THE BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE:

Today is a critical day for the children of our community, their parents and all Angelenos. Voters in the Los Angeles Unified School Districts three and seven will select the final two members for the board of education. At the end of the day, four of the seven board members may be people who have pledged to attack the status quo in our public schools and make school reform—to benefit kids—their highest priority.

L.A. businesses, with the encouragement of Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, have shown a passionate interest in the two school board races that will be decided today. Owners and leaders of businesses, both large and small, have been outspoken and generous in their financial support for Tamar Galatzan and Richard Vladovic—two candidates who offer a unique opportunity to change the decades-long decline in public education in L.A. They have swayed supporters by being vocal on their stance to make our schools safer, reduce the drop-out rate, and focus more resources on making sure our students leave the classroom prepared for high paying jobs, professional opportunities and higher education.

Some have questioned the amount of money businesses have committed to these races. But I take great pride in the willingness of business leaders to become engaged in the most important issue facing our community today—and the key to our economic future. Businesses who wrote checks to support the campaigns of Galatzan and Vladovic did so because they know that education equals economic opportunity, and without the foundation of a good education, our children will have extremely limited job opportunities in their lifetime.

Whichever candidates win today, the Chamber calls on Mayor Villaraigosa, Superintendent David L. Brewer III, the school board, teachers, parents, businesses, organized labor and other community leaders to come together to begin working on a compact that will bring us all together to benefit our students. A lot of money, including from the Business PAC sponsored by the Chamber, was invested in this election to make the point that our community is dissatisfied with the status quo and ready to work as a team to benefit our children.

Lastly, the Chamber appreciates and admires the hundreds of city and county firefighters and members of the military who risked their lives to put out last week’s fires in Griffith Park and Catalina Island. Everyone who assisted with these two dramatic firefighting efforts deserves our praise and debt of gratitude.

Because we are experiencing the driest year on record, there is a high probability that we will need your help again. But let’s not tempt fate. All of us must be diligent to not add to the danger through actions that will in hindsight be regarded as thoughtless and careless. In that way we can all help these brave men and women do their job.

And that’s The Business Perspective.