I owe my life to California in at least two ways. I was born here: in San Francisco, at an Army Hospital. My father was a physician, drafted during the Viet Nam War. Fortunately we never left the States. Then in 2000 I had surgery to remove a tumor from my leg at hospital just a mile or so away from my birthplace, the UCSF hospital on Parnassus.
My experience at UCLA was transformative. The world opened up for me there. It was then that I decided on academics as a career. And it was there that I decided that, if I could, I would return to the University of California whenever I could. My wish came true in 2001. I’ve been at Riverside since.

I’ve contributed to Senate committees. Now it’s time for me to contribute more. What I’m deeply concerned about in particular is our economic future.

Like nearly all of us, I’m worried about the state budget crisis. We’ve all been furloughed. And we’ve all seen the strain it’s placed on morale, on staff, and on our students. The whole campus has been affected.

We’re all working on ways to move forward constructively and strategically. I hope to contribute to these positive efforts as best I can.

Which brings me to one major financial issue: the pace at which we roll out the Medical School.

I’m sold on the Medical School. I was sold even before a concrete proposal was on the table. It would be the first new medical school in California in over 40 years. The need for a new medical school is well-known. Inland Southern California, in particular, needs a medical school. Our own students would provide a unique pool from which to recruit for our region’s diverse needs. A medical school would make major contributions to many of our research programs. It would contribute to numerous entrepreneurial activities and otherwise enhance economic growth. The case for a Medical School at UCR is a slam dunk. Full steam ahead was the right decision.

But I’m deeply concerned that, as things stand, right now we can’t afford it. It may be time to pull back on the throttle.

That’s the unanimous view of the system-wide committees that reviewed the proposal. They too were all sold on the merits. But they too were all worried about the costs, and the ability of the University to raise the money without severely affecting the rest of the campus.
We’ve been furloughed; we’ve lost staff; we can’t retain faculty as effectively; our classes are growing; our students paying more. We can all add to this list. I’m worried that right now isn’t the time to divert huge amounts of resources from divisions at our campus just getting by to the Medical School.

And it seems we are now moving forward, after the economic crisis, with even less money and less commitments than we were when the proposal was initially approved. We may end up paying for it with the caliber and quality of University.

The Senate should at least reopen, and rethink, how we’re going to pay for the School of Medicine.