

# The Jobs Solution



◆ CREATING JOBS SOLVES  
CALIFORNIA'S PROBLEMS

by Luis Alejo

DEMOCRAT FOR ASSEMBLY

Luis Alejo  
is endorsed  
by the California  
Democratic  
Party

# The Jobs Solution

Creating Jobs  
Solves California's  
Problems

by Luis Alejo  
*Democrat for Assembly*



*To my parents:*

*You are the inspiration that pushes me to work hard  
and achieve common sense solutions every day.*

*I dedicate my campaign for Assembly to you.*



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## Letter of Introduction

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I am running for California State Assembly because California is ready for a fresh start. We are ready for new ideas and I have the energy to get things done.

George Bush's policies deregulating Wall Street ruined our economy. People have lost their jobs and their homes. When people don't work, they don't pay taxes. And that is the true reason for California's budget crisis.

My job, if elected, will be to help as many people as I can to get a job. No government program can help California's men and women more than going to work every day.

Here are the first few things I want to get done:

1. Californians who lost their jobs and homes should get a fresh start with their credit. The global recession has hurt many families in our state. Their ruined credit should not be held against them. It hurts both local families and local businesses.
2. California should hold tuition to the level it was when students begin college so that they can afford to stay in school and become part of the skilled workforce California's businesses needs. When Californians earn a good pay-check, they pay taxes and are not subsidized with taxpayer money.

*(continued)*



3. Violent offenders should stay in prison and serve their full sentences, the court system should speed criminal trials, and unnecessary lawsuits that clog the courts should be stopped.

I know what a fresh start can mean. I had opportunities that put me on a path to Harvard University and UC Davis School of Law. I came home to teach troubled teenagers and now, I work as a staff attorney for the Superior Court helping women and children; giving others the chance I was given.

People need jobs. Children need better schools. Neighborhoods need safety. Let's put politics aside and give California families what they need.

I appreciate your consideration for Assembly.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Luis Alejo". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "L" and a long, sweeping tail on the "j".

Luis Alejo



# Creating new jobs: the best budget solution

*“No government program can substitute for a good job. A job brings dignity. Democrats should be the party of good jobs, green jobs, jobs that allow people to take care of their families.”*

—Luis Alejo

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## **GEORGE BUSH RUINED OUR ECONOMY**

George Bush’s policies deregulating Wall Street ruined our economy. Thousands of people have lost their jobs and homes, wiping out California’s state budget.

Families are suffering. Victims of a failed public policy fear that recovery may not be possible.

Our state government must show its leadership now. We must focus on curbing job erosion and creating new jobs. We must also help the long-term unemployed return to the workforce.

Californians who lost their jobs and homes should be entitled to a fresh start. Their ruined credit should not be held against them when they apply for a job. One of my first bills will be to give people a fresh start financially. The bill would help remove foreclosures

from people's credit rating, helping them to gain new lines of credit to help them re-establish themselves.

## **FORECLOSURES HIT HOME**

California is one of the world's largest economies. Despite the economy downturn, our Golden State has a gross state product over \$1.6 trillion, accounting for over 13 percent of the nation's output.

But the collapse of Wall Street has hit our coast hard, raising our number of unemployed to 2.3 million.

Every sector of our economy has taken a substantial hit. As the number of unemployed rise, consumer spending drops. Causing many businesses to cut back even further, causing more people to lose their jobs. Many baby boomers that had hoped to retire are facing another 10 years in the workforce, crowding the field of applicants trying to join the ranks of employed.

The consequences of the bursting real estate bubble and over-sized real estate values have hurt California families particularly hard. As of January 2009, more than a quarter of foreclosures in the U.S. were in California.

My family has felt the strain of our economic times. My dad lost our house when he couldn't pay the taxes. I co-signed on the deed to help him. Unfortunately, the exponential amount of debt was too large to overcome and the bank moved to foreclose. We were able to pay off all taxes with the short sale of the house, but, like other

families facing foreclosure, we faced embarrassment in our community.

Watching my lifetime-of-hard-work father fall victim to this monumental economic downturn has focused my attention to helping other families avoid such hardship. My daily focus in the state Assembly will be to put people back to work so they can pay their mortgage, pay their taxes, and live free from government assistance.

### **WORKING OUR WAY OUT OF THIS RECESSION**

Some families get pushed out of the middle class during every economic downturn before the market recovers and expands again. But this downturn has forced a monumental number of families out of the middle class. Many formally two-income middle class families are living day-to-day with the fear of losing their home and living on the street with their children.

Our social safety net has been strained past capacity. Many Californians must learn to live without necessities, such as prescription medications. And many of the long-term unemployed will be losing their monthly checks by the end of summer.

We should not rely upon the traditional business sectors to lead the economic recovery. The automobile industry has borrowed money from Congress. Home construction is deflated. And the banking industry continues to take hits with every home foreclosure.

Economists insist that the key to returning our economic health is putting people back to work, and I agree.

Our state government should lead job creation efforts. The goal could be modest; start with 100,000 new jobs.

A two-income family of three needs approximately \$75,000 annually after taxes to rent a home, pay for childcare, purchase health care coverage, and pay for monthly expenses without any government assistance.

Working with economists, we know that if we created 100,000 new jobs that pay \$75,000, then the multiplier effect would create another 200,000 new jobs for a total of 300,000 new jobs. Meaning that 100,000 families would be free from government assistance and another 200,000 families would be on their way.

This new economic activity would raise more than \$14.5 billion in the first year alone. State revenues would rise by over \$750 million per year, plus our government assistance programs would see massive reductions. To me, this is the type of budget cut worth pursuing.

## **FOCUS ON NEW JOBS, NOT BUDGET CUTS**

People need jobs. The State can do more to help.

However, we hear our politicians refer to budget cuts as “real savings.” But focusing on budget cuts exacerbates our economic problems and overlooks our real solution: putting people back to work. The

continuous propaganda on “budget cuts” is actually hurting our chances of recovery and scaring potential business investors.

Our focus should be on preventing further job erosion and creating new jobs. Here are just a few examples of changes we can make now that would create new jobs in California.

- California has been awarded over \$20 billion in federal stimulus dollars, but we have spent just a fraction of it. Bureaucrats have delayed projects that can put tens of thousands of construction workers back to work.
- California is spending tax money overseas. The Bay Bridge renovation project is riddled with controversy over manufacturing problems in a half dozen countries around the world. We are importing 40% of the cement we use from countries as far as China. And we are buying our prison guard uniforms made in China too. Instead, all California contracts must give priority to California workers.
- California has over \$92 million to weatherize 43,000 homes and employ hundreds of people to do it. However, as of the beginning of this year they had only completed 12 houses. Putting these dollars into the small businesses to weatherize homes would help many small businesses immediately.

