A little over a month from now, Congress will begin its new session with new leadership and a host of critical issues on its plate. Fortunately, for California, we will be well represented in the leadership of the House of Representatives with Nancy Pelosi as the next speaker of the House.

Pelosi’s election by her peers to one of our nation’s highest leadership roles is a significant milestone – she will be the first speaker from California and the first woman speaker. As speaker, she will have tremendous power to shape our nation’s legislative agenda as well as its direction by selecting the leadership to manage the House with her.

That is why I’m writing today in support of one of our own, Rep. Jane Harman (D-El Segundo) as the next chair of the House Intelligence Committee.

Over the past several years, Rep. Harman has become a key expert on two of the most critical issues facing our nation – terrorism and the war in Iraq. She has distinguished herself with both her knowledge and her ability to communicate these issues to the public.

At a time when dramatic improvement in our intelligence apparatus should be a major priority of the government, it is essential that the right people be in the proper places to oversee this enormous task. There is no one better than an experienced Intelligence Committee member who represents a metropolitan area that many feel is the most likely future target of terrorism on the West Coast.

Beyond her broad knowledge of the country’s intelligence issues and the apparatus that gains and sifts intelligence, Rep. Harman has specific knowledge about two of the most targeted areas of infrastructure – water and airports. Through her familiarity with the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, and the Los Angeles International Airport, she is intimately familiar with the threats and the resources needed to make them safe. This knowledge should be put to use for the rest of our nation as well.

The decision facing speaker-elect Pelosi has its political and personal implications, which have been widely discussed. Selection of the next Intelligence Committee chair is not about politics. It is about selecting the most qualified person to meet the needs of this nation in the critical battle against terrorism. In our opinion, that person is Rep. Jane Harman.

We urge speaker-elect Pelosi to select Rep. Jane Harman as the next chair of the House Intelligence Committee. Our region and our nation would be well served.

And that’s The Business Perspective.