



an
INDEPENDENT
Voice



Introduction

I wrote this booklet to inform constituents of my views, opinions and facts about this legislative district.

I am a candidate for the 5th Assembly District because I understand the particular rural needs within this area of California. I will support legislation and policies that better suit the needs of my constituents. Most importantly, I care deeply about California's future.

The 5th Assembly District includes all of Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, Madera, Mariposa, Mono, Tuolumne and portions of Placer and El Dorado Counties. I encourage you to read and pass the booklet along to someone else who may also be interested in my political positions. You may also make a copy for purposes of distribution.

I appreciate your support and consideration. If you would like to donate, host a coffee, place a yard sign or volunteer for the 2012 Assembly campaign, please contact me at the address or telephone number listed at the back of this publication.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Mark C. Belden", is centered on the page. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mark C. Belden

Candidate for California State Assembly



Independent or Political Party

California recently approved an open primary system, meaning the top two vote winners advance to the general election. In the past, only one nominee of his or her party would advance to the general election. Although political parties still have a profound influence in the election process, it is no longer necessary to affiliate oneself with a political party to advance in California's elections. All candidates are still required to state their party preference for the last ten years.

The fastest growing political party in California is not a political party at all. Almost 20% of California voters consider themselves Independent or Decline to State. The Secretary of State now defines Decline to State as No Party Preference (NPP). Historically, George Washington was the only president considered an "Independent". At the time of his election, President Washington was not affiliated with any political party. A lifelong Republican, I now consider myself an Independent, socially moderate, fiscal conservative.

*"You may call me an Independent.
However, I would rather you call me
'independent' of the two political parties."*

**–Mark Belden, Candidate for California's
5th Assembly District**



Corrections System, Punishment and the Death Penalty

The 1994 Three Strikes law has proven to reduce repeat offenders by removing them from the public population. Behavior of the repeat offenders has not changed, and for many it will never change. Our crime rate has been reduced by eliminating these individuals from the California population. In 1996, judges were given greater discretion to pursue or minimize the Three Strikes law. I will oppose any legislation that would minimize the Three Strikes law. I will oppose any legislation to reduce sentences of individuals as a result of prison overcrowding.

Future California correctional facilities should be built with the utmost cost-effective and efficient techniques and technology. Non-violent offenders should be placed in worker programs to offset the cost of incarceration.

Capital punishment, reinstated in 1978, has placed a tremendous financial burden on the State of California. It is estimated that \$184 million per year is spent above the cost of life-without-the-possibility-of-parole inmates. Unlike the Three Strikes law, the death penalty has not reduced these capital case crimes. Suitable punishment should include life without the possibility of parole, a punishment for many considered just as harsh.

I will support legislation to change capital punishment to life in prison without the possibility of parole, a savings estimated at \$5 billion by 2030. California taxpayers have already been burdened with \$4 billion above the cost of life without the possibility of parole since 1978. It is time to reconsider the death penalty in California, and replace it with less costly but equally effective punishment for these individuals.

Our priority should be to first protect society from these individuals, second to punish them.



Gun Control

In the 1990's I held a Federal Firearms license. Until recently I held a Curio and Relic license, both issued by the Federal Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms Agency. I was allowed to acquire and resell firearms or collect vintage firearms as defined by the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Agency. I still collect firearms and take great pride in my (admittedly incomplete) collection of WW II battle rifles.

I will oppose any legislation that would impose further gun controls on law-abiding California citizens. I further encourage all law-abiding citizens to possess some type of self-defensive firearm for their own protection. I am not going to recite the Second Amendment or what our founding fathers originally intended in the right to bear arms, but rather let's use common sense. We should not rely on law enforcement to provide personal protection; it just is an impractical and unfair burden on our public services.

*“We need to keep what is working,
change what is not, and have the
knowledge and courage to see it
through.”*

**—Mark Belden, Candidate for California’s
5th Assembly District**



The Economy and Jobs

My academic education and experience as a builder do not qualify me to be an expert on California's economy and job creation, but I do understand the basic foundation on which economies grow and maintain balance.

