



Voters Organized Toward Empowerment  
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Minutes accumulated by Denny Schneider

## **VALLEY VOTE REPORT: NOVEMBER 17, 2014 MEETING**

Galpin Ford - 2nd Floor Meeting Room, 15555 Roscoe Boulevard, North Hills, CA 91343  
*Valley Vote meetings are held the third Monday of each month to address critical public policy issues impacting the San Fernando Valley. The next meeting will be January 19, 2015.*

President Joe Vitti encouraged all to become either a Board member or Executive Board member. For details of how to become an active Valley Vote volunteer or to see the dozens of position statements addressing numerous key issues, visit the Valley Vote website: [www.ValleyVOTE.org](http://www.ValleyVOTE.org). This meeting featured LA City Council Member Bob Blumenfield and our own community leader, Valley Vote Exec Board Member, Don Shultz along with committee reports.



### **LA City Council Member** **Bob Blumenfield**

Councilmember Bob Blumenfield was elected to the Los Angeles City Council in March, 2013, representing the 3rd Council District, which spans the northwest portion of Los Angeles in the San Fernando Valley, including Canoga Park, Reseda, Tarzana, Winnetka and Woodland Hills. He is a lifelong Valley resident from Woodland Hills with his wife, Kafi, and their two children.

Bob is a graduate of Duke University and the UCLA Anderson School of Management Business Executive Program.

Bob served a distinguished career in the California State Assembly from 2008 – 2013. Capitol Weekly called Bob "a shining light" with a "reassuring amount of perspective that is uncommon among so many politicians." He is considered an environmental and consumer champion.

From 1989 – 1996, he worked as a staff person to Senators and Congressmen in Washington, DC. He has also served on numerous non-profit boards including, the Anti-Defamation League, Children's Express, and the LA League of Conservation Voters.

Council member Blumenfield spoke of several prime concepts to help Los Angeles and provided examples. He serves on the Budget, Energy and Environment, Audits, Innovation and General Services Committees of the City Council.

1. Get our fiscal house in order – Bob stated that we must restore critical services and have a vision for the future. He emphasized that we must be prudent and spend no more than our revenue by making priority decisions.
2. Seize opportunities and act – Bob provided an opportunity example as the finalization of the Warner Center Specific Plan that had dragged on for years. He noted that enactment now provides certainty and a clear path for investment by developers while protecting surrounding residential areas. Once the WCSP was enacted, The Daily News site was entitled in only one month instead of years. The West Valley's Village Properties plan was recently updated and finalized to include an additional \$3.5M of required infrastructure improvements funded by developers and a requirement that \$315M of investment be completed during 2015 to keep the agreement intact. Reseda lost several redevelopment opportunities when the CRA was closed down, but by lobbying the CA legislature LA recovered \$90M to complete "in the pipe" projects so that needed redevelopment is continuing.
3. Remove obstacles – Bob wants building code simplification and supports Re Code LA. He notes that LA must use technology to foster efficiency and transparency. One example provided is a robust 311 phone app to request and track services from LA City.
4. Infrastructure – our crumbling infrastructure badly needs investment by LA. Two examples he recommended are to use permeable, recyclable tiles for sidewalks instead of cement so that repairs can be made expeditiously and less costly, and, in the transit area, improve grade separations to speed up the Orange line. It is sad that only two rail stations out of 60 in the City are located in the Valley!

Pensions is a real issue– the latest LADWP union contract including zero raises is a start, but Bob noted that the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court cases questioning the invoking of a 2 tier structure to pay less and provide lower pension benefits for new employees may be scuttled by an unfavorable verdict to a lawsuit.

Energy was another issue addressed. Many of the "green" initiatives require power be stored until needed. It was pointed out by President Vitti that there are currently 100 nuclear reactors in the US that have operated safely for over 30 years. Bob agreed that it would be appropriate to get a status report and study nuclear power before summarily dismissing it. They should perform a cost-benefit analysis as warranted.

Bob was asked about water availability limitations versus continued, increased development approvals in LA. He agrees more and better water storage is needed. He advocates for the Prop 1 clean ups of ground water, more recycling, and the use of purple pipe reclaimed water.

Council member Blumenfield notes that a program similar to the PACE Program formed in 2009 (AB949) could encourage investment into energy conservation projects by residents.

One Board member noted that the percentage of Neighborhood Council budget reductions far exceeded other parts of the City government despite huge volunteer hours involved; Bob agreed that more should be allocated to NCs.

It was also noted that LA is part of a family cities with NY, San Francisco, and Santa Monica that have some of the highest costs of living. Each of these cities has a rent control requirement and that housing costs in them are higher than surrounding cities. Bob acknowledged the comment, but told us that he doesn't expect any major changes due to political realities within LA.

