

Transparency In Numbers
CLEARLY ORANGE

May, 2018

Taxpayers Count

In the latest edition of *Taxpayers Count*, the Watchdog takes a look at the Animal Care services provided by Orange County. How many pet adoptions are administered in OC each year? Find out in the latest "addition" of *Taxpayers Count* by clicking the image below.



**Newport Beach Mayor Pro Tem Will O'Neill
Receives Taxpayer Watchdog Award**



Orange County's independently-elected Auditor-Controller Eric H. Woolery, CPA, recognized Newport Beach Mayor Pro Tem Will O'Neill with a coveted Taxpayer Watchdog Award.

"As a Member of Newport Beach's Finance Committee and City Council, Will O'Neill has actively worked to find aggressive proactive solutions to looming pension challenges in Newport Beach," Woolery said. "All communities would benefit from having watchdogs like Will O'Neill in public leadership keeping a close eye on taxpayer funds."

O'Neill, who began championing fiscal responsibility and transparency as a Member of the City of Newport Beach's Finance Committee, – has continued to provide leadership on financial matters since his election to the City Council in 2016.

"Proactive attention to pensions is critical as our liabilities continue to grow," said Mayor Pro Tem O'Neill. He added, "I'm proud of the stance Newport Beach has taken to have the public's interest and Taxpayer dollars constantly on our minds."

Mayor Pro Tem O'Neill joins a list of Taxpayer Watchdogs that includes attorney and former County Public Financing Advisory Council (PFAC) Chairwoman Lisa Hughes, longtime County Audit Oversight Committee (AOC) Chairman Dr. David Carlson, Orange County Taxpayers Association CEO Carolyn Cavecche, Senator Patricia Bates, County Treasurer Shari Freidenrich, former Sutter County Auditor-Controller Robert Stark, Irvine Mayor Donald P. Wagner, Huntington Beach Mayor Mike Posey, Huntington Beach City Treasurer Alisa Cutchen, Cypress Mayor Pro-Tem Stacy Berry, and others.

Internal Orange County Taxpayer Watchdogs



The Orange County Auditor-Controller regularly recognizes individuals and organizations who espouse the mentality of a "Watchdog," safeguarding Taxpayer dollars. Recently recognized county employees were Ila Patel and Annabelle Garcia of our Cost, Revenue & Budget unit, Mark Servino and Justin Graham from County Counsel, and Neal Kelley, Molly Yriarte, and MyLinh Tu from the Registrar of Voters for successfully appealing a decision from the State Board of Equalization on sales tax, which will result in over \$300,000 being refunded to the County of Orange.

Further findings were made by Christine Nguyen and Mark Rahwles of the Administrative & Financial Services Unit within the Auditor-Controller Department. Their diligence uncovered an additional \$400,000 in over-billing for county IT and parking

services.

"The function and duties of the department are only as effective for taxpayers as the competency and diligence of the staff we hire. I'm proud to work with a hard-working team of watchdogs aimed at stamping out government waste," Auditor-Controller Eric Woolery said.

Measure to Maintain Independence, Oversight, and Transparency of Public Funds Approved



From left to right: Ventura County Auditor-Controller Jeff Burgh, Orange County Auditor-Controller Eric Woolery, Calaveras County Auditor-Controller Rebecca Callen, Assemblyman Bill Brough, Merced County Treasurer-Tax Collector Karen Adams, and Yuba County Auditor-Controller Rich Eberle, after AB 2558 was heard on May 9 in the State Assembly Local Government Committee.

The Assembly Local Government Committee unanimously approved Assembly Bill 2558 by Assemblyman Bill Brough (R-Dana Point). AB 2558 would extend protections to voters and citizens by ensuring any attempt to consolidate the elected roles of the treasurer-tax collector and the auditor-controller, the fiduciary and financial watchdogs of public funds, to an appointed position be first approved by voters.

Assemblyman Brough is pleased to introduce the legislation with the support of the California Association of County Treasurers-Tax Collectors and the Orange County Auditor-Controller. Over the last 30 years, 7 consolidations occurred. In all but one of the cases, voters were not given the choice as to whether the consolidated office should be elected or appointed. These independently elected officers provide a critical protection for public funds by providing important independent checks and balances over public money.

"The elected treasurer-tax collector is a public servant and has specific responsibilities as a fiduciary to protect public funds" stated Shari Freidenrich, Orange County Treasurer-Tax Collector. "State law requires another elected official, the auditor-controller to perform independent oversight of these funds by performing reviews and audits of the funds held by the treasurer-tax collector, and include some requirements implemented after the bankruptcy in Orange County in 1994. Any decision to change these important oversight and segregation of duties roles between the two independently elected offices that would consolidate these offices into a single elected position could affect public funds due to the loss of independent oversight. This bill provides that any decision to consider this change would be transparent and only done if approved by the owners of the public funds, the citizens of the county."

Orange County Auditor-Controller Eric Woolery added, "The County's financial watchdogs should be independent of other County officials and accountable only to the people. If the financial watchdogs are instead going to be hired and fired by politicians, then the voters should be the ones making the decision to give up their own right to elect independent watchdogs and placing them under the authority of politicians instead. I thank Assemblyman Brough for his efforts in protecting the will of the voters."

"Fiscal responsibility, oversight, and transparency are core roles of government. This is called into question when counties propose changing elected offices charged with auditing programs and collecting and dispersing public dollars to appointed or a consolidated position. This bill gives voters a critical protection and preserves their ability to choose the level of oversight they feel is most appropriate," concluded Assemblyman Brough.

AB 2558 will next be heard on the Assembly Floor.



Honoring all our brave service men,
women and animals during
Military Appreciation Month
and all year-round!

OC Auditor-Controller



Memorial Day is a time to reflect in appreciation of those who paid the ultimate price for our liberty. We at the Auditor-Controller's office wish everyone a meaningful Memorial Day weekend, with humble appreciation for our fallen service members. Their sacrifice is the thread with which the stars and stripes are stitched.

Cooking the Books with Auditor-Controller Eric H. Woolery

The unofficial start of Summer is upon us which means gatherings with friends, family, and neighbors around the barbecue. Whatever you choose to throw on the grill, nothing pairs with charred meats and veggies quite like potato salad!

Bacon Potato Salad



Ingredients:

- 2 lb. baby potatoes, halved
- 6 slices bacon
- 1 red onion, finely chopped
- 1/4 cup apple cider vinegar
- 2 tbsp. water
- 1 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tbsp. dijon mustard
- 1/2 tsp. granulated sugar
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 8 green onions, sliced

Directions:

In a large pot, cover potatoes with water and season generously with salt. Bring water to a boil and cook until potatoes are easily pierced with a knife (15 to 20 minutes). Drain and let cool slightly before transferring to a large serving bowl.

In a large skillet over medium heat, cook bacon until crispy (about 8 minutes). Reserve about 2 tablespoons of fat in the pan, and transfer bacon to a paper towel-lined plate to drain.

Add red onion to the pan and cook over medium heat until they begin to soften (about 3 minutes). Whisk in apple cider vinegar, water, olive oil, dijon mustard, and sugar. Bring mixture to a simmer, then turn off heat and season with salt and pepper.

Stir in green onions and gradually pour mixture over potatoes. Toss and serve warm.

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