

NEWS

From the Office of

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Mitzelfelt Optimistic in Annual Address to High Desert

VICTORVILLE – First District Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt today outlined an optimistic vision for the High Desert in front of about 250 High Desert business and community leaders in a speech dedicated to the colorful and legendary Victorville volunteer, Doris Davies, who passed away last month at the age of 87.

“The State of the County is stronger because of her, and people like her, many of whom are in this room,” Mitzelfelt told the gathering, which was hosted by the Victorville Chamber of Commerce. “She saw the potential for this region and helped it reach that potential.”

While the economic downturn has hit the region hard – with unemployment in the County at 13.6% in June – several economic indicators are pointing to recovery, Mitzelfelt said. Home sales and prices are up, and the inventory of foreclosed homes is dropping, he said.

The assets that drove the growth of the past decade are still in place, including available land, a high quality workforce and a central location on international trade routes. Those assets position the region for strong, competitive economic growth, said Mitzelfelt.

He identified three key industries as the economic future of the region – aerospace, logistics and renewable energy. He pledged to work with the area’s community colleges to develop training programs that will enable local residents to fill the jobs in those growing industries. He announced during his speech that the County would be contributing \$470,000 in federal stimulus funds to Victor Valley College for training in welding, GIS, logistics, health information management, nursing and water management.

Mitzelfelt also addressed the recent scandals that have tarnished the County’s reputation, condemning those who would abuse positions of public trust for their own personal or political gain. The Board of Supervisors and the District Attorney are aggressively pursuing those suspected of wrongdoing, he said.

Sound fiscal management has allowed the County to weather the current economic crisis better than most local governments, he said. Despite the budgetary train-wreck in Sacramento, the County overcame an \$84 million shortfall and passed a balanced budget without layoffs, one of the few jurisdictions in the state to do so.

Thanks to years of responsible, conservative budgeting, the County was able to achieve a balanced budget without affecting service to the public, said Mitzelfelt. The County took advantage of good financial times to build up its reserves, and is funding several major capital projects with cash, including the High Desert Government Center, due to be complete next year. Other cash-funded projects under construction or in the planning stages include fire stations, libraries and expanded sheriff's facilities. Those projects have the added benefit of providing a much-needed economic stimulus, while saving taxpayers money because construction bids are coming in far below estimated costs, he said.

He concluded with heartfelt praise for Doris Davies, who was a major influence on himself and the entire community. She will remain a role model the community can look to as the High Desert moves forward to a bright future.

"We have much more to do. Let's do a Doris – carry her attitude, courage and humor, with self-fulfilling faith that we will succeed in making the High Desert dream become a reality," he said.