

# Opinion

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

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NEWS: SEN. HATCH INVOKES "GILLIGAN'S ISLAND" ON WHY THE RICH SHOULDN'T PAY MORE TAXES.

PAT BAGLEY SALT LAKE TRIBUNE



e.j. dionne jr.

## Governmental success doesn't make headlines

Don't expect to see a lot of newspapers and websites with this headline: "Big government bailout worked." But it would be entirely accurate.

The actual headlines make the point. "Demand for fuel-efficient cars helps GM to \$3.2 billion profit," declared The Washington Post. "GM Reports Earnings Tripled in First Quarter, as Revenue Jumped 15 Percent," reported The New York Times.

Too little attention has been paid to the success of the government's rescue of the Detroit-based auto companies, and almost no attention has been paid to how completely and utterly wrong opponents of the bailout were when they insisted it was doomed to failure.

"Having the federal government involved in every aspect of the private sector is very dangerous," Rep. Dan Burton, R-Ind., told Fox News in December 2008. "In the long term, it could cause us to become a quasi-socialist country." I don't see any evidence that we have become a "quasi-socialist country," just big profits. Sorry to say, but you won't see a news conference where the bailout's foes candidly acknowledge how mistaken they were.

The lack of accountability is stunning, but not surprising. It reflects a deep bias in the way our political debate is carried out. The unexamined assumption of so much political reporting is that attacks on government's capacity to do anything right make intuitive sense because "everybody knows" that government is basically inefficient and incompetent.

Government failure gets a lot of coverage. That's useful because government should be held accountable for its mistakes. What's not OK is that we hear little when government acts competently and even creatively. For if mistakes teach lessons, successes teach lessons, too.

In the case of the car industry, allowing the market to operate without any intervention by government would have wiped out a large part of the business that is based in Midwestern states.

And contrary to the predictions of the critics, government officials were quite capable of working with the market in restructuring the industry. Government didn't overturn capitalism. It tempered the market at a moment when its "natural" forces were pushing toward catastrophe. Government had the resources to buy the industry time.

What's heartening is that average voters understand that sweeping assaults on government provide better guidance for the production of sound bites than for the creation of sensible public policy. That's why House Republicans are backpedaling like crazy on their plans to privatize Medicare.

There were deep potholes on the road to a market utopia. Put aside that the Republican budget wouldn't provide enough money in the long term for the elderly to afford decent private coverage.

When it comes to guaranteeing their access to health care in old age, most citizens trust government more than they trust the marketplace. This doesn't mean they think Medicare is without flaws. What they do know is that Medicare does not cut people off in mid-illness and that its coverage is affordable because government subsidizes it.

It's axiomatic that government isn't perfect and that we're better off having a large private sector. It ought to be axiomatic that the private market isn't perfect, either, and that we need government to step in when the market fails. The success of the auto bailout and the failure of the Republicans' anti-Medicare campaign both teach the same lesson: The era of anti-government extremism is ending.

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## MONDAY NEWSMAKER

# Redevelopment leader returns

After a stint in Fresno, Raymond tackles unfinished business in Palm Springs

John Raymond is Palm Springs' community and economic development director. He is responsible for the Economic Development Program and Redevelopment Agency, affordable housing, Community Development Block Grant, rent control, public art and management of all city- and agency-owned properties. He recently returned to the position in September.

From 2008 to 2010, he was assistant executive director with Fresno's Redevelopment Agency.

Earlier in his career with Palm Springs, he was director of management & budget, economic programs manager, and economic development and recycling coordinator. His first position in California was as executive director of Main Street Upland Inc.

He began his career in his hometown of Holyoke, Mass. as a Main Street project manager and later as an industrial development specialist with the city.

He has a master of science in public management and policy from the H. John Heinz III School of Public Policy and Management at Carnegie Mellon University and was elected to the National Scholastic Honor Society for Public Administration.

He received his bachelor of arts with honors in geography from the University of Tennessee and studied urban planning at Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts prior to that.

