

WOODLAND HILLS HOMEOWNERS ORGANIZATION

Assemblymember Jesse Gabriel WHHO Meeting 11-18-26 Q&A

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Q: Where and when is the holiday toy drive, and how can residents participate?

Jesse Gabriel:

Yeah. Thank you, John.

And it's really wonderful to be here with you and with Dennis and Marty and Shelly and Colleen. And just let me say thank you, first of all, to the board for all the work you do for our community. It is public service in the truest sense of the word.

So thank you for the invitation to be with you here tonight. And it's really good to be with so many neighbors in Woodland Hills. So I will just tell you we are doing our holiday toy drive this Saturday.

It's from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. in Encino Little League. And we are collecting toys as we do every year. This is for folks to drop toys off.

And then we will distribute those to non-profits in the Valley that are going to help make the holidays a little brighter for some families in need. And it's become one of the things that we really have felt strongly about is there's a lot of folks out there, as you mentioned, it's a challenging moment. And if you're able to drop off a new unwrapped toy, you could really bring a smile to a kid's face this holiday season.

So I would invite all of you to come by. And it's also an opportunity to meet face to face if we haven't had a chance to meet. If you want to follow up in this conversation, if you want to share additional thoughts with me, I will be there in person, rain or shine.

And so we'll look for the opportunity for folks if you want to come by and say hi and be a part of the toy drive.

Correct. 91436. Again, address 5120 Havenhurst Avenue in Encino.

Q: What are your current priorities in Sacramento, and what changes do you anticipate following the election?

Jesse Gabriel:

Yeah. Thank you so much, John.

I will do that and I'll just give you a quick overview and maybe it's okay, just high level and then whatever folks want to talk about questions, whatever's on your mind related to any of the things we're working on. But I thought maybe share a little bit about some of the work we're doing. And then I know that, a lot of folks want to talk about the country club.

So I'm happy to talk about that as well. And really whatever people want to talk about, I look forward to the conversation. So now for those of you who in person, I'm Jesse.

I live in Encino with my wife and three boys, 11, nine, and six. So if I look like a tired dad, that's an accurate description of me. But really privileged to call this San Fernando Valley.

My home have been privileged to represent this community for the last eight years. And the state legislature have tried really hard to work hard and to do right by this community. It's been a challenging and amazing and uplifting and difficult experience all wrapped into one with COVID and so many of the challenges that we have faced as a community over the past eight years.

My work has really been focused on a lot of the policy issues that are near and dear to my heart. So a lot of work around public safety, work around protecting our kids. Obviously being a dad, that's an important priority for me.

Work around fire prevention and public safety around gun violence, other issues that are important to me. I also share the legislative Jewish caucus. So we've done a lot of work around hate crimes and antisemitism and trying to work, bring together different communities to fight hate and bigotry of all forms.

And then in three years ago, my experience really changed when the as chair of the Budget Committee. And so a lot of my work is a very heavy responsibility to manage our $352 billion budget here in the state of California, fourth largest economy in the world. And so I've tried to work really hard to both bring resources home to the Valley.

So one of the things that I talked about when I ran for office is my concern that the Valley did not get its fair share of resources and that we were often overlooked. And so I'm really proud of some of the investments that we've been able to deliver here for Pierce College, for the Woodland Hills community, for the San Fernando Valley community more broadly. And then also the work we have done to try to steer the ship through some choppy waters.

And just so people know, when I took over as chair of the Budget Committee, I inherited the largest shortfall in state history from the prior to the largest shortfall. And so we worked very hard to balance the budget, to make some of the tough decisions. We've had a balanced budget every year.

And then I was also the author of Proposition 2, which was on your ballots a few weeks ago to strengthen our state's Rainy Day Fund. And I'm very pleased that that passed with very strong support across the state. And so that's going to allow us to put more money away during good years so that we have more money for fire prevention and healthcare and public safety and other essential services during down years.

Just to give you all a little bit of sense of sort of the work and what's involved in the state legislature, I represent half a million people here in the Valley. I take that very responsibly with community, very seriously from communities from Van Nuys out to Woodland Hills. I have four amazing and very capable staff members that work for me in my district office, which is led by my district director, Catherine Coddington, who's on this call.

And I think Solenne Ronark in my office, who's also joining us. But they are just incredibly hard working. And if you do the math of 500,000 constituents and four staff, it gives you a sense of how much responsibility they have on their shoulders.

