

DATE: FEBRUARY 26, 2009

TO: TECHNICAL PLANNING COMMISSION

FROM: CANDICE STEELMAN, PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

RE: ONE VOICE – SACRAMENTO TRIP REPORT

BACKGROUND

The One Voice-Sacramento delegation consisted of 22 elected officials, staff of member jurisdictions, educators, and directors of nonprofit organizations, plus seven members of the Merced Boosters Club, and two MCAG staffers. The group visited legislators, key staff, and state agencies Feb. 10-12. (Agenda attached.)

At meetings, the delegation presented the following priorities:

1. Economic Development: Adopt a San Joaquin Valley prevailing wage.
2. Water: Pass a comprehensive water plan that addresses supply, quality, conveyance, and storage.
3. Transportation: Lower requirement for self-help measures to 55%.
4. Healthcare: Support a County Organized Health System (COHS).
5. Education: Pass legislation to put Career Technical Education on equal footing with other forms of education, thus receiving equal opportunities for funding.

DISCUSSION

Delegates felt that the mood in Sacramento matched the weather: gloomy. At the time of our visit, the state budget had not been passed, furloughs had begun, and Caltrans was poised to start shutting down projects.

In a bright moment, Frank Luera of the state's Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) praised the coordinated city and county efforts to get funds for the housing crisis. Merced County wasn't on anyone's radar screen at the state level until a couple of local elected officials made individual trips to Sacramento and MCAG directors made a major presentation at a DHC workshop in Merced late last year, pointing out the discrepancies in the formula used by HUD. Mr. Luera told the group that the amounts granted to Merced County and cities following that meeting have been increased, while Southern California funds were decreased. He added that our persistence has had a ripple effect throughout other HCD programs, with Merced County always being in their minds as they make decisions.

Another gain for One Voice occurred when the group met with the Department of Health Services to request that DHS grant Merced County a medical reimbursement rate to set up a County Organized Health System, which would provide Medi-CAL reimbursements now that the state is discontinuing that service. This request had been at the state level for some months but was not moving forward. There was no response to numerous calls by Merced County health officials. When One Voice met with DHS, they were told that the rates had been approved and

sent to Merced County following our request for a meeting and two days previous to the actual meeting date.

Something new this year was hearing an overview of the state health system from Carmela Castellano-Garcia, CEO of the California Primary Care Association which, according to MCAG state lobbyist Tim Egan, is a very powerful organization. The One Voice group also heard from David Quackenbush, CEO of the Central Valley Health Network. He pointed out that the California Endowment, one of the largest foundations, picked 14 communities as monetary recipients, which included Merced. Mr. Quackenbush said that other foundations are waiting to see the results of this first infusion before deciding whether or not to donate to improving health care in this area.

Jim Bougart, Deputy Secretary of Transportation & Infrastructure, decried the fact that only 5% of the stimulus package was for transportation, and stated that transportation infrastructure does more for the economy than any other kind of investment.

Even though furloughs have begun, many staffers told us they still work those days, calling them "Free Fridays".

NEXT STEPS

The One Voice-Washington, D.C. visit will be March 23-26. MCAG's federal lobbyist, Thane Young, has asked that One Voice bring back a more extensive list of projects. To start that process, MCAG has scheduled a conference call on Wednesday, March 4, at 2:00 p.m.

REQUESTED ACTION

For information only

Attachments: One Voice 2009 Sacramento agenda