

February 25, 2008

**Message From the Chair Emeritus—Richard Johanson**

Last week our nation celebrated Presidents Day. When we think of former presidents whom we hold in high esteem, what are the factors that influence us? Is it because of the passage of significant legislation, healthy economic growth or other external factors occurring during their term of office? Or is it the inherent character of the individual? I respectfully submit that it is both—character and competence. Therefore, I suggest that as we consider those whom we will support for public office this election year, we measure each of them against the widely endorsed Community Values and their ability to get things done. If you don't have a copy at hand, check our website – [www.fresnobl.org](http://www.fresnobl.org) -- and look under “Values”.

**Interdependence of Economy, Infrastructure and Human Development**

Those engaged in the work of community transformation have come to understand that we must work simultaneously in three overlapping spheres—**economic development, infrastructure development and human development**. While more jobs are needed, many jobs go unfilled because applicants lack skills or can't pass a drug test. Without adequate infrastructure the economy cannot grow. Without a growing economy, the money for infrastructure is missing. Without a prepared workforce, the economy stagnates. Without quality schools, students lack basic skills. **Bottom line—we need to work together behind shared strategies so that we can leverage resources and talent to achieve results.** The community has been steadily building collaborative skills, learning across sectors and embracing what once seemed impossible challenges.

**Interdependence Backdrop for Mayoral Forum on Poverty and Possibilities**

The next mayor has the opportunity to build upon the legacy of **Alan Autry**. His ability to challenge long held beliefs about the economy, crime, education and poverty and his relationship with the Governor helped to build a platform for regional action, inspired countless people to engage in community transformation and put Fresno on the map in Washington. Which candidate has the capacity to scale and accelerate the work already underway? The **Worlds Apart, Futures Together Mayoral Forum on Poverty and Possibilities** is slated for April 16, from 5 p.m. until 8 p.m. at the Saroyan Theater. The event is free. The forum is the sequel to the mobilizing conference held in 2006 that released the Brookings report naming Fresno first in concentrated urban poverty in the United States.

**Dr. Manuel Pastor**, a national expert on regional and environmental equity, will moderate. The seven mayoral candidates will be asked to provide specific, realistic strategies to address poverty. The event is sponsored by the partners of the **Fresno Works for Better Health Consortium** and a broad mix of co-sponsors.

**Medical School In the Valley—It's Up To Us**

Priorities are often set, not based upon what is needed or merit, but by who speaks the loudest and has the most influence. The Valley has a history of being underserved. We also have a history of not working together behind shared goals. With a growing population, existing deficiencies in health care and high concentrations of chronic disease, the Valley clearly needs and merits a medical school. In addition to the health aspects, medical schools are economic engines that create jobs and spark business creation. The proposed plan is innovative, collaborative and customized to serve the unique challenges of our population and geography. The regents need to hear from us--the people in the Valley. Send letters to the president, Robert C. Dynes, Ph.D., University of California, 1111 Franklin Street, Oakland, CA 94607-5200 urging him and the rest of the regents to make a medical school in the Valley a top priority.