



Office of the Governor

ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER
THE PEOPLE'S GOVERNOR

GOVERNOR'S REMARKS

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Governor Holds Press Conference to Highlight AB 31 and AB 2494 Bill Signings

DIRECTOR JACOBS: Welcome, everyone. I'm Lynn Jacobs, director of Housing and Community Development and I'm delighted to see all of you here to celebrate the signing of two very important bills that will both increase parks and housing for all of our wonderful residents of California. And I'd especially like to thank the Governor for his leadership on our Strategic Growth Plan, which allows us to not only improve our infrastructure, improve our education system but also to do housing and parks related to our housing so that we get more housing and parks for all of our residents. So thank you, Governor and I'd like to turn the meeting over to you. (Applause)

GOVERNOR SCHWARZENEGGER: Thank you very much, Lynn, for the wonderful introduction. Of course Lynn has been a great, great director of the department of Housing and Community Development and has shown great, great leadership, so thank you very much, Lynn. And also I want to say thank you to Assemblyman de León and Assemblywoman Caballero for being here today with us. (Applause) And also our director of the State Parks, which is Ruth Coleman. Thank you very much also for being here today. (Applause)

Now, today I'm very proud to highlight two bills. There was a lot of bill signing going on lately but there are two bills that I want to highlight here today that will help revitalize communities up and down the state of California, which I think it's about time. Let me first thank Assemblymembers Kevin de León and Anna Caballero for authoring this terrific legislation. And let me tell you, both of them have shown tremendous passion for this subject and have talked about it for a long time to me. So it was really a lot of great work that they put in there, so let's give them a big, big hand for their great work. (Applause)

Now, we all know that over the past few decades California has grown tremendously. I remember when I came here to this country, which was yesterday 40 years ago, the population was 18 million and now we are 38 million. Many of our communities were built up very quickly over these few decades and very fast this state developed, so that parks and open spaces were neglected at the same time, especially in urban and in low-income areas. In a state that is leading the way in the nation and the world when it comes to protecting our environment, I think we can do much better than that.

This legislation is a great step in the right direction. Assembly Bill 31 will provide \$400 million from Proposition 84 money for new parks all over the state of California, directed to those communities most in need. And Assembly Bill 2494 helps lift up communities who lack not only the parks but also affordable housing. And as you all remember, two years ago the people have approved Proposition 1C, which was \$2.8 billion for affordable housing. It rewards local governments that meet affordable housing goals with \$200 million from Proposition 1C money.

Families that live in these communities often have no backyards and have no place for the kids to play. I think it is very important and we all have to recognize that, that it's important to offer our kids a positive alternative to the gangs and to the violence that are out there on the streets and to all the kinds of things that kids get into trouble with. We have to offer them those parks and playgrounds, places where they can go and use a jungle gym, places where they can play soccer, where they play around, where the whole family can go out and do recreational activities, or just walk a dog or hang out. I think we need to provide those places. And this is why this has been so important and it's something that I have been promoting, of course, for many years, with After School Programs. And here this is just another extension, to create those parks and those recreational facilities.

I want to thank also my wife, who has been very much involved in building playgrounds. It's an organization, or an initiative, called the We Build Playgrounds Initiative. They have built 24 playgrounds all over the city here and southern California, which is, I think, a very, very good thing for those kids, to have those kind of facilities.

(Applause)

So I am today celebrating the signing of these bills and celebrating again great work that was done by our legislators in Sacramento. And I want to thank also all the other people that have worked right along with that.

And with that, I want to hand the microphone over to my very good friend, Assemblyman de León, to say a few words about this great bill. Thank you very much. (Applause)

ASSEMBLYMEMBER DE LEÓN: Thank you very much, Governor. This is, indeed, a very, very beautiful day. Today we send a clear message to the children of California and to the families, that from Stockton to San Diego, from San Francisco to the Sierras, from Lodi to Los Angeles, we are turning park-starved communities into park-served communities. We all know the statistics; they're very clear. Park-starved communities suffer from higher crime rates, childhood obesity, asthma and greater high school dropout rates as well as unemployment.

So we must ask the question, what's in a park? Children playing, a family gathering, sports teams cheering, elders strolling. Parks reduce stress, they improve moods, they encourage positive activities. Parks promote health in children and parks create a sense of belonging, community pride.

