

THE BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE:

Experience Matters, So Does a Level Playing Field



Coming up at the Chamber

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

WED | July 19

Connection Point

How to Speak Your Business in 30 Seconds or Less
[more info](#)

WED | July 19

L.A.'s Largest Mixer VIII

[more info](#)

THU | July 20

Export Seminar Session #7

Legal Dos and Don'ts For Exporters
[more info](#)

THU | July 20

Land Use, Construction & Housing Committee Meeting

Featuring Deputy Director of the California Department of Housing and Community Development Cathy Creswell
[more info](#)

FRI | July 21

Small Business Advisory Council

[more info](#)

MON | July 24

Education & Workforce Development Committee Meeting

Featuring State Sen. Gloria Romero and LAUSD Board President Marlene Canter
[more info](#)

MON | July 24

Southern California Leadership Network Recruitment Reception

[more info](#)

TUES | July 25

Referral Network

[more info](#)

WED | July 26

Deconstructing the Three Pillars of International Trade

[more info](#)

WED | July 26

Environmental Quality Committee Meeting

[more info](#)

WED | July 26

Transportation & Goods Movement Committee Meeting

[more info](#)

WED | July 26

Southern California Leadership Network Recruitment Reception

[more info](#)

The Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce 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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Last week, the Chamber and the League of Women Voters of Los Angeles unveiled a series of proposals to strengthen the effectiveness and accountability of city government in L.A. The City Council discussed the proposal in-depth at today's council meeting and took the first step towards placing it before the voters on the November ballot.

Our objective is to make substantive improvements in the areas of term limits, campaign finance and ethics requirements. The voters deserve a frank, open discussion on the merits of these issues and we look forward to helping facilitate that discussion over the next few months.

- Term Limits -- The current two-term rule greatly limits the public's ability to maximize the skills and expertise of our elected officials. Term limits are still a worthwhile concept, but three four-year terms is a much more reasonable approach than the two terms now allowed. Additionally, the three term provision would place the city officials on an equal footing with members of the L.A. County Board of Supervisors.

Making effective public policy and being in touch with the needs of this great city requires the full dedication and commitment of people who can tackle the broad range of issues facing our city.

- Campaign Finance Reform -- Disclosure rules for independent expenditure (IE) campaigns are confusing and contradictory. The public is often completely unaware of who is spending large, unlimited sums of money in support or opposition of a particular candidate. We propose strict disclosure requirements and reporting deadlines for those engaging in independent expenditures. A campaign's success or failure can hinge on IE-related activities. Citizens deserve this important information before they go to the ballot box in order to make the most informed decisions.
- Ethics Requirements -- Over the past year, we have seen how lax ethics rules have damaged the political process in Washington, D.C. The good news is that we are in much better shape here at home. Ethics training for city officials, lobbyists and city contractors should be expanded so that everyone is up-to-date on these important rules and understand how to apply them in their daily work.
- Lobbying and contracting rules -- We also propose enhanced rules in these areas to make the system fairer for everyone. Under the current system, the registration criteria are applied unevenly, with some lobbyists being subject to strict requirements and others are not. Clarifying this area is essential to ensuring that all lobbyists are on a level playing field. Also, to avoid even the appearance of impropriety, registered lobbyists should be barred from serving on city boards and commissions. Finally, a common sense, across-the-board ban on all gifts from registered lobbyists to elected officials is worthwhile. These enhancements are in line with ethics reform "best practices" from across the county.

Extending term limits may be a contentious issue, but it is also the most important of all. The eight-year maximum has resulted in unintended consequences that hurt the city's ability to address long-term problems. As with any new position, it takes time to develop the institutional knowledge and experience necessary to accomplish important goals. Much of a person's first term is focused on mastering the process and learning how to get things done in the complex city government environment. Once that knowledge is acquired, only a few years of service remain before they are forced to leave office. New faces and perspectives rejuvenate the political process, but it is self defeating to mandate such high turnover at the expense of progress.

The opportunity to serve for twelve years will give office holders an enhanced ability to implement their programs and policies. It will also provide us with a greater return on the investment we make in them during the first few years of service. It could be argued that we should have no term limits, but we believe that such a policy is not in the best interest of bringing new perspectives. One additional term will not overly limit voters from changing their representative from time to time. Ultimately it will be up to voters to decide whether their elected official deserves a third term or if it is time to move on.

by
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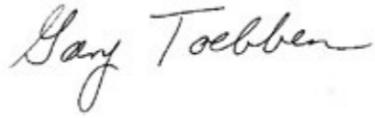
L.A. Business THIS WEEK

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The city of L.A. is complex. As the second largest city in the country, it provides the totality of urban services not only to a massive population, but across an extremely expansive geographic area. Making effective public policy and being in touch with the needs of the residents of this great city requires the full dedication and commitment of people who can tackle the broad range of issues facing our city.

The Chamber and the League of Women Voters of L.A. hope that every Angeleno will see the benefit that these reforms will bring to the city of L.A. This is an important discussion and we encourage everyone to participate.

And that's *The Business Perspective*.



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The Business Perspective is a weekly opinion piece by Gary Toebben, President & CEO of the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, produced with the input of Senior Policy Advisor Rusty Hammer.

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