## **CALIFORNIA JOBS MUST BE OUR PRIORITY**

Every measure must be viewed through the prism of protecting California jobs and creating new jobs for California families. We have taken advantage of the federal stimulus programs such as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, enacted by Congress to stimulate the economy, create jobs and make infrastructure investments. But we must also invest in policies specifically targeted at job creation.

Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg announced a Job Creation Plan, which he estimates would create 140,000 jobs in California. I support his leadership efforts. Here are a few of the ideas that I support.

- Require that a set level of renewable energy be purchased inside California. It is estimated that this would create 20,000 new jobs. Governor Schwarzenegger vetoed a similar bill last year saying it could increase energy costs. But that money would be going to California families that would in turn be able to buy homes, new cars, and spend more money in their respective communities.
- Fast-track renewable energy projects eligible for stimulus funds. Bureaucrats that permit these projects need the authority to act quickly to put people back to work.
- Streamline the process for obtaining multiple permits to start businesses by starting “one-stop” permit centers through Cal-EPA. This

idea is just good government. We do not want to hinder entrepreneurs from starting new businesses in California.

- Grant a 5 percent bid preference to a company that can certify that 90 percent of employees on a government contract will be California residents. On average, California spends nearly \$35 billion on service and consulting contracts annually. We should grant preference to California businesses to help our local economies before sending work and taxpayer dollars to other states or overseas.
- Promote the Employment Development Department's (EDD) "work-share" program, allowing hard-hit companies to keep some employees at reduced salaries while the EDD makes salaries whole in anticipation of an economic recovery and re-hiring. As more and more skilled workers are joining the unemployment lines, we should look to at ways to transfer unemployment funds to small businesses instead.

The Public Policy Institute of California reports that Californians have much higher productivity than other workers, as much as 14 percent higher than the U.S. as a whole. We must use our workers' high productivity, invest in education, invest in innovative and emerging technologies, and take advantage of our international trade connections to recover from this downturn.



Creating good jobs is my number one priority. If people are working, they can pay their rent or mortgage; their utility bills; their healthcare costs; and spend disposable income in local businesses.

## **THE GREEN ECONOMY**

We are home to cutting-edge technologies and innovation. We are the birthplace of most Internet advances. Our universities develop innovative solutions every year.

California will resume its role as a dominant global leader by supporting innovative and emerging technologies. Leading that rebound will be technologies in a green economy.

Consumers worldwide are increasingly concerned about pollution and climate change. We must invest in research and development, as well as provide incentives for green solutions and new green products.

Our biggest competition will be for skilled workers and an infrastructure to support these new technologies. We need to invest in our educational systems to prepare our workers and to increase our competitive edge. We must also invest in infrastructure systems to support a green economy.

## **INVESTMENT SUPPORTING INNOVATIVE AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES**

Our state should be investing in new technologies. And we should also be promoting a climate of partnership for potential investors.

I agreed with Stephen Levy of the Center for Continuing Study of the California Economy when he said, “The state faces substantial opportunities for job growth and economic prosperity in the next ten years. Our future prosperity will depend on our ability to invest for the future and make California a great place to live and work.”

As we begin investing in innovative and emerging technologies of the future, we must create the infrastructure to support it. Outdated systems such as our water system, transportation systems, and airport and port capacity must soon be updated to fully integrate new technologies. Even more daunting is our need to retool our education system to adequately teach our workforce of tomorrow.

## **BUILDING THE BAY BRIDGE IN CHINA**

When the Bay Bridge opened in 1936, it was one of the longest spans and the most complex engineering accomplishments in the world. After the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake collapsed part of the bridge, we began a renovation effort that continues today. In fact, we are behind schedule and the budgeted construction has grown by an estimated 1200 percent.

In 1996 the renovation was estimated to cost \$1.3 billion. Now reports indicate a cost to taxpayers and commuters at more than \$12 billion, which some say will take us until 2049 to pay off completely. Political debates over design, manufacturing delays and fi-

nance charges, among other various reasons, are to blame for this gross misuse of public funds.

Perhaps most disappointing is the fact that a majority of the work has been outsourced to other states and other countries including China, Canada, England, Japan, Norway, South Korea and Taiwan. We contracted with a team in Vancouver to prepare the schematic designs. Millions of dollars worth of rock came from British Columbia and China, rather than a source closer to the construction site. And many of the major steel components are being built in China.

Relying upon businesses overseas has ultimately raised costs, delayed the project, and raised serious engineering concerns. There are on-going challenges in completing the detailed blueprints that specify how the structure will be built. Manufacturing problems in China, where major portions of the steel suspension bridge are being prefabricated, has hampered the project, has many engineers concerned, and has delayed the renovation effort by years.

The first shipment that was scheduled for delivery in October 2008 was delayed due to welding problems. Then the first of the steel pieces of the suspension span was shipped more than a year late. Each piece that is shipped takes a minimum of four weeks for delivery, depending on weather and sea conditions. Once the pieces did arrive on U.S. soil, they had to clear customs inspections and be rolled into place. The delays in the steel shipments have raised the pos-

sibility that the bridge completion could be pushed back beyond late 2013.

Bay Bridge officials have now announced a plan to offer bonuses to speed completion and delivery of the balance of the steel pieces. I strongly oppose such an incentive. It is unclear to me why we have not pursued options closer to home, giving California workers the opportunity to work and giving our officials better oversight.

The last public records and fiscal oversight inspection was in 2005. But a project of this magnitude needs public oversight. Spending \$12 billion and relying upon countries overseas must be subject to public scrutiny.

We need an audit and reassessment of the distribution of funds.

## **CEMENT FROM CHINA?**

The Bay Bridge is not the only project where we have chosen to purchase goods and services from China rather than spurring California's economy. Approximately 40 percent of the cement we use in California comes from China. This accounts for an estimated 25 percent more greenhouse gases than cement we produce here at home.

Caltrans reports that they haul most of their materials by truck, on average a distance of 50 miles from distributor to construction site. If we could reduce that distance by just 15 miles, then we would save on traffic congestion, truck emissions, and about \$705

million annually in the Caltrans budget. Again, this is the type of budget cut we should pursue.

Instead of purchasing our cement from China, if we could produce or buy cement from California businesses like CEMEX then we could save taxpayer dollars that could instead be used for schools and higher education.

### **SCHWARZENEGGER DELAYING WORK PROJECTS**

We've lost 500,00 manufacturing jobs in California over the last six years. And our construction industry has been one of the hardest hit during this economic downturn.

Governor Schwarzenegger has had many press conferences expressing his concern for California's families. But there are actions he can take now to put people back to work.

Eighteen months ago Governor Schwarzenegger pushed our legislature to waive California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements for a dozen major shovel-ready construction projects. The legislature agreed with the need to put construction workers back on worksites quickly and granted the waivers. However, the projects are still stuck in our state's bureaucracy. Instead of more trips to D.C., our governor should fulfill his end of the deal and get these shovel-ready projects started.

