I said we were not going to ignore any longer. My campaign slogan was "A City that Works for Everyone," and that was really with the homeless population in mind. We have, as a city, swept this under the rug and ignored it; it was a dirty little secret that we did not want to talk about. That's no longer acceptable in the city of Sacramento.

I am proud that the task force came together and in two weeks came up with some real solutions. Typically, you do not see city government working with a sense of urgency, certainly a sense of urgency to find solutions in a real-time manner and we did that. Council last night approved the plan.

And the Governor addressed some of these things; I just want to reiterate. Cal Expo, as the winter overflow shelter, is going to be expanding. It will not close at the end of March; it will stay open through June, which is very significant.

We will also be bringing out 50 additional beds to Cal Expo, 32 additional beds between St. John's and Aid-in-Kind Shelter. And then permanent housing units with Faith and Families Initiative, there will be 68 additional permanent housing units. That makes up 150 beds that we'll be able to bring here in the Sacramento community, which is very, very significant.

The Governor and I walked the campgrounds last week and we heard firsthand from a lot of people that were homeless. Some of the barriers for them to come out to a shelter were they

wanted places to store their private belongings, so we are going to make sure that there are 50 bins where people can store their private belongings.

Another barrier for the homeless population when it came to shelters was they wanted a place for their pets, so we are going to be able to provide kennels for 20 pets. So people who have their pets, we'll make sure that kennels will be provided for overnight animals.

Another barrier where there were couples and families, so we're going to make sure there are private areas that couples and families can come together and commune. That was very significant for the homeless population.

I think what you see from the Governor and myself here is a real commitment to treat people as human beings. We wanted to make sure that they had dignity and respect and these were issues that were very important for them.

Again, when I went out to the homeless shelters and talked to people, they thought that this was a good idea and most of them said, quite clearly, that they would take the opportunity to take shelters, whether they be temporary or permanent housing.

There will be some people who will not come out and that's where Tim Brown -- Tim, raise your hand -- Tim Brown is going to do a great job of outreaching and surveying and laying out the options for everybody at the homeless shelter so they can clearly understand what the options are. We are not going to go in there tomorrow or the next day and sweep everybody out, say you have to go. We're going to treat people with dignity and certainly human decency and that's our commitment.

Let me be clear here. I mean, there's a balance between compassionate services for the homeless population and striking that chord between making sure the public safety of our citizens is met in the city of Sacramento and that balance of tough love is something that we are committed to doing.

This is not a panacea that's going to solve all of our problems but it's a crucial first step. And that first step is something that people normally say city government can't move this quickly and we did. We cut through the red tape and bureaucracy and we got something done in a very short order.

We need a regional approach. You're going to hear us constantly talk about a regional approach. You're going to hear us constantly talk about long-term solutions and certainly the state has stepped in and been a part of the solutions.

And as mayor of the city of Sacramento, we are not going to shy away from problems or challenges. We're going to take them head on, we're going to grab the bull by the horns. And my commitment as mayor of the city of Sacramento is bringing people together to find solutions and today again marks a very significant first step.

I want to close with this, that there have been many people who have come together, the city, the county, the nonprofit, the homeless advocate groups. Even on our task force, we have people that sat on that, that are living in tent city and are part of the homeless population. Everybody there has come together and said look, we want to find solutions, we're not going to make excuses.

And this is a first step in hopefully many very critical steps that we need to take going forward. We had the private property owners, you had SMUD, you had Blue Diamond, Union Pacific, we had law enforcement, we had neighborhood associations. Everybody had a seat at the table and were a part of this plan that was endorsed. And ultimately Council last night unanimously voted to support this plan and I think that's very, very significant. We've expanded our homeless population programs and we look forward to moving forward.

So in closing, again, I would like to thank everyone here. Cal Expo, your partnership and all of these folks here that have been working on this issue for not just two weeks, sometimes for 10, 12 years, to find solutions. And again, last but not least, the First Lady of California and the Governor of California to say look, we want to be a part of the solution.

So thank you very much. And again, I'd like to thank the Governor. And I think he's going to come up and address some questions that are probably much broader. So thank you.

(Applause)

QUESTION/ANSWER:

GOVERNOR: Well, maybe you want to stay up here, because since we are partnering we might as well do this together. Yes, please.

QUESTION: Governor, this is for 150 people in the city of Sacramento. There are thousands of people homeless throughout California. Do you have a plan to help them?

GOVERNOR: Well, the important thing is that you have here an outstanding mayor that brought this to my attention. And he didn't hesitate. You know, he came to me -- we were at some public function together and he came over to me at the end, as he always does and he said, "There's just one more thing." And so, you know, then I always know what that means. And he said, "I would like to go and sit down. Let's have breakfast together and talk about the homeless."

And I said I would love to. I said I would love to learn more about it. I said, "Let's get together." And the next morning we met and we had breakfast together and that very same day we went out to the tent city and took a tour so that I can see the whole thing.

So if anyone comes to me and comes to us and says look, we need some help. Here is an ideal thing, because we have Cal Expo, so we as a state could help. We found a little bit of money also, even though in a difficult time, there is always somewhere where you find a few crumbs that we can add. And so we partnered in this.

