



Los Angeles Area
Chamber of Commerce

MONDAY | Apr. 25, 2005

THE BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE:

Take the Politics Out of County Health Care



Coming up at the Chamber

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

TUE | Apr. 26
Referral Network
A Growing Companies Program
sponsored by
Wells Fargo
[more info](#)

WED | Apr. 27
Construction Industry
Council
[more info](#)

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

WED | May 4
World Trade Week
Kickoff Breakfast
[more info](#)

THU | May 5
Leadership LA "Cinco De
Mayo" Alumni Mixer
[more info](#)

THU | May 5
LA Youth at Work
Spring Job Fair
[more info](#)

FRI | May 6
Accenture Pancake & Politics
with Assembly Speaker
Fabian Nuñez
[more info](#)

FRI | May 6
Education & Workforce
Committee Meeting
[more info](#)

FRI | May 6
Mobility 21 Coalition
Meeting
[more info](#)

TUE | May 10
Referral Network
A Growing Companies Program
sponsored by
Wells Fargo
[more info](#)

WED | May 11
Cash for College
Thank-You Breakfast
[more info](#)

TUE | May 17
Small Business Awards
Luncheon
[more info](#)

TUE | May 17
Transportation & Goods
Movement Committee
Meeting
[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

This column has often derided the discrimination against California in the allocation of funds sent from Washington back to the states. So often we say that many of our region's infrastructure needs could be helped if only our Congressional delegation got its act together. Looking back on the Chamber's annual lobbying trip to Washington, D.C., last week, I think we can say it's finally happening.

For several years now, we have been clamoring for more of California's fair share of federal tax dollars. We only receive 79 cents back on each tax dollar our state sends to Washington.

Why? Because for the most part, our congressional delegation has not worked closely on issues of importance to all Californians. Instead, they have become distracted by partisan issues that tend to be divisive instead of unifying. Another reason is that our members of Congress have not pursued seats on the committees that appropriate money. While L.A. County has fabulous representation on the Judiciary (four members) and Foreign Affairs Committees (five members), we do not have nearly as much representation on the committees that allocate money for transportation and other needs. And, taking our share of the blame, until recently the business community has not made it clear enough that their priorities were in the wrong places.

But that began to change three years ago, with the revitalization of Access D.C. and the creation of the Mobility 21 Coalition, efforts we have developed with government and business partners to focus clearly on issues of importance to Los Angeles.

Things are now different. Not only is the delegation beginning to work more closely together and put California first and party politics second, the members are getting on the right committees. In fact, five important committees are chaired by Southern Californians: Jerry Lewis on Appropriations, Bill Thomas on Ways & Means, David Dreier on Rules, Christopher Cox on Homeland Security and Duncan Hunter on Armed Services.

And with Democratic members such as Lucille Roybal-Allard and Jane Harman working closely with those committee chairs, we are finally starting to see some progress.

For the second year in a row, Roybal-Allard and Dreier coordinated a bipartisan luncheon for our 52-member lobbying team. Each of them brought several of their colleagues to the luncheon, including House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi. Not once did anyone reference Republican or Democratic priorities, nor did they criticize one another. Instead, they all discussed California's infrastructure needs and how they are working together to get our fair share. I was very impressed to hear that Rep. Lewis, who represents Riverside County, is so well versed with the importance of LA Air Force Base. Clearly, Reps. Harman and Lewis talk to each other frequently about important issues.

Texas' Congressional delegation has for many years set the standard of what a state's delegation can achieve when they place regional needs ahead of partisan politics. Issues like transportation, energy and education have not been political issues for Texas' members of Congress, these are more issues of federal funding and how much they can secure when they are all on the same page. I say has been because Tom Delay's recent redistricting scheme left a lot of Texas Democrats with a taste of bad blood to the point where cooperation is not as common these days. With less competition from the nation's second largest state, California's delegation has more of an opportunity to channel more federal dollars our way. With a state budget deficit of \$8 billion and a crumbling infrastructure, we need all the help we can get.

Things are now different. Not only is the delegation beginning to work more closely together and put California first and party politics second, the members are getting on the right committees.

We have made progress, but more can be made. The progress on obtaining more money for transportation and funding priorities - and even in influencing the way policies are written can be increased if we spend more time in Washington. We go back only once a year. Various government agencies may go more often. But we all need to spend more time walking the halls of Congress, hosting them when they come to California, taking them on tours of our needs. We should work to make the annual Access D.C. trip the region's key lobbying trip that unites all cities, the county, chambers and business organizations so that congress and the administration can become

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

L.A. Business THIS WEEK

View the latest issue of the Chamber's [weekly email newsletter](#). [Contact us](#) to subscribe.

350 S. Bixel St.
Los Angeles, CA 90017
213.580.7500 tel
213.580.7511 fax
info@lachamber.org

fully aware of the real needs of the nation's second largest city.

But even that is not enough. Because we have a geographic disadvantage of being so far away from the nation's capitol, our lawmakers need to spend more time in DC. In fact, we all do. And we found that when we sent teams of public and private sector employers to meet with federal decision makers, our message was more effective effective.

The Chamber is already hard at work planning next year's lobbying trips to Sacramento and Washington, D.C. I hope that you pencil in March 7-8 for Access Sacramento and mid-May for Access D.C. (We'll make an official announcement soon). In the meantime, if you are making your own plans to lobby in Sacramento or DC, please contact us so we can compare notes on what the timely issues are and how to strategize on the most effective message for you to deliver.

I am inspired by Reps. Roybal-Allard, Dreier and their colleagues who are genuinely trying to deliver for Southern California. But they can't do it alone. We owe it to them to be vigilant by communicating with them and making ourselves available to take advantage of a unique opportunity as so many members of our delegation have key leadership roles.

Let's turn it up a notch this year and see what we can all do--together!

And that's the *Business Perspective*.



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

Powered by



Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, 350 S. Bixel St., Los Angeles, CA 90017
213.580.7500 | fax: 213.580.7511 | info@lachamber.org | www.lachamber.org

[Modify](#) your profile or [unsubscribe](#) from this list automatically. If you request to be taken off this list, the LA Area Chamber will honor your request pursuant to [CoolerEmail](#)'s permission-based email terms and conditions.
