



NEWS RELEASE
ROBERT A. LOVINGOOD
First District Supervisor

www.SBCounty.gov/bosd1

CONTACT:
Don Holland
Policy Advisor
760-995-8100

January 12, 2015

Topic of Interest



Halfway through first term, Lovingood focuses on solar, mining, trade education



Robert Lovingood talks about reaching the halfway point of his first term as 1st District supervisor. (James Quigg, Daily Press)

SHEA JOHNSON
STAFF WRITER

Posted Jan. 10, 2015 @ 12:01 am

Updated Jan 10, 2015 at 10:54 PM

VICTORVILLE — Midway through his first term, San Bernardino County 1st District Supervisor Robert Lovingood said this week that he remains committed to supporting the local solar and mining sectors in 2015, while also seeking to push career technical training for youth.

Lovingood sat down with the Press Dispatch to share his priorities Thursday as the newly elected county Board vice chairman, which has thrust him into a key position alongside 3rd District Supervisor and new Board Chairman James Ramos.

The two supervisors represent between them the Victor Valley and Barstow, now wielding more influence than before to steer the narrative toward issues directly impacting the desert.

"It gives us the opportunity to bring a conversation about the desert," Lovingood said about the shift in leadership roles. "I think you'll see more of an outreach to work on common-cause projects together."

His office has labeled last year, his second full year on the job, as "one of overcoming challenges" and touted various successes in the realms of public safety, business assistance, community advocacy and renewable energy.

The latter issue will be a focal point for Lovingood this year. Saying the under-discussion Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan is in general "going to drive a lot of decisions," he underscored the need to strike a balance when it comes to renewable energy between progress and appropriate land use.

He said he believed that a six-month moratorium on new solar projects in 2013 was successful in stopping a lot of projects at "wrong locations," as rural residents decried proposals that they felt would disturb their lifestyle and wildlife.

Last year, he opposed the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument, setting new restrictions encircling Wrightwood, and the massive North Peak Wind Project, which would have made 500-foot wind turbines visible from across the Victor Valley.

"I don't want to have (the Victor Valley) look like Palm Springs or Tehachapi and have this covered with windmills," he said.

He vowed to continue efforts to protect pristine land, but he also has backed projects in perceived right locations, including the 300-megawatt State Solar Farm near the California-Nevada border last year.

In September, he called upon public officials to renew interest in the mining industry, which produces gold, silver, iron ore, specialty clays and rare earth materials in the High Desert.

He reiterated Thursday that the value in the sector is not only in jobs it can create, but in the indirect jobs it can create as well as the materials it can provide, including cement and concrete. His office has been active in seeking to push forward a "bottleneck" of delayed mining permits with federal land officials, he said.

He has previously said he believed that construction materials will remain in demand,

which bodes well for the local industry.

He also echoed Ramos' agenda to boost career technical programs at local schools, agreeing that a ready workforce is a recipe to attract industrial employers to the region.

"You really have to embrace public schools that are embracing technical trades in their programs," he said.

Ideal training programs will be ones that extend no longer than six months, Lovingood said, and he wants to seek scholarship funding for enrollees who, potentially pulled away from work, could find the commitment financially stressful.

As he turns to plans for the next two years, he will also do so without his original planning commissioner, Randy Coleman, he confirmed.

"Randy Coleman is excellent," he said. "He's done a wonderful job."

Lovingood did not disclose the reason for Coleman's departure, except to say, "we're looking for an opportunity for transition."

He added that there had been no prior talks or understanding with Coleman limiting his service to only the mid-term.

A new 1st District planning commissioner is expected to be named by mid-February, he said.

Meanwhile, Lovingood's office said that other 2014 highlights included allocating funds to the Sheriff's Department's SHOCK program for at-risk youth; funding 21 crime sweeps around the Victor Valley resulting in 1,136 arrests; enacting a synthetic drug ordinance; and increasing deputies in unincorporated areas.

According to his office, county efforts helped connect employment seekers with more than 550 jobs in the 1st District; allocate \$75,000 to Opportunity High Desert for a regional marketing campaign; and facilitate a compromise with Caltrans officials to save the Mountain Top Cafe in Phelan.

Lovingood also intervened to restore essential three-year funding for "A Better Way" domestic violence shelter, worked toward resolving six-year dust issues near Oak Hills High School and allocated funds to save the 4-H Program after budget cuts.

Shea Johnson can be reached at 760-955-5368 or sjohnson@vvdailypress.com. Follow him on Twitter at [DP_Shea](#).