

Brief from Bakersfield Californian, Monday, October 14, 2002

FRESNO, Calif. (AP) - There are no grade As in Fresno when it comes to health.

Men's Health magazine ranks Fresno 63 out of 101 healthy cities in the nation in its upcoming November issue. The magazine gives Fresno a C in health, an F in environment and a D in fitness.

Other San Joaquin Valley city rankings include Bakersfield at 66 and Stockton at 79.

Atlanta was ranked America's unhealthiest city for men in 2002. Honolulu was judged the healthiest, with San Jose coming in at No. 2.

Fresnans may be accustomed to insults. **The American Lung Association ranks the city No. 3 in smog pollution.** In 1984, a New York university geographer used statistics to declare Fresno the worst place to live in the nation. In 1994, Fresno was judged last in per-capita charitable giving. In 1999, Fresno was rated 108 out of 112 in best cities to raise children. In 2000, the city was near the bottom of best cities to earn and save money.

But the city had one bright spot in 1997. Fresno won the prize for the American city with the most good hair days, according to the Ladies Home Journal.

Bakersfield Californian Editorial, October 14, 2002:

Right a \$71 million wrong

Forget it. What part of NO do lawyers not understand? At issue is an arbitration award being foisted on taxpayers that is as ridiculous as any we can remember.

Back up the truck a bit (or car, in this case). Starting in 1980, California imposed a fee of \$300 on new residents who brought a vehicle into California that did not have California-required smog equipment.

The idea was to pay for programs to clean up smog problems caused by the newly arrived, improperly equipped cars. Vehicles sold in the state had special smog devices and engines.

A consortium of five law firms sued on behalf of car owners who had to pay the fee. They prevailed and the state began refunding the money.

Now at issue is the attorneys' fees. In a binding arbitration process that Gov. Gray Davis signed as part of the legislation appropriating money for the refunds, attorneys were awarded almost \$89 million.

Everyone -- including Davis -- went through the roof. Court rulings from successive lawsuits knocked the award for fees to \$18 million, which is still a hefty amount.

But attorneys are still grousing and are asking the state Supreme Court to intervene. "When is a binding arbitration award not a binding arbitration award?" reads part of their appeal of their fee reduction.

Simple. When it is wrong. Taking the attorneys' argument to a very logical conclusion, no injustice could be rectified simply because it exists -- whether it is the result of a contract or as a result of legislation.

Hey guys, righting wrongs is what the law is all about.

Letter to the Editor, Fresno Bee

Measure C 'message'

By Stebbins F. Dean
Fresno

(Published Thursday, October 17, 2002, 4:55 AM)

One recent evening, I had a message from the Valley Taxpayers Coalition telling me how to vote on the Measure C extension. The person said it would cost taxpayers \$5 billion for a new tax to build roads, and that only those who would benefit from the extension were promoting the measure. She said money would be spent on roads instead of police and fire services.

She also used Chris Mathys' name three times, as if that was supposed to impress me. When he was a City Council member, Mr. Mathys cost taxpayers tens of thousands of dollars to defend lawsuits against him and the city of Fresno.

That phone message is an outright lie. The Measure C extension is for the residents of Fresno County. The measure will raise \$2.8 billion over 30 years. It is an extension of a half-cent tax we have paid for the last 16 years. Labor, trade and teacher unions, law enforcement, firefighters, business, agriculture, every city council in Fresno County and the Board of Supervisors have endorsed the extension. Medical professionals and air district officials have stated that if we do not pass the Measure C extension, air quality in Fresno County will get worse.

It has been very difficult to deal with all the misinformation being delivered by the League of Women Voters, and now this new taxpayer coalition.

If we don't pass the Measure C extension, traffic congestion will get worse, and we will again see the days when all our transportation dollars go to San Francisco and Los Angeles. Vote "yes" on the Measure C extension.

[Editorial, Visalia Times-Delta, Thursday, October 17, 2002](#)

Smart growth is just as critical for open spaces

California is getting smarter when it comes to growth. Not overwhelmingly smarter, but a little smarter.

If there is any place that could use a little dose of smarts, it is the San Joaquin Valley.

California grows by one person every minute, according to the Urban Land Institute, a land developer association. To cope with the pressures of that booming growth, the institute is promoting a concept called "smart growth." That concept has been around for a while. It refers to the practice of urban planning and development without using new land or resources.

Smart growth means building up, not out. It means reusing and renovating, not starting fresh. It favors multiple uses and variety over replication and monotony. Smart growth principles integrate the character of a place with its planning. It means putting space to better use.

There are places in California that are so built out that they must by necessity use smart growth or no growth at all. There are other suburban and urban areas that have discovered it meets their needs.

The San Joaquin Valley still has plenty of space, but unfortunately all that open space represents a fatal attraction: It's farmland, and we pave it at our risk.

Smart growth is actually more important here than in any crowded suburb, because we have a choice. The area can continue to pave fresh dirt, or it can use smart planning principles to build up, to reuse, to maintain natural character.

It can't be that hard. The Urban Land Institute cited places such as Chico, Valencia, Mountain View and Emeryville for smart growth projects. If those places can, so can this area.

Smart growth should not be a substitute for variety, either. We still have the luxury of allowing large lots and residences with open space. We need to retain those options.

At the same time, local planning officials have to adopt some principles that keep the Valley from becoming the kind of place where growth has become a four-letter word. If the region fails to take

advantage of that opportunity, future generations will look back on the sprawl we created and say it was pretty dumb.