



County of San Bernardino



Ensen Mason CPA, CFA • Auditor-Controller/Treasurer/Tax Collector

OP-ED – For Immediate Release

April 22, 2020

Springtime to Grow a Healthy Economy

San Bernardino, CA — March and April 2020 have been unlike any other spring in our lifetimes. The coronavirus pandemic has had a profound effect on our personal lives and daily routines. Social distancing, daily face mask wearing and frequent 20 second hand-scrubbing were unheard of in February but are the norm today.

While we celebrate the progress we've made in turning the corner on this physical health emergency, we also now need to focus on the economic health emergency it precipitated. Millions of Americans are out of work, the survival of entire economic sectors especially critical to California such as restaurants, hotels and tourism are threatened, and over six million California school children can't go to school. As April turns into May next week, it's time for Governor Gavin Newsom and the State Legislature to focus on putting people back to work and kids back in school.

Vague platitudes don't pay the rent or put food on the table. Reopening our economy in an orderly fashion does, and May is the time to start. Over the course of the next week, the Governor should promulgate a plan that reopens California for business while continuing to mandate reasonable disease precautions such as social distancing and face masks. Announce that restaurants, golf courses, most businesses, beaches and parks may reopen Friday, May 1 with these precautions to position California's economy for a summer rebound while maintaining health protections for its citizenry. Notice I'm not saying to reopen everything at once. Large gatherings such as sporting events and concerts can wait. But events for less than 100 people, including weddings and funerals, should be allowed to resume so Californians can regain more of their quality of life while remaining vigilant against renewed spread of the disease.

The Governor needs to show leadership in restoring our economy by laying out a public pathway for return to normalcy. Show us a step-by-step economic plan that business owners can count on so they can bring employees back to work, knowing that the customers will be there to generate the income that pays them. Declare that public schools will resume classroom learning in August for the new school year, with modifications and protections in place to protect the physical health of our kids while also enabling them to learn on schedule for their mental and psychological wellbeing.

As the elected Auditor-Controller/Treasurer/Tax Collector (ATC) of San Bernardino County, California's fifth largest by population and economy, I've seen our residents struggle to pay taxes

CONTACT:

Tracy Calentti
ATC Project Administrator

(909) 382-7016 or (909) 382-7000
tracy.calentti@atc.sbcounty.gov

www.MyTaxCollector.com
www.sbcounty.gov/atc





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while trying to stay afloat economically. I’ve done what the law allows me to do to help by waiving penalties on late property tax payments. But the Governor can do so much more than I can, and he can do it for all the people of California. No one is non-essential.

Scores of businesses have been shuttered against their will while others were allowed to remain open. However, it’s not for the government to decide which businesses succeed and which fail. It is the people themselves, through the choices they make of their own free will on what they want to buy. We can allow businesses of all kinds to open while being careful with health concerns.

Governor Newsom, please reopen California for business. Our health is critical – but it includes both our physical **and** economic health.

That’s a win-win for everyone, and it starts with your leadership at the top. Thank you for your consideration.

ATC Ensen Mason was elected in June 2018 after a 30-year career as a local Certified Public Accountant (CPA) and Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA). Mr. Mason is also an Enrolled Agent with the Internal Revenue Service and holds a Master’s Degree in Business Administration, with an emphasis in finance. In his role as ATC, Mr. Mason oversees more than 330 employees in directing the financial affairs of the County and managing an investment pool of over \$8 Billion. He is also an ex-officio member of the San Bernardino County Employees’ Retirement Association, Board of Retirement, and helps manage their more than \$10 billion portfolio of investments.

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