

Daily Breeze

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INSIGHT

State GOP alive and kicking

By Shawn Steel

Some political observers contend that the Republican Party is an "endangered species" in California. In reality, exactly the opposite is the case. Californians are overwhelmingly embracing the leadership of President Bush and are turning en masse to the Republican Party. The same cannot be said of the party of Gov. Gray Davis.

In California in 2001, more than 120,000 more voters joined the Republican Party than joined the Democrats. This trend started in early 2001, picked up pace through the rolling blackouts of Davis' energy debacle and accelerated at a rapid pace following the events of Sept. 11.

Today, 80 percent of California's registered voters approve of the job that Bush is doing (Public Policy Institute of California poll, Jan. 17), while most are disinclined to re-elect Davis (Field poll, Jan. 31).

Residents of this great state are hungry for Republican alternatives to turn around our flailing state government. Every day Californians are bombarded with more bad news on state budget numbers, our failing schools, the looming effects of Davis' energy crisis or whatever his administration's catastrophe du jour may be. The past four years in our state government have been

anything but the model of efficiency that Gray's recent multimillion-dollar ad campaign is touting.

Davis has earned a reputation as a superb political fund-raiser and a bumbling chief executive during his tenure as governor. Want the proof that Davis takes the "govern" out of "governor"? Check out his latest budget proposal. The Davis budget aims to delay any real decisions on the crises that have developed under his mismanagement until after the election. Rather than propose a plan, Davis has turned to creative accounting techniques, coupled with a mortgage on the state's future, to fulfill his constitutional obligation of turning in a balanced budget for 2002. In doing this, his inaction once again compounds the problem as both the crisis and the state deficit grows.

The last time Davis did call the shots in a time of crisis, he locked the state into more than 20 years of inflated energy contracts totaling \$43 billion. That \$43 billion divided by the population of California leaves more than \$1,200 for every man, woman and child in the state, just to compensate for the contracts that Davis signed in 2001. Couple these inevitable electricity rate increases with Davis' \$1.2 billion in sales taxes that kicked in Jan. 1, and you have a burden that falls almost solely on

the backs of the working class. Californians do not need to hear more of Davis' incessant spin on these numbers, they need a new leader with the vision to turn this state around.

Also, the enduring costs of Davis' politics-first style of governance would burden California taxpayers for decades if he were to leave office today. Our children literally and figuratively cannot afford four more years of Davis' mismanagement. In 2002, California needs a leader with the vision to lead our state out of the red, and put us back on the track toward fiscal responsibility.

This year Californians will be faced with real choices about the future of their state. Three strong candidates are vying for the Republican gubernatorial nomination. All of them are capable of leading California out of the crises that have spawned under Gray Davis. On March 5, Republican voters will select the candidate we believe can lead our state back to the prosperity that California has known in the past, and that its residents deserve in the future. The November election will be a referendum on the past four years of the Davis administration.

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