As part of the Recovery and Reinvestment Act, we received more than \$92 million to weatherize 43,000

homes, meaning contractors would install home climate control measures to help homeowners lower their energy bills. But so far we have one of the worst rates of completion in the nation according to the U.S. Department of Energy with just 12 homes finished. These are jobs that could be spurring our economy now, taking families off public assistance and putting more dollars in circulation. If our completion rate does not improve quickly, we could risk losing the stimulus funds completely.

### **THE OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION HOLDING UP JOBS**

California has been awarded \$3.4 billion in Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds specifically for transportation projects. However, as of the beginning of this year, we spent less than 5 percent of the transportation funds.

In January the Sacramento Bee reported that the California Office of Historic Preservation had a two-month backlog in approving projects funded by federal stimulus funds. Many of the projects in the backlog had no impact on historic preservation and should have been given a quick approval.

The backlog caused an unnecessary delay in beginning hundreds of construction projects and putting many Californians back to work. These funds should be freed and utilized immediately.

## THE NUMMI PLANT CLOSING

Our last car plant in California has closed. New United Motor Manufacturing, Inc. (NUMMI) launched in 1984 as a joint venture with General Motors Corporation (GM) and Toyota Motor Corporation.

When GM announced that they would not be renewing their portion of the contract last summer, Toyota followed the announcement by saying they could only give seven more months of orders as well.

The closing of the NUMMI plant begs the question of what to do with the real estate. I would like to see the nearly 400 acres used to bring in good jobs, perhaps building pieces of the Bay Bridge or building our high speed rail trains.

However, what I find most distressing is the lack of preferential treatment we gave NUMMI while they were in operation. The NUMMI plant was a valuable economic contributor for 25 years. However, state and local governments did not give preferential treatment to their products. Every California legislator is given a car to drive in Sacramento, but they were not required to drive cars made in California.

Again, every California contract must be viewed through the prism of protecting California jobs and creating new jobs for California families.



# Education Equality: be fair to students

*“California once had the country’s premier education system. We were admired for our quality and quantity of graduates. But over the last three decades, we have increased spending on prisons and decreased investment in higher education. The result: California jobs are not going to Californians.”*

—Luis Alejo

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## UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION

My parents picked strawberries. From a very young age, they instilled in me the value of education. Education can take you out of the fields and into the boardroom. Education is the ticket to a better life. I have not met anybody who appreciates that more than my parents.

My father proudly served in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War. With his GI bill, he obtained vocational skills for auto body and paint services.



After many years of working at auto body shops, he took classes at San Jose State University and earned his teaching credential. For the next 24 years, my father taught vocational skills classes at our local jail in hopes that the inmates would find a job and not a gang once they were released. He now teaches classes at Hartnell Community College in Salinas helping local residents achieve their educational goals.

My mom worked in the strawberry fields and canneries during the day and took classes to earn her vocational nursing degree at night. She worked as a Licensed Vocational Nurse in a clinic, and later in the health services center for our local jails for over 20 years. She went back to school at Harnell College to become a registered nurse and now provides critical health services to thousands of families in Salinas at the Alisal Health Clinic.

My parents have worked hard their entire lives. The importance of a good education was a daily topic at our dinner table. They led by example. Inspiring a lifetime passion for learning, for perseverance, for understanding the value of a second chance and a fresh start.

Giving someone a fresh start can turn their life around, putting them on the path to making a positive contribution to the community. A fresh start means a good job; and to get a good job you need a quality education.

## MY HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE

I had opportunities that put me on a path to Harvard University, to the University of California at Davis School of Law, and to the University of California at Berkeley.

After graduating from UC Berkeley with honors and a dual major, I came home to teach. At first I worked with special needs middle school students as an instructional aide. Then I was moved over to teach at an alternative high school to teach troubled and “at risk” teenagers, where the students had either been expelled from the traditional public high school or had been placed in the program by the courts.

The students in this program were tough—many exposed to substance abuse, domestic abuse, sexual abuse, or emotional abuse. As their teacher, I was tasked with teaching the 30+ students in my class a core subject comprehensive curriculum with all traditional high school requirements. As their civic leader, my goal was to spark an excitement about learning and give them a sense of pride with success in education.

I was young, ambitious, and excited to make a difference. I sought out new ways to teach my students new skills and new ideas. For example, just a week on the job I realized that many of my students had not been exposed to computers or typing. So I worked with our local parks and recreation department to gain access to a computer lab just two blocks from the school.

After teaching, I decided to continue my education as well and applied to law school. I graduated from the UC Davis School of Law with a concentration in public interest law and was awarded the Martin Luther King Community Service Award.

My goal was still to return home to teach in my hometown. But I decided that further knowledge of education policy would be needed to make a substantial difference, and not become part of the systemic problem.

So I went to Harvard University and earned my master's of education degree. It was here that I worked on the Harvard Civil Rights Project and did research about improving our educational system.

After my graduate studies, I returned to my hometown with a goal of helping our community's neediest families on a daily basis. I worked as a staff attorney for California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA), a statewide non-profit legal advocacy organization that champions the rights of working families. My specialty with CRLA was helping special education students and parents that felt neglected or overlooked by the education system. Some had been expelled for behavioral problems, when in fact they required special education services. The hours were long, but I deeply loved this job.

I now work as a public interest attorney for Superior Court, assisting thousands of local families, parents, students, and workers. But the lessons I learned while teaching and helping struggling students in

the classroom and in the courtroom have been life-altering and unforgettable.

## **EDUCATION IS AN INVESTMENT**

The current education landscape can be summarized as this: Lawmakers debate where to cut more school funding. Administrators redistribute funds to minimize layoffs. Schools struggle to boost academic performance with less money and fewer teachers.

We have to stop thinking of education as an expense. On the contrary, education is an investment. Poor quality education has and will continue to curse us for generations if the dynamic of the dialogue doesn't change now.

As a society, we want all of our kids to get good jobs so they can pay taxes and support their families without any government subsidies. Successful graduates spur economic growth, have increased productivity, and secure our state's competitive edge and future prosperity. The next generation must have a substantive knowledge base to apply critical thought to increasingly complex world problems.

A majority of Californians believes that school quality is a problem. Most experts agree that funding alone will not cure the magnitude of our challenge to fix our schools. But finding where to start can be daunting.

Our lawmakers are quick to write piecemeal bills for the hot-topic photo opportunity, but we need

thoughtful and meaningful reform regardless of its political popularity.

## **EDUCATION'S DIMINISHING RATE OF RETURN**

According to the Public Policy Institute of California, by 2025 only 32 percent of the state's working-age adults will have a college degree, but 41 percent (two of every five) of the jobs will require a degree.

To continue on the path we are currently taking, we will not be able to meet the demands of tomorrow's economy. We know for a fact today that one in four California 9th graders will not earn a high school diploma.

Our school system is not producing the quality of graduates to meet our competitive needs. California students rank near the bottom nationally on 8th grade reading and math skills.