Bob took a few minutes to address innovations in LA. He told us that technology is critical and that the current internet backbone needs to be upgraded. He is a proponent for a Citywide internet service. He supports a full LA wide community gigabyte coverage via public-private partnership. A Request for

Information was issued about out 6 months ago with about 34 companies responding. Next a Request For Proposal will be in March 2015 for a 5 year system build.

When asked about affordable housing, he agreed that repairs and major renovations are hampered when the owners are not allowed to recover their costs.

Bob is willing and anxious to join us in the future to address more topics. His last comment was about the LA Business tax. He told us that it will be phased out over many years because the City Council must be cautious. The Council is allowed to unilaterally lower taxes and reduce the business tax, not he noted that if projected business growth and tax revenue decrease the City would be harmed. The passage of CA Proposition 218 prohibits reimposing former tax rates without a vote of the people.



## **Don Schultz, Community Representative**

Chair of the VNY Airport Advisory, member of the Public Safety Advisory Board, past president of the Van Nuys Homeowners Association and the Van Nuys Neighborhood Council as well as Public Safety Committee chair for Valley Vote.

Don noted that while 10,000 police officers in LA sounds like a large number, New York has 34,000 sworn officers in an area over sixty times smaller. He noted that LA has an estimated 120,000 gang members.

Don spoke about the street prostitution problems in the Valley and that it wasn't a victimless crime. He described in detail what is involved and the life of these prostitutes.

He informed us about the "Johns' School." Offenders caught in prostitution sting operations may take a class for \$600 a day in lieu of jail time. Don told us that upon completion of the one-day, eight hour class, a one year probation period, and taking an HIV test the law allows for expunging similar to that of the driver schools for ticket rejection.

Prostitutes and retired police officers teach this class. It is graphic, honest, and holds no punches on what happens to the prostitutes during their daily life. Recidivism will be a thing of the past with this class as it teaches how both the prostitute and "John" are harmed. Much of the money raised by the class is used to reach out to victims and offer help. Of over 1400 people were processed in this class only 4 were rearrested. Don gave credit to City Attorney, Mike Feuer and Council member Nury Martinez for fostering this class.

Don suggested that you have suggestions or want to be more involved in Public Safety issues around the City. Call him at (818)786-9344.

There were questions about what will happen with the passage of Prop 47 which recategorizes some crimes into misdemeanors. Many, including the Police Protective League were concerned about early releases. During question and answer it was noted that about 600 non-sworn officers were laid off and that sworn officers are now performing those tasks resulting in less officers on patrol.

# **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

## **Valley VOTE Membership - Joe Vitti**

### 1. How To Become a "Member"

Fill out an application and submit to the Secretary or mail it to the address below. A Valley VOTE "Members" Email Address will be added to the invitation list for Valley VOTE's meetings. Annual contribution for "Members" is \$25.

### 2. How To Become a "Board Member"

Fill out an application with a brief resume and submit it to an Executive Committee member or mail it to the address below. Board Members may vote on all Valley VOTE motions that have been submitted and approved by the Executive Committee. The President may appoint any Board Member as a Committee Chair. Annual contribution for Board members is \$50.

### 3. How To Become a Member of the "Executive Committee" –

Executive Committee members have the following duties:

Establish policy for Valley VOTE operations.

Vote on all Valley VOTE motions and approval of new Board members

Approve new Valley VOTE Executive Committee Board members.

Remove from membership any member of Valley VOTE for just cause.

Will chair at least one Committee.

Annual contribution for Executive Committee members is a minimum of \$50.

Mailing Address:           Valley VOTE  
                                  14622 Ventura Blvd #424  
                                  Sherman Oaks, CA 91403

## **MINIMUM WAGE vs JOBS - Vic Viereck**

There is a campaign to increase the minimum wages of lower income workers at City of Los Angeles hotels of 300 or more rooms to \$15.37 an hour. A year later the requirement will include hotels of 150 or more rooms. Compared to the current California minimum wage requirement of \$9.00 an hour, the \$6.37 increase to \$15.37 represents a 70% increase. I'm certainly in favor of everybody having more real income, if they want it. But not when it has real negative consequences.

