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The New Year will dawn on us in a few short days, so it must be the Christmas season. That is how it works, right? We make our lists of presents, check them twice, and eagerly anticipate our gifts. Don't worry if your shopping isn't done, though. Or that the calendar reads June. It really will soon be New Year's and the Christmas wish lists are being written right now.

This imminent New Year, of course, is the new fiscal year which starts on July 1 for California municipal and county governments; the wish lists are the budgets those governments, and myriad government agencies, are preparing and voting on in the last few weeks of June. The amount of money – of your tax dollars – that they plan to spend this Yule Season is truly staggering.

Let me take a minute to detail a few of those government and agency budgets, and explain why I have taken the role lately of Scrooge rather than Santa Claus.

The Orange County budget was considered by the Board of Supervisors at our June 11 meeting. While it is a spending wish list in excess of \$6.5 billion dollars, the amount over which the Board has any actual discretion and control is only a bit over \$900 million. Admittedly, I voted for the majority of that spending. Orange County has long been unfairly treated by the legislators in Sacramento who return to us only about six cents of every dollar that Orange County taxpayers generously send to them. Surrounding counties like Los Angeles and

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District Map



Anaheim, Irvine, Orange, Tustin, Villa Park, Yorba Linda, El Modena, North Tustin, Orange Park Acres, the Canyon Communities

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San Diego receive considerably more of their dollars back. If Orange County received an amount equal to that given to Los Angeles, we would have multiple billions, not just about \$900 million, to address our issues of increasing crime, needed wildfire protection, or even homelessness.

But I didn't vote for all of the proposed County budgets. For example, a line item in it offered a bit less than \$1 million to a separate government agency called LAFCO. (The acronym stands for Local Area Formation Commission.) My problem with its budget is the hefty raise of more than 25% that it gives to its staff. I recognize that LAFCO staff does a lot of very good work and has been underpaid with respect to some surrounding counties – because of that wide disparity mentioned earlier. But a raise in excess of 25% is too much. County employees will not be getting that much this year. I could not vote for a budget giving that to LAFCO.

Another government's budgetary wish list that was too generous to itself, and which drew my Scrooge-like opposition, was from the Transportation Corridor Agency, the toll roads folks. My problem here is that the organization runs a large surplus, but still asked for another toll increase. The TCA explained the increase as needed to assure financial stability in future years as its financing obligations increase. That explanation is not unreasonable, but the timing is bad. You just saw your gas taxes increase at a time when Californians already pay the nation's highest gas taxes. Commuting in Orange County has become increasingly costly. Moreover, it appears that the economy might be slowing down. On principle, it seems wrong to pile on our commuters even a little bit more when, today, that increase is not needed for current operations.

Then there was the budget for the Orange County Transportation Agency which I opposed. I believe the OCTA is well managed and its proposed budget heading into the fiscal New Year is sound, with one exception. The OCTA plans to continue spending multiple millions of dollars on the Santa Ana Streetcar project, a project that costs millions of dollars per mile without necessarily having the support of the local community and the businesses it ostensibly exists to serve but will disrupt significantly during construction. I voted no on the OCTA budget because I believe the streetcar project should be reconsidered. Perhaps it can make sense economically and as a component of Orange County's transportation

system. But that case has not been made. This item should come off OCTA's wish list.

Governments and agencies around Orange County are writing their budgets for you, the taxpayer, to play Santa. But taxpayers cannot give them everything they want any more than children can always get everything on their Christmas lists. Someone has to play the occasional Grinch.

Happy (fiscal) New Year! Party responsibly.

Tackling Negotiations: Irvine Lake Could Reopen This Summer



Irvine Lake has sat vacant for nearly 4 years. Supervisor Wagner led negotiations with key entities to bring this vital resource back to the public.

On June 25, the Board of Supervisors passed a 5-0 vote, marking a monumental step towards reopening Irvine Lake.

The Orange County community is buzzing with excitement about shoreline fishing. Below are some happy comments from the Supervisor's [Facebook](#) page:

"Thank you, Supervisor! Now I can take my grandchildren fishing there" - Tony R. Valdez

"Thank you, Don!!! I remember fishing there with my brother... Such a great place. Beats having to travel out of the county for decent fishing! Thank you again!" - Tony Tripp

"As a family-friendly fishing team that has many members that have spent decades fishing at this lake and spreading the joy of the great outdoors to kids we thank you for helping facilitate the reopening of this gem in Orange County!!!! Team57 thanks you more than you know!!!!" - Dan Fityone

"Beyond excellent news, Irvine Lake is a very special place for many of us. I can't wait to cast that first line at 'The Vine'" - Aaron Titleman

"Thank you, Don Wagner, from all the families with valuable memories of that lake, including mine!" - Royal Hunter

For more details on this story, please read Supervisor Wagner's interview in the [OC Register](#).

Movie Magic Pet Fair This Saturday!

Supervisor Wagner is super excited to present:

**MOVIE MAGIC
PET FAIR 2019**
Pet & Community Vendors | Animal Rescues | Pet Demonstrations
Food Trucks & Fun for the Entire Family!

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Saturday, June 29th
11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

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Fire Safety Evacuations: Remember the 6 P's



IN CASE IMMEDIATE EVACUATION IS
REQUIRED, REMEMBER THE

SIX P's



- P**EOPLE and pets
- P**APERS, phone numbers, and important documents
- P**RESCRIPTIONS, vitamins, and eyeglasses
- P**ICTURES and irreplaceable memorabilia
- P**ERSONAL COMPUTER hard drive and disks
- P**LASTIC (credit cards, ATM cards) and cash



Questions, comments, or want to share the latest in your community? Please ring our staff at: (714) 834-3330 or email Rachel Lurya at: Rachel.Lurya@ocgov.com