But we work really hard. We have helped thousands of Valley residents every year with issues with state agencies, whether it's accessing EDD or issues with the DMV. They do about 100 community events a year.

So that gives you a sense of how frequently they're out there trying to meet the community and connect with the community and help folks. And we're very proud of the work that we do in the district. So trying between our budget work and our policy work and our work here in the district to do everything we can to help folks here in the community.

To give you a sense of how active the legislature is, John, you talked about the good, bad and the ugly. It would be hard for me to summarize. And one of the things I always like to share with people just to give them a sense of this is I was at my dentist's office today.

He's up in Northridge, but lives in Tarzana. And he was talking to me about some issues related to the practice of dentistry, which the state legislature regulates. And I asked him, doctor, guess how many votes I take in a two year session.

And so he guessed 100, the hygienist against 500. And they were very surprised when I shared with them that I take an average of 6,000 votes in a two year session. So that gives you a sense of just how many issues are before the legislature.

Obviously, we try very hard to understand those issues with nuance to dive into the details to see all sides of the issue. But it's just a lot that we're dealing with. And so if you ask me about a bill, and I don't remember the number off the top of my head, I'll apologize in advance.

But I do want to assure you, we are working as hard as we can to understand the details and to get those issues right. So I guess the other things to talk about, we're trying to do a lot of work to support our small businesses. We have heard from small businesses across the valley about red tape, about regulation, about how hard it can be, how challenging it can be to operate a business these days.

And so we've done a lot of work to try to support small businesses. Also done a lot of work to try to help our entertainment industry, which is so important to us here in the valley and in the city of Los Angeles, and working on tax credits and other policy changes to really try to keep those jobs here in Los Angeles and keep those jobs in the state of California. So that has been another big area of emphasis for us.

I will say that we are in a time period where we have gaveled down our legislative session, as you mentioned. We have changes are forthcoming. So there was just an election.

We are going to go back up to Sacramento at the beginning of December to swear in the new legislature. A lot of new members, not 100% sure what to expect, but the blue wave hit California as well. And so we have eight seats in our 80-member legislature that flipped from Republican to Democrat.

So we will now have 68 out of 80 seats will be Democrats and 12 seats will be Republicans. So we will see what kind of changes that ushers in. Also, the most important change, I think, is the election of a new governor.

So Governor Newsom's term will end at the beginning of January when Governor-elect Javier Becerra will be sworn in. I think a lot of us are interested to see what he's going to put forward, what policy proposals he's going to put forward, most importantly in his January 10th budget proposal. So literally just a matter of days after he's elected, he has to put forward a budget.

And that will be an important moment for us. But I am looking forward to working with him. I had the opportunity to work with him when he was our Attorney General.

And I found him to be very straightforward and very thoughtful. And so I think he's going to inherit a lot of challenges that we have here in California. But I do believe that he's up to the task.

Q: What is your approach to the proposed country club/golf course development and the concerns raised by neighbors?

Jesse Gabriel:

The other thing I wanted to mention, and you and I talked about this, was just the Country Club. I know we have gotten a lot of outreach from the community, a lot of feedback from the community. We have taken a lot of meetings, a lot of emails, a lot of conversations.

I just want to project and share with people that I understand why a lot of folks have the feelings that they have about the issue. We, in my eight years in the legislature, have never taken a position either for or against a specific land use project. It's a policy that we have adopted because I don't have any direct control over that.

The decisions about whether to approve or not approve land use projects are really the province of local government. So we have never weighed in for or against something, but we have tried to be thoughtful and make sure that community concerns are passed along. And so understanding concerns from the community, we have taken those and amplified, particularly the concerns about wildfire and particularly the concerns about public

safety, to the governor's office, to the attorney general's office, to the Department of Housing and Community Development, to the Department of Fish and Wildlife.

We have spoken to the author of AB 2011. We have spoken to other members of the legislature about it. I was talking to my staff today and he said in my eight years in office, he can't remember a time when we have been as engaged in trying to transmit community concerns to other elected officials.

At the same time, I've had very good and direct conversations about the issue with our partners in local government. I had the opportunity to talk to your incoming councilwoman, Barry Worth Ervin, about this yesterday. I certainly don't want to speak for her, but I think that she's going to be an extremely important voice in the future of all this.

We talked about all of it. I think she's going to be a really thoughtful and dedicated member of the city council, obviously. Lives in Woodland Hills, is deeply connected to the community, and we talked a lot about how we can work together in partnership to serve the San Fernando Valley.

