

# Valley VOTE

Meeting Report May 12, 2008

By David DeVoss



**Mayor Villaraigosa**

(Photos by Ralph Kroy)

It's easy to like Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. He's a politician who takes off his coat, loosens his tie and then says, "Let's talk, candidly." He was savvy enough to recognize Valley VOTE's doomed but principled secession effort of 2002 before starting his main remarks, which are excerpted below:

### ***The Valley Will Rise Again! (Just Not As It's Own City)***

"I've always believed that it's important to have vigorous discussion about burning issues. And because I was born and raised in LA, I know the Valley always felt like the weak sister or stepchild in the family. A lot of people really felt that we should look at this issue, so (when I was an Assemblyman in Sacramento) I provided the first \$1 million that got the secession study going. I think that's why over the years I've had a good relationship with Valley VOTE They knew I was against secession, but what I said back then was instead of berating people for wanting to succeed, why not listen and try to fix the problem.

### ***Befriending The San Fernando Valley***

"Look at my schedule. I've been to SFV more that anybody in a very long time. Wendy (Greuel) used to say in first three months I visited her district more than others had done in a whole four year period. This job is about rolling up sleeves.

### ***Antonio the Crime Dog***

"I listened early on to a number of issues that you raised and the first was public safety. People say they liked me getting involved in education, but the most important thing was to do something about public safety. We've made tremendous progress since (Police Chief William) Bratton has been here and we continue to build upon the foundation for having a vibrant city for the middle class and insure we'll have the kind of investment to address the issue of the schools."

In the three years I've been mayor we've seen crime go down. Gang crime is down 40% in the Valley. Look at homicides, violence; every single year it is down. I promised 1,000 officers. By 2010 we'll have 1,000 new officers. It hasn't been easy, but we made it our priority."

### ***Gangbusters***

"City Comptroller Laura Chick said the way LA spends money on gangs is like spreading peanut butter across the city. We have to target specific areas and spend more resources in the areas we

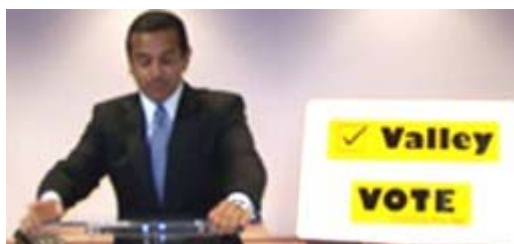
target."

### **Free Fire Zones AKA Public Schools**

"The second issue that's most important to residents of the city is schools. I saw Roberta Weintraub the other day and we started talking about what Bobbie Fielder and the bussing issue. A lot of people said it was racial at the time and maybe there was some of that. But it also was about people loving their neighborhood school and not wanting to be bussed. The bottom line is that people want their kids to be safe. Maybe not in 1968, but more and more now people want their kids to be in a broad cross section of multicultural LA. But they want them to be safe.

### **Isn't the Valley Part of LA?**

"I know education is important. If you think about why people leave LA and move to the Valley and then leave the Valley to go to Orange County and then move to Idyllwild before finally leaving for Idaho it's because of three things: safety in their neighborhood, the lack of quality schools and the cost of housing."



### **On Immigration**

This issue of immigration drives lot of people nuts. One of proudest moments of my tenure came recently when 500,000 people come and wanted to be part of the American dream. I supported them."

### **Who Let The Dog Out?**

"I'm pro civil rights. For me, the number one social compact says 'Thou shalt not discriminate.' (LA fireman) Tennie Pierce admitted never been discriminated against (when he asked LA to pay him millions because dog food was put in his spaghetti). He called himself the Big Dog. I know that guys fool around and I'm not spending \$2.7 million because of an innocent prank. All the civil rights groups get upset, but I call them like I see them."

### **Clean Money**

"I supported the clean money initiative and I still support it. But the devil is in details. LA is looking at a \$406 million deficit this year and we need to see how we can pay for this."

### **Neighborhood Councils**

"I've met each of my three years with neighborhood councils to develop a budget. Neighborhood Councils tell me public safety is the number one issue and I've listened. There's tremendous pressure to cut expenditures but I propose in my budget that we continue the \$50,000 allocation for each NC."

### **Van Nuys Airport Noise**

"Bob Hope Airport wants to impose a curfew and redirect flights to Van Nuys. I say, **No!** I just removed from the advisory committee two people who wanted to expand the (Van Nuys) airport. We want to reduce Stage 2 jets and helicopters there. Let's be fair. If they want to give us money to develop the infrastructure at Palmdale, then we can talk."

### **Metrolink**

"I just fought the MTA Board that wanted to cut night time service. I told the board, 'Hold it, I'm not cutting those lines.'" Some of the lines they wanted cut are in high crime areas. Need to keep transit

fares down now that gas is \$4 a gallon."

### **Densification**

"SB 1818 was well intentioned as smart-growth, transit oriented development. A lot of changes have been made to reflect the concerns of the community. When you look at the city there has been haphazard growth. But despite all the anti-growth concerns, the city is going to grow. I support affordable housing built along transit corridors, but I don't think that any street that has a bus going down it is a transit corridors

"As for population growth, I don't know what we can do about it. Lot of growth is birth. Some is immigration. Can't say people can't have children. We're not China. "

### **Rent Control**

"I support rent stabilization. We have to protect our housing stock. One way to do that is by having more housing development downtown and along sensible transportation corridors."

### **LA City Deficit**

"I can tell you for a fact that last year the economists told us that we could have a slow down in housing, but nobody predicted a crisis. Last year, I had a strike because I wouldn't give engineers and architects an 18 to 24% pay increase. We held and eventually agreed to 3.5% or 3.75%. The coalition of unions talks about their 23% raise. It's not an accurate statement. They get 5%. In the third fourth and fifth year the unions have to give me back \$25 million in health care savings to pay for the 5%. That's the fact. Would I have (given those raises) if I had known about the economy? Of course not. But nine months ago, nobody knew things would be this bad."

"So what can we do? I plan to eliminate 767 positions, but some are not filled so we're talking about laying off 350 people. 1983 was the last time there were layoffs. I'd like to avoid layoffs so I'm seeking six furlough days that are mandatory. If they don't do that we'll have to eliminate even more. "

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### **Thank you Galpin Motors**

Prior to the Mayor's comments President of Valley VOTE **Joe Vitti** made some introductory remarks. He indicated that Valley VOTE is in it's 10th year of operating as a 501c4 organization. He thanked the **Galpin** management for providing their Community Room for the organization's monthly meetings for over a decade. Joe also thanked the **Galpin** Staff for the outstanding refreshments provided for the meeting with the Mayor.

The members of the **Valley VOTE Executive Committee** were introduced to the audience. Also provided in a handout to the attendees was a summary of the **24 Press Releases** issued by Valley VOTE along with a listing of the **100+ Featured Speakers** that have made presentation at monthly meetings since 2003.

(For more details go to the Valley VOTE website [www.valleyvote.org](http://www.valleyvote.org).)

### **Video on Line by Ron Kaye**

The former editor of the Daily News **Ron Kaye** attended the meeting and made a few opening remarks before Antonio arrived for his presentation. He also video the Mayor's remarks. They are available on Ron's blog; <http://ronkayela.com/archives.html>

Go to the "**money**" **2008.0513** - "Antonio pitches his success story" listing, and you can view the Mayor's remarks.

*(Thank you **Ron Kaye** for the video of the event.)*

### **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 fostering the implementation of programs that empower the people of the San Fernando Valley and the City of Los Angeles, to improve local governance, education and public participation on policy matters.*

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