The statistics are even more discouraging for low-income students, minority students and students still working to become fluent in English. As of 2005, about half of Asian students and one-third of white students graduated from high school college-ready. But the numbers fall to only 14 percent for Latino students and to 16 percent for African-American students.

Most of the studies also overlook the challenges facing rural regions of our state. Rural regions have lower median incomes, lower education attainment levels, and higher poverty levels. They also have a

reduced access to higher education opportunity resulting in a rural region “brain drain” and shortage of skilled workers.

## **HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS TAKING A TOLL ON FAMILY BUDGETS**

Our K-12 education system is impoverished. We can't keep expecting schools to do more with less. We are not just failing to teach students the skills they need. We are also failing to motivate many students to complete minimum high school graduation requirements. We are in a crisis situation with California leading the nation in public school dropouts.

I've taught troubled and “at risk” teenagers, where the students had either been expelled from the traditional public school or had been placed in the program by the courts. The students were tough and exposed to abuse. I know what it takes to ignite passion for learning, to give students pride and hope for a positive future.

As a society, we need to change our own mentality and expectations of our children. A recent study showed that the general public does not believe that children from low-income families or children of color are able to learn at the same rate as more affluent white and Asian children. This is absolutely absurd!

We need to be talking to our children about going to college at a very young age. We need to discard the notion that college is only for those whose parents went to college; I am proof of that myth. And we need

to make a promise to each student that if they work hard and study, then they can go to college and have a better life. We cannot keep letting kids fall through the cracks because we think they are not able to learn.

During my service for the Superior Court, I have seen firsthand what happens to youth that fall through the education system cracks. When students do not graduate from high school, their quality of life decreases dramatically. They are more likely to enter the criminal justice system. They will not earn as much over the course of their lifetime. And it is very likely that the taxpayers will subsidize them at some point in their lives by paying either incarceration costs or welfare payments.

I find it absurd that we know one in four California 9th graders will not earn a high school diploma, but we are not able to target them to help them succeed. Even more discouraging, of those that do graduate and apply to attend community college, an estimated 75% of them require remedial classes in math, English, or both.

Inspiring youth to learn is imperative for our working family budgets. Our economic health depends upon quality education. This is why I've volunteered to work with a countywide task force aimed at reducing high school dropout rates. We need a hands-on approach and comprehensive plan to solve our education system problems.

## **CHRONIC PROBLEMS IN OUR K-12 SCHOOLS**

We all want the best for our children. And when it comes to education, we should set the bar at the highest level. Unfortunately, we are falling short on a number of education fronts that are most basic to obtaining a quality education—quality teachers, equal opportunity, and inspiring young minds.

We have a chronic problem of underperformance. When students do not master subject matter material but are advanced to the next grade, the challenge of bringing the student up to grade level compounds exponentially every year.

Experts state that by 3rd grade, a student's education foundation has been established and their likelihood of graduating from high school can be determined. By 7th grade, a distinct achievement gap can be seen between ethnicities. On average, 7th grade African-American and Latino students are reading and doing math at the level of a white 3rd grader. Of those that remain in school, 12th grade African-American and Latino students are reading and doing math at the level of a white 7th grader, undoubtedly reducing their chances of attending a four-year college. If they choose to attend community college, they will be required to pay for remedial course instruction, which they should have received in their K-12 education.

The word “underperformance” implies that the problem lies solely with the student. However, I firmly believe that the problem is systemically larger.



Under current school district and teacher union contracts, the most experienced teachers have school placement priority. This has created a trend for the most experienced teachers to congregate in more affluent communities, leaving a concentration of the least experienced teachers in many inner-city and lower-income communities. Without experienced teachers serving as mentors, the new teachers struggle in the schools with greater challenges.

This trend also leads to a funding inequity. Teachers have a uniform salary schedule. Teachers earn more money based upon their years of experience and their level of advanced education units. Experienced teachers are higher on the salary schedule. This means that the expensive teachers are teaching the affluent students, and the least expensive teachers are teaching the low-income students. Therefore, the affluent communities are receiving more money per pupil.

Teachers should be reflective of the communities in which they teach. We must find incentives for attracting more minorities to become teachers in our public schools.

I've been a teacher in my hometown. I know firsthand what a difference it makes for teachers to understand a community and become part of the community in which they teach. Communities need consistency and greatly benefit when teachers know the families personally, such as teaching student siblings and cousins.

Every year, we graduate high school students that are not prepared for college. Students are advanced based upon age rather than mastery of subject material. We simply must do better.

The California Supreme Court decision in the Serrano cases of the 1970s stated that California's method of funding public education, because of district-to-district disparities, "fails to meet the requirements of the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution and the California Constitution." I would argue that our current system of funding on a per pupil basis still fails to meet equal protection clause requirements.

We need a strategy for students to receive their fair share of the funding. We fund our K-12 public education on a per pupil basis with a system called average daily attendance. Schools that have a larger student population receive more money under the theory that they will need more money to run the school. But funding on a per pupil basis discards any challenges or special needs of a student. It also assumes that the money then follows each student, which is not the case since more experienced teachers in affluent schools are paid much more.

Another place that I see needs immediate attention to achieve education equality is campus environment standards. Academic achievement cannot be separated from the student's classroom conditions. Some California students and teachers are housed in over-crowded, run-down schools plagued by broken

or very loud heating and air conditioning systems, poor lighting, pest infestations, broken windows, graffiti, or other environmental distractions.

Lower-income schools face challenges and costs that are not a factor in newer, more affluent schools. But under the current funding structure, these needs are not being met. We can't keep asking low-income schools to bring students up to grade level in order to raise test scores with less money than affluent schools.

### **OUR COLLEGE PROMISE**

Californians under the age 35 are far less educated than the baby boomers they need to replace in the workforce. Some studies estimate that we will need to increase the number of bachelor degree graduates by at least 60,000 each year until 2025 to fully meet the workforce demands.

We cannot rely upon other states to help us make up the difference since this problem is nationwide. In fact, most other states have an even greater deficit to fill. Between 2000 and 2005, California jobs attracted 612,000 college graduates from other states but we lost 658,000 for an overall loss of 46,000 of our college educated minds.

Investing in higher education is imperative. We must expand our higher education opportunities and explore creative ideas to retain our college graduates.

In President Obama's 2011 budget press conference, he made a commitment to once again make our nation a world leader in new college graduates.

Specifically, he requested \$34.8 billion in Pell Grants, which are federal awards given to low-income students whose families generally have an annual income below \$45,000. I was very pleased to hear that Pell Grants were a priority for this administration and the amount requested was increased over prior years. Pell Grants are a very important tool and incentive for qualified students who would not otherwise have access to higher education.

