

## **Farm Bureau Annual Meeting September 26, 2009**

*By Paso Robles Mayor Pro Tem Fred Strong*

Times have changed. In 1954 I was running a small farm we owned in Wisconsin and working with my neighbors to plant and harvest crops, and provide care and feeding for our animals. The total federal government income that year was \$69.7 billion with expenditures of \$70.8 billion resulting in a federal deficit of \$1.15 billion and, at the request of the chairman of the Senate Agricultural Committee, I wrote the 1954 Farm Bill for the United States which introduced flexible price supports at 82.5 – 90% of parity which I brought forward from a pre-World War Two base to a post-WW II base. It was my first political effort on a grand scale or specifically on behalf of agriculture. My own animal husbandry efforts paid my way through the university and took me away from agriculture on a full-time basis. It did not take me away from an understanding and appreciation of agribusiness. Nor from the ways, positive and negative, that government can influence agribusiness.

In 1973 nearly all of the ranch owners between San Luis Obispo and Morro Bay/Los Osos brought me to this county as a professional land use consultant to defend their ranch interests which were under attack by county government. I was successful. They then created a county-wide concerned citizens group, known as CEBES, to keep me here as its CEO representing all of their interests at local government. I did so, working closely with Leroy McChesney of the Farm Bureau as well as the cattlemen, cattle women, almond growers and the emerging grape growers along with other business and real estate interests throughout the county. Leroy and I went from farm center to farm center explaining the pluses and minuses of the Williamson Act during the county's big push to enroll as many ranches as possible. Time has proven that we informed you correctly.

I testified on, and defended agribusiness during, various transformations of the county's general plan and its ag and open space combined element during the 1970's. During that same time I trained a young housewife, at her request, in how to deal with local government and the regulatory environment. When I was asked to help a floundering organization in Sonoma County, in 1977, I turned our South County organization over to Ruth Brackett who was then ready to spread her own wings. She did well.

I spent about 4 years in Sonoma County, retaining offices here, while doing much the same thing there well enough that the Sonoma County Alliance is still functioning and highly regarded. I also learned a lot about vineyards and wineries.

In the 1980's, what was then the Paso Robles Vintners and Growers Association, retained me to represent it on the county's ag liaison committee. I introduced and saw through to passage the county's Right To Farm ordinance at that time while opposing additional ag setbacks as redundant. The group voted to make Herman Schwartz my successor a few years later.

My other simultaneous activities can be found on my website: [www.fredstrong.com](http://www.fredstrong.com) or, in brief, in my literature.

In 2004 I ran for the Paso Robles City Council and was elected. Since then I've been chosen to serve as the Mayor Pro Tem of Paso Robles and on the San Luis Obispo Council Of Governments, SLO Regional Transit Authority, two intercity passenger rail boards and committees for rail between San Diego and San Francisco, the Economic Vitality Corporation and as liaison to numerous other bodies. I've also been sitting on statewide policy committees on Revenue and Taxation, Housing, Community and Economic Development for the League of California Cities. In the latter three areas I represent all of the cities in San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara and Ventura counties.

I was chosen for special committees. On one to deal with homeless shelters which we recommended they be a local decision. On California's conversion to a national standardized sales and use tax we recommended against participation at this time. On climate change legislation we successfully got the author to respect local control in most instances. The League listened when I proposed a Task Force on Statewide Water Problems. It was created and is currently working on some sensible legislation, some of which I'm tweaking this weekend at the request of our lobbying division. My comments on three major state initiatives in the water area are posted, in full, on the State of California's web site.

Last week, on invitation from the League, I coordinated and moderated a statewide forum at the San Jose Convention Center on surviving the state's water crisis. It was well attended by government leaders from throughout the State of California and was well received.

After all these years of mostly reacting to other's proposals, I now seek your permission and your support to have a voice and a vote on the floor of the Assembly where I can back the state away from micro-management and back toward local and individual control of our lives and fortunes.

I started my activity in a nation with \$69.1 billion of income and seek to go to a state with a gap between budgeted expenditures and income that is nearly as much as that at \$60 billion. The state's payroll alone is \$16 billion. It is no longer a matter of shifting money from one pot to another. It is a matter of cutting expenses and getting back to reality. The exact same thing is true with water. We can't increase our shifting it from one basin to another. We can not continue to use more than we have available to use. We must either create more local capture and storage or practice extreme conservation.

I know how to get there but I also know that I have to deal with keeping things manageable during a transition which I may not live to see. There is no one who can, single handedly, slay all the dragons, save all the maidens and put every man in his own castle with resources to waste at will. I've been a practical man with practical solutions for a long time. Although I've made some mistakes, I'll gladly stand on my total record. I've grown older but I haven't grown old. I'm well known for thinking constructively outside of the box.

I've brought literature which I ask you to please take to learn more about me. I have a web site at [www.fredstrong.com](http://www.fredstrong.com) that has a lot of information, if you want it, on many topics including budget, cash flow, water and transportation state and local. I would truly appreciate your support for the 33<sup>rd</sup> District Assembly seat in the election next year.