

David Hadley: What your representatives are up to in Sacramento

By David Hadley Beach Cities Republican Club

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So far in 2011, the media seem mostly interested in Republican legislators' votes in Sacramento - pretty odd, considering our state legislature is stuffed with Democrats.

Why the focus on Republicans? Simple: The big Sacramento story this year has been the state budget crisis. Since Proposition 13 requires two-thirds majorities in the Legislature to raise taxes, and since Republicans have more than one-third of the seats in each chamber, and since the Democrats are hot for tax hikes, Republicans matter on taxes. Without GOP support for tax increases, Gov. Jerry Brown and the Democrats ultimately had to balance the budget relying on current revenue sources (plus smoke and mirrors).

But governing is about more than taxes. And in pretty much every area but taxes, a simple majority of Democrats plus Brown can enact whatever legislation they want. So what are our local representatives - Sen. Ted Lieu and Assemblywoman Betsy Butler - voting for, and what does that legislation say about their vision for the state and the South Bay?

Assembly Bill 114, now state law, makes it illegal for school districts to lay off teachers this year. It doesn't matter what kind of budget shortfall a school district might have, and it doesn't matter that employee wages and benefits are by far the largest expense of every school district. The law allows school districts to shorten their school years to balance the books - only with union permission, of course - so supporters

obviously think that union prerogatives are more important than kids' time in the classroom.

If you have kids in South Bay public schools (as I do), you might wonder why we elect local school boards if they are going to be straitjacketed with union-imposed mandates from Sacramento. Both Butler and Lieu voted for AB 114.

A real legislative beauty is AB 183, which would prohibit retailers from selling alcohol using customer-operated checkout stands. This bill's real name should be "Screw Fresh & Easy Because it is Non-Union."

Fresh & Easy is a rapidly growing, El Segundo-based grocer with more than 175 locations, including in Manhattan Beach and Harbor City. When I buy beer or wine there, the register prompts an employee to verify that I am 21 (not a tough call, sadly). The system works at least as well as traditional checkouts. But for the benefit of unionized supermarket operators and the unions themselves, our Legislature is trying to make life difficult for a worthy competitor. Butler voted for this insane piece of legislation. It has not yet reached the floor of the state Senate.

Yet another gem is Senate Bill 432, which passed the Senate in May. This bill would ban the use of unfitted sheets in California hotels. I know you are wondering how we survived 160 years of statehood without addressing the unfitted sheet crisis, but I am not making this up. The organizations on record for supporting the bill are split about evenly between labor unions and trial lawyer associations.

If SB 432 becomes law it will cost hotel operators millions, with scant public benefit. Lieu voted for this bill.

Debasing our academic curriculum and pushing an ideological agenda. California's schools are dealing with untenable union contracts, exploding costs outside the classroom and educational results that can charitably be described as disappointing in much of the state. But amidst all these challenges, our state government has pushed the LGBTQ agenda to the front of the line. Senate Bill 48 "requires instruction in social sciences to include a study of the role and contributions of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Americans, persons with disabilities, and members of other cultural groups, to the development of California and the U.S."

So coming soon to your child's social studies classroom - textbooks that don't tell us that Abraham Lincoln won the Civil War, preserved the Union and ended slavery, but that some believe he might have been gay.

SB 48 is now law in the state of California. Both Lieu and Butler voted for it.

To summarize: What kind of state are the South Bay's representatives pursuing in Sacramento? One vote at a time, they are creating a state where unions, not our locally elected school boards, manage our public schools. A state where the government inserts itself in business decisions large and small for the benefit of politically connected competitors, unions and trial lawyers. A state where aggressive activists leverage political donations and identity politics to rewrite school textbooks.

And the things our legislators are not doing anything about? Statewide unemployment of 11.8 percent, the worst business climate in the country and structural budget deficits that one year of budget tricks is not going to solve.

When is the next election?

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