Rebuilding California

TUESDAY | Nov. 15, 2005

THE BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE:

There is no need to dwell on the results of the special election, other than that I am pleased with the passage of Measure Y, the $3.95 billion LAUSD school bond, and with the election of Herb Wesson and Jose Huizar to the Los Angeles City Council. Statewide, however, we did not fare as well. You have heard enough from the pundits and experts.

Today, I want to address the future and what state lawmakers and the governor must do to rebuild our state and regain our trust.

First, they must dedicate themselves to working together in bipartisan fashion and focus on the big issues affecting our state, issues so complex and expensive they might take a generation to fix.

Second, they must agree on the priorities for our state. This will not be easy, given our congested roads, shortage of nurses, crumbling infrastructure, underpaid teachers, high dropout rates in schools, air quality, water supplies and our business climate. We have serious issues to address.

Third, they must restore confidence in our political processes. This is something that is usually said after each election, and for a while, the two parties and the 100+ personalities must work together, as they did in 2004. But then political instincts and survival take over, and we have a year like 2005, when nothing was achieved.

This time the people must insist that things change.

One way to get lawmakers working together and regaining our trust might be for the governor to call a special session of the legislature to focus on rebuilding our infrastructure. Infrastructure is not a partisan issue, and it's one that all Californians agree should be a top priority.

The Southern California Association of Governments estimates that our region alone requires $30 billion just to catch up with growth. The local chapter of the American Society of Civil Engineers estimates that L.A. County's infrastructure needs are $10 billion--annually.

The old days of Governors Brown and Reagan investing three percent of the state's general fund into infrastructure are long gone. Today, we spend less than one-half percent at a time when we need infrastructure investments more than ever.

The list of infrastructure needs is enormous: bridges, dams, levees, roads, subways, hospitals, schools, universities, ports, parks, solid waste, urban runoff, storm water treatment...the list goes on and on.

Funding our priorities will not be easy--not with the debt we have incurred and the deficits that are predicted. There simply is no way to levy enough taxes or cut enough spending to divert enough to even start addressing these needs. One thing that will pay for these investments is an economy on the rise, with more jobs, giving us more taxpayers and prosperous businesses.

That should not be partisan, either. While the parties may have some differences, nobody should disagree that restoring our economy to prosperity should be job #1.

The results of last week's election should be a wake-up call. Except for Measure Y, not a single measure passed. That says a tremendous amount, not so much about voter opinion on the specific issues, but a referendum on the system and the people who serve. The public sent a strong message that they expect our elected officials to do the jobs they were elected to do.

Tough decisions face us in the months ahead if we are to stop the downward cycle. It's time to put down our partisan swords and get down to serious work.

And that's The Business Perspective.
TALK BACK TO THE CHAMBER
Please tell us your thoughts on this issue. Include your name, company and email address and your response may appear in next week’s Business Perspective.

Submit Response

(Use this link if the above form does not work with your email program.)

Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, 350 S. Bixel St., Los Angeles, CA 90017
213.561.7500 | fax: 213.561.7511 | 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.