

# 'One-voice' group convened in city

*Los Baños member of committee reported on manufacturing summit recently held at UC Merced.*

By Corey Pride

CPRIDE@LOSBAÑOSENTERPRISE.COM

Council chambers inside City Hall was packed with attentive political and business leaders last week as they listened to the importance of being able to convey their message to the powers that be in Washington D.C. and Sacramento.

"Everybody in the country is looking for something and the only way you get to the top of the pile is you make an appearance," said Bill Spriggs, chairman of the Merced County Association of Governments.

Friday morning MCAG held a workshop for its lobbying group, One Voice. Members of the group, interested private citizens and local government officials brainstormed ideas of needs in Merced County that they can pitch to state and federal legislators. One Voice will be taking its annual trips to Sacramento and the nation's capital in February and March.

Councilman Mike McAdam, who is a One Voice member, said he made a 20-minute presentation on the lobbying group at a manufacturing summit at UC Merced Thursday.

"Basically my main pitch to the manufacturing community is that we don't have enough private participation. We have a lot of governmental participation, but we need more participation from the private sector," he said. "I was trying to tell the group where it'd be beneficial for them to participate for their manufacturing productivity and possible grants and the incentives they could get for jobs if this (an enterprise zone) all comes through."

McAdam said Congressman Dennis Cardoza attended the summit in the afternoon and also spoke about One Voice.

"He got up and talked about One Voice and talked about participation. He talked about how important it is for him to have people from Merced County come into his colleagues' offices and make a pitch for what Merced County needs," McAdam said. "It's the squeaky wheel syndrome. If they don't hear it they're only hearing from Stanislaus, they're hearing from Fresno... They're hearing from all of our Valley counties but not hearing from us, then I guess they're OK in Merced County. I won't worry about them."

MCAG is going to various cities around the county and asking what issues they should request assistance for when One Voice goes to Sacramento. The list includes more law enforcement to combat meth labs in rural areas, providing more computers for high school students, providing incentives for regional wastewater plants and funding for a county jail facility.

Funding for the bypass of Highway 152 was not on the list and was not placed on the list at the workshop. MCAG Executive Director Jesse Brown said it is on the list for the Washington D.C. trip.

Mayor Michael Amabile said the bypass must have its environmental impact report completed before the state will look at the project. He said California government wants projects to follow all the necessary steps in order. The EIR for the bypass is expected to be finished in the next few months.

One Voice's Sacramento lobbyist, Tim Egan, also

spoke at the workshop. He addressed two propositions on the ballot.

"What we spent last year doing was trying to make sure Merced (County) was well heard as related to transportation financing," he said. "The legislature had a couple issues before them which now are Proposition 1A and 1B. Primarily 1A is the proposition that would guarantee Prop. 42 funds, which are the sales tax and gasoline, go back to transportation and not be diverted into the general fund of the state of California."

Egan said polling results indicate Prop. 1A will pass. But, he said, the fate of Proposition 1B, a transportation infrastructure bond, is not as certain.

"It's polling OK," he said. "It's polling over 50 percent in some polls, but the poll numbers are starting to come down as we get closer to the election."

Egan said Proposition 1B will provide a lot of money for transportation projects such as Highway 99, which has \$1 million specifically earmarked for it. He said a little gamesmanship was played on the part of Central Valley to get the highway funding included.

"We started to play a little political math here," he said. "We started to say 'well you need two-thirds votes in both houses to get the bond out and also Prop. 1A. You know I don't think the Valley is going to vote for these infrastructure bond programs unless we see something.' It was just basic horse trading."

Egan said he doesn't expect much turnover in the state legislature come November. But, he said, Congress is another story. He said one or both houses will likely be