Jobs are created by private businesses and corporations, (private sector) or government (public sector). The private sector job creation is driven by revenue produced by sales, service, etc. (and hopefully profits). The public sector relies solely on tax and fee revenue. The more private revenue generated, the more taxes and fees paid. Simply put, businesses make money and government spends it. It is essential that job creation be first accomplished in the private sector. It is incumbent on our local and state governments to provide an environment that encourages this.

Think of the public sector as overhead of the private sector. The greater the overhead, the less profit for individuals and companies. Overhead in any company is essential for the proper operation and organization. However, when it becomes too large, it affects efficiency and profitability. If the California legislature was very serious about business development, hence job creation, they would eliminate the red tape and the bureaucracy that is so detrimental to its success.

“Change and innovation are rarely spawned by established institutions, but rather by mavericks, free-thinking individuals, the courageous and the independents.”

–Mark Belden, Candidate for California’s 5th Assembly District



Immigration, Illegal Residents and Border Integrity

California would not be the world's leader in the scientific, technology, agricultural and entertainment industries if it were not for the vast numbers of immigrants. Many of California's immigrants enrich and contribute to California's greatness. The lawful process of U.S. citizenship, legal worker status and visitation should be adhered to.

Foremost, our borders should be secured not only from unlawful immigration, but more importantly from terrorist elements, human and drug trafficking and other criminal activities.

Residents without legal status should be given a short grace period to achieve legal status. After that time, they should be returned to their native country.

I will support legislation that practices greater security along our border, in our government institutions and private businesses. I will further support legislation that provides a legal path to those persons in California illegally who meet acceptance requirements. A path to legal residency must adhere to a strict time and requirement schedule.



Taxes, Government Growth and Regulation

California's government is too big and too expensive. According to the Legislature Analyst's Office, the deterioration of state revenues and the increase in such programs as the prison system, Medi Cal, funding guarantee of Proposition 98 and too many programs to list, has put our state in a financial downward spiral.

How did this happen? I am not an economist and do not think anyone fully understands all of the complexities of California's economic situation. I do know the State of California provides too many services that its revenue is unable to support.

The term "Nanny State" was first coined by a British Member of Parliament in 1965, but easily defines the policies of California's government. I do not want people to go hungry, emergency services discontinued or essential public services eliminated. However, we must act now and continue to discipline our legislators to make the right choices.

I offer several suggestions:

- 1) Competitive bidding for public services
- 2) Reduction of burdensome regulations
- 3) A fair and competitive wage and pension system for state and local workers
- 4) A cost effective welfare program that allows the recipient to contribute to the public or private sector in exchange for State received services or funds
- 5) A correction system that allows for some inmates to



Taxes, Government Growth and Regulation (continued)

contribute back to society while serving sentences, a fair and ethical health care that minimizes cost to taxpayers, and abolishment of the death penalty for life without parole inmates.

As taxes and revenues rise, so do expenditures. Californians are now faced with the opposite reality. All Californians should adopt a self-reliance philosophy. Our reliance on government services is poorly received by its citizens. More money in the pockets of Californians can be spent more efficiently and effectively by all of us. I will support any legislation that reduces the tax burden on California's citizens and businesses. I will oppose any legislation to raise taxes on individuals or California's businesses.

The growth of our government is systemic to many of our financial problems, cumbersome, archaic and inefficient. California deserves better. Our state government is not a for-profit business, but should be conducted in much the same way. Feel good programs and expenditures should be eliminated promptly. Every tax dollar you spend should result in a dollar of public service received.

As a small business person I have felt the effects of burdensome California regulations. Well intended but ill-conceived laws cost businesses and citizen's precious time and money. If elected, my top priority will be to make California the number one state to live, work and conduct business.