Raymond was part of a five-person Rotary group study exchange team from Southern California to visit Siberia and the Russian Far East for five weeks in April/May 2001. There, he lived with Russian families and met with colleagues in similar professions to share knowledge.

In 2007, he was named by Palm Springs Life magazine one of the "101 Influencers" in the Coachella Valley, the only municipal department head to have been so honored.

In 2010, he received two California Redevelopment Association Awards, one for Palm Springs for the redevelopment of a 38-acre landfill into a Home Depot-anchored shopping center and one for Fresno, which received a citation from the association for the long-term effort by the Fresno RDA and the city to help Community Regional Medical Center expand into one of the top trauma centers in California.



John Raymond, Palm Springs' community and economic development director.

MICHAEL SNYDER THE DESERT SUN

**QUESTION: You worked for Palm Springs for 15 years before taking a job as assistant director of the Fresno Redevelopment Agency and returned in September to be the community and economic development director. What brought you back?**

**ANSWER:** First, I actually liked Fresno as a community and worked on a number of projects there that I never would have been able to work on here. My agency bought and rehabbed 15 foreclosed houses, including several historic houses, and an apartment complex. I did eight affordable housing agreements in 18 months.

But I also learned that an assistant director is not a director, and it's possible to do too many median islands. What really brought me back was the sense of unfinished business — the Fashion Plaza, the College of the Desert campus — and new opportunities like the iHub. I missed Palm Springs and I missed big projects.

**Palm Springs' unemployment rate stood at 11 percent in March. Do you expect that to come down this year?**

There are things that affect unemployment that are obviously beyond our control — the national and regional economy, for example — but we know that the local economy is picking up and that hiring at all levels is improving somewhat. Unfortunately, it won't move the number very much but more people should be working. The City Council has focused

our economic incentives on construction, because those are good-paying jobs, construction builds a tangible product and ultimately it increases tax revenue for the city.

**What is the status of the Innovation Hub and what will that mean for Palm Springs, Cathedral City and Desert Hot Springs?**

Things are beginning to move really quickly. As you know, the iHub will be located in the new Coachella Valley Economic Partnership headquarters across from Palm Springs City Hall. CVEP is moving forward on their tenant improvements for the space — which also includes the iHub space — and expects to be moved in by June or early July. We are developing the administrative framework for the iHub, the marketing and outreach program, guidelines for participants, and of course, the iHub program itself. Most of that should be ready for presentation to the City Council and review by a new iHub advisory board soon.

**If Gov. Jerry Brown succeeds in dismantling redevelopment, what will that mean for Palm Springs?**

Just look at two recent projects that Palm Springs has completed: The Springs Shopping Center (Home Depot) and the BMW/Mercedes expansion. Both involved the agency being able to acquire property and enter an agreement with a developer to undertake millions of dollars of private improvements. The Ralphs center also needed agency involvement to assemble the whole site.

In all three cases, the private sector never would have or even could have done those without our participation. In terms of smaller projects, over the past two years, the city and agency participated in more than 100 façade improvements in the downtown, as well as a number of remodels. Our ability to do projects like that will be greatly diminished, too.

**What is the future of the Palm Springs Mall?**

Probably not in the form it's in. The mall is back up for sale and most of the prospective buyers are trying to figure out the right mix for the property before they actually make an offer. The whole site is about 30 acres, and there are properties that are not part of the mall, like Camelot Theatres. The site is twice the size of Smoketree Commons. It's a lot of land, and a lot of the retail demand is being met with other new centers in town. We'll know more in the next few months.

Do you have a suggestion for the Monday Newsmaker feature? Email Community Conversations Editor James Folmer at [james.folmer@thedesertsun.com](mailto:james.folmer@thedesertsun.com) or call (760) 778-4625.

## MYDESERT POLL

### Today's question

Have you experienced delays at Palm Springs International Airport?  
To vote, go to [mydesert.com/opinion](http://mydesert.com/opinion)

### Sunday's poll results

136 votes cast as of 5 p.m.

Are you doing anything special for your mother on Mother's Day?

18.4% ..... Yes  
81.6% ..... No