

Gaines predicts worst is not over for California

By Kathryn Reed

Even though Ted Gaines considers himself an optimist, he painted a bleak picture when it comes to state government.

“Because of regulations, taxation issues and demographics there are a lot of state programs that are costly,” the Republican assemblyman from Roseville said. “We need to do a lot of work to get from point A to pint B to restore the luster of California.”

Gaines drove to South Lake Tahoe on Tuesday afternoon in a blizzard to speak with more than two dozen constituents assembled at Lake Tahoe Community College. Nearly three hours after his talk started he was on his way back to Sacramento.



Assemblyman
Ted Gaines
answers
questions
Tuesday at
LTCC.
Photo/Kathryn
Reed

He plans to introduce a bill modeled after one adopted by British Columbia, Canada, which was able to reduce the number

of laws on the books by 43 percent in two years. In BC, they also had to take away a bill for every new one.

Gaines connected with many in the audience when he talked about having six children, four of whom are in college. He touched on owning an insurance business for 27 years, and understanding the pains of the economy and stranglehold of state and federal regulations.

He said he is looking at ways the state can help businesses and entrepreneurs, whether it's through more laws or backing away.

South Lake Tahoe Councilman Hal Cole asked about the proposed tax on independent contractors.

Gaines said nothing has been brought to the committee level, but ideas are percolating.

"I would be vigilant and keep an eye on it," Gaines told Cole.

El Dorado County sheriff's Lt. Les Lovell asked about the pending legislation to protect snow removal dollars.

Gaines said he is worried the state will take more dollars from cities to balance the \$21 billion deficit. His bill would protect snow removal funds. The bill has yet to reach the first committee meeting.

Mayor Kathay Lovell asked how cities would fare in upcoming state budget talks.

"I think there will be pressure at all levels. I think you will see a reduction in services," Gaines said.

From there Gaines delved into his opinions about the state prison system – don't let inmates out early, don't give them Cadillac medical care plans.

The assemblyman all but said he doesn't like Proposition 98,

which guarantees a set amount of funding for education. Instead, he would like to give districts block grants for them to spend how they want.

"We are constantly micromanaging," Gaines said of government.

However, to Leanne Wagoner's question about what is going to be done about the continued cuts to domestic violence programs, he told the executive director of South Lake Tahoe Women's Center, "I will fight that fight to keep women's center in the state open."

He also suggested Wagoner engage first lady Maria Shriver in her cause.

"She has a lot of power," Gaines said.

One person brought up the issue of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency not being held accountable to the public because the Governing Board is not elected directly by the people.

Gaines said he has had his issues with boards like TRPA for the same reason. But he also said he sees hope in the direction Executive Director Joanne Marchetta is taking the bi-state regulatory agency. He does not favor reducing funding for TPRA.

Cole, who is also on TRPA's board, said it's best if TRPA can give more control to local jurisdictions when it comes to things like sign ordinances and land use.

Gaines told John Adamski he would look into the local resident's concern about what he perceives as a stalemate between the U.S. Forest Service and Lahontan Water Quality Board when it comes to forest fuels reduction.

Local resident Ken Weitzman asked if the state is going to weigh-in on the city's redevelopment proposal that will be before the City Council on April 6. Gaines said redevelopment areas are a local issue and he didn't give a direct answer on

the property tax issue at the state level.

Gaines said with the approval of Proposition 11, which mandates redistricting be by a public commission and not in a backroom by lawmakers, "it should make district seats more competitive." This will be done this year.

"I think more will get done in the Legislature," Gaines said of eliminating gerrymandering.

Gaines admitted he doesn't trust state government and that local jurisdictions should learn to fend for themselves.

"There are tremendous stresses everywhere in services provided by government. It will affect the poor more," Gaines said. "Communities are better when they create their own revenues base. If you create a stable tax base, the better you are going to be."