

OPINION

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The Year Ahead with the RCRC



By Matt Kingsley

I was recently sworn in as chairman of the Rural County Representatives of California, better known as RCRC. RCRC is an association that advocates on behalf of 36 of California's rural counties before legislative and regulatory bodies in Sacramento and Washington, D.C. Inyo County has been a member of RCRC since 1973 and I have served as the Inyo County delegate on the RCRC Board of Directors since 2015.

The core of RCRC's mission is to improve the quality of life in California's rural counties. To accomplish this, RCRC strives to promote a greater understanding among policymakers about the unique challenges that face California's small population counties, and advocates that they consider these challenges when developing policy and regulations.

I am honored to have been selected by my fellow RCRC board members to lead the organization in 2019, which is shaping up to be another challenging year for California's rural counties. A new administration, freshmen legislators, and a democratic supermajority in both houses of California's legislative chambers leave many in Sacramento in a state of anticipation. Additionally, with the election of a new governor comes the filling of hundreds of key state positions that wield major influence over the everyday governance of California's rural counties. That means RCRC will be focused on both educating the new legislators and agency leaders on the unique issues specifically

impacting California's rural counties, and developing strategies to address the legislative and regulatory priorities of the 2019-20 session.

As an organization we will work to identify new ways to address the ongoing, unresolved issues that inequitably impact rural counties, such as disadvantaged communities, unfunded mandates and various budget cuts/reallocations, while also developing and advocating for legislative proposals on a handful of proactive opportunities expected this session. This includes policies dealing with water, housing and health care issues, wild-fire and forest management, land-use restrictions and the status of investor-owned utilities in light of recent wildfire events, and organics recycling implementation, to name a few.

On the federal front, we've identified three issues of top priority. These include the enactment of the Endowment for the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) program to provide California's forested counties with a long-term, stable revenue stream from the federal government, the enactment of legislation to liberalize federal banking laws for cannabis, and the need to enact a comprehensive national infra-structure package that goes beyond bridges and highways so that we can address rural broadband deployment and rural water/wastewater facilities.

In addition to the legislative and regulatory advocacy efforts that lie ahead, I am excited to host an RCRC Board of Directors meeting in Inyo County in May. This two-day event will include a tour of Death Valley National Park and will introduce more than 40 locally elected officials, staff and rural county representatives to Inyo County. My time spent working on behalf of RCRC will serve to give exposure to the unique issues that impact Inyo County and the Eastern Sierra. I appreciate the backing of my fellow Inyo County supervisors as I work to advocate for both Inyo County and California's rural counties as a whole, and am grateful to my constituents for supporting me as I fulfill my duties for the next year both here in Inyo County as well as Sacramento and Washington, D.C.

There is much to be done to safeguard and enhance the rural way of life in California. I am excited about the opportunities that lie ahead, and I look forward to working with my fellow RCRC board members, local government partners, stakeholders and my constituents to continue to advance policies that are important to rural communities throughout our great state.

(Matt Kingsley is the Inyo County Fifth District supervisor and the chairman of the Rural County Representatives of California.)

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