So I'm hoping that there is understanding that there is a real diversity of opinions around some of these issues, that they're complicated, that they're thorny. Obviously, I'm not an expert in habitat, so I'm not positioned to weigh in on that. I want to be mindful of how we talk about it since there's ongoing litigation, but I do think that some leadership from the city to try to bring stakeholders together, bring the relevant parties together, perhaps there is a way to create a path forward here that will address the thoughts and concerns and perspectives of a lot of different folks who've weighed on that.

So I am very excited to work with her, and I think that she's going to be a really important person and voice in this conversation. So with that, appreciate the opportunity to be here, appreciate the opportunity to connect with all of you. I see that Scott has joined.

Hi, Scott, it's nice to see you, and just look forward to the conversation, and thank you again for the invitation to be with you.

Q: Did you understand that AB 2011 and subsequent amendments could allow a residential road like Canoga Avenue to qualify as a commercial corridor?

Jesse Gabriel:

Yeah, so let me, so let me just address that broadly and then, and then specifically to that, so I think just to give you a sense, so I, specifically, moved to the valley with my wife to raise our kids here because we wanted a particular quality of life, certain things we're looking for, I live in a single family neighborhood, I'm very fortunate to have that opportunity. I live in a hillside community where the issues of wildfire are extremely proximate. As many of I was under mandatory evacuation during the Woolsey fire, excuse me, during the Palisades fire, and so these are issues that are, really important to me and I think that I take them very seriously.

At the same time, I believe that we have a housing crisis in California, and I think that a lot of our local governments are not getting the job done, and when I came up to Sacramento, a lot of my colleagues there are former local government officials, they may have been mayors or county supervisors or city council members, and so they very jealously guard the power of local government to make land use decisions, but what I witnessed over time is that there was a growing frustration among members of the legislature and particularly members from the city of Los Angeles about the lack of progress on homelessness and the lack of progress on housing, and so that created...

Q: Could Sacramento exempt communities such as Warner Center and Woodland Hills that have already planned substantial housing growth?

Jesse Gabriel:

So first of all, just to address that, I agree. I think that the Woodland Hills community, particularly Warner Center, there has been a lot of important work. People have taken very seriously the obligation to build more housing.

And I will say generally, I agree with you that the state should reward those or support those who are being part of the solution, and it's more appropriate to step in for those communities that don't want to be part of the solution. And as there have been communities that have very actively said, we don't want any new housing, and we don't want anything here, and we're not going to be part of this. And the state has taken a more firmer line.

But what I want to communicate is there's not an ethos in Sacramento, I know that some people think this, of we want to destroy single-family neighborhoods, or we want to take away all local control. That is not at all what's going on. And just if you'll bear with me for a moment, what is happening there, and it's happening on a bipartisan basis from both Democrats and Republicans, and 2011 passed 33 to 0 in the State Senate, and I think it was 67 to 4 in the State Assembly, with strong bipartisan support, is that you have a lot of former local elected officials.

I mean, I'm a little bit of an anomaly in that I didn't come out of local government, but the overwhelming majority of my colleagues in the legislature came out of local government and worked very intensely on these issues. We now have three urban planners who are members of the State Assembly. A deep frustration with a lot of cities not getting it done on homelessness, and not getting it done on housing.

And I will tell you, I, again, entered with an approach of maybe more deferential to local government on these issues, and then I consistently heard from people in the Valley their intense frustration with the lack of progress that the City of Los Angeles was making on homelessness.

Q: What can be done to restore local control and protect communities that are planning housing responsibly?

Jesse Gabriel:

I think we, again, I have tried to take a thoughtful approach to all these things, understanding, John, that just to be blunt, you and I may not be in exactly the same place in terms of our philosophy on these things, and that's okay.

And I understand that in a community of 500,000 people, not everybody's going to agree with me.

I want local control when it makes sense and local input when it makes sense, but the reason I have voted against some efforts to take away, to constrain local control and why I voted for some other effort and voted against some of them is because I think that we, local governments in California, and again, I don't do issues specific to any individual development. I have to help make statewide housing policy have not made enough progress. And I think that we have, and I believe that we have a housing crisis in the state of California.

