

# **Bureaucrats stand in way of low gas prices, investment**

**Assemblyman David Valadao (R-Hanford), Fresno Bee, 3-29-11**

During this time of economic uncertainty, California should be encouraging innovation from the private sector that could help bring new jobs to our communities. With more than 2 million Californians out of work and so many families struggling to make ends meet, job creation must be our top priority to restore economic prosperity.

Here in the San Joaquin Valley, we have been hit much harder by the recession than other parts of the state. Fresno, Kern, Kings and Tulare counties all have unemployment rates far above the state average. In some of our local communities like Shafter and Delano, the employment problem is even worse with more than 35% of residents unemployed.

One industry that has great potential of bringing back jobs to our region is energy production. In the Valley, we already produce 70% of California's oil and there are opportunities to further expand operations to create jobs, and kick start our economy.

By increasing petroleum-based energy production, the Valley could benefit from hundreds of millions of dollars in capital investments, thousands of new jobs, and enhanced revenues to fund the services Californians value most.

An increase in domestic energy resources would also decrease our dependence on foreign oil and help lower the cost of gasoline. This would be good news for drivers who are looking for relief from \$4 a gallon gas prices. Cheaper gas prices would also allow some employers to save money on transportation costs and use the savings to expand their businesses and create jobs.

But unfortunately, energy producers looking to expand their operations and create jobs have been recently confronted with an unprecedented level of resistance from bureaucrats in Sacramento. The Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources is refusing to work collaboratively with oil producers, making it next to impossible to achieve the regulation compliance needed to drill new wells and create jobs.

Rather than providing guidance to oil producers, these unelected and unaccountable bureaucrats have obstructed the permitting process with delays, inconsistency, confusion, and chronic foot-dragging. Last year, this state agency approved a mere 27% of the permits requested to increase oil production. This was down from 71% in 2009, and 93% in 2008, threatening job creation in our community.

While government has a responsibility to thoroughly review new drilling permits and assess any potential health or environmental concerns, this type of behavior is reckless and devastating to our economy. Refusing to provide certainty and transparency during the permitting process is obstructing hundreds of millions of dollars in capital investments and thousands of job opportunities that the Valley desperately needs.

We must allow these permits to be assessed in a fair and timely manner to help restore our economy and provide opportunities that put people back to work. It is irresponsible for unaccountable bureaucrats to discourage innovation and job creation at a time when our region and our state are in desperate need of relief.

I recently joined a bipartisan group of legislators from the Valley in sending a letter to DOGGR and Gov. Jerry Brown asking for more clarity in the permitting process for new energy development. It is my hope that the

response we receive will provide clearer guidelines and give energy producers the information they need to expand their work force.

I urge my legislative colleagues and all Californians to join me in this endeavor and support reforms that prevent government bureaucrats from asserting their own personal agendas that stunt job creation.

As we move forward this legislative session, I will continue to fight for reforms that make job creation our top priority. Government must always take steps to encourage private sector job creation and not stand in the way.