

McClintock introduced in town hall setting

*Written by Sonora Union Democrat staff
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Congressman Tom McClintock probably will not be mistaken for either of his predecessors representing the Mother Lode in the U.S. House of Representatives.

McClintock spoke proudly during his town hall forum Tuesday night in the Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors' chambers of his votes in opposition to recent bills passed with the support of Republican colleagues Jeff Denham and Dan Lungren. That pair represented Tuolumne and Calaveras counties respectively until redistricting took effect last year and the Lode counties joined the new 4th District in giving McClintock 60 percent of the vote.

On legislation that averted the so-called "fiscal cliff" just after the new year, McClintock said "we ended up with a measure that increased the government's (debt) obligations \$300 billion."

He called it "a good thing" that the bill made permanent the George W. Bush administration tax cuts on up to \$400,000 income annually but lamented that there was any cap at all.

Both Lungren and Denham voted to pass the measure.

McClintock paraphrased his Jan. 17 blog post in defending his "no" vote on a Hurricane Sandy relief package.

"It was a terrible tragedy that struck the Northeast. There's not one of us that begrudge emergency disaster relief," he said, but added "what they did was an absolute obscenity. They made a mockery of the tragedy by loading the bill with pork."

He went on to blast \$2 billion included for road repairs to be made available anywhere in the country and a quintupling of the community development block grant program, which he said has funded dubious projects like a "doggie day-care center" in Ohio.

The CDBG program has also funneled millions of dollars to local projects in recent years such as facade upgrades for downtown businesses in Angels Camp and Jamestown, a new roof for the Sonora Police Department headquarters, food for the Amador-Tuolumne Community Action Agency food bank and low-income housing initiatives in each county.

The resolution came before Congress after Lungren, defeated last November in a more urbanized district by Democrat Ami Bera, left office. Denham voted in favor of it.

An audience member asked McClintock if he will follow in Lungren's footsteps and support the razing of O'Shaughnessy Dam in Hetch Hetchy Valley.

"Absolutely not," the Elk Grove Republican replied. "With all due respect to Dan, that was lunacy."

The town hall is the first visit to Tuolumne County by McClintock since he was sworn in Jan. 3 as the area's new congressman. A nearly full house greeted him, mostly quite warmly, as he fielded questions on a variety of local and national hot-button issues. The crowd traveled from as far as Bear Valley and Copperopolis.

On Tuolumne County's lack of water rights, McClintock said he supported a bill authored by Tulare Republican Devin Nunes that strengthens point-of-origin claims on water but that the legislation stalled in the Democratic-controlled Senate.

He earned rousing applause for his message of "no additional conveyance without additional storage," otherwise, he said, water shortages will merely shift from Southern California to Northern California.

McClintock empathized with Tuolumne Utilities District Director Jim Grinnell's complaints of costly litigation brought on by lawsuits permitted through the federal Clean Water Act after sewer spills.

Civil courts "were never intended to punish people," he said, adding that punitive damages ought to be eliminated and a suit's losers made to pay winners' legal fees, as occurs in some other countries, to reduce frivolous suits.

He said immigration reforms proposed by U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., and President Barack Obama are unjust to those who have immigrated legally and called "assimilation" of a shared culture and language an integral part of the system ignored by any notion of "amnesty."

McClintock called the controversial U.S. Supreme Court ruling on the Citizens United campaign finance case a simple upholding of the First Amendment right to freedom of assembly.

"I think there's a word for that (judgement)," he said. "It's called freedom."

When Sonora's Mark Plummer asked about his stance on gun control, McClintock replied that gun control laws have affected only honest people rather than criminals.

"As long as guns exist, I sincerely wish they didn't but they do, I want them used by decent, law-abiding citizens to defend themselves," he said.

The Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Newtown, Conn., occurred in a state with some of the nation's strictest gun control laws, including felony penalties for bringing firearms on school grounds, which did not prevent the tragedy, McClintock noted.

"If there had been a gun in that front office (for administrators' use), it would have ended right then and there," he said.

He also agreed with a call from Tuolumne County Supervisor Randy Hanvelt for greater ability to harvest timber to manage overgrown national forest land. Nevertheless, he again pointed to Obama and the Senate as immovable obstacles to policy change in that direction for at least the next four years.

Environmentalism “is not a movement,” he said. “It’s a religion.”

McClintock repeatedly criticized the Obama White House, once calling it “the most spendthrift administration in the nation’s history” and skewering the Affordable Care Act time and again.

However, fringe theories offered up by a couple of audience members put the congressman in the awkward position of offering a defense of the president in some regards.

One man asked what will happen if Obama declares the Constitution and Congress dissolved and police nationalized at his State of the Union address next month. Another offered up a widely debunked theory about the president using a Social Security number assigned to a long-deceased Connecticut man.

“I don’t think he is an evil man ... let’s not attribute to him sinister intentions,” McClintock said before launching a criticism that resonated better with the wider audience.

“I think (Obama) honestly believes European collectivism is going to work better here than it has over there.”

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