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Alameda County
Supervisor Keith Carson, Fifth District

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PRESS RELEASE

“It’s like being asked who should sink and who should swim.”

In contrast to the State Legislature, the Alameda County Board of Supervisors passed a balanced budget on June 25, on time and without borrowing or accumulating more debt. The cost in human terms, however, will be great. Across the board County services were cut leaving many of the most vulnerable populations at a greater risk. County Supervisors gritted their teeth as they made surgical cuts. “Unlike many in the State Legislature or the Governor, we have to look into the eyes of the people hurt by all of this,” Supervisor Keith Carson said.

As Chair of the Budget Work Group, Supervisor Carson led a year-long effort -- along with the County Administrator and department heads -- to draft and present a balanced budget. A \$178 million budget gap -- in part the result of plummeting real estate values and a subsequent drop in county tax revenue -- was filled employing a variety of strategies, both one-time solutions and strategic ones. Still there were no easy solutions. Since 2008, the County has been forced to eliminate 235 positions. “Between being forced to cut programs that serve the poorest of the poor and having no choice but to eliminate jobs for people who have families and work very hard, it is very difficult for me to sleep at night,” Carson said. “It’s like being asked who should sink and who should swim.”

To make matters worse, once Sacramento approves a budget it is expected they will rob Peter to pay Paul. Alameda County may have up to \$200 million *more* expropriated by the State to balance their books. In preparation for just such a scenario, the Board of supervisors set aside \$6.5 million to cover any such state-sponsored shortfalls.

Even with the largest budget gap in Alameda County history, there were some bright spots. The County will continue to reduce its carbon footprint through sustainability and transportation initiatives; it will maintain programs that provide work experience opportunities at the Fresh Start Café and for former foster youth through the Independent Living Skills Program and it will provide health services to 6,700 children and youth County wide in 23 schools. However, a host of programs and services provided to the people of Alameda County, including a multitude of health services, road and bridge maintenance and repair, AIDS and HIV prevention, domestic violence shelters, senior citizen support, to name a few, may very well be put on the chopping block.

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