War on Drugs

California is losing the war on drugs. Although few persons receive prison sentences for simple marijuana possession, a greater percent do for other controlled substances. A person possessing a small amount or under the influence of a controlled substance while conducting lawful activities in my opinion, is different than trafficking, manufacture, sales or other activities, specifically prohibiting its use.

Like alcohol addiction, an addict and/or abuser of a controlled substance is a very serious problem to all of us. We do not incarcerate alcoholics nor should we incarcerate substance abusers.

Historically, addictions have been classified as mental health/behavior problems and should be addressed as such. Recent scientific research indicates that addiction may also be genetic. Although Proposition 36 and drug courts have had mixed results, we should continue to offer a path to sobriety other than incarceration. I will support legislation that continues to offer a path to sobriety for controlled substance addicts/abusers.

The burdensome process of law enforcement to arrest and incarcerate addicts/abusers should be eliminated, saving taxpayer dollars for more serious crimes. Law enforcement money should be utilized to reduce and if possible, eliminate the manufacture, trafficking and sale of controlled substances.



California Natural Resources, Water and Environment

California has an abundance of natural resources for which our stewardship is paramount. Our natural resources are not to be preserved, but to be utilized with great care. We need a common sense approach to forest lands, water, mining rights and other natural resources. We must accept that our present day natural resources will never meet our expectations of what we had in the past, it is impractical and unattainable to achieve such.

The Sierra Nevada Mountains are California's largest fresh water source and one of the world's largest reservoirs. Snow melt and precipitation runoff flow each year provides 75% of the state's agricultural and urban water needs. Roughly 1400 reservoirs with the capacity of 42 million acre feet are the direct beneficiaries of this "Sierra water reservoir". I will support legislation that continues to preserve California's Sierra reservoir for the purposes of industrial, agricultural and urban development. I will further support legislation that allows for greater storage of California's precious water resource.

As a trained scientist, specifically in environmental health effects on the human body, I am keenly aware of the purity of our water, air and soil. A common sense approach should be maintained in regulating our life giving resources. Surprisingly, Mother Nature does have the ability to correct many adverse effects man has made on the environment. We depend upon Mother Nature every day to convert carbon dioxide to oxygen, to decompose waste products and to filter water through ground absorption and aquifer generation.

I will support legislation that balances the needs of California's natural resources for our use with the interest of our environment.



California Agriculture

If you have read some or this entire booklet, you will know that I am pro-business, pro-growth and anti-big government...with the exception of when it may impact California's precious agricultural industry.

As a young man recently graduated from college, I dreamed of becoming an independent farmer. The thought of working the soil and producing something from nothing seemed magical. I soon realized the cost to get started in such an endeavor was beyond my financial means. I still regard California farmers and ranchers as the most inventive, creative and industrious individuals in California.

California is the 8th largest economy in the world, which is absolutely amazing. It is the 5th largest producer/exporter of agricultural products in the world. That is truly mindboggling.

Precious agricultural land should be preserved. Industrial and urban centers should be planned and located in a way to minimize their effects on California's agricultural land.

I am absolutely committed to expanding agriculture in California. We need more water, not less. I believe in less regulation, not more, and a commitment by California's legislature to make this possible.



Health Care in California

Most important is preventing disease and promoting healthy lifestyles. I am just as guilty as many Californians of not actively pursuing this course of treatment. The five chronic diseases -- heart disease, cancer, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and diabetes -- cause two thirds of the deaths in California. These diseases are largely preventable, but make up 75% of the health care expenditures we experience in California. Let us appropriate additional resources to eliminate these diseases and reap the benefit -- dramatically reducing the overall cost of health care in California. As Ben Franklin stated "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

I will support "voluntary" affordable and accessible publicly and privately funded health care legislation. The same health care benefits offered to legislators should be available to all Californians. The details of such a program are beyond the scope of this booklet, but should closely align with the Patients Choice Act of 2009. The uninsured and underinsured will have the security of knowing that major illnesses or diseases will not affect their quality of life.

