

Pat Bates' Statement to ETRPA 1/22/07

As a founding member and past Vice Chair of ETRPA, opposing an airport at El Toro was ETRPA's number one priority. Indeed, preserving South County's voice in the planning process and protecting our quality of life was paramount.

Though some tried to characterize the reuse of MCAS El Toro as a North County vs. South County issue, voters clearly opposed plans to convert El Toro into an international commercial airport because it would have irreparably damaged Orange County's quality of life and they disapproved of the way the reuse planning process was being handled by the Board of Supervisors and County planning staff.

The Millennium Plan – ETRPA's official non-aviation alternative for El Toro and forerunner for what would later become known as The Great Park – captured the imagination of people throughout our county. It mixed education and technology with open space and cultural land uses to provide both a sense of "place" and a destination within the county that everyone could appreciate, enjoy and value. For the first time, the citizens of Orange County had a clear choice of uses for this last remaining land in the heart of the county.

The El Toro reuse debate essentially united South County cities into a single community and a fighting force to be reckoned with. Through our collective effort, what was widely regarded to be "a done deal" was ultimately undone.

El Toro's destiny was ours to make, and ETRPA was clearly a driving force to that end.

On behalf of the citizens of the Fifth District, I proudly commend ETRPA and all its past and present members for your tireless and successful efforts to protect our quality of life and having established a nonaviation reuse at the former MCAS El Toro.

Gratefully,

Supervisor Pat Bates