President Obama also announced that he would ease the burden of student loan repayment. His plan is to reduce the maximum monthly payments to no more than 10 percent of the borrower's income, down from 15 percent currently. After 20 years, the loan balance would be forgiven; and for those who go in to public service, the loan would be forgiven in 10 years. That would be an enormous relief to graduates pursuing nonprofit, educational and government jobs, which typically pay lower salaries.

There has to also be a proposal to increase funding for biomedical, clean energy, sustainable climate systems and other scientific research, as well as the increased support for undergraduate and graduate students pursuing science, engineering and technology careers from which our University of California system and our California State University system would greatly benefit.

But we can't simply rely upon the federal government for all of our higher education solutions, although I do think that some additional federal stimulus would

prove to be enormously beneficial. For example, colleges and universities that enroll large numbers of Pell Grant recipients should be granted additional funding for their operations and maintenance.

We must also remember that simply increasing demand does not result in increasing access to higher education. An insufficient supply of facility accommodations and faculty are the biggest barriers to higher education in California. Our investment must include the ability to build the capacity of colleges and universities.

In both our California State University system and our University of California system, budget cuts have led to sharp decreases in enrollment. With more budget cut “savings” and tuition increase “revenue raising” discussions taking place, I expect to see an even further decline in enrollment.

Qualified students are struggling to pay rising tuition costs and are unable to budget their education costs accordingly. California should hold tuition to the level it was when students begin college so that they can afford to stay in school and become part of the skilled workforce California’s business needs. This would be a great way to ensure investment to higher education and fulfill our promise of opportunity.

### **COMMUNITY COLLEGES ARE PART OF OUR RECOVERY SOLUTION**

Community colleges are often overlooked when discussing both higher education and the future of

our economy. However, community colleges play an extremely important role in our state's economic recovery solution.

Investing in our community colleges is just good, old-fashioned common sense. If we can prepare people for the workforce, then they will earn more money in their lifetime, pay their taxes, and not rely upon government assistance. People who have an Associate of Arts (AA) degree will earn \$500,000 more in their lifetimes than those with only a high school diploma. That averages out to \$8,328 per year, which could significantly impact most of the families I know.

More than half of the California State University graduates and almost one-third of University of California graduates start out in community colleges. I am one of those students who started at Gavilan College in Gilroy. Community colleges save the state and its students millions of dollars. But with the increased demand from students and decreased funding from the state, community colleges are faced with raising tuition putting a greater burden on students already struggling to advance their chances of a good job.

In the last round of budget cuts, our community colleges lost about \$840 million, an 8 percent loss to their operating budget. As a possible solution, the Legislative Analyst Office has suggested raising fees from \$26 per unit to as much as \$60 per unit; that's an increase of over 200 percent! It is ridiculous to assume that students that need community college classes to

improve their workforce skills would be able to absorb a 200 percent increase in fees. Many community college students rely upon financial aid, grants, and loans. Increasing course fees means they will have less money for supplies, or they will be forced to drop out.

History shows us that even minor increases drive students to drop out of community colleges. Community college per unit fees increased from \$11 to \$18 in 2003/04, and then again from \$18 to \$26 in 2004/05. During that time, approximately 300,000 students dropped out and the colleges eliminated more than 12,000 courses.

California should hold tuition to the level it was when students begin college so that they can afford to stay in school and become part of the skilled workforce California's business needs.

Although much of the discussion in Sacramento is focused on where to cut funding, that would be detrimental to our community colleges. A divestment at this point will undermine our state's ability to recover from this recession. Community colleges operate on one-third the amount of funding that the UC system receives per student. Unlike the California State University and the University of California systems, community colleges must accept all applicants. Already the community colleges are teaching more than the equivalent of 52,000 students for which they do not receive any state funding. With the mounting financial constraints, the community colleges are un-

able to accommodate schedules that allow students to earn a two-year degree or transfer to a four-year college in a reasonable amount of time.

Our California Community College system is the largest higher education system in the nation with 110 college campuses. Those campuses currently serve 2.9 million students per year, and enrollment is rising annually. For the 2008/09 academic school year, enrollment increased by nearly 5 percent with more than 135,000 students. In the last four years, enrollment increased nearly 16 percent with almost 400,000 new students.

The community colleges provide higher education access to a wide array of students—returning war veterans, workforce employees needing advanced training in emerging green or health care technologies, as well as the traditional teenage high school graduate that perhaps was not ready for a four-year institution or was not accepted due to over-crowding. Many of our high school graduates entering college are not ready for college course material. One study estimates that just one in three California students takes the preparatory course work required by most four-year colleges. This results in about half of all incoming students at California State University campuses and one third of University of California freshman requiring remedial English or math, if not both.

I was pleased to hear President Obama's higher education plan. He presented Congress with a goal of 5 million more community college grads by 2020. In



order to meet that goal, he estimates that the federal government will need to invest \$12 billion in community colleges over the next 10 years. States will need to compete for the money, similar to the Race to the Top competition President Obama is running for K-12 underperforming schools.

Undoubtedly, we will need a bold, comprehensive strategy to be competitive for those federal dollars. We will need to develop a plan to increase access, expand facilities, improve graduation rates, and increase transfer rates to four-year colleges.

### **JOB OPENINGS FOR NURSES, BUT SCHOOLING NOT AVAILABLE?**

Undoubtedly as we create our plan to improve access and quality to higher education, we will need to address a looming need in our health care system—qualified nurses.

As our state's baby boomers near retirement, our nursing health care needs are rising exponentially. First, the retiring baby boomers who worked as registered nurses will need to be replaced as they leave the occupation. Second, in-home support services demand will increase to care for the growing number of retirees with functional disabilities, consumer preference for care in the home, and managing complex technological advanced treatments that can be performed in the home. Third, experienced nursing instructors are needed to train the wave of nursing students needed to fulfill health care demand; treating patients,

educating patients, providing advice and emotional support, and in some cases helping retirees with basic activities of daily living.

Registered nurses record patients' medical histories and symptoms, help perform diagnostic tests, operate medical machinery, administer treatment and medications, and help with patient follow-up and rehabilitation. They also teach patients and their families how to manage their illnesses or injuries. Registered nurses often times run general health screening or immunization clinics and blood drives. But the vast majority of registered nursing jobs are on hospital campuses.

On average, registered nurses earn between \$50,000 and \$76,000 annually in the United States. Many employers offer flexible work schedules, childcare services, educational benefits, and bonuses. In fact, nationwide over 20 percent of registered nurses are union members or covered by union contract.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that approximately one of every four new jobs created nationwide through 2018 will be in health care and social assistance. That includes over 500,000 new job openings for registered nurses and over 250,000 new jobs for nursing aides, orderlies and attendants.

There are typical three educational paths one could follow to become a registered nurse, obtaining a bachelor's degree, an associate degree, or a diploma from an approved nursing program. Graduates are then required to complete a national licensing examination as well as fulfill any state licensing requirements.

