ACCESS L.A. City Hall is the L.A. Area Chamber’s annual advocacy event aimed at building stronger partnerships between L.A. City Hall and local businesses. Here are nine things the L.A. City Council can do to improve our economy.

1. Make business growth and job creation the No. 1 priority at City Hall

We still have 19,300 fewer jobs in L.A. County than we had at the start of the recession. Unemployment in the City of L.A. still exceeds 9 percent. The City Council must be pro-active in adopting strategies and policies to attract and assist businesses in investing in L.A. and creating new jobs. City staff must also be pro-active in providing responsive and efficient customer service to create jobs as quickly as possible.

2. Implement plan to phase out the Gross Receipts Tax

The City of L.A. has the highest business tax of any city in L.A. County, and one of the highest in the nation. The Business Tax Advisory Committee recommended a 15-year phase out plan. The most recently presented plan to reduce the Gross Receipts Tax by $45 million over three years is simply not enough to move the needle. We urge the council to revive this issue and approve the first phase as recommended by the Business Tax Advisory Committee.

3. Stay the course on LAX modernization and ensure rail connects to LAX

Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) impacts, directly and indirectly, 294,000 jobs in the County and generates more than $39 billion into our economy. The City Council took a big step toward modernization with its vote in support of the Specific Plan Amendments and the realignment of the north airfield to ensure that LAX can safely and efficiently handle the new generation of airliners. The City Council must continue to support this modernization plan and ensure that we will finally have a rail line into LAX.

4. Ensure the Port of Los Angeles can compete with a widened Panama Canal

The Port of L.A. is responsible for hundreds of thousands of jobs and billions in tax revenue throughout the region. By aggressively supporting projects designed to increase competitiveness, the City Council can ensure the seaport is ready to meet the challenges of an expanded Panama Canal. We must modernize and green the Port by upgrading terminals, developing near-dock rail facilities and relieving congestion on our goods movement corridors. The City must stand strong behind its support of the Southern California International Gateway Project and show the same support to the Union Pacific Railroad when their proposal comes forward in 2015.
5. Support the goals of water supply reliability and ecosystem restoration of the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP)

While the City of L.A. is working diligently to reduce its reliance on water from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta through conservation, groundwater cleanup and recycling, local supplies alone will not be sufficient to meet the City's water needs in the future. The BDCP is a comprehensive effort to address the chronic water challenges facing both the State Water Project and Central Valley Project in a manner that also protects the Delta environment. It must be an essential priority for the City of L.A.

6. Commit to an incentive based strategy to build more affordable and market based housing in Los Angeles

With the demise of the Community Redevelopment Authority (CRA), the City of L.A. must work with the business community to develop a new strategy to increase our housing stock. This approach must be incentive based and practical, so as to not make building in the city more difficult and unattractive for investors. As when the CRA was in place, L.A. must commit real financial resources to this effort and back up those resources with collaboration and flexibility.

7. Maintain an affordable and reliable energy supply by supporting policies that promote a portfolio approach

Reliable and affordable energy is critical to L.A.'s economic competitiveness. The City should support energy policies that maintain grid reliability, minimize energy costs for families and businesses, promote job growth and cost-effectively reduce air pollution. A portfolio approach that balances the use of traditional energy sources like natural gas, to achieve these objectives will help to integrate renewable sources and transition to alternative fuel vehicles.

8. Ensure a Skilled Workforce by Supporting a Cradle-to-Career Approach

Strengthen the region’s cradle-to-career focus by supporting early learning, Linked Learning, college and career pathways models that will increase the region’s economic vitality. Prioritize investments in HIRE LA’s Youth, Cash for College, school safety and Gang Reduction Zones. Deepen relationships and shared resources with key stakeholders such as Los Angeles Unified School District, Los Angeles Community College District and the Workforce Investment Board to leverage collaborative approaches that strengthen the region’s labor force.

9. End chronic and veteran homelessness in L.A. by supporting Home For Good

In late 2010, the L.A. Area Chamber and United Way released Home For Good, an action plan to end chronic and veteran homelessness in L.A. by 2016. Since its launch, Home for Good has inspired a cooperative alliance between federal and local officials, a landmark shift of County resources and policies, and the establishment of a Funders Collaborative to leverage public and private funds for permanent supportive housing. Home for Good has housed 14,000 homeless so far and 9,000 veterans. The City’s continued good will and strong support is essential to meeting our shared goals.