



Los Angeles Area
Chamber of Commerce

TUESDAY | Oct. 18, 2005

THE BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE:

Prop. 75: It's About Fairness



Coming up at the Chamber

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

THU | Oct. 20
Environmental Quality
Committee Meeting
[more info](#)

MON & TUE | Oct. 24 & 25
2005 Golf Classic
[more info](#)

TUE | Oct. 25
Referral Network
A Growing Companies program
sponsored by Wells Fargo
[more info](#)

WED & THU | Oct. 26 & 27
2005 Cash for College:
College and Career
Convention
[more info](#)

THU | Oct. 27
Economic Development &
Land Use Committee
[more info](#)

FRI | Oct. 28
Mastering Media III:
Marketing Your Event
[more info](#)

WED | Nov. 2
Health Care Committee
Meeting
[more info](#)

WED | Nov. 2
One Global California:
Connecting You to the World
[more info](#)

THU | Nov. 3
Leadership L.A. Graduation
and Scholarship Fundraiser
[more info](#)

FRI | Nov. 4
Education & Workforce
Committee Meeting
[more info](#)

FRI | Nov. 4
Accenture's Pancakes &
Politics with LAUSD
Superintendent Roy Romer
[more info](#)

TUE | Nov. 8
Referral Network
A Growing Companies program
sponsored by Wells Fargo
[more info](#)

WED | Nov. 9
5th Annual Westside Mixer
[more info](#)

WED | Nov. 9
The Connection Point:
Follow-Up and Follow-
Through
[more info](#)

MON | Nov. 14
Mobility 21 Annual Summit:
L.A. County Moving
Together
[more info](#)

TUE | Nov. 15
Transportation & Goods
Movement Committee
Meeting
[more info](#)

THU | Nov. 17

I suspect that nothing I say about Proposition 75 (Paycheck Protection Act) on the November statewide ballot will change anyone's view. But I feel as though I must say something about it.

What I have to say is less about the Chamber's support for the measure, than it is about trying to clarify what this measure is all about. And it's about, in one word, fairness.

Basically, the measure provides that California's public employee unions would need their members to consent to having their dues used for political purposes. It would not prevent unions from contributing to political campaigns. But if you were to believe the television commercials, you would think that Prop. 75 bars unions from making campaign contributions—under any circumstances.

The way things are now, unions have the freedom to use member dues for political purposes without the consent of the member. The only way an individual member's dues cannot be used for these purposes is if they "opt-out" by sending a letter or signing a document. This is totally opposite of the way our society works.

For example, anywhere else you are a customer, companies ask you to "opt-in" by signing a document, giving them the right to send you sales materials, emails or other promotional materials. If you are a customer of a bank, their related companies may not contact you unless you "opt-in." The list goes on and on.

We live in an "opt-in" society—except when it comes to unions making political contributions on behalf of all of their members.

I have read countless stories about union members who do not want their dues used for these purposes. Not all union members necessarily share their unions' political positions. But they don't want to embarrass themselves by having to "opt-out." It simply calls too much attention to their decision.

How would unions feel if companies could deduct from paychecks for political purposes without the permission of the employee?

At least with Prop. 75 we can have more dialogue on the role of unions. Unions are a part of our political culture and succeeded for many years in strengthening our middle class. We would be the last to argue that they should not be allowed in the political process, or that they should not be able to influence the public debate, just as we can. But it must be fair.

It concerns us when unions place their own interests above the public interest -- for example, when the state engineers' union blocked legislation to secure federal and state monies to extend a carpool lane through the Sepulveda pass, one of the 405 freeway's most congested stretches.

Or, when certain LADWP workers got a 30 percent pay raise last month while some LADWP workers in a different union settled for no raise last year because of the city's fiscal uncertainty. One union showed concern for our future, while the other threatened to shut down our city's power supply if its members were refused raises.

And, finally, let us not forget that not a single union is registered to lobby the L.A. City Council even though they lobby councilmembers all the time for pay raises, better benefits and to protest budget cuts affecting their members. We are registered—why aren't they? If this is not an example of unfairness within our system, I do not know what is.

We believe that the playing field should be level. We believe that unions and companies should be able to make contributions. But let's make it fair and let's play by the same rules.

So don't believe the rhetoric that those who support Prop 75 want to eliminate union contributions—we just want fairness. That's what Prop 75 is all about.

And that's *The Business Perspective*.

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

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

L.A. Business THIS WEEK

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Environmental Quality
Committee Meeting
[more info](#)

TUE | Nov. 22

Referral Network

A Growing Companies program
sponsored by Wells Fargo
[more info](#)

THU | Dec. 1

New Member Orientation

[more info](#)

THU | Dec. 1

New Member Reception

[more info](#)

The Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, with more than 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

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

TALK BACK TO THE CHAMBER

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