And one of the things that I hear very frequently when I speak to people in the community, particularly people of my age, is people said, I grew up in the valley, and I can't afford to buy a home in the community in which I was raised. And I want to move back to the valley, and I want to raise my kids in the same community that I was raised in, and I want my kids to play at Encino Little League, and I want my kids to play at Sunrise Little League, but I can't afford a home. And so I believe that we have a housing crisis, and I believe that we need to build more housing.

Now, I want that to be done thoughtfully. I want that to be done appropriately. It's important to me that people take in considerations around fire and impacts and on the local community, all those things.

And so what I am trying to look for is the appropriate balance between state and local control. And that's why, if you just give a moment, that's why if you look at my record on housing policy in Sacramento, I have supported some of the bills and voted and not supported others, voted against others, because I have tried to approach it with a thoughtful and nuanced approach to all these things. But I, again, I think these are issues that are nuanced, and they deserve a nuanced approach.

Q: Can you help protect narrow hillside roads, evacuation routes, open space and wildlife habitat from unsafe development?

Jesse Gabriel:

And here's what I'd say, John.

Again, part of the reason, understanding that I've never taken a position on for or against any specific land use proposal, one of the reasons I have engaged more significantly in amplifying community concerns on this project than any other project in my eight years in the state legislature is because I do believe that there are real concerns around wildfire and public safety. And I think that that's a real thing that people need to understand and they need to grapple with. And that is why, really, for the first time as a legislator, went to the governor's office, went to the attorney general's office, went to the author of the bill's office, have talked to folks because I think there are real issues there.

And those are issues that I talked to Council Member Bloomfield about. Again, I don't want to speak for the councilwoman-elect, but I shared with her my perspective that there are real health and safety and life safety issues there. And so I think those are important things that need to be addressed.

Q: What can you do now, and can AB 2011 be changed quickly enough to affect this project?

Jesse Gabriel:

We don't do legislation around individual developments.

I'm happy to take a look at... I'm happy to take a look, and I've conveyed this to me, at how we might tighten up 2011 or think about potential changes to it. But just to be totally transparent, and I was very direct with people from the community when they came and spoke to me about this.

So if I were to introduce a bill on the earliest possible date on December 2nd, the earliest that that bill could reach the governor's desk for signature absence, some special process, would be next September. That's the legislative process. What I would hope, and what I've always said is that the city council and council members who have expansive formal and informal powers in terms of their negotiations with developers, because many developers are repeat players and they want to do things in other parts of the city, would convene stakeholders, would bring the developers to the table and say, hey guys, there are real issues here.

And I do want to commend the land alliance. They're very clear in the letter that they wrote to HCD about the fact that they're not opposed to all development. That's not what this is about, but that there are real issues here that need to be thoughtfully considered.

And I thought that that was very well, smart and well articulated in the letter. But to bring people together and say, hey, there's a real issues here that the community is raising and that these need to be addressed. And I'm

hopeful that maybe the new councilwoman-elect will have the ability to convene that conversation in a way that I think is constructive.

I'm happy to talk to the community, to have a conversation, to entertain your thoughts, to look at it with experts about how to maybe think about if there are tweaks that need to be made to 2011 or any of our other state housing policy. But I also just want to be honest with people about the timeline on which we operate and how we do housing policy, which is not parcel by parcel specific, but is about the entire state, is probably not going to make an impact on this particular development on the timeline that folks want. And I just, even if that's not what folks want to hear, I believe it's extremely important to be honest with people about the situation.

Q: Why have months of engagement with state officials not produced action, and what can be done about HCD involvement and the litigation?

Q: Why were very-high-fire-hazard protections not included in this legislation, and could the definition of a commercial corridor be narrowed?

Jesse Gabriel:

And, nice to see you as always.

And I, and I appreciate the constructive feedback and I will tell you, I mean, you, I appreciate you trying to put yourself in my shoes because, the vision that came to mind as we were looking at this building, this bill was like victory Boulevard, right.

Or Ventura Boulevard or other places, where for me, when you say commercial corridor, that's what, that's what, that's what pops into mind for me. and, I don't know exactly how the language got negotiated around very high, fire severity, fire zones. I will tell you one of the frustrating things to me, which is a regular feature of my job is, oftentimes by the time a bill reaches me, it's done, right.

My choice is to vote yes or no, or not vote for it. And those are my three choices because that's just how the processes work. So if you, when I, when I used to sit on the housing committee, I had more opportunities to, exert influence over the specifics of legislation.