So today we send a message. We send a message loud and clear throughout the state of California, that whether you live down the street in Lincoln Heights, or Logan Heights, whether you live in Salinas or Santa Ana, whether you live in East Oakland or East L.A., you are free to enjoy the same shaded picnic areas, the same open playing fields, the same natural beauty as other children do in Malibu, Sausalito or Manhattan Beach. Children can get off the streets and get on a swing. Teams can kick a soccer ball on grass rather than a dirt or concrete lot and families can walk to their local parks, not just to the corner store. Thank you, Governor Schwarzenegger, for signing AB 31. Thanks to all those -- (Applause)

A special thank you to Governor Schwarzenegger, because this has been a very, very difficult fiscal year. But what the Governor is witnessing today with all these children -- not just in Los Angeles but again throughout the state of California -- these are the beneficiaries, because this is a historic moment. When the Governor signs this bill, this bill will be the largest distribution of park bond dollars not in Los Angeles, not in California but in the nation -- the largest distribution of park bond dollars in the nation. (Applause)

And I want to thank the many, many organizations; Green L.A., California Green Coalition, the TPL, Anna Wak (Phonetic) and the many community-based organizations that endured so much from the very beginning. I am so proud of each and every one of you that are here present today, because AB 31 was the very first bill that I put across the desk when I was sworn in as a state legislator in 2006. So thank you very much.

And I want to say a few words in Spanish for our media in Spanish. (Spanish)

I want to bring up a colleague from the Bay Area, the south Bay Area, a diverse district, a woman who -- I know the trials and tribulations of her measure that's going to be signed by the Governor also. We came in together. She represents an area that's largely rural and largely migrant workers. She fought tirelessly hard to make sure that we got what is needed and what is necessary for those who are low income so they can own their home in the future. It's with great pleasure that I bring, all the way from Salinas, California to the podium, Ms. Anna Caballero, Assemblywoman. (Applause)

ASSEMBLYMEMBER CABALLERO: Thank you very much, Assemblymember de León. It's a pleasure for me to be here today in this beautiful, wonderful opportunity here in the middle of Los Angeles. I'm very proud to be here. I want to thank the Department of Housing and Community Development for their assistance in helping me to craft AB 2494 and the affordable housing advocates for their help as well in putting together the plan to marry the creation of affordable housing and parks. And I want to ask all of you to help me in thanking Governor Schwarzenegger for his great approval, for his support and for his signature on AB 2494. (Applause)

AB 2494 represents a major policy shift in the way that the state relates to local agencies, because it creates incentives for cities and counties that do the right thing by building affordable housing. If they do, they can be assured that they will receive money for parks. Instead of punishing cities and counties that don't build housing by threatening them, it provides an opportunity to give them an incentive and to say if you do the right thing, then there will be resources for you. And as you know, the voters overwhelmingly supported the idea of affordable housing and Proposition 1C in 2006.

We need to get these funds out the door so that Californians can be confident that the bond funds that they support are helping to create and rehabilitate new parks. In this housing market it's especially important to incentivize the

building of affordable housing.

It's not easy. I sat on a city council for 15 years and it was our priority to build as much affordable housing as we could. But when you do that, then you don't have the resources to build the libraries and the parks and the open space that you need in your community to be able to service all of the young people that you see here today.

And so, in putting together the idea that you can incentivize cities and counties and you incentivize them by allowing them to build the affordable housing and then giving them resources for parks and open space, you create an opportunity for healthy communities and you create an opportunity for kids to be able to be proud of their neighborhoods, to be able to come out and socialize with each other and to be an integral part of the community. So it's my hope that through this bill some of the cities and the counties that have said no to affordable housing will begin to say yes when they realize that the state is a partner with them, that we're going to work together and that we're going to make sure that they have the resources they need to be able to build the kind of infrastructure that our young people deserve.

So thank you very much, Mr. Governor, for your support. Thank you for your interest in the health and wellbeing of the children of our state. We're very proud today to stand here with you and we're very proud that we have an opportunity to focus on our young people who are so important to us. Thank you very much. (Applause)

And it gives me great pleasure to introduce someone who is no stranger to you, Council Member Reyes. (Applause)

COUNCIL MEMBER REYES: Thank you. I want to thank Governor Schwarzenegger for this gift. The power of your signature will be felt for generations to come. This is the type of bill that, as you could hear from Assemblymember Kevin de León, will essentially transform whole cities. I know this because I've seen it happen here. Many of us fought hard because we need a park for our kids. Many of us stood in many, many meetings since the late '80s to talk about how we wanted to define our space. But it was a great partnership with the state and the city allowed us to develop what we see here today.

