Lobbying trips to Washington, D.C. are not unusual. Thousands of interest groups descend on the nation’s capital every year to meet with members of Congress and administration officials. So what makes this week’s Access Washington, D.C. trip different? Nearly 200 business and civic leaders—the largest-ever delegation of bipartisan Southern California leaders in the L.A. Area Chamber’s history—are in Washington, D.C. today to advocate on behalf of Southern California’s 18 million residents.

For the first time in decades, our region traveled together to our nation’s capital to collectively advocate on issues that matter to all of us. Those issues include increased investment in highways, public transportation and rail for residents, tourists and cargo containers; a fair distribution of homeland security funding to our gateway ports and airports; increased investment in student financial aid, career academics and workforce development; assistance with major urban challenges like health care, gangs and affordable homes; and tax and piracy issues that face all U.S. businesses as they compete around the world.

The message is loud and clear: Southern California is a national asset. No other region is more integral to the United States’ success in the global marketplace, delivers more goods to the rest of the country or sends more tax dollars to our nation’s capital than Southern California. International trade defines our region, with $293.9 billion flowing through the Los Angeles Customs District annually—the largest in the nation. The federal government should and must partner with us as we invest in our future.

The chorus of regional voices includes L.A. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, Anaheim Mayor Curt Pringle, Santa Monica Mayor Richard Bloom, Los Angeles Police Chief William Bratton, Los Angeles Unified School District Superintendent David Brewer III, several L.A. City Councilmembers, along with business and civic leaders from Santa Clara to San Clemente.

Washington, D.C. lawmakers, who traditionally view Southern California as an unorganized constituency, now understand that the strength of our voice matches the strength of our economy. When so many engaged citizens and leaders from across the political spectrum join together with one common purpose, the results can be far-reaching in Washington, D.C. and in Sacramento.

Access Washington, D.C. sets the stage for Southern California to feature prominently in upcoming appropriations bills and other important federal legislation. I look forward to reporting back on substantive developments of this week and encourage each one of you to join us in Sacramento in May as we communicate the same message to our state lawmakers.

And that’s The Business Perspective.

Image 1: 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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