The wage amount per hour is the basis for other costs. Much bigger than the employer's 7.65% share of the Social Security and Medicare taxes is the required Worker's Compensation insurance. For hotel employees, that is \$19.23 per \$100.00 of payroll. When the minimum wage is increased, the new amount may equal or exceed wages that some more experienced employees have been earning, requiring increases in more wage levels. The combined increase for payroll taxes and worker's compensation insurance is 26.88%. If each of 25 employees gets only a \$2 per hour raise, the annual wage increase alone would be \$104,000.00 (\$4,160 per person). Including the payroll taxes and worker's compensation insurance, the annual increased cost would be \$131,955.20. If the cost increase cannot be covered through increased prices (room rents), at least 7 employees (over 25%) would have to be fired. Some people with different job skills might benefit from producing the computerized gadgets that might replace employees.

A couple well-known local hotels are in the midst of significant investments to improve their facilities and services. At hotels, as at other kinds of businesses, when the wage rates go up, payroll taxes and worker's

compensation insurance also goes up. As expensive as the minimum wage increase is, especially including the additional related costs is a job killer.

The minimum wage of small restaurants at U.S. military bases was recently increased to \$10.10 an hour. Out of operating income the military bases had been donating a certain amount to a non-profit entity that provided athletic programs and other benefits on the military bases. But due to the increase to \$10.10 an hour, Burger King and other restaurant companies pulled out. Not only did the employees, many of them from military families, lose their jobs, the non-profits also had to close.

Besides eliminating any wages at all, ending minimum wage jobs eliminates the opportunity to learn, get experience with job skills, and start on a ladder to success.

### **Transportation - Bart Reed, President, Transit Coalition**

The Transit Coalition focuses on congestion relief opportunities and mobility alternatives, which allow for the region to move forward, to reach its full potential as a dynamic world-class region.

Bart spoke about some of the best bus and rail routes possible around the Valley. He talked about new access to Bob Hope Burbank Airport as well. He recommended that we speak out to get things done.

Contact information: bartreed1951@gmail.com <http://www.thetransitcoalition.us/nationaltc>.

### **Airport Report by Denny Schneider, President, Alliance for a Regional Solution to Airport Congestion, ARSAC**

Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA) was acknowledged for its' expertise in running airports when it took control of Ontario Airport (LA/ONT) in the 1970s. In recent years, however, LA/ONT lost approximately 45% of its passenger traffic.

The LA/ONT usage decline has significantly impacted local economic health, and thereby reduces the tax base to support its' citizens. Residents of Ontario and the Inland Empire, have stated that the LAWA has violated its "fiduciary relationship" to the citizens, and they have sued.

The initial phase of their lawsuit, has apparently resulted in interesting information about LAWA. Executive Director, Gina Marie Lindsey, made statements in e-mails which countermand the LAWA commitment for regionalization (diversification) policy calling it "unnecessary". Instead of decentralizing air service to bring users closer to a local airport, LAWA has fostered concentration into LAX.

As a result, LAX now manages over 95% of all flights in the region. LAWA demonstrated its' willingness to inhibit smaller airports, by its' lack of action in support of LA/ONT, and giving preference to LAX.

Denny said: "Counting on LAX exclusively, is a high risk venture for the community." According to his research, "LAX is built adjacent to two major earthquake faults. LAX is the number one terrorist target on the West Coast. Any catastrophe, no matter how small, can have devastating consequences."

In addition, the total regional economic benefit to Los Angeles County is reduced by concentrating exclusively on LAX operations. Specifically, job concentration is occurring in one location, which causes long drives for more people, with resultant vehicle traffic congestion costs. Denny reported that re-directed

traffic from LA/ONT, adds at least 1.6 million more cars into the Westside traffic areas, and increases transportation costs and delivery delays. Individuals pay in their time lost, transportation expenses, stress from traffic jams, and unhealthy pollution impacts. He expects that over the next year, the ONT lawsuit will seriously evaluate LAWA management. [www.RegionalSolution.org](http://www.RegionalSolution.org) [Denny@WeLiveFree.com](mailto:Denny@WeLiveFree.com).

### **Sound Off!**

Valley Vote's has added a public comment period to its monthly meeting. Coming toward the end of the meeting, Sound Off! will give members and guests an opportunity to briefly voice their opinions and concerns in brief two-minute presentations. Members attending our meeting will have the opportunity to discuss their concerns.

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The press and public are invited to attend the meeting.  
The next meeting of Valley VOTE will be on Monday, January 19, 2015 at Galpin Ford.

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#### Valley VOTE Mission Statement

Valley VOTE is a diverse coalition of San Fernando Valley residents, business people, educators, community activists, and organizations, committed to exploring and fostering the implementation of programs that empower the people of the San Fernando Valley and the City of Los Angeles, to improve local governance, education and public participation on policy matters. We meet monthly to address key policy issues and hear reports from our standing committee chairs. For additional information about Valley VOTE, for an upcoming meeting agenda, or for previous meeting reports and press releases, we encourage you to go to the Valley VOTE website.