

September 18, 2006

### **Fresno Business Council Bond Measure Endorsements for 2006**

While the Fresno Business Council does not endorse candidates, the organization does endorse bond measures. The Fresno Business Council Board Has Endorsed Propositions 84 (Water), 1 B (Transportation) and 1 E (Education) on the state ballot and the renewal of Measure C in Fresno County.

### **Message From the Chair Emeritus—Dick Johanson**

As kids we all used to look far down the railroad tracks and marvel at how they eventually seemed to come together. That thought returned to me last as I attended the Fresno Works For Better Health conference and a recent meeting of the Fresno Compact. Some rankings list this region as the number one poverty center in the nation. Other rankings list the academic attainment of too many of our local school kids as well below acceptable levels. Syllogism I tells us that (1) if poverty is directly related to unemployment and (2) unemployment is directly related to unemployability then (3) job qualifying education is the roadbed to escape from poverty. Both of the meetings referred to exploring new ways of bringing about this transformation. We have increasing confidence in tomorrow because of our greater community's growing realization that effective education of our under skilled adults and our underachieving children is our collective responsibility. Let's join hands and walk the merging rails together...

### **“Confronting Concentrated Poverty in Fresno” Alan Berube, the Brookings Institution**

The Fresno Works for Better Health conference on September 6, brought together four national level speakers to discuss Berube's report that named Fresno as first in concentrated poverty in the nation and fourth in the overall poverty rate. The conference, in addition to focusing on showcasing successful strategies from other communities, offered the participants an opportunity to learn about the impressive local work already underway. Success and failure are largely the result of aggregating assets or deficits—creating the Perfect Storm. Once a neighborhood deteriorates to a certain level, problems compound and the costs to the larger community increase exponentially. Neighborhood poverty increased dramatically on the South and West sides of Fresno between 1980 and 2000 due to population changes, economic changes and growth and housing patterns.

Since the Brookings report was based upon statistics from 2000, many things have changed. We have pulled together as a community to address chronic, systemic challenges through collaboration and innovative initiatives. Dr. Berube noted that “no city or region has brought together the key players from the public, private and nonprofit sectors in a focused effort to tackle concentrated poverty.” His counsel is to choose key interventions, set ambitious, measurable goals and let everyone know who is accountable.” He challenged Fresno to be the leader.

### **The Water Technology Cluster**

The first and beta test for industry clusters in our region, The Water Technology Cluster, was formed in 2001 as a collaborative effort between California State University Fresno and 30 manufacturers of water technology and related equipment. Today the Cluster has over 200 companies nationwide. The cluster's focuses are the construction of the International Center for Water Technology, expansion of careers in the field, and expansion export development. To learn more about this exciting cluster, go to <http://www.icwt.net>

### **Fresno-Madera Regional Community Renewal Summit**

Assemblymember Mike Villines has already heard Dr. Berube's challenge. He is hosting a conference on Friday, October 13 at the Cornerstone Conference Center from 8:30 to 1:30 p.m. to share blueprints of some of California's best community-building programs. The summit is an effort to strengthen and scale the organizations working to address the many challenges Valley communities face. For information or to RSVP call 446-2029 or email [Assemblymember.Villines@assembly.ca.gov](mailto:Assemblymember.Villines@assembly.ca.gov).

### **Fulton Mall—What's Next**

After a series of community meetings, substantial research and careful analysis the Working Group on Fulton Mall will present its findings and recommendations to the Fresno City Council. The date is

September 26 at 2:30 p.m. in the City Council Chambers. For more information, contact Terri Salivar at 621-7796.