But now that I'm not on the housing committee, when a bill reaches me four days before the end of session, when it's past the deadline to make amendments, I've, I gotta go up or down. Right. And so I've got to decide as I look at it, do I think that this is more helpful, less helpful, or the details that I don't like about the bill so significant that I can't support the bill, and those, sometimes they create very tough calls.

We call them headbangers. and again, when I looked at this bill, I, again, my take was like, oh, this is about building more housing quickly on Victory Boulevard. That makes sense to me.

And so, I think that there is, as you've raised about the definition of commercial corridor around very high fire, very high severity fire zones, but all those things, I think there is an opportunity to have a conversation and to go back and look at that. And I'm happy to, engage there. I know that, just to level set, and I've, I shared this with other folks who've come in, it can be very tricky to try to undo things once they've been passed into law.

So that is an uphill battle. And I just want to be super transparent about that, but I am, I am more than willing to sit down with the author, and to sit down with the stakeholders who, were behind that bill and to, and to engage them in that conversation.

Q: Can you still pursue amendments if you are no longer on the Assembly Housing Committee?

Jesse Gabriel:

Correct.

That's a hundred percent look and you can, I mean, obviously I can do, I can, part of, I think the most sacred trust I have with the people that I represent is how I vote on any bill at the end of session. I think what I'm just sharing to you sort of the practical reality of how the process works. If you, I will, I get about, a thousand, roughly 800 to a thousand bills that come my way in a two and a half week period at the end of a legislative session.

And I won't know what the final amendments to those bills are, because of the way that the appropriations process works and the way the floor amendments work until really about two weeks before the end of session.

Q: Did you speak with other Los Angeles-area Assembly members as you had promised during our January meeting?

Jesse Gabriel:

Yeah, we, so we did, we did engage with folks. I think I, and I did have conversations. I can't remember if I had shared that with you, with the author of the bell.

We did engage with folks in HCD, on some of these issues. And I think what we walked away from was with a pretty clear understanding that as long as governor Newsom was in the governor's seat, that there were very unlikely to be, that there were very unlikely to be amendments, made to the bill this year.

Q: How do concerns about the wildlife crossing and the mountain lions at the golf course square with the proposed development?

Jesse Gabriel:

I guess what I would say to that is, obviously I want to be, sort of cautious about answering that understanding that there's active litigation on that very specific, subject. I'm, look, I'm not, I'll just be, I'm not an expert in habitat or species or any, what would constitute, a, meet the definition of that term. I know that there are, experts that have weighed in on both sides of that issue.

And I think that that's something that ultimately the courts are going to figure out. But from where I sit, I just don't have enough. I just don't have enough expertise to understand, what is and isn't a particular habitat.

Q: How can Sacramento address special-interest influence, respond to a narrow fire-and-habitat carve-out, and work more effectively with local communities?

Jesse Gabriel:

Yeah, thank you, Jamie. And thank you for all the back and forth with staff.

And I just witnessed how the incredible amount of time and effort and energy that you have put into all of this and really sort of gone into the belly of the beast, so to speak, on behalf of your community. So I just want to thank you for that. I guess the two questions you asked are, I think, important ones.

Look, I will not deny in any way, shape or form that there is that special interests have a lot of power in Sacramento in ways that I think are in many times corrosive to our democracy and unhelpful and, have tried to think with my colleagues about different ways to address that. I mean, unfortunately, our hands are really tied in

many ways because of the Supreme Court's decision in Citizens United. I think that is one of the most harmful things that has happened to our democracy and I think in many ways has eroded the confidence that citizens have in their government.

And one of the things that we talk about a lot in my office is how do we restore trust in government? Because I understand that when I interact with constituents, many are coming in very skeptical about government, about the motives of people in government, and I understand why. I completely get it.

I understand why the average person would be distrustful of government. So one of the things that we have tried to do is engage with people in a very forthright way so that even if they may say Gabriel doesn't see it the same way I see it, that they believe that there are people there that are trying to do the best that they can for their community. All of that having been said, I really do believe, and I believe this very sincerely, that what you're seeing in Sacramento around housing policy is actually not driven by special interests.

I don't believe that. I think it is driven by the fact that members of the legislature are really seeing and experiencing and feeling and hearing about our housing crisis in so many different ways and from so many different people in their community that that is what is spurring the action. And I will tell you when I meet with business owners, when I meet with experts, when I meet with people in the community, the lack of affordable housing, the inaffordability of our communities is one of the main things that I hear about.

