

Das Williams Introduces I.V. Self-Governance Bill

By Megan
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Assemblyman Das Williams, right, introduced AB 3 to the California State Assembly yesterday, which aims to establish Isla Vista as a community service district. *Photo courtesy of the Office of Assemblyman Das Williams*

Assembly Bill 3, a bill aimed to create the Isla Vista Community Services District (CSD) in order provide infrastructure and services to the residents of I.V., was introduced to the California State Assembly yesterday by Assemblymember Das Williams.

The establishment of greater self-governance for I.V. has been discussed in the community for decades, but has become a more pressing issue since the occurrence of events such as multiple sexual assaults, April's Deltopia riots and the May 23 mass murder. The bill was authored by Williams, who grew up in I.V., an unincorporated area with 20,000 residents situated on less than one square mile.

Williams said the bill would be building off previously passed legislation that established I.V. as a CSD over 30 years ago and would provide more specificity as to the structure and operation of I.V. as a CSD.

"We would have to spell it out more than that previous legislation did," Williams said. "I think that it is in the interests of the people of Isla Vista ... as well as the state of California ... that provides balance."

In 1972, when the legislature authorized the establishment of the Isla Vista College Community Services District (IVCCSD), the resulting proposal establishing I.V. as a CSD went before the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), which did not approve the authorization.

Williams said having the legislature act to establish a CSD would provide more flexibility than the LAFCO process.

"State legislation, unlike the LAFCO process, provides great latitude in spelling out the specific powers of the community services district," Williams said.

Williams also said that if the bill passes, and is approved by the Senate and Governor Jerry Brown, a CSD could be established in I.V. with minimal input from LAFCO.

“We could include some participation from LAFCO in the process,” Williams said. “However LAFCO is bound to only ... approve or disprove a five member board that are all directly elected.”

According to Williams’ office, the CSD would have the power to facilitate infrastructure, utilities, garbage, police services, parks, recreation, cultural facilities, fire, security and roads. The bill, however, does not specify how these community services will be funded, although Williams’ office has stated CSDs are commonly funded by revenue bonds or special taxes.

Williams said the specifics of the CSD’s revenue will be determined through continued community dialogue.

“There are many ideas for revenue, some are less controversial than others, and that is why we really need a stakeholder process to really talk about what is the right revenue sources for a community services district,” Williams said.

Williams also said he thinks a CSD will be more successful than previous attempts at self-governance.

“We as a community can make that change but we shouldn’t be so naive as to think that we can do it . . . with what we have because what we have had before is not working,” Williams said. “When we had a municipal advisory committee before it did not work. Governance by the county alone, without the resources to do things particularly for I.V., has not worked.”

According to Williams, the university supporting the creation of self-governance in I.V. is a positive sign and a key difference to note when comparing previous attempts at self-governance for I.V.

“One thing that is really important that has changed since the previous attempts at local governance in I.V. is that the university, which was once an impediment to local governance in Isla Vista., is as an institution now arguing for local governance,” Williams said. “That is a change that everyone should have some hope in and it means that the aspirations of Isla Vista as a community may be able to be reached.”

According to Williams, the establishment of some form of local governance must address the needs of the variety of residents in I.V.

“Any local governance should provide a balance between the different residents of Isla Vista.,” Williams said. “Both what you could call the lower income ethnic communities of Isla Vista, the student population and the resident population concentrated out of the west end — there needs to be a balance between the interests of all of those parties.”

According to Williams, he and his staff will be asking for public comments from I.V. residents over the next two months to determine the specifics of the bill and said it is his “intention to continue the community dialogue that has already been taking place.”

“We will be asking for input as to what powers will be included in this community services district and how many seats there are, what their terms are, that sort of thing,” Williams said. “The legislation ... would continue how it is with the added detail that can only happen after we receive more comprehensive and more specific public comment.”

Williams said that given the events that have occurred in I.V. in the last year, the time to act is now.

“There is plenty of time for further public input and for the stakeholder process,” Williams said. “But that given, the amount of human pain that has been experienced in Isla Vista in the last year, I felt that action was necessary and that we needed to begin this process and begin it now.”