And it was all about the will. He didn't look at it in a political way and neither did I. And we came together, we made a list of people that could help us, organizations, businesses and so on. And I told him, I promised him right off the top, without really knowing yet the whole issue and what we can do, I said, "I will be 100 percent behind you."

So yes, we want to help as much as we can, anyone in any city.

QUESTION: Governor?

GOVERNOR: Yes?

QUESTION: This is great for the short term. What about long term? A lot of these are mental health issues. How do you plan to address that throughout the state?

GOVERNOR: Well, first of all, you know, through Prop 63 there will be a lot of help coming from that, because luckily there is money available for that. But this is by no means -- I think that the Mayor made it clear -- this by no means solves all the problems. What we wanted to do is, we looked at that situation there and we saw that people don't have running water, they don't have

toilets, they cannot wash themselves and keep themselves clean. I mean, just the basic things that people need, no matter how poor you are. We want to facilitate that and we want to provide safe grounds for those people.

And now in the meantime we can go and, while we have these few months now until the time runs out, we have time now to look at it and see what permanent solution we can come up with. But as you know, that people in America have been, ever since I've come to this country in the last 40 years, have tried to find answers about the homelessness.

And no one really has found the sweet spot yet because there's always this kind of question, you know, how much do you provide for homeless people? And does this then attract then more people from around the country, if you provide something really nice? But how do you still give them the things that they basically need and so they can be with their animals and that couples can be together and all of those kinds of things?

And there are a lot of them that don't want to go to a structure, because when I mentioned, I said, "Well, we're going to find buildings you can move in."

They said, "No, no, no, please, don't move us into buildings." So as you can see, one has to work around all of those obstacles. But we're going to try to find a solution.

Yes?

QUESTION: Could you elaborate on what you told the Times, I believe it was yesterday, about what political office in the future you might want to run for and how that played into your decision to break a campaign promise not to raise taxes?

MAYOR: I can't help you with this question. (Laughter)

GOVERNOR: Number one, I think it is very important to know that everyone, Democrats and Republicans, have made tough choices and tough decisions in order to get the budget agreement done and to get the budget done. And so my point of it was, that those people have put their political career at risk because some of them were already threatened immediately to be recalled, others were threatened that they're going to campaign against them and they're going to be taken out and they will never win another office and so on.

And the point was that I am not running for anything, so no one could threaten me, because I'm not running for Senate, I'm not running for Congress, I'm not running for another term as governor. And I definitely cannot, because of legal reasons, run for the presidency, because the Constitution doesn't allow it. So therefore I'm not running for anything and so it was that I felt more at ease about moving forward and doing the right things, maybe than them, because they are concerned, what does that mean in two years from now when I run again and so on.

So I found it very heroic of, for instance, David Cogdill, who lost his leadership but he did what was right for the state of California and for the people of California. And so did all of the leaders. So I am very, very proud of the Democratic leaders and I'm very proud of the Republican leaders.

And now we all have to go and travel up and down the state to make sure those initiatives pass, because as you could see with the latest poll numbers, they are as big a challenge as we have had, the biggest challenge. When we did redistricting, that has lost five times in the past and then it finally won. But the press asked me always, "Well, it's only at 34 percent, how could you ever win with that?"

And we said, "Don't worry, this is two months away." But eventually -- what is important is are we going to win or not and we did win for the sixth time.

And the same is also with the infrastructure bonds. We started out at 32 percent. And it was a real grind, where the people wanted to see Democrats and Republicans traveling up and down the state and addressing the issue, why it's important. And then they won.

And the same will be also with those propositions. We are going to work very hard, both parties, to go up and down the state and educate the people to make sure that they win. Because failure here is no option because it will mean an additional \$13 billion in deficit for the state, so it would be disastrous. OK?

Yeah, one more. One more over here. Sure, please. Why don't you take a mic? Thank you. Right there. What a reporter.

QUESTION: I don't know what this is. I've never seen one of these before.

GOVERNOR: I know.

QUESTION: As you know, a couple of large unions, AFSCME and the Nurses Association, have come out against your reform measures. Other unions are either for it or are neutral at this point. How will the union opposition play into your strategy to try and pass these measures and frame the challenge you have there?

GOVERNOR: Well, we so far have been very fortunate that we had labor support and we had business support. We had, for instance, just last week, we got the endorsements of all law enforcement in California, so this was really an extraordinary day for us, to get all of those kinds of endorsements. And we have had, you know, the NAACP and the Black Caucus and there are all kinds of different, from the right and from the left, endorsing those initiatives.

So we are trying very hard in this next month and a half, two months, to get as many endorsements as possible. For redistricting, as you remember, we got 2,500 endorsements of individuals, community leaders and organizations and we are trying to do the same thing again. One thing I've learned in 2005 is that in order to win those initiatives you've got to be very inclusive and you've got to bring as many people together as possible. That is the important thing and that's what we are trying to do here.

In the meantime, again, thank you all for coming out and showing such a great interest in the homeless issue. And like I said, don't be surprised if you see very soon of us calling for another press conference to actually see, so you can witness the relocation and you can see them living here under better conditions, safer conditions, with their animals, couples being together and cleaner and all of this. And then provide them with transportation so they can get their health care services and all kinds of other services that they need.

Thank you very much and have a good day.