As the school day ends today I invite you to notice the young people that will be walking to this park. This park has transformed this community because it has created a different type of magnet. Most times when we talk about magnets, we talk about big shopping centers, we talk about big development schemes. But today we're talking about big parks as a magnet. Big parks as a magnet that will help heal our communities, the type of impact where families can come together and actually feel that relief from these very dense areas. Around you, you have communities of up to 30,000 people per square mile, when the city average is 6,000 to 7,000. so when we talk about our future, this park will create so many opportunities for the whole community.

So I personally want to publicly thank my Assemblymember, Kevin de León, for this unprecedented opportunity. Thank you, Assemblymember. (Applause)

As far as AB 2494, this week our city council, working with the Mayor's office, introduced a mixed-income housing proposal aimed at creating affordable housing throughout the city. And I can share with you that in this policy we offer what I consider a fair set of incentives of developers of affordable housing. However, because of AB 2494, I can honestly say that we now have a substantive incentive for communities who welcome affordable housing in their neighborhoods and for that I say thank you to you, Assemblymember Caballero. (Applause) Because incentives should not be exclusively for developers. Neighborhoods deserve and need them too. (Applause)

Together these bills not only create more green opportunities for residents of Los Angeles but they also demonstrate a new way of looking at our neighborhoods. And around you you see many, many heroes of this great neighborhood; the Anna Waks of the world, the different political advocacy groups, those who have fought for intervention to deal with our gang problem, we're all here together to embrace you, Governor and assemblymembers, because you did not forget about us, you did not forget about those of us who do toil every day, wring their hands to wonder where will our kids play, where can they be safe? And with these measures we'll have an answer, thanks to you and the great family, the state, all the departments and the city, for coming together. (SPANISH) (Applause)

GOVERNOR: The next speaker we'd like to have out here is Ruth Coleman, our director of Parks. Thank you very much. (Applause)

DIRECTOR COLEMAN: Well, I think it's fitting that today we're having this signing ceremony at this particular park. If I can take you back about two years ago, this place was just a flat, brown dirt patch. It had no soul and it had no heart. And today what you see around is what happens when we can spend our bond dollars wisely and in particular at this park, when state parks and the city partner together. This is a spectacular example of what we get with partnerships.

And we're really looking forward to the signing of these two bills, because it's going to allow us to recreate this kind of space all across the state in areas where there are underserved communities, both parks and park-poor communities. This place helps the health of the community and it helps the health of everybody who walks in it. In fact, doctors will tell you, when you walk into a place like this, your blood pressure drops within two minutes of walking in here. This is good for you and it's good for all of us.

And the exciting thing about these two bills is that by growing these parks and creating new spaces, we're also going to be helping prod the economy. We're going to be creating housing and parks and improving the economic condition of our cities. So this is a very important day for California and a very important day for all of us here. Thank you. (Applause)

GOVERNOR: And now let's create some action and sign those bills. (Applause)

(BILL SIGNING)

QUESTION/ANSWER:

GOVERNOR: Any questions about parks, recreation, children, playgrounds, action, fitness, sports, or anything like that? Ask, please. We have a microphone that is going right there.

QUESTION: Thank you, Governor, from KFWB Radio. I highly commend -- we all need more parks. Everyone believes that, we're certainly happy that you're doing this. But just one question on another subject from today, please? Assembly Speaker Karen Bass has said today that she thought that you have shirked responsibility by not signing bills that crossed your desk during this impasse, during the budget crisis. Could you respond to that, please?

GOVERNOR: Well, first of all, I think that every bill got enough attention, even though it was a stressful situation by not only having, instead of 30 days, 10 days available. I know there are people that complained about that some of the bills were vetoed but my response to that is, I only was built with gears that move forward. So I don't have any reverse gears in me, so I don't look back, I only look forward. And I think that the legislators that are here today and I and other legislators from Sacramento, we're going to go and do a lot of great work this coming year and I'm looking forward to working with them and building California and bringing our economy back.

QUESTION: Was (Inaudible) an example of partisan politics, by this happening? By the Democrats doing one thing, where you wanted something else?