I want to further state that for those who think taxpayers are again going to pick up the tab for such programs, think again. The uninsured and underinsured eventually do receive health care (at the taxpayers' expense) and at a much higher cost. In addition, these individuals not afforded preventive health care might have avoided these inflated medical treatments in the first place.

We can all hope for universal, affordable health care but we should be prepared for something less. Our goal should be to provide affordable, accessible, voluntary health care that is budget neutral for all Californians.



A Woman's Choice

There has been no one issue that I have encountered that is more divisive than pro-life/pro-choice. Our founding fathers at the time of independence held abortion to be legally acceptable, if occurring before quickening (the first movement of the unborn infant). Starting in the 1820s and accelerating rapidly in the 1860s, by 1900 all states had some type of law prohibiting abortions. Abortions were being performed illegally however, sometimes with adverse effects and even death of the woman.

By the 1960s, laws were introduced in some states repealing illegal abortions culminating in the Supreme Court decision Roe versus Wade in 1973. The present law regarding abortions has seen some adjustments, but still provides all women the freedom to choose.

Like our nation, I too have struggled with this issue, but feel our present law is appropriate. I will support a woman's choice. It is up to the woman with the counsel of her mate, clinician, and clergy to choose pro-life or pro-choice.



Same Sex Marriage

Marriage has been defined by a union between a man and a woman, usually sanctioned by a governing body or a religious institution. We should continue to preserve this institution.

Throughout time society has tolerated and now accepted, in many parts of the world, the union of a man and a man or a woman and a woman. I do not feel the State of California should be involved in the regulation of such unions. I will not oppose or support same sex marriage legislation.



Biography

I was born in Oakland, California, and graduated high school in Fremont one year ahead of my peers. I graduated one week after my twenty first birthday with a Bachelor of Science from California State University in the newly created discipline of Occupational Health Science, a combination of engineering sciences and medicine. After a brief time employed as an engineering representative for Aetna in their San Francisco and Buffalo offices, I received my Masters of Science in Occupational Health Science from the City University of New York under the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) fellowship program.

After graduation, I worked with a Washington DC consulting firm and was their site manager of Occupational Safety and Health at Love Canal, New York (the nation's most notorious hazardous waste site at that time). I then worked as the employee Safety and Health coordinator at Fairchild Semiconductor, San Jose, then as the Manager of Occupational Safety and Health at GTE Sprint, Burlingame.

During my professional employment, I obtained the following board certifications: The American Board of Safety Professionals and the American Board of Industrial Hygienists.

However, my first love was building, and with the blessings of my wife, at twenty eight years of age, I pursued renovating buildings in Stockton. I was granted a General Building contractor license in 1994 by the state of California. I later developed a way to build steel frame homes, founded the M C Belden company and developed



Biography (continued)

the steel frame home components EZ stud and EZ joist.

Although none of my business ventures made me rich or famous, I am happy to have been able to pursue my dreams. I ran for Supervisor in Calaveras County (1992), attended the S.F. Police Academy (1989) and recently ran for State Senator in a special election vacated by the late Senator David Cox (2010). I am presently renovating the historic Inspiration Lodge on Highway 88 in Amador County.

My wife Christine and I live in the small community of Railroad Flat, Calaveras County in the home I designed and built in 1991. I have been married for thirty years and our children consist of two large macaws, Rudy and Pete, two equally large Great Pyrenees Mountain Dogs, Oscar and Lola, and numerous felines, many unwelcome raccoons and an occasional mountain lion.



Belden for Assembly 2012

Yes, I want my independent voice heard. Also, I can:

- Make a monetary contribution
- Host a small event at my home
- Put up a yard sign/ bumper sticker
- Volunteer my time

Belden for Assembly
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Contact us on the web at
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Mark with his wife Christine and his two Great Pyrenees Mountain Dogs, Oscar and Lola, in front of the house he designed and built in 1991 in Calaveras County.

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5th Assembly District**

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Map of the 5th Assembly District

