

INSIDE TUCSON BUSINESS

RETIREMENT IS FOR THE GOATS

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OPINION: Vote yes on Prop 200

Public Safety Initiative an unfunded mandate? Nonsense

Let's be very clear - Proposition 200 only requires the City of Tucson to follow through on public safety improvements that were adopted by Mayor and Council in the 2006 Sustainability Plan.

Does the City of Tucson have the money to pay for:

- Emergency vehicle response times of four minutes or less 90 percent of the time?
- At least 260 more police officers over the next five years?

The answer to both questions is yes! There is money to pay for these things; it is simply a matter of *priorities and political will*. These are difficult times but we expect our city's political leaders to make those difficult decisions. They have not.

So why are city staff and many council members speaking out against implementing their own plan? They claim it ties their hands. That is exactly right. They are angry and petulant because voters are telling them they have not made good decisions. The council has failed to keep its promises. When politicians are irresponsible with taxpayer money, the citizens must take action to get things back on track. That is why more than 18,000 city voters demanded



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that Proposition 200 be put on the ballot.

Members of the city council say they remain committed to the Sustainability Plan and its associated costs which were identified in 2006. The cry that

Proposition 200 will cost extra money is clearly untrue — it won't cost one more dime over what the city already intends to spend. Proposition 200 brings absolutely no new costs and no new taxes. Nor does it require any cuts to the city budget. Funding for public safety is already mandated in the city charter through the general fund.

Proposition 200 just gets a wayward council back on track. The initiative specifies "when" the already adopted Sustainability Plan will be fully implemented and eliminates the ability of council members to renege on their promises.

The city has positioned this issue to the voters as having only two options — cut

services or raise taxes — that's a false choice.

There are other choices that can be made: better fiscal management of our city's resources and planning for economic recovery. How, in this economy, could our city council have said "no" to selling or leasing a prime piece of downtown real estate (estimated by some to be worth as much as \$4 million) and instead agree to lease it to a local arts group for \$1 per year? City officials have projected no revenue increase for the next five years, even when confronted by a growing economy. It would take less than a 1 percent increase next year to fund the costs for the Public Safety Initiative — much less than the \$4 million they irresponsibly said "no" to in favor of a sweetheart deal with the Museum Of Contemporary Art for \$1 a year.


City Manager Michael Letcher has already admitted he was "overzealous" in saying the city would close the Reid Park Zoo. How soon will we hear he is also being "overzealous" in scaring every social service and arts programs with similar threats?

Threatening to shut down social services, close parks and let city streets go to ruin are among the many other unfounded threats

the opponents of Proposition 200 and the city manager's office have put forth to the public. City government is using scare tactics and disinformation to influence the outcome of the election.

Pima County officials' recent cry that Proposition 200 will create the need for a new jail is yet another example. Sheriff Clarence Dupnik identified the need for a new jail as far back as October 2007. At that time, the sheriff identified a new jail as one of "three high priority projects" to Pima County's Justice and Law Enforcement Bond Subcommittee.

Proposition 200 demands action from city government to ensure that fire fighters and emergency medical personnel can reach you or your loved ones in time, reduce our high crime rates, get School Resource Officers back where they belong and stem the recent rash of home invasions.

 Bill Arnold is chair of the Public Safety First Campaign promoting Proposition 200. The campaign's website is at www.keeptucsonsafe.com