



Los Angeles Area
Chamber of Commerce

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LA AREA CHAMBER TACKLES HEALTH CARE

Leading business organization in Southern California sponsors discussion of health care options for employers

A health care forum hosted this morning by the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce drew over 200 business leaders from throughout the region who heard from key health care experts, elected officials and researchers on the subject of health care options for businesses.

In partnership with Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Chair Don Knabe, this year's "Access LA County 2004: Health Care Options for Businesses" provided prominent opinion leaders and decision makers from the public and private sectors with the opportunity to discuss timely healthcare topics that impact employers in the Los Angeles area.

"Health care is an issue that impacts each and every one of us day in and day out," said George Kieffer, Chair of the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce. "As employers, parents, and children of the elderly, we all have a stake in making the current system work. Our goal in sponsoring today's forum is to enable Chamber members to better understand and navigate the healthcare options available to our businesses, families and community-at-large."

County Supervisor Don Knabe, co-sponsor of *Access LA County 2004*, praised the Chamber for helping its members overcome today's challenging health care climate. "I commend the Chamber for its leadership role in seeking answers to the health care questions that plague us. The Chamber and I agree that it is incumbent upon the business community in Los Angeles to set an example for the rest of the state by educating our workforce about the health care options available to them in the hope that we can reduce the number of uninsured here in Los Angeles County."

California currently spends \$112 billion on health care—more than any other state. At the end of the day, these costs are absorbed by everyone, including business owners. Some of the topics discussed today were small employer health care options, worksite wellness, the working uninsured, and the outcome of Proposition 72, which would have mandated California businesses to offer healthcare to their employees.

One of the attendees at today's event was Kristina Moreno, Manager of Human Resources, Legislative & Community Affairs for American Apparel, a company that has been heralded as a model for taking employee relations to new highs. Said Moreno, "Today's forum is a critical joining of the business community with the health care industry. When we all work together to ensure that we are doing the best for our employees and our families, we all win. Today's forum is an important step in that direction."

In addition to Knabe and Kieffer, other key participants in today's program included:

- Dr. Marcy Zwelling Aamot, past president, Los Angeles Medical Association
- Dr. William Averill, President, American Heart Association, Los Angeles County
- James Barber, President & CEO of the Hospital Association of Southern California

- Diana Bonta, VP of Public Affairs, Kaiser Permanente, Southern California
- Greg Clure, VP, Health Net
- Dr. Hector Flores, California Latino Medical Association
- Rita Cruz Gallegos, Salud Con Health Net
- Michelle Heilpern, Center for Health Enhancement at Saint John's Health Center
- Howard Kahn, LA Care
- Dr. Neal Kaufman, M.D., M.P.H., Commissioner, First 5 LA
- Carla Magarity, Owner, Time Employee Benefits
- Burt Margolin, former State Assemblymember, president of the Margolin Group
- Glenn Melnick, Center for Health Policy and Management at USC and health economist with RAND Corporation
- Marian Mulkey, California Health Care Foundation
- Betty Jo Toccoli, President, California Small Business Association
- Liz Torres, Worksite Wellness LA
- Yolanda Vera, LA Health Action
- Lucien Wulsin, Director, Insure the Uninsured Project

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The Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, with 1,400 members, represents the interests of business in LA 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.