Nothing Stops A Bullet Like A Job

by Gary Toebben, President & CEO, Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce

Gang violence is a social problem, it's a law enforcement problem, it's an education problem, it's a jobs problem, and most importantly, it's every Angeleno's problem.

At the core of this strategy is the honest realization that we must change the Petri dish in which many of our young people are growing up, so that they see the rewards of staying in school and securing a good job as greater than joining a gang and selling drugs. As Father Greg Boyle of Homeboy Industries says, “nothing stops a bullet like a job.”

The report recommends creating an entrepreneurial, centralized and results-oriented city entity to replace today’s decentralized and uncoordinated approach. Rice emphasizes that this new entity must be held accountable for reducing gang activity and to do so, it must be free enough from civil service rules that resources can be redirected easily to those activities that are showing the biggest results.

This new initiative will require millions of dollars that must be viewed as an investment that will save billions of dollars and countless lives in the long run.

But before we start spending money—and there is already a proposal for a $50 million tax increase circulating at City Hall—we should first measure the effectiveness of the $82 million in city money that is already being spent by those 23 agencies. The public will not look kindly on the creation of a new entity and new taxes if there is no assessment or refocusing of the resources already being spent.

Gang violence is a social problem, it's a law enforcement problem, it's an education problem, it's a jobs problem, and most importantly, it's every Angeleno's problem. We have no choice but to work together collectively on a solution. The future of countless young people and many neighborhoods in our community is at stake.

And that’s The Business Perspective.

Gary L. Toebben
President & CEO
Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce

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.