



Los Angeles Area
Chamber of Commerce

TUESDAY | Apr. 12, 2005

THE BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE:

Take the California Budget Challenge



Coming up at the Chamber

[View all upcoming events on our web calendar.](#)

TUE | Apr. 12
Referral Network
A Growing Companies Program sponsored by Wells Fargo
[more info](#)

WED | Apr. 13
Technology Industry Council featuring Oracle
[more info](#)

WED | Apr. 13
Executive for a Day
[more info](#)

FRI | Apr. 15
Accenture
Pancakes & Politics: Mayor Jim Hahn
[more info](#)

SUN-WED | Apr. 17-20
Access Washington, D.C.
[more info](#)

MON | Apr. 18
Executive Briefing: Hedging Business & Political Risks in Latin America
[more info](#)

WED | Apr. 20
Power Hour Lunch Series: Creating a Mindset for Building Your Business, Part 1
[more info](#)

THU | Apr. 21
Export Seminar Series: Legal Do's & Don'ts for Exporters
[more info](#)

THU | Apr. 28
Economic Development & Land Use Committee
[more info](#)

The Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, with nearly 1,400 members, is the voice of business in L.A. County. Founded in 1888, the Chamber promotes a prosperous economy and quality of life in the Los Angeles region. For more information, visit www.lachamber.org

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If you regularly follow *The Business Perspective* you are familiar with many of my common themes. Since the business of government more often than not revolves around money, I write often about establishing priorities for the state budget. In the last several months I have been critical of attempts to rob the state's transportation funding. I expressed opposition to efforts to build a spectacularly expensive replacement for the Bay Bridge--rather than a functional, affordable one--at the expense of taxpayers across the state. I am critical of Sacramento's tendency to undermine local priorities by balancing their budgets on the backs of local government. And I am critical of the state for not approaching revenue and expense gaps like businesses and citizens do--by balancing their budgets.

Every year we see the legislature and the governor battle over priorities. They compromise on major decisions, and, increasingly in the era of term limits, put off major choices for years to come. They almost always fail to adopt a budget on time. More often than not, the budget is more a reflection on a series of compromises rather than a clear articulation of the state's priorities. And then there is the pork that gets distributed.

Californians get more frustrated each year by the gridlock. Many of us tune out because we're tired of the partisan fighting. We cannot afford either, because our future is written each year by the decisions made in the budget. Perhaps the better way to say it is that our future is not written by these decisions because tough decisions are not made; they are postponed. And in that postponement the hill gets steeper, and the problems more difficult to solve.

This week I want to try something different. I want to give you something to do. I want you to take some time and use a unique tool to develop your own plan for setting budget priorities for the state.

The organization NextTen has developed the [California Budget Challenge](#) to give you the opportunity to roll up your sleeves and create your own state budget for the next 10 years. You call the shots on how much to give to schools, health care, prisons, and other budget spending categories. Then, you make choices on how to pay for these programs. The Budget Challenge does not try to "sell" a point of view, but instead gives nonpartisan information to help you make your own judgments. There's also an interactive link on the web site where you can share your opinions about the budget with other Californians.

The [California Budget Challenge](#) offers:

- A chance to build a state budget for the next 10 years your way;
- Good basic information about spending and tax policies, to inform your budget choices. No advocacy--just the facts about the pro's and con's of your choices;
- The only place where the implications of current budget choices are examined over the next 10 years;
- Links to information from the Governor's budget, Legislative Analyst's Office and others, all organized for easy reference;
- A fun experience with informative, easy-to-read graphics; and
- A chance to explore your views and values about California's future and share them with other Californians.

Take the California Budget Challenge at www.next-ten.org/challenge/ you will be able to engage personally in setting your own course for spending priorities, and how to obtain the revenue to pay for your choices. I have tried it--believe me, it's not easy. But I know you will enjoy the challenge.

And that's the *Business Perspective*.

Russell J. Hammer
President & CEO
Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce

The Business Perspective is a weekly award-winning opinion column by Rusty Hammer, President & CEO, LA Area Chamber

L.A. Business THIS WEEK
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