GOVERNOR: No, no, absolutely not. When it comes to building California or making decisions for the state of California, I think we should keep the partisan politics out of that and I think that we always should look at what is best for the people of California. And as you can see here today, we have Democrats and Republicans here today celebrating this. These playgrounds will be used by kids no matter what the political affiliation is of their parents. It makes no difference, there is no difference at all. Our kids need health, our kids need fitness. Our kids have gained 360 million pounds in the last 10 years in California, 10 pounds average per kid, the bodyweight gain. It's because we're not giving them enough physical activities, we are not giving them enough physical fitness instructors in the schools, we don't have enough playgrounds available for them. So this is a move in the right direction. That's why I say we are looking forward and we want to build and we all want to work together on all of those issues.

Thank you very much. Thank you. (Applause) Yes?

QUESTION: Oh, hi. Okay, hi. I'd like to get your reaction to preliminary findings that indicate that the Metrolink driver, engineer, had sent a text message 22 seconds before the crash and the Federal Railroad Administration has now issued an emergency order banning the use of personal electronic devices while engineers are at the helm.

GOVERNOR: Well, first of all, let me just say I think that that was already something that was in place before the accident, because I think that people were not allowed to use texting of messages while they are doing their work. And even though people are now talking about they should get more rest periods and all this, that was not the problem. The problem was that this person at that time was not responsible enough and stayed away from making phone calls or text messaging, especially in an area where it was a very dangerous area with a turn, with a tunnel and with a parked train, or a train coming on in his direction. So I think these were human mistakes. Now we just have to figure out how to prevent those from happening again and how do we have safety procedures that

something happens when someone runs a red light.

QUESTION: Prop 1C, about the Prop 1C money, some of it's going to the -- the Prop 1C money that you talked about, I heard that some of it's going to the Grant Avenue Project that's subsidized with tax breaks. And how do you feel about the emergency shelter money going for that cause?

GOVERNOR: I think it's very important that we use the \$2.8 billion as quickly as possible so we help people with affordable housing, because there's a tremendous need in the state of California, all over the state of California, to have affordable housing. So we're trying to push that money out as quickly as possible. I think it creates jobs, the faster we put it out, which is very important and it also provides affordable housing.

Thank you very much.

QUESTION: What about the (Inaudible) we believe in a healthy mind and a healthy body and we need money for higher education for all our children.

GOVERNOR: There are a lot of people all over the state that say they need more money. But you know something? We are in a crisis right now. We don't have enough money. We have a structural deficit of around \$5 billion. And we even have difficulties and a big challenge to get a loan now, because of what's going on in Washington and what's going on on Wall Street, to get a loan for \$6 billion for the state of California. So we all are struggling and we all have to just hold back right now with all of our demands. Right now is the time to be cautious about expanding programs and all of those things. So I totally sympathize with the various different need that are available out there but right now we just don't have the money because we have a limited amount of money because our economy has declined and therefore our revenues have declined.

There's one question right over there. Please.

QUESTION: Governor, Carlos Morales with the Voice Newspaper. First of all, thank you on behalf of the community from northeast Los Angeles. Thank you, Kevin de León, for making this happen. My question to both of you, or maybe even the person in charge of the parks, who is going to make the decisions of what these parks look like and are you going to incorporate bike-friendly parks?

GOVERNOR: Ruth, do you want to answer that, please?

COLEMAN: Sure. With the signage of this bill, it sets in motion a process where we're going to be developing guidelines and we'll do that through a public process; first do focus groups and then lots and lots of public meetings across the state. And so we'll be following the language that's laid out in the bill and also in the bond that created these funds. And then, through that, we'll be developing guidelines that then cities and counties can use to then compete for the funds. And so there is no predisposition to prohibit bikes of any sort. It will be one of those issues that will come through the public process.

DE LEÓN: Let me add one thing real quickly, too. It's a very good question. We wanted to make sure that there was no cookie cutter approach to the distribution of the bond dollars, as well as the design and architecture of a park. What may work in Salinas may be a little different in parts of Los Angeles as well as elsewhere. So we wanted to make sure, working with the Department of Parks and Recreation, the language of my bill clearly states that we'll get community input also when grants are submitted. The applications are submitted through a competitive grants program. It's an opportunity also for all community sectors to get involved in the makeup and design of their community parks.

GOVERNOR: Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you very much for being here today. Thank you. (Applause)