



## Valley Vote Meeting Report

January 15, 2007

by

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Valley VOTE's monthly meetings attract an articulate mix of Valley civic and political leaders. But our first meeting of 2007 drew an unusually large, standing room only crowd of people, many of them Neighborhood Council representatives from as far away as San Pedro.

The attractions were many: **Lisa Sarno**, Interim General Manager of the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment, (DONE), **Bill Boyarsky**, LA City Ethics Department Commissioner and **David Hernandez**, a North Hollywood community advocate who is the lead petitioner in the legal action challenging the constitutionality of Measure R, the local proposition passed last November linking ethics reform to a deceptively written term limit extension.

### *DONE's Best of Intentions*

Lisa Sarno, interim manager of DONE, monitors the city's 86 Neighborhood Councils. Each of the elected NCs receives \$50,000 to resolve local issues. LA spends a total of \$4.3 million on NCs. It also spends close to \$4 million (DONE's budget) to regulate them. Is the latter sum wisely spent?

"Controller (Laura) Chick spent seven months in our department doing an honest assessment of our infrastructure," Sarno told Valley VOTE. "She found that we have a lot of work to do. Our staff never received the right education and training upfront. DONE is only as good as its staff, so we need to get everybody up to speed and let them know what the city has to offer its Neighborhood Councils."

The purpose of NCs was to get all parts of the city involved with information flowing between stakeholders and the city council, Sarno explained. There has been significant progress since the first NC – Wilmington – was certified five years ago. Hollywood Hills West did an outreach event recently where more than 1,000 people attended and 600 registered to get more information. The Van Nuys NC has a schoolteacher on its board who gives extra credit to 5th, 6th and 7th grade students who attend NC meetings on the theory that when children come to the meetings so will their parents. Says Sarno: "A whole category of individuals are now getting involved because of their kids."

Many issues, most of them local in nature, were raised during the Q&A session following Sarno's presentation. They ranged from what happens to NC board members who fail to take the city's ethics exam to how long stakeholders should be able to speak at NC meetings.

### *An Outrageous Proposal*

**Bill Boyarsky** saw plenty during his 31 years with the Los Angeles Times. But nothing prepared him for the City Council's backroom crafting of Measure R. "When (the measure's) sponsors bypassed the ethics commission I was outraged," Boyarsky said. "It extends City Council terms from two to three terms. It gives existing city council members an extra term."

The measure was sold and passed as a clean government reform. It prohibits lobbyists from giving gifts to city officials and campaign contributions to incumbent office holders. It also lengthens from one to three years the interval between when an official leaves city employment and the time he registers as a lobbyist.

Unfortunately, the measure also contains a large loophole in that it changes the definition of lobbyist from the money he earns per quarter to the number of billable hours he spends lobbying. Left unregulated are the hours a lobbyist might spend touting clients at a social luncheon or charity fundraiser. This exempts some of the best lobbyists from city regulation.

### ***Valley Paladin Holds Council Accountable***

“We hear a lot about transparency when it comes to ethics reform but we don’t often see much of it,” says **David Hernandez**, whose legal challenge to Measure R, the City Council term limit extension, will be heard in court Jan. 25. (*the Superior Court Hearing Date is now set for April 11, 2007*) Actually, as Hernandez explained, Measure R was challenged once before and found to be in violation of California’s State constitution. But the city appealed the ruling and because the appellate hearing could not be scheduled until after the November election, the trial judge allowed the measure to be placed back on the ballot.

A poll was taken prior to the measure being prepared by a San Francisco law firm representing a number of companies doing business with the city, Hernandez reported. It showed that a term limits “extension” would not pass unless it was linked to lobbyist regulation. City Council members raised over \$1,000,000 from companies doing business with the city. Thousands of misleading brochures resulted in Measure R passing with 59% of the vote.

“That the deck was stacked against the people is indicative of the political environment,” says Hernandez. Our case attempts to preserve the fabric of the democratic process.” The goal is to receive a writ of mandate that restores the original judgment. Should that happen, the council undoubtedly will appeal. Financial contributions to support the legal challenge against Measure R can be sent to P.O. Box 9158, North Hollywood, CA 91609.

### ***Progress in the Air***

It can be depressing living in a city that has a Hummer-driving transit boss and needs a 24/7 waste and fraud hotline to keep city employees honest. That’s why it’s so uplifting each month to hear from **Denny Schneider**, Valley VOTE’s ambassador to Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA) and the Southern California Regional Airport Authority (SCRAA). This is because Schneider, more often than not, arrives with good news.

