

Wednesday, September 23, 2020

Editorial

The EDD and real people staying afloat

It was already widely apparent to everyone that California's Employment Development Department was ill-suited to the task of handling unemployment claims. But we have a clearer picture of just how bad things have been with the recently released report by the "strike team" ordered by Gov. Gavin Newsom to assess what was going on at the EDD.

The "strike team," announced by Newsom in July, detailed a litany of problems, including the overwhelming of call centers and technological problems.

But one of the main take-aways was put forward clearly: "Good government in 2020 that is responsible to its citizens requires people who know how to integrate new technology tools into departmental operations and programs, with policies and processes that are revisited and updated constantly to achieve the desired programmatic goals."

California government agencies and departments need to get with the times. With millions of Californians put out of work in the blink of an eye, it's understandable to an extent that the EDD would be overwhelmed with the responsibility at hand.

But the widespread complaints and reports of delayed responses from EDD and difficulty getting information underscore the need for California to get EDD right.

According to an overview by the Legislative Analyst's Office on July 30, while the average weekly number of unemployment claims filed per week in normal times was around 50,000, since early March that number has averaged as much as 400,000. Behind those numbers are real people just trying to stay afloat, pay their bills, put food on the table and support themselves and their families, which is why it's so im-

portant that EDD function as effectively as possible.

Even with the aid of \$120 million in grants and funds from the federal government to assist with handling increased unemployment claims, from May to June, just 62% of unemployment claims resulted in payments being issued within 21 days. This compared to a national average of 69%.

"The state that's the center of the global computer industry should be at the forefront of service, not the end," noted Sen. John Moorlach, R-Costa Mesa, in a statement. "The governor should have people working around the clock to fix this problem."

These sentiments are non-partisan in nature.

"EDD has become, in the last six months, what is worst about government," said Assemblyman Davis Chiu, D-San Francisco, in response to the report, according to KCRA 3. "Many of us are very concerned that this will be too little, too late for Californians who've been desperately waiting for benefits since the early part of the pandemic."

We reiterate a point we've made few times since we backed calls by Assemblyman Jim Patterson, R-Fresno, for an audit of EDD on July 1. Sacramento must focus more on fixing practical, basic issues like the hand. If Sacramento had a culture of doing so, perhaps some of the worst of the EDD meltdown might've been avoided.

Endorsement

Chad Mayes for Assembly District 42

Try as he might, Chad Mayes just can't evade the partisan furries that have consumed California for years. But voters can, by re-electing Chad Mayes to represent Assembly District 42.

A former Republican leader in the Assembly, and self-described "governing conservative," Mayes is now the Legislature's lone independent.

Mayes is instinctively conservative and pragmatic in his approach to government, particularly as regards fiscal matters, where his kind of prudence will be essential as the state spends itself deeper and deeper into debt.

Recognizing that, whether as a Republican or independent, his perspective is in the superminority, Mayes has positioned himself as a conservative willing to work with Democrats on areas of mutual agreement and to help mitigate the harms of legislation in the works.

Over the years, Mayes has amassed a record that is generally pro-business, supportive of charter schools and supportive of police reforms (having voted in support of asset-forfeiture reform and raising the bar for when police can use deadly force).

Mayes is solid on legislative

experience and keen to address some of California's most pressing needs — among them reforming the California Environmental Quality Act, re-examining land-management policies in the light of recent wildfires and addressing the California Rule that makes it nearly impossible to reform the pension system.

None of this is to say Mayes' record is sure to please everyone, or even us. For instance, he voted against Senate Bill 1421, which released police misconduct records, and he didn't cast a vote either way on Assembly Bill 5, which should've been an easy "no" vote. To his credit, Mayes has since voted to exempt several professions from AB 5.

Mayes' Republican challenger, San Jacinto Councilman Andrew Kotyuk, is an earnest conservative who, if elected, would likely overall vote similarly to Mayes, but with a more consistently conservative approach. Ultimately, though, we think Mayes' approach and independent status is the best fit to represent the broadest proportion of the district.

Mayes is a thoughtful, experienced lawmaker, deserving of voters' support in Assembly District 42.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Why the region needs the UCR School of Public Policy

By Rick Bishop, Paulette Brown-Hinds, Ron Loveridge, Tyler Madary, Grover Trask

The air you breathe. The water you drink. The education and health care you receive. The public safety you deserve. These are essential public policy issues most citizens want carefully analyzed and effectively addressed by our leaders.

Despite being only six years old, UCR's School of Public Policy (SPP) has already established itself as a vital, impactful resource in addressing these and many other issues that policymakers in the Inland region face.

The major universities in Southern California all have effective and vital public policy schools. Public policy schools are likewise increasing and expanding at the top tier universities across the country. They recognize the importance of connecting faculty research with real time issues and problems.

A recent news story suggested that elimination or significant downsizing of SPP was a cost-cutting option being considered by UCR. Below, we offer several reasons why SPP must be maintained.

