
Guest Column: Senator McGuire comes to town

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Del Norte’s State Senator dropped up to congratulate newly-appointed Crescent City Fire and Rescue Chief Kevin Carey, last week.

Mike McGuire held an invitation-only Town Hall at the Crescent City Fire and Rescue station. I was fortunate to waggle an invite despite the fact I didn’t share the capital “D” behind my name.

Nonetheless, McGuire delivered an “I have a Dream” type update to an audience of about 40 like- thinking City, County elected and community scions – all the news that’s fit to print from the Office of the Senate Majority Leader. If nothing else, the presentation was impressive. Sans any written notes, McGuire was articulate and commanding as any politician I’ve seen. He is very smooth.

McGuire reported that when he entered office in 2015, California was dead last among the 50 states in per pupil spending. Now, as the Senator is about to enter his third and final term-limited State Senate seat, he proudly reports per pupil spending in the Golden State is now in the top ten of all states in K-12.

As a retired Multi-Subject CLAD Certificated teacher, I'm thrilled the state has made this financial commitment. Now, we anxiously await pupil reading and math scores which at present situate just above Mississippi, which dismally remains the lowest in the United States. Sadly, Del Norte Unified School District reading and math scores languish in the bottom 25 percent of State reading scores.

Without looking at a single note, McGuire reported a \$9 billion K-12 block grant with the following funding:

- \$250 million for school counselor recruitment. If counselors will travel and relocate to rural areas like Del Norte for a minimum of two years, the public-funded loans will be forgiven.
- Another \$250 million to expand school nursing recruitment.
- \$1.5 billion will be allocated for new school buses, and \$1 billion for drivers. The Senator did not specify if new vehicle purchases will be internal combustion engine or electric; I suspect the latter.
- Cal Poly Humboldt will now offer a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing.
- Another \$900 million in funding will be dedicated to vocational education, because, in the words of Sen. McGuire, "College is not for everyone."

Spend, Spend Spend! How will the State afford all this aggressive spending?

McGuire reported Last Chance Grade has narrowed the road options down to two: the tunnel option, or rebuilding the existing alignment option.

McGuire doubled down on addressing the homeless problem: \$14 billion will be allocated for low income, no-income housing with the catch phrase "wrap-around" services for three years. Taxpayers will pay the tab, including drug, alcohol and mental health services.

The question begs to be asked: Who will pay for these wraparound services in years four to infinity? McGuire spoke to the choir (audience) stating, conditions created by the homeless are "appallingly, unacceptable, and we need to do more."

Question: Who pays for the "must do more" action item? The audience quietly and respectfully listened like Easter Island statues.

Answer: The already tax-weary middle class.

The state does not exactly have a stellar track record when it comes to spending. Rather than fixing the problem and actually improving conditions, it grows the problem and massively expands the footprint of more government oversight.

McGuire again underscored the proposed "Community Assistance, Recovery, and Empowerment" (CARE) Court. The Board of Supervisors apparently is none too happy with SB1338 CARE Court, and has sent a Letter of Opposition.

McGuire also proposed two crisis residential centers, one to be located in Eureka and the other in Crescent City. These centers could hold 5150 psychiatric patients for periods of 30 to 45 days.

Folks, Senator McGuire was transparent in expressing his vision. What was glaringly missing from this presentation was any reference to you and I, the middle class.

Senator McGuire did not mention even once the horrific inflation rate from which so many of us are suffering, and the highest fuel prices in the Lower 48. Almost everyone in the audience of mostly government and elected officials has either a government credit card or mileage reimbursement, or has no problem absorbing the outrageously high prices for everything which moves by truck.

The good Senator and staff arrived and departed in their sleek, black Suburban, five SUVs short of a six-limousine Presidential motorcade, with no worry on how to fill the tank. It doesn't seem quite fair.

Indeed, the Senator will continue to serve this Senate district, which stretches from Marin County to the Oregon state line. His 72 percent district-wide Primary election victory did not come with the consent of local voters.

Unknown Republican candidate Gene Yoon actually beat McGuire 55 to 45 percent in Del Norte County.

Does Senator McGuire represent the interests of Del Norte County?

Roger Gitlin is a retired Supervisor for Del Norte County.