

Readers Write: The importance of state grants

By

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I was stunned to see the lack of understanding of our state government and its support to our local communities exhibited by Adam Haber in his recent column, “Rotten Pork-Barrel Promises” (Feb. 26).

State grants are an integral part of the funding model for local infrastructure projects and other initiatives that benefit local residents.

The state collects taxpayer money that is intended to be returned to the community. The individual state senators are critical to the initial screening and evaluation of projects and organizations in their communities.

Grant applications are subject to extensive review and approvals by state agencies, government leaders and the governor.

I am proud to have recommended many local projects and organizations for state grants. Grant applicants in the 7th District are non-political (they serve all residents), diverse (throughout the district) and deserving (already doing great work or with substantial needs).

All provide needed services to our local residents and, in my judgment, will invest taxpayer funds in thoughtful and impactful ways.

To suggest a sinister motive for the recommendation of grants indicates a lack of understanding of the process and, further, an indifference to the financial needs of important projects and organizations here in our community.

It is a long-established responsibility of sitting state senators to follow up on the grant recommendations inherited from their predecessors. After all, the grant applicants are providing services to residents, and the grants are an important part of their funding.

Further, failure to support the existing grant recommendations effectively makes the grants contingent upon the election of the incumbent.

This is clearly bad government.

When I was elected state senator, my constituents asked me to follow up on the grant recommendations of my predecessors — Sen. Jack Martins, a Republican, and Sen. Craig Johnson, a Democrat.

I worked hard to identify and support all existing grant recommendations and to keep the promises of government made by Sens. Martins and Johnson.

In most cases, the grants were issued and local projects and organizations received valuable funding.

My successor, Sen. Anna Kaplan, has a duty to make good on government promises to her constituents, just as I did before her and just as her successor will do after her.

I trust that Sen. Kaplan is not being influenced by Mr. Haber's faulty understanding of her role and instead is focused upon helping to secure financial support for projects and organizations that enhance the lives of her constituents.

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