And it's teachers who work at our schools in the Valley who have to commute an hour and a half because they can't afford to live in the communities in which they teach. It's municipalities in Northern California where they're trying to build housing for firefighters and police officers on city-owned property because the firefighters can't afford to live in the communities that they protect. So I don't actually believe that housing policy, I think there's a real issue with special interests in our politics, but I want to share with you my sincere belief that a lot of this conversation is actually not being driven by special interests.

It's being driven by legislators who are feeling and hearing about our housing crisis. I think your point on the state versus local is one that's very well taken. I will be the first to admit that I don't know every municipal code in California.

I don't even know all of LA municipal code. A lot of these decisions that we're making are complicated and highly technical, and that's why it does require us to work in partnership with local government. And one of the reasons that I'm so excited about Councilwoman Worth Girvin coming in is because I think it's an opportunity to reset that relationship and for us to hopefully be able to work together in much closer partnership.

One of the things that she and I talked about at length yesterday, not just about the specific development and the specific issue, but how do we get our teams coordinated? How can we sit down? How can we make sure that we are in regular communication?

Because I've always believed that public service is a team sport, and we have got to be, her and I are on the same team working to represent a lot of people that we overlap, that we both work for. And so I think you make a great point about that, and I have made a very sincere pledge to her that I am all in to do whatever I can to try to work together as best as we can to support and represent Woodland Hills and the other communities where we overlap.

Q: Is homelessness caused by more than housing costs and shortages, including drugs, mental illness and enforcement?

Jesse Gabriel:

Shelly, I super appreciate your perspective.

I really appreciate you sharing it with me. I agree with you that the challenges that we have with homelessness are not entirely driven by housing, that there are other issues, including, drugs and substance use disorder and all the other things you mentioned that are 100% contributing to the crisis that we're facing on our streets. I agree with you that our affordability challenges are not only the result of housing, but I won't respectfully disagree with you on the point that I have become convinced through the many conversations that I have had with experts, with researchers, looking at the evidence, the data, talking to some of the best and brightest minds at UCLA and at Berkeley and at the Department of Finance and others. I firmly believe that part of what is causing our housing, our homelessness crisis in California is our lack of housing. And I think everyone who's looked at the issue from a scientific and an objective viewpoint has come to that conclusion.

So I appreciate that that's your perspective, but I just, I want to be honest that I do believe that the severe shortage of housing we have in our state is contributing to the crisis that we have on our streets.

Q: Can communities that have already accommodated substantial housing growth stop approving more projects after reaching a set target?

Jesse Gabriel:

I do want to agree with you.

I think that the West Valley and the Woodland Hills Warner Center community has done a lot more than a lot of other parts of the city of Los Angeles in saying yes and accommodating growth. I know that there has been a huge amount of time and effort and attention from a lot of folks on this call, members of the Neighborhood Council, others. I want to absolutely validate that.

I know you all have done the work and have come to the table with an attitude of not saying no, but of being part of the solution. I think that the Woodland Hills Warner Center community deserves a lot of kudos for that. I will say, just taking a step back so you understand how it happens at the state level, there's something called Arena Regional Housing Needs Assessment that assigns numbers to different cities for how much housing growth each city needs to accommodate so that it's distributed evenly across the state.

The unfortunate reality is that the city of Los Angeles has not met that number. What you're talking about is that LA has not approved the number of units that it needs to to meet its obligations to take its fair share of housing. I think the Woodland Hills community deserves a lot of kudos, but what you're suggesting is in place.

Unfortunately, the city at large has not kept up its end of the bargain.

Q: Would you publicly support the city's determination if HCD referred the golf course dispute to the Attorney General? What concrete action can residents expect?

Jesse Gabriel:

So I think I've been very clear, I appreciate this, that in eight years in office I have not taken a position for or against any individual project and I'm not going to change that here. I am happy to engage, I'm happy to...

I think I am going to do everything I can to continue to hear and work with folks.

I appreciate your feedback and I appreciate your perspective.

Q: Why can't California's Democratic supermajority change laws that are harming communities?

Jesse Gabriel:

I think the only thing I'd share with you there, Scott, is that if you're to come up to Sacramento and you watch housing policy votes, they're not partisan votes. It's not an issue that breaks down Democrat versus Republican, very much not so.

And in fact, some of the strongest pro-development voices in the legislature are the Republicans. Many of them are very close to the business community and to builders. And so what you have seen is actually a lot of Republicans who have championed pro-growth, pro-housing legislation.

