



TUESDAY | November 13, 2007

THE BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE:



# Stop the Delay on Redistricting Reform



## Coming up at the Chamber

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

**TUE | Nov. 13**  
Referral Network  
Grow Your Business  
[more info](#)

**WED | Nov. 14**  
Leadership L.A. Class of 2007 Graduation & Class Report  
Leadership L.A. 20th Anniversary Celebration  
[more info](#)

**THU | Nov. 15**  
Doing Business with Turkey  
[more info](#)

**THU | Nov. 15**  
Joint Education & Workforce Development and Health Care Committee meeting  
[more info](#)

**FRI | Nov. 16**  
Small Business Council  
Tools for Success  
[more info](#)

**TUE | Nov. 20**  
L.A. Export Series #6  
Freight & Logistics: Delivering the Goods  
[more info](#)

**WED | Nov. 21**  
International Trade & Investment Committee Meeting  
Featuring Geraldine Knatz, Port of Los Angeles  
[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)

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Today in California, our redistricting rules allow state legislators to choose the voters they wish to represent rather than the other way around. Incumbent legislators draw their own district lines – a blatant conflict of interest. For the past three years, Sacramento lawmakers repeatedly promised to reform this broken practice by giving the responsibility to an independent commission. But even with term limits reform on the February 2008 ballot, redistricting reform is still missing in action.

That's why the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, together with Common Cause and AARP (formerly the American Association of Retired Persons), filed an initiative with the Secretary of State's office to place the [Voters FIRST Act on the November 2008 ballot](#). Our organizations are committed to collecting 1 million signatures to qualify this initiative for the ballot if the Legislature does not agree to submit the measure to the voters.



All voters, regardless of their political affiliation, have limited choices under existing rules. The current map of gerrymandered districts stifles any real competition between candidates or ideas. As a practical matter, most district elections are over after the primary. In the last three election cycles with 459 separate races, only four seats switched party hands. That's right – less than one percent of the seats changed party hands. The system is designed to protect party incumbents and there is little incentive for lawmakers to consider voices from the political center.

Our proposal will create a 14-member independent citizens' commission to redraw State Senate and Assembly district lines based on strict non-partisan rules in a process that will respect city and county boundaries. The criteria for serving on the commission will exclude individuals with an obvious conflict-of-interest, including elected officials, their staff and major political donors.

The result will be fair redistricting that is not controlled by a single party. Democrats and Republicans will have an equal number of seats on the Commission – five each, while four spots will be reserved for true independents. As a result, any new redistricting plan will require the support of Democrats, Republicans and Independents. Moreover, voters will get to watch the process in action because all proposals will be debated in a public forum and all the minutes will be posted to the Internet.

The State Legislature could take a giant step in enhancing their public credibility, which continues to decline, by placing this measure on the ballot on Feb. 5 – at the same time we vote on term limits reform for incumbent lawmakers.

We hope you will join our Voters FIRST coalition by [sending an e-mail message to your state lawmakers](#) urging them to place this initiative on the ballot. [Join your fellow Californians](#) who believe that reforming our redistricting process is essential to solving the other challenges of our state. It's in the Legislature's hands now, but it will be in our hands when we start collecting signatures.

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.*

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

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