

## **Ken on the Issues: ENVIRONMENT**

I believe strongly that the health of our residents is tied to the health of our environment. I am proud of my work in environmental stewardship. I have acted to make Santa Clara County a leader on climate change and environmental issues.

Climate change has become an increasingly important issue both globally and locally. If we do not act quickly and decisively to reduce greenhouse gases, rising temperatures and sea levels will have devastating effects on our planet. In 2006, the California Legislature passed the California Global Warming Solutions Act, commonly referred to by the bill number AB 32. This groundbreaking measure created aggressive caps on greenhouse gas emissions. As member of both the California Air Resources Board (ARB) and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD), I have been able to give our local residents direct input into the implementation of AB 32.

I have also led local efforts to curb pollution and greenhouse gases. Land use regulations – decisions about where we approve the building of new homes and businesses and how to build them – have a huge impact on our carbon footprint. Buildings in the United States consume over 30 percent of America's energy, 67 percent of all electricity, and produce over 35 percent of the nation's carbon dioxide emissions. That is why I called for the creation of a Green Building Ordinance requiring essential design elements to be incorporated into new building projects that use less wasteful building materials and more energy efficient construction.

Another new program I advocated for was a prescription drug take-back program. Tests of local reservoirs found traces of chemicals and medicinal compounds in the water supply that end up there when medications aren't disposed of properly. Our drug take-back program prevents drugs from contaminating the water supply. It also helps prevent dosage errors by cleaning out excess prescription bottles from medicine cabinets and helps reduce recreational pharmaceutical drug abuse by getting rid of unused pills.

Single-use bags contribute greatly to our County's litter problem. They often end up in streams and fill-up our landfills. Single-use plastic bags are not biodegradable, have a negative impact on water quality, and are harmful to aquatic life. Single-use paper bags require more energy and resources to manufacture and are more expensive to distribute. After a year of outreach to the community and local businesses, I am prepared to ask the Board of Supervisors later this year to pass an ordinance banning the giveaway single-use bags at retail outlets in the unincorporated areas of the County.

Finally, as leader on environmental issues, the County must assure that its operations are as "green" as possible. To that end, I have supported making reductions to our overall vehicle fleet and converting to hybrid vehicles where possible. We have strengthened our recycling programs and started composting. I have also asked that we look into ways to make all County-sponsored events zero-waste.

I believe that it is critical that the County Government Center begin the process of transitioning to using renewable sources for 100% of its energy consumption. The County is currently drafting a plan to make that a reality. The County also has a Renewable Energy Task Force that is looking to install solar panels on County-owned sites and create regional Power Purchase Agreements with other government jurisdictions. This is not only an investment in our future, but one that will pay immediate dividends by reducing ongoing costs.