

## **Gang czar acknowledges he faces many challenges**

By ALICE WALTON, City News Service 27 SEP 07

**Man picked to head city's fight against gangs tells a panel that violence touches all segments of the city.**

LOS ANGELES — Crimes committed by gang members affect all parts of the city and stopping that type of violence is a moral issue, the city's new gang czar said last week.

The Rev. Jeff Carr, appointed by Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa to evaluate the city's gang intervention and prevention efforts, made his comments during a panel discussion hosted by the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce Sept. 20.

"From the north to the south to the east and to the west in our city, there is a war that is raging underground, and a lot of people don't know about it unless they happen to be a victim of that violence or live in the community where that violence is pervasive," Carr said.

City Attorney Rocky Delgadillo agreed that gang violence is not limited to poor or violent neighborhoods, and said gang members look at upscale areas as business opportunities.

"If you think that gangs are not in your neighborhood because you live in Bel-Air or Brentwood or Woodland Hills or some place like that, guess what? Gangs are coming to a neighborhood near you. Gangs are like any other enterprise," Delgadillo said.

"You find new opportunities some place else, what are you going to do? You're going to pursue them," he said. "Gangs are figuring that out, too. They're coming to other neighborhoods."

Education, parental involvement and job training programs are key to keeping youths out of gangs, panelists said. The city attorney pledged to find a job for any gang member who gets off a gang injunction list.

City Councilwoman Janice Hahn, who is supporting an effort to get a measure on the February ballot that would raise \$30 million for anti-gang programs through a parcel tax, said schools need to beef up vocational classes for students who are not college-bound.

"Job skills are important for a huge segment of our young people," she said. "They're not all going to go on to college, and we need to pay attention to that and give them the kinds of skills they need for good-

paying careers.”

The City Council voted Monday to place the a measure on the February ballot that would place a \$30 parcel tax on propertiuies within the city to fund anti-gang programs.

The council vote instructed the city attorney’s office to draft the wording for a ballot measure on the plan.

City Controller Laura Chick wants any proposed tax increase delayed until she has finished an audit of the effectiveness of the city’s current gang prevention and intervention programs. That audit is not expected to be completed until January.

“I think February is the time to do it and I hope we can convince the controller to support us,” said Hahn, who authored the plan.

Chick told the Los Angeles Daily News, “I want us to be able to go to the voters and say this is what we’re doing right. I don’t think we are ready to go to the voters in February and ask them to part with their hard-earned tax dollars when we don’t know what we will be recommending.”

Hahn said she wants to assure Chick there will be guarantees in the measure to determine how money is spent.

Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa has made gang issues a priority and said he hopes to work with Chick and the council to develop an agreement on when to ask voters to support a parcel tax.

There are an estimated 39,000 gang members and fewer than 10,000 police officers in the city of Los Angeles. Those statistics should not discourage people from supporting gang prevention and intervention programs, Carr said.

“We have to figure out how to not become so desensitized to the violence that is going on in our community that we allow it to numb us to the point where we don’t take the kind of action and have the kind of moral outrage that is necessary to eliminate this problem,” he said.