Advanced practice nurses, such as clinical nurse specialists, nurse anesthetists, nurse-midwives, and nurse practitioners, must have a master's degree. Advanced practice nurses will also be in high demand, particularly in medically underserved areas to serve as lower-cost primary care providers.

According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, enrollment in doctoral nursing programs increased by more than 20 percent last year. There is a strong interest in careers as registered nurses, advance practice nurses, nursing scientists, faculty, primary care providers, and specialists.

Despite the growing demand and interest, thousands of qualified applicants are being turned away from four-year colleges and universities. According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, nearly 55,000 qualified applicants were not accepted to nursing schools due to resource constraints including lack of faculty, insufficient clinical teaching sites, limited classroom space, budget cuts, and insufficient experts to provide practical training and experience.

As a result, here in California, we are recruiting nurses from other states and countries overseas. Instead of providing a path to employing interested and qualified health care applicants, we are essentially sending those jobs overseas. We are giving economic priority to non-Californians to fulfill the health care demands of Californians.

We must find ways to advance policy and programs that will enable schools to accommodate all qualified California applicants in professional nursing programs. We should explore the options of expedited nursing programs, free textbooks, and waiving course fees for qualified California applicants.

California jobs should be filled by Californians.





# Stop the gang cycle, give kids a chance.

*“The African proverb is right—it does take a village to raise a child. California needs an ‘all-hands-on-deck’ approach to stop gang violence. We need our political leaders, our leaders of faith, our community investors to all work together against our common enemy.”*

—Luis Alejo

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## **KIDS DESERVE A FRESH START**

I know what a fresh start can mean. I had opportunities given to me that put me back on the right path, leading me to the University of California at Berkeley, the University of California at Davis School of Law, and Harvard University.

During my last year at UC Berkeley, I worked as an intern in a law office in Oakland’s Fruitvale District serving low-income communities. Because the staff attorney was overwhelmed with cases, I was able to work on many cases personally. What I saw working these cases changed my perspective on humanity forever.

Every day I visited apartment complexes with pest infestations, sewage problems, and neglected waste management. It was astounding to me that children were playing on streets filled with garbage and rats. These families were fighting for basic human necessities.

It is on streets like these, in neighborhoods with failing schools, that gangs flourish. Gangs become the government where leadership fails, filling the streets with violence.

### **VIOLENCE ON THE STREETS IMPACTS OUR WALLETS**

Residents in gang neighborhoods wake up every day with a fear that a bloody gang battle could take place on their street, in front of their children. Reports indicate that children as young as 4 years old that are exposed to gang culture and violence on a regular basis suffer from mental distress including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), taking a toll on their education opportunities.

Many times the residents do not believe that leaving the neighborhood is an option. The gang culture has persisted for generations and invades every aspect of the community's quality of life. In some areas, postal and delivery workers refuse to enter gang war streets at night. And public services, such as libraries, have limited hours because money is directed to public safety services instead.

But the gang violence also affects every California taxpayer, regardless of what our neighborhood looks like. We each pay a high price for gang violence. Billions, in fact, is spent every year on emergency room medical care and also to arrest, prosecute, and incarcerate. It is in the interest of all Californians to reduce gang violence as a measure to effectively cut spending from our state's budget.

### **WE DESERVE BETTER.**

John Steinbeck's hometown no longer has a bookstore. Children are drawing pictures of people fighting with guns. And, we're looking at a record number of gang related crimes.

We deserve better.

Gang wars are escalating in our valley. The violence is infecting our schools, neighborhoods, libraries, parks, hospitals, and businesses. Gang-related crime is rising and our police departments suspect that more and more gang members are carrying weapons.

Gang-related crime spikes specifically in areas entrenched in gang culture. For example, there are an estimated 3,500 gang members or associates in Monterey County, but most of them live in Salinas. In 2008, Salinas has 25 murders and 23 of them were gang-related. In 2009, Salinas witnessed an all time record high of 29 murders, all gang related, and 143 shootings.

At a time when we need to be encouraging new businesses in our community, gangs are scaring po-



tential investors. Further reducing an opportunity for families to find work.

## **PREVENTION IS THE SOLUTION**

Just saying “tough on crime” doesn’t work. I am not running for State Assembly to shake hands with police and sheriffs for a photo opportunity with the press.

Our community is in pain. We need a massive response to break the culture of violence.

In 1994, the death of nine-year old Jessica Cortez in Pajaro shattered my peaceful world. She and her 16-year old brother Jorge were killed running an errand for their mother at the local bakery. I was just a teenager myself. But the fact that a gang could execute a young girl for walking on the street at the wrong time seemed grossly unfair. Every year since then I have helped organize an annual peace march to build awareness for gang and domestic violence, and get the entire community involved in addressing this pressing issue.

Violence is a learned behavior. Preventive measures curb violence and can stop tragic deaths like Jessica Cortez. In high school, I resisted after-school trouble by focusing on sports. My wrestling coaches taught me focus and discipline. This is why on the City Council I have worked diligently to preserve summer programs for kids.

I have also worked to maintain neighborhood public safety services including mobile community ser-

vice centers where designated police officers work directly with a neighborhood most in need to resolve differences peacefully.

Prevention programs and strategies have proven track records in reducing violence. In Chicago, their CeaseFire program comprehensive coordination, communication, and attention to preventing violence have achieved drastically lower violence rates, including a 100 percent drop in retaliation murders. The city of Salinas has currently attempting a similar effort. In Minneapolis, the Violence Prevention Blueprint for Action had a 40 percent drop in juvenile crime in just two years.

### **AN ‘ALL-HANDS-ON-DECK’ APPROACH**

State and federal funding is directed to multiple locations with a mission to curb violence, but each program has a narrow scope and focus. According to a 2008 report by the Urban Networks to Increase Thriving Youth (UNITY), cities with the greatest coordinated approach to prevent and respond had the lowest rates of youth violence.

Some community leaders are calling for a Marshall Plan to end gang violence, and I agree. We can no longer take a piecemeal approach to an epidemic that costs California taxpayers billions of dollars a year. We need a comprehensive strategy with regional coordination between all community actors—political leaders, leaders of faith, healthcare professionals, business leaders, law enforcement, schools and child

development centers, parole and probation officers, and entertainment services.

We should look to proven models for guidance—such as Chicago and Minneapolis. Los Angeles ran a 12-week program with 24-hour intervention and saw miraculous results; in fact, youth crime dropped to zero. The 12-week project included activities to keep youth off the street. Activities included everything from midnight basketball, to 24-hour computer labs, radio station contests, recreation centers with Xbox and Wii, and free large-screen movies. For 12 weeks, gang-ridden neighborhoods had zero shootings, zero battery assaults, zero initiation rite gang rapes. But as soon as the 12-week pilot project was over, the youth crime resumed its previous levels.

### **IF YOU EARN YOUR WAY INTO PRISON, SERVE YOUR TIME.**

From the 1940s through the 1960s, California ran the nation's model of a correctional system. Our correctional programs pioneered effective strategies that duplicated in other states.

