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Economy & Efficiency Commission Presentation

**PRESENTATION OF
Alisa Katz, Chief Deputy,
Supervisor Yaroslavsky
February 1997**

Topic: Supervisor Yaroslavsky's Direction for 1997

Chairman Abel introduced Ms. Katz and welcomed her to the Commission.

Ms. Katz stated that she would present Chairman Yaroslavsky's goal's for the new year as well as specific goals for the County. One of their main areas of focus is the County's lawsuit against the tobacco companies for business fraud, which has a significant impact on the County health care system. This lawsuit is to recover the hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars that the County expends to care for indigents who have tobacco related illnesses. These individuals are served through the County health system. The attorneys working for the County on this case are working on a contingency basis.

Ms. Katz stated that another area of focus is the implementation of Proposition A, which is the \$3 million in park bonds. When the initial Prop. A, which was a \$540 million park bond issue, was initially written and implemented it did not include a schedule. They did not layout when they expected to build each project, when they expected to issue bonds, how much they would build on a pay as you go basis, or how much the would build through bonded indebtedness. The first action of the 1996 Prop. A is to set up such a schedule. Currently, they are preparing a RFP for financial advisors or accountants to work with the Board on a "base line plan" of revenues and expenditures so they can track progress and begin plan implementation.

Chairman Yaroslavsky is going to introduce legislation to ban Saturday Night Specials and impose standards on gun dealers in unincorporated areas of the County.

Chairperson Yaroslavsky is also interested in Children Services. Recently, the Children's Planning Council and the United Way put out a children's score card for the children of Los Angeles County. The following figures of the score card indicate the crisis that the County is facing: between 1990-94 the number of children in the County living below the poverty level increased by 32%; the number of children receiving AFDC Welfare increased by 42%; and the number of child abuse cases opened increased by 57%. These figures are particularly alarming in relation to Welfare Reform. One of the factors that leads to child abuse is a lack of money in the household. Welfare Reform must be implemented with care to assure children are not put at even more risk.

Welfare is an issue that the County as a whole will be grappling with in 1997. The Board has adopted a policy position in November 1996. This position views Welfare as an opportunity to achieve the goal of breaking the cycle of welfare dependancy. In regards to the Governor's proposal, not enough training dollars are offered. The County would require an additional \$200 million to meet the Governor's standards. The

Chair does not favor abolishing General Relief, as was offered by the Governor. The Chair is looking for an integrated safety net of County, State, and Federal resources.

We experienced recording tape problems at this point which caused a portion of Ms. Katz's presentation to be indecipherable.

Commissioner Buerk asked Ms. Katz to share Chairman Yaroslavsky's plans for the County strategic planning effort initiated by Mayor Antonovich last year. Ms. Katz stated that they continue to receive periodic reports from the departments on Vision 2000. Not all of the departments have utilized the opportunity to express their vision for the future. She feels that specific questions need to be put to the departments to facilitate participation. Audits are currently being used to streamline the County. Every major department will be audited within a five year cycle. Commissioner Buerk stated that the key to a strategic planning effort is to have the key decision makers come up with their vision and use that as a basis for the planning effort. He asked if that has been done for the County's strategic planning. Ms. Katz replied that did not know if that had been done for the County and that process is difficult for an elected body. In the past, they have worked on a case by case basis, for example the health department. Commissioner Petak stated that is a description of crisis management. Ms. Katz agreed.

Commissioner Frankel asked what happened to the Proposition Chairman Yaroslavsky supported that would have gotten legislation to prevent the State from taking our taxes. Ms. Katz stated that Proposition, Prop. 217, failed.

Ms. Katz stated that reforming the relationship between state and local government, particularly in the area of finance, is another area of focus for Chairman Yaroslavsky and it is the overarching issue for local government in the near future.

Chairperson Abel stated that the Commission unanimously approved a report on the issue of constitution revision that will be in front of the Board in the next few weeks.

Commissioner Tortorice stated that he was encouraged to hear of the planned audits, but inquired if the Board was committed to funding them. Ms. Katz replied that there will be a request to fund supported by Chairman Yaroslavsky and she hopes the other Board members will support it as well. Commissioner Tortorice stated that the EEC does both organizational studies, as well as, issues that cut across County departments. If the County is conducting audits on a department by department basis, the EEC and may be useful in examining the broad structural issues that are present.

Commissioner Petak asked if the audits would be managerial or financial. Ms. Katz replied, both. Commissioner Petak stated that the County does not have a good performance based accounting system, which is needed to do an audit. This is an issue covered by the EEC's unincorporated areas report that was mentioned earlier. There is not an adequate system to determine whether or not municipal services are being appropriately delivered. Ms. Katz stated that this was a management question. Commissioner Petak stated that it is also an accounting question. Commissioner Crowley added that it is also a policy question. Ms. Katz stated that a management question is a policy question and asked how it was an accounting question. Commissioner Tortorice stated you can't control what you can't measure. Commissioner Crowley stated that when the EEC first began to gather information for the unincorporated areas report from the departments and CAO, the Commission emphasized the need for some form of cost analysis to provide accountability and was told that it was too expensive to be accountable. Ms. Katz stated that she would revisit the unincorporated areas report and talk with the CAO.

Vice-Chair Farrar stated that approximately three years ago, the Commission produced a report on the economic issues facing Southern California. The Board adopted our recommendations as they related legislative decisions. The EEC suggested, as a tool of implementation, that the Board invite the Legislators who represent Los Angeles County in the Assembly and in the Senate to meet at an informal luncheon to decide how they could all work in a collaborative effort to help the Los Angeles County achieve its legislative goals in Sacramento. The suggestion was declined and the Commission was shocked to discover that this type of collaborative event has never happened in the past. Vice-Chair Farrar stated that he believed

that the Chair could be effective in facilitating a collaborative environment. Ms. Katz agreed and stated that it has been a priority since joining the Board of Supervisors. Burt Margolin was hired as a legislative strategist and Cliff Allenboughy was hired as a lobbyist in Sacramento. There has been a tremendous turnaround in the County relationship with Sacramento and collaborative activities, such as luncheons, are taking place. There is also talk of forming a LA County Caucus in Sacramento.

Commissioner Abel thanked Ms. Katz for her time and presentation.

[Return to Top of Presentation](#)



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