Last week the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, along with L.A. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and more than 200 delegates, traveled to Washington, D.C. for the region’s largest-ever advocacy trip to the capital. The united group of Southern California business leaders and local elected officials met with federal lawmakers to discuss the most important issues facing our region and the nation.

One of the trip’s successes was refocusing Congress on goods movement. Our Access Washington, D.C. delegation hosted a briefing for the Congressional Goods Movement Caucus to highlight a recently released study by the Alameda Corridor Transportation Authority and the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach detailing the economic impact of the ports of L.A. and Long Beach on every Congressional district in the nation.

Several years ago we spread the message that the flow of goods through our local ports is an economic issue that impacts every region in the county. Any disruption due to traffic congestion, work slowdowns, terrorism or a lack of free trade agreements harms our national economy. But many Congressional members from outside of California viewed the welfare of our ports as a local issue and put punished responsibility back to Southern California.

This new report is helping change that flawed perception as lawmakers from Alabama to Michigan recognize that jobs, product availability and consumer prices in their districts depend on goods that move in and out of Southern California. We have Sen. Barbara Boxer and Congresswoman Juanita Millender-McDonald to thank for that changing perception.

Boxer and Millender-McDonald chair the Goods Movement Caucuses on their respective sides on Capitol Hill. They, along with other informed lawmakers, continue to foster a coalition of Congressional members to educate their colleagues about this important national issue. Now Congressional members from around the country are meeting with us to learn how they can help grow and green our ports.

They certainly have good reason to care. The new report shows that the Pacific Northwest can trace 40,000 jobs directly to the ports of L.A. and Long Beach; 244,000 in the Great Plains; 690,000 in the Great Lakes; 275,000 in the Atlantic Seaboard; more than 1 million in the Southwest; 435,700 in South Central; and nearly 500,000 in the Southeast. That is a total of 3.3 million jobs nationwide that exist all because of the goods flowing through our ports.

The results of this study also serve as a reminder to the rest of California about the importance of our ports to the entire state economy. Sacramento, just like Washington, D.C., has a role to play in making sure that our ports continue to be the economic engine of Southern California.

But there is another chapter to this story. In Southern California, the movement of goods comes with a price that must be addressed. Emissions from ships and trucks have grown with trade volumes and now contribute significantly to global concentrations of nitrogen oxides, sulfur oxides and particulate matter. This air quality burden is borne most immediately by residents living near the ports complex and it is the responsibility of the public and private sector to improve the quality of our air as we enhance the capacity of our ports to meet the demands of the future.

As our delegation reiterated many times last week, Congress must recognize its responsibility for helping to improve Southern California’s goods movement infrastructure and reducing the negative environmental impacts on our citizens. We need to partner with the federal government as we explore all sources of funding, and develop a framework for Southern California and the rest of the nation to share the responsibility, risk and reward of developing a green and efficient regional, national and international goods movement system.

And that’s The Business Perspective.