Today, California is known for our expansive prison system with nearly 170,000 inmates at the beginning of 2009. From 1980 to today, our prison population has increased by 700 percent.

We spend more than \$10 billion annually to run our corrections system, which averages to \$43,000 to incarcerate one adult in prison every year. Our prison system costs about 10 percent of the state budget,

equal to our investment to higher education. I would rather direct that funding to preventative measures, but for those individuals that commit violent crimes our correctional system needs to incarcerate for the full term of the sentence.

There are other ways to reduce spending in our court and correctional systems. Our court system should speed criminal trials. And unnecessary lawsuits that clog the courts should be stopped.

We should not look at cutting spending for correctional facilities that house violent criminals. If you earn your way into prison, you should serve your time. Instead of early release, our corrections system should educate the inmates with workforce skills to stop the cycle of incarceration.

### **“NOTHING STOPS A BULLET LIKE A JOB.”**

My own story is proof of what a fresh start can mean. I got put on a path to Harvard and UC Davis Law School. I came home to teach troubled teenagers and work in the Superior Court helping women and children, giving others the same kind of chance I was given.

I have seen how I can apply my education, networks and experience to make good changes here at home. I have served on the Santa Cruz County Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Commission because I want to serve as a role model for local youth, and hopefully inspire more to also come back home and give back to the community.

On the City Council, I made neighborhood safety and reducing gang violence a top priority, and I continue to hold neighborhood meetings with residents committed to deterring crime. I have led graffiti abatement efforts, improved our public art ordinance, and created a high school dropout prevention task force.

But as Father Gregory Boyle of Los Angeles once said, “Nothing stops a bullet like a job.” He’s right.

Education and job creation are the best tools to reduce gang violence. Studies in Los Angeles and Chicago show that giving gang members jobs and a steady paycheck reduces neighborhood violence. We need to stay focused on creating jobs and maintaining our investment in education.



# Growing agricultural awareness: support our local farmers.

*“The people of this Valley are the  
greatest asset. We have a history and  
tradition rich in agriculture.”*

—Luis Alejo

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## **AGRICULTURE PRIDE**

Farms and ranches paint the landscape of our California roads and highways. But farms today are nothing like their portrayal in movies from yesteryear, with a single farmer on a tractor plowing until sunset. Each farm and ranch today represents dozens of jobs and thousands of hours of hard labor. The result of which maintains California’s seat as the most productive agriculture industry growing some of the best produce in the nation and the rest of the world.

Here in the Golden State, we grow nearly half of the fruits, nuts and vegetables produced in the United States with less than 5 percent of the nation’s total farmland. We have nearly 90,000 farms and ranches spanning every corner of the state and have a cornucopia of 400 plant and animal commodities produced every year.

California also has more forestland than all other states with the exception of Alaska. Private timber owners in California plant seven new trees for each tree that is harvested. That works out to be 20-30 million new trees annually. In fact, it's estimated that we have 500 million trees and vines, which would produce enough oxygen to sustain the entire Los Angeles population.

This innovative industry uses cutting-edge technologies and agricultural economic practices to make California the most productive agricultural state for more than 50 years. Our dairy farmers use methane digesters to generate about \$1.6 million in electricity and divert over 400,000 tons of manure annually.

Biotechnology allows farmers to produce more food on less land. In 2005, biotech crops increased yields by 8.3 billion pounds.

Locally, our tradition of agriculture provides the finest quality food, flowers, and fiber for the global economy. Our farms and ranches are very much an important part of our community and local economy.

## **OUR GLOBAL ECONOMIC POWERHOUSE**

Our agriculture industry generates an estimated \$37 billion every year that then generates another \$100 billion in economic activity, including 1.1 million California jobs.

Milk remains our top farm commodity. Contrary to the belief that Wisconsin is the dairy capital of the

United States, the Golden State actually is the largest dairy producing state in the nation. We produce well over 20 percent of the milk supply for the country while Wisconsin produces less than 15 percent. In fact, each of the top ten commodities in our state is a world leader generating more than \$1 billion annually.

Although our primary consumers are Californians and the rest of the nation, our agricultural industry exports nearly 30 percent of our annual agricultural production to markets overseas to more than 150 countries. In 2007, our agricultural exports totaled well over \$10 billion.

Here at home, our farmers and ranchers provide food and flowers for families. In 2007, the Monterey County agricultural industry generated \$3.82 billion in agricultural production; Santa Cruz County generated \$485 million; and Santa Clara County generated \$254 million. Monterey County proudly leads the state in lettuce production and shares the lead title with Ventura County in strawberries production.

Our farms and ranches are an integral part of our economic health and our environmental landscape. Touring our valley, you may see broccoli, grapes, spinach, celery, strawberries, raspberries, Brussels sprouts, apples, mushrooms, bell peppers, tomatoes, cherries, grapes, or onions growing on family farms that date back generations.



## **PROTECTING A VALUABLE RENEWABLE RESOURCE**

In order to maintain our standing in the United States as the number one food and agricultural producer, we need to protect our natural resources and environment, balance fairness between farmer and farm worker, and create more opportunities for consumers to “buy California grown.”

Our local communities represent some of the finest in homegrown talent and optimism. Unfortunately, opportunities haven’t kept up with the demand. That’s why the slogan of my campaign is “Hope Grows Here.” I want it to symbolize my candidacy. We need to grow our local economy so that the next generation can raise their families here.

I went to school at Watsonville High School and left to graduate from Harvard University. But my heart has always remained here. It’s why I returned home. This part of the state cannot be replicated anywhere. And I know I’m not alone in my love of our valley. Our region was named one of the top ten of “Best Places to live in America” by Country Home Magazine.

We have a unique position and responsibility in California and the nation to ensure our position as the top agricultural producer. We’ve done it for the last fifty years and I want us to lead for the next fifty years.

But we have to grow new industries here that build off of those strengths. We can establish top-notch

research centers into plant biological and molecular processes that will increase crop productivity, efficiency and quality. By leading tomorrow's innovations in biotechnology, we can establish our region as the nation's capital for research and applied food sciences. Biotechnology and genetic engineering will provide a long-term path to growing our local economy by attracting scientists, specialized growers, students and entrepreneurs to invest our communities.

Sustainable growing practices and organic crop production will also encourage agricultural distributors to establish trade facilities here to help market our homegrown products around the world. And we should explore creating more economic incentives for more food processing plants to locate here. It doesn't make economic sense to ship food across the state to be processed somewhere far removed from its agricultural origin.

Sprawl continually threatens to consume valuable resource farmlands. Our focus instead should be to use existing developed land more efficiently to accommodate the growing population while continuing to supply that population with safe, affordable and reliable food.

