

Contact:
John Grubb
SVP, Bay Area Council
O: 415-946-8705
C: 415-847-6320



CALIFORNIA CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION CAMPAIGN BEGINS

Movement Channels Frustration – Events To Be Held Across State

Group Requests Legislature Place Measures on Ballot

CALIFORNIA, May 20, 2009 — Today, the Bay Area Council and a coalition of partners launched a grassroots campaign at www.RepairCalifornia.org to empower Californians to fix their broken government with a Constitutional Convention. The group is channeling unprecedented frustration and anger of citizens into a method nearly as old as democracy itself to calmly and rationally fix system of government in California. At a press conference at the Capitol, the group requested that the legislature place two measures on the November 2010 ballot to create a voter-driven Constitutional Convention. If the legislature does not place the measures on the ballot, the group will use the initiative process to do so.

“We do not make this move lightly,” said Jim Wunderman, President and CEO of the Bay Area Council. “We have spent a great deal of time weighing the pros and cons of this idea, and after meeting with hundreds of groups and citizens across the state, we know the people are with us. Enough is enough. The severity of our problems and the unlikelihood that existing Sacramento structures can provide a solution mean now is the time for decisive action.”

“We want to make one thing very clear: this effort is as diverse as the state of California,” continued Wunderman. “We are working with Republicans, Democrats, Greens, and Nonpartisans. We are working with every gender, ethnicity and age group. Part of our systemic failure is our dissension into narrower and narrower interests. This Convention can unite us again.”

Responding to strong interest statewide, the Bay Area Council and its partners will hold several forums in the coming weeks, including in Los Angeles, San Diego, Fresno, the Sierra Foot Hills, Silicon Valley and Orange County. Through repaircalifornia.org, Californians anywhere can host their own community meetings on the Convention and provide feedback.

“Can anyone – left, right, or center – deny that our future is threatened?” asked Michael Capaldi, Chairman Emeritus of the conservative Lincoln Club of Orange County. “Californians must put aside their narrow interests and fundamentally change government to ensure we can prosper together.”

“California is now ungovernable. Our state should be a paradise given its natural resources, higher education system, rich cultural diversity, geographic location, climate, and diverse economy, yet Sacramento tied in knots by special interest-serving laws and policies. A constitutional convention is indispensable to return us to our rightful place as a state that leads America and the world in achieving opportunity and prosperity for all,” said Antonio Gonzalez, President of the William C. Velasquez Institute.

“A Constitutional Convention returns power to the people as was originally intended,” said Rick Jacobs, founder and chair of the 700,000 member Courage Campaign. “The Special Election is the

latest example of the Governor and the Legislature turning to the voters to make their decisions. A constitutional convention just ‘cuts out the middleman’ and give voters the power to make California governable.”

“The voter anger and apathy that marked yesterday's special election are signs of the governing paralysis California has inflicted upon itself through decades of piecemeal, incremental reform,” said Mark Paul, senior scholar and deputy director of the California program at the New America Foundation. “The people want government to work, but have made normal functioning impossible. Only by rethinking our constitution can California hope to get out of this self-imposed bind.”

“We have seen what happens when legislators go behind closed doors, even with noble intentions, to negotiate structural reforms,” said Derek Cressman, western states regional director for Common Cause. Californians are ready to embrace major reforms, but only if they are involved in crafting them. A constitutional convention may be the best way to accomplish that at this crucial point in our history.”

After consultation with experts, historians and lawyers, the group has prepared two draft ballot measures. The first amends the constitution to allow the voters to directly call a Constitutional Convention, and the second is the actual call for a limited convention dealing with the budget, the election system, the state-local relationship and government oversight.

“We have a once in a lifetime opportunity to fix our state,” concluded Wunderman. “We cannot waste a crisis.”

#