And as I mentioned, the frustration with the lack of progress at the local level is very much a bipartisan thing. And so that's why you had bills like 2011 pass 33 to 0 with Democrats and Republicans supporting it. And so I appreciate the point about the supermajority, but I do want to just make sure that folks understand this is not, in my experience, both in my time on the housing committee and now after eight years in the legislature, it's not a partisan issue.

Q: Are there too many bills, taxes, regulations and fees making life and business more expensive in California?

Jesse Gabriel:

That's going to surprise you. I agree with a lot of what you just said.

And I very strongly agree with the process point that you made. I think we have way too many bills moving through the legislature. I think it deprives us of the opportunity of the kind of thoughtful consideration that these policy changes deserve.

As an attorney, someone who was an attorney, I was trained to try to see all different sides of an issue and try to think through unintended consequences. And the fact that we do so much legislation, I think is unhelpful. And I have actually been a big advocate for significantly reducing the amount of bills that we do now.

That's not only in my power, but I have been part of a group of people that has convinced the speaker to actually enforce a limit on the number of bills that people can do and then lower it. So I agree with you. I think there are way too many bills moving through the legislature.

And I think at the detriment of making good, thoughtful, nuanced public policy. To your point about over-regulation and red tape, I also agree with that. I think that often with the best of intentions, we have made things too difficult and too complicated and put too much red tape in California.

A lot of that, as I mentioned at the beginning, I've done a lot of work on small businesses. A lot of what I have done is actually just bills to repeal laws or to repeal regulations or to cut through red tape. I'll give you an example.

I've worked a lot with with Vika and with neighborhood restaurants because we are killing neighborhood restaurants in California. It's just too damn hard for them to survive. There are so many little ticky tacky rules that actually do nothing to protect people.

They do nothing to make us safer. They do nothing to support businesses. And they're just they're just making it harder for people to operate a business and to make a living.

And so I'm a Democrat. I believe that government has an important role to play in protecting consumers and the environment and workers. But I think that in a lot of ways, we have gone in certain places too far and are doing things that are just that just don't make sense anymore.

So I know that you and I might not agree on every issue, but I think that a lot of what you just said are things that resonate with me as a policymaker.

Q: How do you weigh your constituents' fire-safety and infrastructure concerns against other interests when making legislative decisions?

Jesse Gabriel:

I'll go quickly. And let me just say one thing, Brooke, and I don't want to scare you, but one of the things that stuck out to me when I was understanding this and why I've engaged here is because I remember when Encino was under mandatory evacuation from the fires, my brother who lives around the corner from me, his wife was pregnant. And so they had left at the doctor's because there was smoke before the fire crept up the hill.

They had gone and my brother called me and said, my wife left some very important things in the house. Can you go grab them very quickly? And so I drove over to his house to grab a few things before we evacuated.

And people were driving like crazy people when the mandatory evacuation, it was actually very scary. It's very scary. And a lot of people are trying to get out at once and the fire, you literally see the flames and it's a very dangerous situation.

And it is something that stuck with me from that experience. And part of why I resonate with what really has resonated with me are the concerns of the community. I understand what it's like for people who are up in the hills with narrow roads in an emergency situation.

That is a dangerous and scary situation. So I want to, I just want to validate that that's very much on my mind.

I'm worried about your time. It's okay. So one of the things I've learned in eight years representing half a million people is that people in my community have, like there's often differences of opinion, right?

And people in Van Nuys may say things differently than people in Canoga Park who may see things differently than people in Woodland Hills and not all 75,000 residents of Woodland Hills agree with each other. And I often have situations where I'm talking to people in the community and two people who live in the same neighborhood have very different views on the same issue. So my, what I try to do is I try to really dig in.

I try to understand the issues as best as I can. And then I try to make the best decision that I can. And for me, it's a very personal thing because I decided, yeah, I don't think I fully appreciated what I got into when I ran for office.

And now every Monday when the legislature is in session, I say goodbye to my kids and I leave them for the week. And that's something that's become increasingly difficult for me. And so the one promise that I made to myself is that I'm only going to do what I think is right for the right reasons, because otherwise it's not worth it to be in public service.

And I could make a lot more money and I could sleep in my own bed and I could spend a lot more time with my kids if I had a different job. So I can't speak for everyone in public service. I can't speak for all of my colleagues in the legislature, but I want you to understand, even if I'm disagreeing with you or not agreeing with you on a

particular issue, I'm just trying to do the best job that I can to represent this community and to understanding that there are a diversity of viewpoints in this community.