We need to think of our farmland as long-term investments. If prime agricultural farmland is developed for housing, transportation, or commerce, then that land no longer has renewable resource potential. You can't build a second house on top of an existing

house. But as farmland, that soil can be turned over, fertilized and new crops grown to put food on the tables of California families year after year.

## **MAINTAINING THE SUCCESS OF THE WILLIAMSON ACT**

The future of the California Land Conservation Act of 1965, more commonly referred to as the Williamson Act, is in jeopardy. The Williamson Act was enacted in a time in history with rapid urbanization and massive development in rural areas of our state. Throughout its history, the Williamson Act program is credited for protecting our state's prime agricultural land and open space.

Here's how the program works. The Williamson Act allows local governments to enter into contracts with private landowners to restrict using parcels of land to agricultural or open space. In return, landowners receive property tax assessments that are much lower than normal because they are based upon farming and open space uses as opposed to full market value. Local governments are encouraged to participate because the loss in revenues, the difference in the foregone property tax values, is made up by a payment from the state every year.

Statewide, we have about 16 million acres that are protected under a Williamson Act contract. The Department of Conservation says that's about one-third of all privately held land in the state, and about one half of all the state's agricultural land.

I've spoken to many farmers in our valley who rely upon the Williamson Act contract and the lower property tax assessments in order to accurately budget for upcoming crops. Without the Williamson Act protections, many of our local farmers fear that they will be unable to continue to work their land.

Unfortunately, the Legislature is again looking at the Williamson Act as a cost-saving measure. The subvention payments the state makes to the local governments to make up the difference in the property tax assessments has never been guaranteed.

This year's state budget reduced payments to the local governments to just \$1,000. The state Department of Conservation still has the Williamson Act in place with staff, but this reduction takes money out of the hands of local governments. Counties that are hurt most are those that rely heavily upon the agricultural industry, like the counties in our valley.

The Williamson Act contracts between the local government and the private landowners also remain in place for the time being. But local governments and the private landowners both have the option to non-renew the contracts.

Members of the Legislature and the Department of Conservation have said that they are hopeful the Williamson Act program will continue to have a positive impact on land-use planning and agriculture once the economy rebounds. But I think that putting the Williamson Act program on life-support is the wrong course of action. Our farms and ranches are

generating billions of dollars in revenue and supporting thousands of families.

We should be looking at ways to creating new jobs here in California as a way to balance the budget, not cutting proven successful programs that benefit thousands of working men and women.

It's a step in the wrong direction that I fear will move us deeper into a recession instead of building upon a momentum to move us up and out of this recession.

### **SUPPORT OUR LOCAL FARMERS**

Our local institutions that are funded by tax-payer dollars should practice "buying locally." Buying locally is a movement that has gained popularity over the last few years for a number of reasons. Food that was grown in your local community is fresher, picked closer to its peak of ripeness, and tastes better than food shipped long distances from other states or countries.

All local government contracts should be reviewed to give priority to local farms and ranches for vegetable and fruit procurement. These institutions are community leaders and must lead by example. For example, our public safety organizations should buy locally. Firefighters should buy fruits and vegetables from farms in their community when purchasing food for their firehouse. And local governments can mandate that law enforcement buy locally for their jail procurements.

Our public schools, community colleges, and California State University, Monterey Bay should also give first priority to our local farms and ranches. And on the state level, we should mandate that our prisons give priority to California farmers and ranchers for food procurement.

We as individuals can also do more to support our local farms and the thousands of hard-working men and women that grow the food for our families. California has over 400 communities with farmers' markets. We should all support our local certified farmers' markets.

Vegetables and fruits that are shipped from other states and other countries can spend up to two weeks in transit before arriving in the supermarket. In order to sustain the shipment process, those vegetables and fruits are likely genetically altered and chemically treated to ripen "off the vine." Their nutritional value diminishes and they do not taste the same as produce picked when ripe.

Supporting your local farmers also keeps dollars circulating in your own community, further helping your community's social services like parks and law enforcement.

## **QUALITY WATER SUPPLY FOR OUR FUTURE**

California has run out of abundant water, an essential resource for families and farmers alike as well as the delicate ecosystems of our great state. Years of dry

weather and minimal rainfall have depleted reservoirs and groundwater basins. Without quality water, we cannot sustain life and good health.

Water scarcity emphasizes the need for better water management. Our groundwater resources are continually overdrawn in many locations throughout the state. And most of our river flows have already been allocated, in some cases multiple times. In fact, more than 90 percent of California's lakes, rivers, and streams were listed as "impaired" by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 2004, meaning they could not be used for one or more of their intended uses, including drinking water, irrigation, fishing, and swimming.

New laws to protect one water source in one region many times have a negative impact on water demands in other regions of the state. For example, our state has new environmental restrictions on shipping water through the Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta in order to protect the Delta's ecosystem. But these new restrictions have intensified water supply concerns in southern urban centers and farming regions alike.

Healthy ecosystems provide significant value to the California economy and they must be maintained on our list of priorities. Twenty-two percent of the state's 122 remaining native fish species are already listed as "threatened" or "endangered" under the federal Endangered Species Act. Another 45 percent are very close to making the "endangered" listing.

Still, many opportunities exist for mutually beneficial water management. More than a thousand local and regional water agencies are responsible for water delivery, wastewater treatment, and flood control. There are a dozen more agencies on the state and federal levels.

Our public agencies must work together to guide our state on water policy on both short-term and long-term public policies to decrease water scarcity. Our water policies must ensure an affordable and sustainable quality water supply for our families, businesses, farmers, and ecosystems. We must aggressively pursue a comprehensive plan including conservation, distribution, and flood protection in order to meet the demands of the next generations.





# Conclusion

*“I think true leadership is best shown during challenging times.”*

—Luis Alejo

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A theologian by the name Reinhold Niebuhr once wrote, “God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; the courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference.” It will take courage to be a strong leader in this time of trial in Sacramento.

A failed public policy has hit our economy hard. People have lost their jobs and their homes. When people don't work, they don't pay taxes. And that is the true reason for California's budget crisis.

My job, if elected, will be to help as many people as I can to get a job. No government program can help California's men and women more than going to work every day.

Our valley has always had its challenges, but we have confronted them with common sense, resiliency, and perseverance. The people, cultures, and rich agricultural land really make our home a wonderful place to live.

I know we can recover—get people back to work, back into their homes, and back into the middle class.

It will take focus and determination. Some choices may not be easy. But it's time to put politics aside and serve the people of California.

I appreciate your consideration for Assembly.



## Luis Alejo

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Luis Alejo... from Watsonville High to **Harvard University**... and back. Luis came back home to **teach troubled kids in alternative high school.**

Luis... a **Superior Court Attorney** helping **protect abused women and children.** The Democratic Party's **John F. Kennedy Award Winner.**

Luis... **nominated Barack Obama** for President. **Campaigned with President Obama's sister, Maya.** **Winner of the United Way Community Hero Award.**

