

Remarks of Harvey Rosenfield
“On Governor Schwarzenegger’s Special Election”
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Americans have learned a lesson about government over the last month, a lesson that is making people re-think the government bashing that has gone on for twenty-five years.

It took a couple of catastrophes for Americans to remember what our parents and grandparents learned back in the Depression: that to meet the promises of liberty and justice in our Constitution, there has to be a functioning government.

When government fails, when it sees hijacked planes heading for New York City or a Category 5 hurricane heading for our southern coast, and does nothing, people die, many people. Even those who have made “strangling government” their life’s work are a little worried about avian flu. So now, a lot of Americans and politicians who didn’t want to pay taxes and have constantly trashed government, well have you noticed that they’re the first in line with their hands out asking all the rest of us to help them rebuild their cities and businesses? And now they’re demanding government regulation – yes the dreaded “R” word -- of insurance companies that took their premiums but now won’t pay their claims. And, if nothing else but money matters to the corporate class, it’s clear that even they realize that widespread death and destruction is bad for business. So Americans are re-learning the hard way that we need a strong and effective government.

Now here in California, we’ve also learned some important lessons about government recently. We’ve learned, for example, that there’s a big difference between leadership and celebrity. That running the government take a lot more thought than mumbling a few dozen lines out of a movie script about robots who time travel. We’ve learned that marrying into the Kennedy family does not make that person a Kennedy in any way, shape or form. And according to the latest poll, about 67% of California voters have figured out that when a movie star makes stuff up, it’s called “acting,” but when an elected official breaks his promise or misleads the public, there’s only one word for it: LIAR.

The “super-hero” “Action Figure” we elected Governor promised to clean up Sacramento. He told us, “Any of those powerful special interests, if you take money from them, you owe them something...” He said “I don’t have to take money from anybody. I have plenty of money.” It turns out he was lying. The Action Figure’s raised more than \$57 million from corporations and other special interests - a hoard of loot, funneled through a convoluted, secret and loophole-ridden realm of campaign committees and non-profit organizations. That’s \$75,000 a day -- more than twice what his predecessor collected, and that guy was cashiered by the voters for his cash register politics.

If you’re a big corporation, once you’ve got the Action Figure in your pocket, look what you get in return:

For its \$1.9 million, the health care industry gets to subvert state law and avoid putting enough nurses in emergency rooms and operating rooms.... The drug companies alone gave the Action Figure \$337,000 – that’s more than they’ve given any other public official in the United States, with the exception of the President of the United States. Then the Action Figure vetoed four bills that would have made it cheaper to buy prescription drugs.

The auto industry puts in \$1 million, the Action Figure vetoes a car buyers’ “bill of rights.”

The insurance industry pumped \$1.2 million into the Action Figure and got a workers compensation law that says that if you get injured, you’ve can only go to the insurance company’s doctor. Worse, the Action Figure has slashed your benefits – but he made sure that there was no limit on the premiums and profits the insurers could charge.

This can only be described as a “sell-out performance” by the Action Figure.

Yes, the Action Figure is all about box office. Just when he was having trouble filling theatres at \$8 a seat, he found an audience he could entertain who would pay \$21,100 a seat in the executive suites on Wall Street.

We elected a comic book character who instead of fighting the bad guys **is** one of the bad guys.

Figuring all this out has proved to be a costly lesson for California voters. Take the “extra election” the Action Figure has called for November. In a gross abuse of executive power, he has forced the taxpayers to fund his very own personal election, at the cost of \$50 million, so that he can evade state campaign laws, curry favor with right wing extremists and reward his corporate paymasters.

There is absolutely no public urgency or other emergency that would justify the extra election. Not one of the Action Figure’s initiatives will build another hospital, highway, home or school.

Do those of us who believe in public schools want to make it harder for them to attract teachers then it is now, when we’re seventh from the bottom in education spending? So long Prop 74. Is any Californian going to trust the guy who broke his promise to fix our financial problems by borrowing \$15 billion for our kids to pay back, and give him unchecked authority over the state budget under Prop. 76? Forget about it. Does the average Californian care about whether politicians pick political districts or whether politicians pick judges who pick political districts? Sayonara Prop. 77.

And a lot of Californians are outraged by this abuse of the initiative process. It was designed to permit voters to take matters in their own hands when our elected officials are too beholden to special interests to act. Back in 1988, we used the initiative process to regulate insurance companies. Proposition 103 forced insurers to issue \$1.2 billion in refund checks and has blocked over \$23 billion in auto and homeowners insurance rate increases. The Action Figure has made a mockery of this tool of democracy, using his power to call this election to feather his own nest and in the process turning the initiative process over to the very special interests that it was designed to protect the public against.

That’s why my guess is voters are going to Vote NO in NOvember against ArNOLD's initiatives.

California needs leadership. But what we’ve got is the chucklehead politics of the celebrity Action Figure, where everything is “fantastic.” But saying everything’s fantastic doesn’t make it so, in real life. Ask the kid who’s trying to find a chair in an over-crowded classroom. Ask the parent in a hospital emergency room who’s waiting for hours to get someone to examine their child. Just ask the person trying to pay the utility bill, buy

food and cover the cost of health care. Ask them and they'll tell you things aren't "fantastic."

Californians want someone who will restore the gleam and promise of the Golden State, not use special effects and Hollywood-style hocus pocus to make California's budget and infrastructure problems disappear.

I guess I've been pretty tough on Arnold Schwarzenegger, haven't I? So let me tell you one thing I love about what he's done. I love the fact that he was stupid enough to come after you.

It was clear to us just about from Day One that this guy wasn't who everybody thought he was. A lot of people were star struck, and he really began to think that he could run the state based on a bunch of his best lines from his movies. Remember how there was talk of amending the Constitution, and he started flying around the country auditioning for his next role – President of the United States?

Then he made the mistake of saying he liked to kick nurses butts and wanted to cut the pensions earned over a lifetime of hard work by public servants like you, police and firefighters. The day he picked a fight with the working men and women in this state was the day Arnold Schwarzenegger's political career collapsed – *and he knows it*. That's why he's behind Prop. 75. I cannot think of anything more anti-American than a ballot initiative that is designed to prevent regular people from having a voice in their own government. It's clear to me that Mr. Schwarzenegger does not really understand what America, his adopted country, stands for.

Most politicians hate being held accountable for their actions. But that is what this country is all about. That's why, when I was writing Proposition 103, and trying to figure out a way to make sure all its reforms would take effect, we ended up making the office of Insurance Commissioner an elected position – accountable directly to the voters. The core mission of the organization I work for, the Foundation for Taxpayer and Consumer Rights, is to hold elected officials accountable for their actions.

Now, with just a few weeks before the election, I want to thank you for all you have done. I want to thank the people in this room for your dedication to serving the public. You're overworked, underpaid and understaffed, and you carry on, often with little recognition -- until now. But now, thanks to a

governor who has turned our government over to industry lobbyists and political consultants, the light is shining on you. You didn't ask for it. But they've given us an opportunity to educate the public about the difference between the real-life heroes that keep things running and an out of touch celebrity who used to play heroes in the movies. I've seen you in action. And I don't mean, "lights, cameras, action." You are the superheroes. This Schwarzenegger doll is an action figure. As we know, if you have enough money, you can buy him. But you are the real superheroes.

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