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Transportation tax, Trump highlight Glazer-Baker Lafayette Town Hall

By Nick Marnell



Lafayette Mayor Mike Anderson introduces Sen. Steve Glazer at the April Lafayette Town Hall. Photo Nick Marnell

California's new \$52 billion transportation funding bill cast a large shadow over the Steve Glazer-Catharine Baker Lafayette Town Hall April 3 as demonstrators waved signs demanding its passage, speakers questioned Glazer over his stance and the cohost missed the meeting entirely as she was delayed at a state committee hearing over that very transportation bill.

Gov. Jerry Brown pushed hard for the April 6 passage of Senate Bill 1, a long-term transportation funding package that includes new revenue to repair local streets, highways, bridges and overpasses. The money will come mainly from a 12-cent-per-gallon gasoline tax increase and higher vehicle registration fees.

The first Town Hall speaker, a representative of the Bay Area Council, urged Sen. Glazer to vote for passage of the bill. Glazer, a Democrat, appeared unmoved.

"I have supported three tax increases," Glazer said, speaking of the local road repair measures he backed as a member of the Orinda City Council and the proposed countywide transportation tax increase in 2016. "I'm not sure I see the accountability here," he said. Glazer voted against the bill, having lobbied unsuccessfully for a BART no-strike provision.

Lafayette Council Member Ivor Samson later said that he wanted more specifics from Glazer. "I wanted to hear about changes he would suggest. What would he like to have seen in SB1?"

Other topics broached by the public extended from the lack of state funding for schools to universal health care for California. "Where would the money come from?" said Glazer, who noted that the best answer to the health care crisis is to save the federal Affordable Care Act.

No 2017 Town Hall seems complete without shots at the new administration in Washington. "We need a law to demand the release of tax returns for anyone who runs for president in California," posed an attendee, and Glazer said he supported the thrust of that concept.

Then came a question on what the state can do to protect the public from the actions of President Donald Trump. "There is a lot to worry about, and with good reason," the senator told the largely approving audience at the Stanley Middle School gymnasium. "It keeps me up at night."

Glazer said that the state has retained former attorney general Eric Holder to protect the rights of Californians from federal overreach.

Baker and Glazer conduct the joint town halls to foster bipartisanship in a state whose leaders Glazer said are twice as polarized as the U.S. Congress. "In 2016, Catharine and I agreed on state bills 88 percent of the time," said Glazer, who later commented that he and Baker work together to present a model of civil behavior which he believes makes everyone stronger.

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[back](#)

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