And I'm going to dig in and try to understand the issues as best as I can, and then do the best that I can to make good public policy that helps people.

Q: Will you take a public position on the golf course project, given the community's concerns about donors, wildlife and evacuation safety?

Jesse Gabriel:

I think it's a super fair question. And I have understanding that, a lot of people in politics will just try to pander to the people in front of them and tell people what they want to hear. I've tried to be very transparent since the beginning of this conversation with the community that I have not, I don't think it's fair to say I don't do housing policy.

I vote on statewide housing policy all the time. What I have been very clear about is that I will not take a in support or against any individual project, any individual housing project or commercial project or any type of land use decision that is being made by a local government. I never have.

And I'm not going to because I don't believe that that's my role as a member of the state legislature. I will work on statewide housing policy. I will bring the perspectives and voices of my constituents to that conversation.

I will bring my own intuition and judgment about what is the best for the people of the state of California and the people of the San Fernando Valley. But I'm not going to issue a letter saying I oppose this project. I'm also not going to issue a letter saying I support the project.

That's just not something I've done and it's not something I'm going to do. So I have been happy to take the concerns of the community, the perspectives of the community, particularly around the health and safety and wildfire issues and really center those and underscore those and underline them and highlight them and put them in front of the relevant decision makers. And that is something I do feel is appropriate for me to do.

But if what you're looking for is for me to issue a letter saying I oppose the project, it's not something I'm going to do.

Q: How do you respond to concerns that you follow your own policy judgment rather than standing up for the West San Fernando Valley?

Jesse Gabriel:

I appreciate that.

And I will tell you, all of your signs made my boys very nervous. So every time they saw a Tracy Schroeder sign, they pointed it out to me. But so I appreciate you raising your hand and being part of the democratic process.

Look, I think the only thing I can say is that I live in this community. I own a home in this community. My entire net worth is mostly is tied up in that home.

I'm actively choosing to raise my boys in this community. I am deeply sensitive to the needs and perspectives of folks here. I, hear about it all the time at Little League.

I hear about it when I'm coaching soccer at Pierce College. I hear about all of the various issues that people are dealing with in every corner of the valley. And I try to be as open hearted, open minded and as empathetic as I

can.

But at the end of the day, politics is about making decisions, leadership is about making decisions. And there is what I have come to learn is there's no decision you're going to make that is going to make 100 percent of the people happy. And if you're making everybody happy, it's because you're not doing anything.

So I have to make calls on these on these bills. And I do absolutely the best job that I can. We work our butts off.

We try to understand them. We try to think through the unintended consequences. We talk to folks in the community.

We consult with experts. And then at the end of the day, I have to make a decision and I will take responsibility for every single vote. Those are votes that I have made, decisions that I have made.

But the only thing I can say to you is I am working as hard as I can. And the other thing that I really want to convey to folks is one of the things that has become increasingly important to me during my time in public service is to try to approach all this with a sense of humility. I don't think I have all the answers.

I know that I don't. And I don't believe I'm an expert on every single issue. I'm not.

And nobody is. And so I try really hard to do a lot of listening and to do a lot of learning and to really approach these issues with the thoughtfulness and sensitivity that they deserve. And, I may I may not cast a vote the way that you want on every single bill, but I want you to believe that I'm trying really hard to make the right decision for the right reasons.

Q: How can housing in high-fire-hazard areas be affordable when residents and property owners struggle to obtain insurance?

Jesse Gabriel:

It is a real issue, both the the cost of insurance, the lack of insurance insurance leaving the market issues with the fair plan. It's been an issue of it's not actually under the jurisdiction of the budget committee, but, the people on Utilities and Energy Committee have been and the Insurance Committee have been very focused on it. I suspect, Eve, that it will be one of the first things that we do with the new governor when the new legislature comes back into session.

And we may have to do some very there's some very difficult and complicated tradeoffs there and some choices there about litigation and utilities and insurance. But I think in many people across the state, I think are having the same challenges that folks in hillside communities in the valley are, which is like simply the inability to purchase insurance or insurance that's just exorbitantly expensive. So I think stay tuned is the answer on that.

And I expect that you're going to see some legislation that may be one of the few things that we do in a very expedited manner at the beginning of the new session.