

Column: GOP ready to retake California

By Bob Huff

We've seen the election results. We have read the polls, too. It's no secret that Republicans are not doing well in California. Statewide, our party registration is down. There's not one statewide Republican elected official in California. There's no argument that we Republicans have our work cut out for us. It is our job to reach out to all Californians. We start this work by renewing our faith that Californians want a government that works for all.

While the other party is coasting along on its cushion of public support, it's crystal clear that we Republicans don't have that luxury. If our party is going to survive in California, it is our responsibility to reach out and build trust with the people. And building that trust depends on connecting with voters who have come to distrust who Republicans are, though not necessarily what we stand for.

Talk is one thing, but actions speak louder than words. This year, Republican lawmakers are working to re-build trust with Californians. We're doing this through a series of legislative efforts and policy initiatives that demonstrate we're on the side of everyday Californians. We're out to make it clear that Republicans believe in government. And just as important, while we're at work in Sacramento, we're going to do everything we can to ensure that our state government actually does what it's supposed to do, and that is serve the people of California.

We see some opportunities to do that because frankly, with the other party in charge, the people are not doing so well. Jobs remain scarce while the cost of living keeps going up. We pay

more for gas, but our streets are full of potholes. The other party, the party that controls how government works in California, is taking its cushion of public support for granted. That explains why the other party has made it clear they are focused on what works best for government. In case after case, the other party is taking care of government and its workers, and is placing the needs of the people on the back burner.

It's no secret why this is the case. The other party enjoys the solid support of the groups and associations that represent government workers. That's nice if you work for government, and it pays off for the other party on Election Day, but it leaves the rest of us out in the cold. However, that cozy connection also ties the hand of the other party. They are more than loyal to the government worker groups because they have become dependent on the government worker funding stream. It's that misplaced loyalty that has forced the other party to choose between serving the public, or serving the public workers. Their choice is crystal clear.

Look at the evidence piling up. Whether it's protecting bad teachers who are hurting our kids or public transit workers who throw up strike lines in order to line their pockets at the public's expense, the other party must be held accountable for siding with the public workers over the public. This is what Republicans are doing in 2014. And by doing so, Republican lawmakers are getting the chance to show that we are worthy of your trust and support. We get to show why we count, too. Look at these cases where the other party has turned its back on the people, and what Republicans are doing about it.

Schools and colleges – Instead of passing the next round of tuition increases at our public colleges, Republicans are working to take the waste and fraud out of college administration. For instance, was it really necessary to hire the former U.S. Director of Homeland Security to run the University of California, and then pay her three times what

she was getting at her last job?

The other party also fights Republican efforts to put students first. Our kids deserve safe schools and the best possible teacher in every classroom, but when our kids are being sexually molested in public classrooms and still we can't pass a solid bill to protect them, it's clear the other party is no longer on the side of kids and parents.

Small efforts like opening up teacher classroom assignments based on skills and need instead of time on the job, or making sure kids can attend any school they can get to, is what Republicans stand for and we're fighting to make those changes the reality.

Public transit – The other party has made it clear that, more and more, everyday Californians will have to rely on public transit as a way of life. What they've failed to do is make sure that public transit is reliable. That's not the case today, as was evident during last year's two BART strikes. California Republicans have offered legislation to ban public transit strikes throughout the state. The other party killed my bill to do that at its first committee hearing, but my Republican colleagues in the Assembly are giving it another try this year. We must make sure that trains and buses show up as reliably as the six-figure salaries BART station agents get to take home.

Health care – We have to make sure that as California's version of Obamacare, Covered California, rolls out in the coming months that the new health care system works as well as it can. People's lives and families have been put at risk. As the legislature and governor roll out their new system, Republicans will stand for making sure that money spent by Covered California goes to patient care first and bureaucrats last. Health care reform is not an excuse for a government hiring spree. If we don't take care now, in a few years we'll find ourselves saddled with a health care system that passes

out better benefits to the people shuffling papers behind the counter than the people walking in the door for treatment.

Water – While the other party is busy these days running around declaring droughts, Republicans have been working for years to increase California's water supply. Meanwhile, the other party has been at work deciding how much water should go to fish and how much human beings should get. This year, Republicans will keep trying to get the other party to finally let the people vote on a water bond they agreed to in 2009 but have kept off the ballot ever since. Even now, in a drought, the leaders of the other party won't commit to a water plan that increases the supply of fresh, clean water for all. So what's the point of spending billions of dollars for a water bond that doesn't guarantee any new water?

Jobs – Except for a handful of government positions, the other party continues to fail miserably at creating new jobs. California's unemployment rate remains stubbornly high, yet the fastest growing industry in California is government. In fact, 25 years ago California had some two million manufacturing jobs, and just 800,000 people working for government. Today, those numbers are just the opposite. Instead of seeing cargo ships at the Port of Oakland heading out to sea full of goods made here, we're seeing ships coming in to port loaded with goods from overseas. Good, solid paying jobs are what lead families to pride and prosperity. California families deserves better.

As we press these cases to the public, Republicans hope to gain more influence in Sacramento, and to be trusted by more Californians to represent their interests in 2014 and beyond. And it's just as clear that the other party has no interest in offering up the real reforms that Californians want and deserve.

California deserves a government that works for everyone. And that's why there's room, and relevance, for Republicans in

California in 2014 and beyond.

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