



TUESDAY | May 8, 2007

THE BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE:



# Fix the Levee Before it Breaks



## Coming up at the Chamber

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

### FRI | May 11

Accenture Pancakes & Politics

L.A.'s Role as the World's Entertainment Capital  
[more info](#)

### TUE-WED | May 15-16

Access Sacramento  
[more info](#)

### THU | May 17

The Connection Point  
Intentional Networking  
[more info](#)

### TUE | May 22

Referral Network  
Grow Your Business  
[more info](#)

### WED | May 23

Transportation & Goods Movement Committee Meeting  
[more info](#)

### WED | May 23

Energy, Water & Environment Committee Meeting  
[more info](#)

### THU | May 24

Land Use, Construction & Housing Committee Meeting  
[more info](#)

### WED | May 30

26th Annual Small Business Awards  
[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](http://www.lachamber.org)

350 S. Bixel St.  
Los Angeles, CA 90017  
213.580.7500 tel  
213.580.7511 fax  
[info@lachamber.org](mailto:info@lachamber.org)

As the second anniversary of Hurricane Katrina nears, California is not closer to having a comprehensive policy to deal with the impact of a major earthquake on flood control and water supply. It's possible to have one—with the necessary political will—and the L.A. Area Chamber will fight hard to convince the Legislature to toughen up during our Access Sacramento trip, May 15-16.

Action on a comprehensive policy is easy to delay because the issues are complex. Most of California's water falls in the northern part of the state and makes its way to the more populous and industrious south through the [Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta](#). The delta is home to agriculture, electric, gas and telecommunications infrastructure as well as endangered species. The levees that tenuously protect and maintain this system are old earthen structures that sit on shifting ground that will give way in earthquakes.

The water challenges facing the state today "make the electricity crisis of several years ago look like kindergarten," said Sen. Dianne Feinstein recently. The political ground in Sacramento and in local government near the delta is as shaky as the soils that make up its banks. Previous attempts to fix the delta have failed because decision makers were not determined to consider the overall needs of the state as a whole when confronted by more narrow interests.

All of California needs a solution that provides a consistent and stable source of reasonably priced water in order to sustain our population and forecasted growth. We cannot let our fellow Californians forget that they have as much to lose as we do in the south if there ever should be a delta collapse. Both the Bay Area and the Central Valley receive about a third of their water from the delta, just as we do. We will all feel the pain in a delta catastrophe as it sinks California's economy by an estimated \$70 billion.

Government often waits for a crisis before it finds the will to act. But we must motivate our Legislators and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger to act well before an earthquake, water shortages, environmental damage and floods cause unnecessary havoc in our state. Fortunately the governor understands this. After Katrina, Schwarzenegger took the dredging equipment in his own hands and began making repairs to the worst levees in Sacramento and the delta, telling the Bush administration he would solve the problem first and argue about who would pay later. That is just the kind of political leadership and problem solving we need. We must bring that same kind of determination and leadership to a water package that includes:

- Emergency planning that can be executed in the event that a major catastrophe occurs before our master plans are implemented.
- Smaller delta storage facilities and the long needed and much debated peripheral canal, which would be the most cost-effective way to move water through the delta while promoting the natural return of the delta's natural ecosystem, native plants, endangered fish and other aspects that have become endangered, according to the Public Policy Institute of California.
- More up-system storage at the base of the sierras to retain water for flood control and supply purposes.

We believe that these are the essential elements of a compromise proposal that the voters of California could support. We will be talking about this package in [Sacramento next week and encourage you to join us](#). We can't predict a heavy rainfall or earthquake. So we must act now. It is a serious issue that will impact generations to come.

And that's *The Business Perspective*.

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

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

## L.A. Business THIS WEEK

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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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Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, 350 S. Bixel St., Los Angeles, CA 90017  
213.580.7500 | fax: 213.580.7511 | [info@lachamber.org](mailto:info@lachamber.org) | [www.lachamber.org](http://www.lachamber.org)

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