

Published: 11.01.2007

## **Nothing grass-roots about Prop. 200**

Opinion by Andrea Robson and Leah Mundell

Backers of Proposition 200 have argued recently that big business interests are attempting to quash their grass-roots effort to restrict growth and repeal the garbage fee. But in what way does Proposition 200 represent the interests of the grass roots?

This poorly constructed initiative was not the result of a collaborative community process of research and discussion. If there had been such a process of community inquiry and dialogue, the unintended consequences of this ill-conceived proposition might have been anticipated and avoided.

Over the past months on these pages, we've heard multiple reasons to oppose Proposition 200. Water experts have argued that the proposition does not limit growth nor assure a sustainable water supply in Tucson since the cap on new hookups does nothing to prevent developers from drilling wells to provide groundwater for their new developments.

Proposition 200 could lead to more sprawl by forcing growth outside Tucson Water's service area. It limits use of reclaimed water to irrigation use, preventing the city from using reclaimed water to meet industrial or power-generation needs.

These are all powerful arguments that Proposition 200 would actually inhibit Tucson's ability to manage water responsibly.

We are not water experts. But as members of the Pima County Interfaith Council, we have worked to ensure that public dollars are spent on strategies that benefit Tucson families. We are therefore very concerned about Proposition 200's repeal of the trash fee, which currently generates \$23 million per year for the city budget.

Eliminating this revenue source overnight will jeopardize programs that are critical to many of our city's families, including Kidco, School Plus Jobs and JobPath.

The Pima County Interfaith Council comprises over 40 member institutions representing tens of thousands of Pima County residents. This grass-roots organization was never consulted in the creation of Proposition 200. This stands in contrast to other recent initiatives, such as the Regional Transportation Authority.

The RTA, while not a perfect policy, was the result of true community negotiation and compromise. Unlike past transportation proposals, the RTA included significant improvements in bus service and sidewalks.

Those investments, so important to Tucson families without cars, were included in the RTA because community groups such as the interfaith council were represented at the negotiating table.

Needless to say, Proposition 200 is no RTA. As interfaith council members have learned the details about the initiative, we have become increasingly concerned about its negative impacts on the Tucson community.

At a convocation of member organizations on Sunday, Oct. 7, interfaith council leaders agreed to oppose Proposition 200. The decision reflected a grass-roots process of research, debate and decision-making.

This is the kind of process that we expect in the formation of major initiatives affecting our community, and we look forward to being part of such collaboration in the future.

**Prop 200 videos**

In separate sessions, the Arizona Daily Star editorial board met with John Kromko, author of Proposition 200, and with members of a committee opposing the initiative. View video excerpts from the meetings, comparing statements on the following topics:

- The \$14 garbage fee
- "Toilet-to-tap"
- Future water connections
- The meaning of the word "distributor"

*Andrea Robson and Leah Mundell are members of the Pima County Interfaith Council executive committee. Write to Robson at [andrearobson@earthlink.net](mailto:andrearobson@earthlink.net). Write to Mundell at [leahmundell@gmail.com](mailto:leahmundell@gmail.com).*