

County must fund fire departments

JIM RIORDAN | Cameron Park | March 29, 2009 12:42

EDITOR:

Open letter to El Dorado County Supervisor John Knight: This newspaper reported that you said, "Fire districts should reach out to their communities for financial support."

I have two objections to such a concept. First, your constituents are already "contributing to police, fire and other essential services" through the payment of hefty and burdensome property taxes. It is the Board of Supervisors' responsibility to provide essential fire and law enforcement services to everyone on an equal basis within the budget available to you before funding other non-essential "departments of worthless services."

Further, our fire departments should not be tasked to walk the streets and beg for local dollars just to keep their doors open. There are many who believe that governmental bloating and "over-regulation" are much bigger problems for our economy. Sierra Pacific has cited such regulatory excesses as a principal reason for closing its mill in our community. Let's get to work on fixing that problem.

My second objection is to the obvious disparity among the various fire districts within our county. Why are some districts building fully staffed and fully equipped fire suppression facilities while other districts are barely able to keep their doors open? And to these underprivileged districts, your response is that they need to go out and get more financial support from their communities. That might be easy for El Dorado Hills, but rather difficult for Rescue, Somerset or Diamond Springs. Shouldn't the county strive to increase response times for all of its residents as its primary responsibility? I believe all county residents should be entitled to equal treatment and funding, adequate for its population base, to provide equal response time for all when it comes to fire and law enforcement before any other departments of worthless services get one dime.

I have recently had the opportunity to review some of our local fire budgets and there is no fat to cut there, so please, instead, try downsizing the staffs of your departments of worthless services and call for volunteers ... you know, like our fire departments do and our Sheriff's Department does. If no one shows up to volunteer, I think you would have to agree that I am not the only one who considers them "worthless services" unworthy of further funding.