Good news for North Valley residents who might find it more convenient to fly out of Palmdale than LAX. By the end of this month Delta and United should announce their start of service out of Palmdale. Lured by \$2 million in subsidies, the airlines’ Palmdale flights will fill a large gap in regional air service.

The SCRAA held a second reorganizing meeting in January. Bill Rosendahl was elected to lead this organization. His goal is to have all eight counties from Santa Barbara to San Diego in one organization to discuss and implement a truly regional network of air transportation. Taken off the table was the body’s right to impose eminent domain. The next meeting is scheduled for March.

Meanwhile, LAWA imposed new lease agreements on many airlines and confirmed plans to buy back the rights to LAX Terminals 3 and 5 so that gate traffic can be more equitably distributed. This move allows LAWA to pass on more of their costs to the airlines. It is expected the airlines will use this to justify slightly increased ticket fares although operating costs at LAX remain some of the lowest in the world.

### ***Living Wages. So what’s not to like?***

The Living Wage Ordinance was extended and added to the Municipal Code by the Los Angeles City Council on November 15 and signed into law on November 22, reported **Pauline Tallent**, chair of Valley VOTE's land use committee. Only three council members voted against this ordinance: Greig Smith, Dennis Zine and Bernard Parks. According to Bill Rosendahl, the author of the bill, "The living wage for the hotel workers is a matter of social justice as well as a matter of good business sense. Treating workers fairly and improving working conditions will benefit hotels and drive economic activity along Century Boulevard."

"Originally this Ordinance only covered contractors doing business at LAX, but now it has crept outside the Airport and affects anyone doing business in proximity to the airport," Tallent said. "Not only hotels, but also retail businesses in the hotels are also included in the Ordinance. The burning question is of course, what gives the City Council authority to mandate how much private business pays its employees. Also, this insidious Ordinance could later be extended to other airports, and possibly even to businesses in proximity to government buildings. Any wonder why Los Angeles has trouble retaining businesses, and certainly is not attracting them?"

Councilman Bernard Parks, through the United Chambers of Commerce, alerted the business community to speak before the City Council on January 8, 2007. This was a meeting of the Budget Committee, and Councilman Parks wanted to draw attention to the enormous expense the City would have to bear if repeal of this ordinance would come up for a ballot vote. Double the number of signatures needed to put the ordinance up for public review have been gathered by opponents of the ordinance.

### ***Rent Control: Is It Good for Los Angeles?***

Good luck if you own and want to improve a rent-controlled apartment building built before October 1, 1978. LA's Rent Stabilization Ordinance says owners can recover no more than 60% of their capital improvement costs from tenants. For improvements of \$7,920 or more per unit in RSO covered buildings, the limitation is 50%.

"The Rent Stabilization Ordinance also has a significant impact on crime and the city's budget for police," says Valley VOTE treasurer **Vic Viereck**. "Since the owners of the older buildings do not have the right to evict nuisance tenants with a 30-day notice, the police and City Attorney's office have to direct substantial resources to problems at older apartments."

### ***Working for You!***

Are you the parent of a small child who would like LAUSD broken into smaller, more efficient school districts? Valley VOTE shares your desire and consistently has supported reorganization, notes **Richard Leyner**, chairman of Valley VOTE's membership committee.

Disgusted by the City Council's disingenuous gutting of term limits? So is Valley VOTE, which urged the defeat of Measure R.

Worried that property developers were the real beneficiaries of Measure H, the multimillion-dollar housing bond? So was Valley VOTE, whose strong objections contributed to the measure's defeat at the polls.

Concerned about the expansion of the living wage ordinance and the city's infatuation with inclusionary zoning? So is Valley VOTE.

In unity we have influence. Please send in your membership dues today to help Valley VOTE meet its goals.  
*Valley VOTE - 14622 Ventura Blvd. #424 Sherman Oaks, Ca 91403*

### **Valley VOTE Mission Statement**

Valley VOTE, a diverse coalition of San Fernando Valley residents, business people, educators, community activists, and organizations, is committed to exploring and implementing programs that empower the people of the San Fernando Valley and the City of Los Angeles, including opportunities to improve local governance, education and public participation on policy matters.

*Please forward this Email to interested individuals and organizations. If you would like to be removed from our distribution list please send an Email to [javittisr@cs.com](mailto:javittisr@cs.com). We apologize if you receive more than one notice for this meeting.*

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