

Supervisors condemn hate speech by administration

By **Anne Ternus-Bellamy**

Yolo County supervisors on Tuesday passed a resolution condemning “hate speech directed against immigrants” by the Trump Administration, speech that the board said contributes to an atmosphere of hate and violence in the United States and is tied to recent mass shootings like the one in El Paso, Texas, last month.

The resolution also condemns the treatment of immigrants detained at the nation’s borders, where unsafe and unsanitary conditions “may have led to the deaths of six children in custody.”

“Our laws require that detainees be kept in safe and sanitary conditions and it has come to light that both adults and children are kept in overcrowded conditions with inadequate food, water, hygienic supplies, light and temperature control, bedding and medical care,” according to the board’s resolution, and “the current administration has argued in court that not meeting these basic needs is legal and is currently perpetuating this inhumane practice.”

The resolution also noted an immediate impact on Yolo County, which currently has a contract with the Office of Refugee Resettlement to house unaccompanied refugee minors in the county’s juvenile detention facility.

The current administration, the resolution notes, “has threatened to withhold funding for legal, educational and recreational services for detained children,” something that would impact the county’s ability to provide the services the board has said those unaccompanied minors deserve.

“We recognize that we as citizens of Yolo County and the United States have a moral obligation to oppose the human rights abuses of family separation, overcrowded and unsanitary housing, depriving individuals of rights and opportunities previously available in custodial care.”

On the topic of hate speech, supervisors said “hate speech directed against immigrants by the current administration has contributed to an atmosphere of hate and violence in our nation... and mass shootings, such as the recent massacre of innocent men, women and children in El Paso, have been tied to this ... atmosphere of hate and violence.”

The resolution calls on the federal government to “immediately cease and desist all hate speech directed at immigrants, asylum applicants, foreign nationals or against persons based upon race, ethnic background, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, religion or disability.”

“Those words are taken from California’s hate crime statute,” said Supervisor Jim Provenza of Davis.

Provenza, who said retired Davis physician Tia Will helped draft the resolution, noted that county supervisors — like all elected officials — “take an oath to preserve, protect and defend the constitutions of the United States and California and the laws of the United States and California, and in this instance, those laws are being violated.”

“The individuals coming to this country, the majority of those seeking asylum, are fleeing economic, social, religious oppression; they have a right to come here to seek asylum,” he said. “However, families have been separated from children and families have been kept in inhumane and dangerous conditions.”

“In many ways, we provide better treatment to animals in our animal shelter than some immigrants have received,” Provenza said.

The resolution was initially drawn up in July, but since then, Provenza said, “one of the things that we’ve recognized is that hate speech directed against immigrants has created an atmosphere in this country that may have contributed to events, including the shooting in El Paso.

“So we have also included in this resolution a recognition that that has to be tempered down and should be stopped completely.”

Specifically, the resolution makes the following requests of the federal government:

- * Adhere to our nation’s laws with respect to the rights of immigrants.
- * Immediately halt the detention of children and families in overcrowded, unsafe, and unsanitary conditions.
- * Immediately halt the practice of family separation and reunite those families that have been separated.
- * Expedite the closure of all for-profit detention facilities.
- * Deploy adequate legal, medical, and detention staff to rapidly and efficiently process requests for asylum and other legal immigration criteria.
- * Immediately cease and desist all hate speech directed at immigrants, asylum applicants, foreign nationals or against persons based upon race, ethnic background, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or disability.