



This Hospital Delay is Bad For Our Health



Coming up at the Chamber

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WED | Oct. 10

Small Business Owners Roundtable

Let's Talk Growth
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WED | Oct. 10

Trade Briefing: Building Bridges with Chile

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WED | Oct. 10

2007 Cash For College: College and Career Convention

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WED | Oct. 10

Aviation Committee Meeting

New Technology Briefing

[more info](#)

THU | Oct. 11

2007 Cash For College: College and Career Convention

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FRI | Oct. 12

Health Care Committee Meeting

[more info](#)

FRI | Oct. 12

Special Briefing with U.S. Dept. of State Assistant Secretary Daniel S. Sullivan

[more info](#)

MON | Oct. 15

Joint Transportation & Goods Movement Committee and International Trade & Investment Committee Meeting

[more info](#)

MON | Oct. 15

Energy, Water & Environment Committee Meeting

Featuring State Sen. Joe Simitian and LADWP Director of Water Resources Thomas Erb
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The Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce is the voice of business in L.A. County. Founded in 1888, the Chamber promotes a prosperous economy and quality of life in the Los Angeles region. For more information, visit www.lachamber.org

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Southern California's hospital safety net is one major disaster away from collapse. Eleven hospitals in Los Angeles County have closed since 2000 due to severe financial strain. As a result, the remaining hospitals are forced to treat the overflow of emergency room and trauma patients as they lie on gurneys in the hallway. Waiting times continue to grow as the overcrowded situation only gets worse.

With such a severe crisis facing our community, you would expect quick approval of a project that would add new beds and services to an existing hospital in an underserved community. Providence Holy Cross Medical Center in Mission Hills seeks to do just that by adding 136 new inpatient beds, a new neonatal intensive care unit, and an expanded surgical services department. Certainly, the city would rally around such an important project.

Unfortunately, that's not the case. A coalition of special interests led by the Service Employees International Union seeks to delay the project by demanding a full environmental impact report (EIR) which would take at least 18 months. This demand contradicts the L.A. City's Planning Commission, which unanimously approved the project without the EIR earlier this summer.

The issue here is not environmental mitigation, even though the hospital completed an extensive Mitigated Negative Declaration that addressed every potential impact and reduced each one to a level of insignificance. In fact, the project would make Providence Holy Cross the first "green" hospital in California and the fifth hospital in the entire nation to receive certification for Leadership in Engineering & Environmental Design (LEED). It would also provide the important seismic upgrades required after the 1994 Northridge earthquake.

Instead, the issue is entirely about the SEIU seeking to organize hospital workers. By pushing for the EIR and the accompanying delay as part of an overall corporate campaign, they hope that Providence Holy Cross' parent organization, Providence Health & Services, based in Seattle, will capitulate to a collective bargaining agreement for all 28 of their hospitals in the Pacific Northwest and California. Then, they would likely drop the EIR demand and allow construction to move forward immediately. If SEIU is successful, the union is expected to use the same tactic against Sherman Oaks Hospital when that hospital seeks to expand their facilities next year.

This is in spite of the hospital's strong track record in nursing excellence and satisfaction. Just last month, the American Nurses Credentialing Center awarded Providence Holy Cross the coveted Magnet Status for nursing excellence – an honor shared by only 10 other hospitals in the state. Further, Providence Holy Cross was recently named as one of the 15 best places to work among large employers in California by the *Los Angeles Business Journal*.

Los Angeles City Councilmember Richard Alarcon and union representatives [held a news conference last week](#) supporting the EIR. Despite their statements to the contrary, it's very clear that the issue rests solely on the effort to organize the hospital's employees. Absent from their coalition, which includes some neighborhood councils, is the Mission Hills Neighborhood Council – representing the hospital's neighborhood residents - which unanimously endorsed the project.

I do not oppose efforts to organize hospital workers. To the contrary, Providence Holy Cross' workforce is entitled to that vote if they so choose – by the way, the hospital's workers voted nearly two to one not to be represented by SEIU in 2003. I do oppose holding the health of our entire region hostage for this self-serving purpose.

The City Council's Land Use & Planning Committee is expected to take up this issue on Tuesday, Oct. 23. [Please join us in urging the Land Use & Planning Committee to uphold the Planning Commission's project approval.](#)

And that's the Business Perspective.



Gary L. Toebben
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Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce

by Gary Toebben,
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L.A. Business THIS WEEK

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*The Business Perspective is a weekly opinion piece by Gary Toebben,
President & CEO of the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce,
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