First, SPP plays a crucial role in training the future policy leaders for our region. Offering the only public policy undergraduate program in the entire UC system, SPP has already graduated several hundred students. As our region grows rapidly over the next decade, we will continue to need well-trained SPP graduates to lead the way in shaping sustainable and equitable growth in our communities.

Second, SPP faculty and students are producing impactful research for informing policy in the region — whether that be in water conservation, health disparities, civic engagement, immigrant integration, criminal justice reform, and minority entrepreneurship development. This research improves the quality of policymaking and thus the quality of life for all of us who live in Inland Southern California.

Some examples of SPP's many contributions to the region include:



TERRY PIERSON — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Some UC Riverside students wear masks to protect themselves from a possible coronavirus infection as others do not on campus in Riverside in March. The region needs the UCR School of Public Policy.

- Bringing together nearly a hundred organizations to plan for a better, more equitable, and sustained economy for our two counties. Inland Economic Growth and Opportunity (IEGO) was the first time in the history of Inland Southern California that so many stakeholders were involved in a sustained conversation about the future of this region. IEGO's major action strategies continue to be implemented.

- SPP's Robert Presley Center of Crime and Justice Studies, funded directly by the State, is working closely with the probation departments in the counties of Riverside and San Bernardino to evaluate and improve reentry programs for released prisoners, specifically prison-to-employment initiatives.

- SPP's Blum Initiative on Global and Regional Poverty has worked closely with the County's Economic Development Agency and community organizations to pilot and evaluate new innovative programs that combat poverty and homelessness throughout the county.

In the last six years, SPP has raised over \$6.5 million from donors and received over \$10 million in research contracts and grants from local, regional, state, and national agencies.

Third and finally, SPP has amazing community outreach, organizing nearly a hundred public events each year that bring eminent speakers and policymakers from around the

state and the nation to UCR to reflect on the big challenges and opportunities facing society.

SPP is unique among UCR's schools in two ways.

First, it is the only school that houses faculty from multiple disciplines — economics, political science, sociology, geography, and public health. We believe that it takes different disciplines working together to solve the most difficult societal problems.

Second, it is the only academic unit at UCR that has a place rather than field identity. It works on policy challenges that affect our two counties, but drawing upon policy lessons from around the nation and the world, thus living up to its motto of "Solutions for the Region, Solutions for the World."

Given the extraordinary crises we now face, the mission and work of SPP will only increase in importance. There is no question in our minds that Inland Southern California needs UCR's School of Public Policy as a vital resource for charting an equitable, prosperous, and sustainable future.

Rick Bishop is executive director of WRCOG. Paulette Brown-Hinds is founder and publisher of Voice Media Ventures and Black Voice News. Ron Loveridge is former mayor of Riverside. Tyler Madary is district director for Senate District 31. Grover Trask is the former district attorney of Riverside County.

Letters

College-bound whiners

Re "COVID-19 and 'summer melt' have hit colleges hard" (Sept. 16):

Dreamers Cifuentes and Garcia lament about the new breed of students' aspiration to attend college being derailed because of COVID-19.

The authors ramble that the high cost of tuition, lack of financial support funded by taxpayers, finding money to pay babysitters, each detrimental to returning to college, probably forever. Hey, prospective students, grow up and stop whining. If you want a college degree, stop having kids right out of high school and go get a job to pay your own tuition.

In 1965, I had to give up my dream to attend college because my dad died, so I had to get a job to help my mom pay the bills. A year later I was drafted, sent off to war. When I returned home I got a full time

job at the newspaper working 10-12 hours a day to make overtime pay, then used my own money to go to college, after work.

— Joey Duran, Riverside

Ginsburg passing

Re "Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg Dead at 87" (Sept. 19):

One thing that keeps getting repeated yet is completely irrelevant is Justice Ginsburg's final wish that the next president name her replacement. The framers gave federal judges, including Supreme Court justices, life tenure to keep them away from politics. In constitutional law, in fact, there is an entire constitutional doctrine called "political question"; where the other two branches collide, on purely political questions, the Supreme Court will bow out.

Ironically, this very question, whether the Senate could confirm a justice appointed by a

president during an election, or even a lame-duck president with a lame-duck Senate, would be deemed a political question.

So, while Justice Ginsburg was a hero and a mentor, a text she sent to her granddaughter (or transcribed by her?) is completely irrelevant to these discussions.

— Hirbod Rashidi, Temecula

RBG's last wish

The Democrats are now so committed to Ruth Bader Ginsburg's "last wish" that her replacement not be named until there is a new president.

That looks a lot like the same standard that the "democracy-threatening" Mitch McConnell followed after the death of Justice Scalia. Maybe In-N-Out should put something new on their secret menu: the Double-Double Standard, with a liberal helping of sauce.

— Tim Martin, Corona

MALLARD FILLMORE: By Bruce Tinsley

