



Cities Counties Schools Partnership

Summary of the Local Government Summit on Governance and Fiscal Reform July 17-18, 2009

Over 500 local government leaders including city council members, mayors, county supervisors and county chief administrative officers and school board members attended the two-day summit, *REBUILDING CALIFORNIA FROM THE GROUND UP* sponsored by the Cities Counties Schools Partnership.

Rich Gordon, Chair of the CCS Partnership, Immediate Past President of CSAC and San Mateo County Supervisor facilitated the event. " This is an historic gathering, marking the first time that hundreds of local elected officials have come together to discuss their common interests," Rich Gordon said in his opening remarks. "There is no more important time for us to gather, and no more important subject to discuss," Gordon continued, "given the drastic toll the state budget crisis is exacting on local governments."

Friday's program included a presentation entitled "How We Got Here?" by Fred Silva, Senior Policy Consultant for California Forward. This was a brief history of the reform efforts and structural changes to governance that have led to the current state of breakdown of the state government.

In his introductory remarks for the panel of presenters to follow, CSBA President-elect Frank Pugh paraphrased the rallying cry made famous in the 1976 movie "Network," saying that the goal of the summit was to take the spirit of "We're mad as hell, and we're not going to take it anymore!" and figure out what local governments are going to *do* about it.

The panel then presented ideas for possible solutions to the situation. First Jim Wunderman, President and CEO of the Bay Area Council, discussed the idea of a Constitutional Convention called by the citizens of California who would also be the delegates to the convention. Jim Mayer, Executive Director of California Forward,

was the second panelist. He outlined reforms that would create a better balance between the state and local government and suggested that either a legislative or initiative process could achieve the needed changes. The final panelist was Bill Leonard, Member of the Board of Equalization and former legislative leader, who urged delegates to first identify what they wanted to change and then decide how to make that change come about.

A lively question and answer period followed the panel with delegates using social media of texting and twittering comments and questions to the panelists. There were also questions and comments from the floor.

The Friday dinner session included a presentation, *The California Electorate The Mood and Attitudes Toward State and Local Government*, given by Dave Metz, of Fairbank Maslin, Maullin & Associates.

A main focus of the work at the summit was to review and prioritize a set of reform principles and options drafted by the CCS Partnership's Joint Task Force on Fiscal Reform. Following dinner the three associations' executive directors addressed the delegates on the principles and options for reform. CSAC President Gary Wyatt introduced the panel which consisted of Chris McKenzie, League executive director, Paul McIntosh, CSAC executive director and Scott Plotkin, CSBA executive director. After a brief question and answer session, the delegates worked in small groups discussing the ideas presented to them throughout the day.

Saturday the delegates to the summit spent the morning working in small groups to discuss reform options. Each group and each individual ranked their priorities for discussion and change. Their priorities were reported to the entire summit in the closing session. The protection of local revenue was the number one priority of delegates.

In closing comments, Rich Gordon expressed local government's frustration with the state on Saturday afternoon by saying "Local government as represented in this room has lost confidence in California." Gordon urged the delegates that time was of the essence and that we must move forward.

The summit concluded with "What Can You Do When You Go Home?" a presentation by Jim Madaffer, former president the League. He rallied the delegates by telling

them, "This is not just about reforming state government. It's about transforming government." He urged the delegates to take this message home with them and organize neighborhood meetings and engage colleagues, friends, family, and the whole community. He also told the delegates that state lawmakers must understand the role of local government. "Local government is not a special interest group. We are the people of California," said Madaffer.