

POLITICAL ADVOCACY

As fall turns into winter and the holidays approach, politics is the last thing on everyone's mind. In fact, we are receiving a reprieve from the never-ending onslaught of PLA battles, as elected bodies take it easy and start to plan for the next year. This provides the perfect opportunity for the Government Affairs (GA) team to soldier on toward our new strategic approach, which will pay dividends.



Matthew Estipona with Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas

I. Direct Proactive Grassroots Advocacy: Offensive Attack

For too long we have been playing defense as city after city falls into union clutches. I am fed up with constantly losing. For us to win we need to play offense and to play offense, we must change the way we engage. I call it our new offensive play.

The first order of business is to identify where PLA's are failing and when the are scheduled to face renewal. By strategically selecting and identifying where and how these policies are failing, we can mobilize our members, the public and the press ***against them***. The first step is our data gathering phase. The GA team has assembled an overarching matrix, which tracks the specificities of each PLA—with the goal of understanding how to undermine them.

Here are a few of the current list of areas where we are looking to go on the offense:

- Watsonville
- Hercules
- Sacramento
- American Canyon
- Stockton
- San Jose

If you have suggestions or would like to learn more about our efforts, please do not hesitate to reach out.



ABC of California lobbyist Michelle Rubalcalva and Assemblymember Tim Grayson

II. Building a Merit Shop Coalition



Fresno Area Councilmember Joe Garcia with Assembly and ABC NorCal endorsed candidate David Tangipa at Fresno Tailgate

Once we have the requisite data and the tactics in mind to achieve our goals—which are specific, measurable, achievable, reasonable and within a certain timeframe—we need to assemble a coalition of the willing to join us and defeat them. This is where we rely on our existing relationships, leverage key decision-makers and build upon support we have with like-minded merit shop organizations, such as WECA.

The first few groups that I will be zeroing in on are the Greater Sacramento Economic Council and the Sacramento Region Business Association. We sit on the board of directors and advisory councils for each organization, and have access to a repertoire of economic information we can harness to provide our input, including our economic impact and ability to leverage our membership.

With WECA, we already have a built-in relationship with our advocacy priorities. The next step is to formalize that partnership with a joint advocacy campaign, which recruits the public to the merit shop. By spreading our message to a larger audience, we have the potential to build an army of supporters who agree with us philosophically, but who have no idea how to support us.

The onus will be on us to prove why they should support the merit shop and to reinforce the message that we are building in the community.

III. Candidates, Campaigns and Elections

Finally, looking into the 2024 elections, we have the potential to influence a multitude of races at the local and state level. As we dive into each locality—armed with our data, advocacy campaign and coalition of willing partners—each candidate will serve as an opportunity to springboard ideas and barter on promises. We need to approach candidates with a positive message, especially in areas where we have already lost.

We are on the right side of the issues, but our friends on the other side do not know that. We must work to establish an agreement that the general populace also supports. Issues, such as supporting local businesses; more career technical and vocational training in the trades for students, business, and community investment; and curbing burdensome regulations, are the beginning tenets we are crafting for a “Pro Construction Agenda.” Once the contours of these are finalized, we will begin sharing it with candidates for their feedback, but also with the intent that this is the agenda we would like for them to push, especially if we are supporting them early.

If you have suggestions on areas or candidates you would like us to look into, please do not hesitate to reach out: matthew@abcnorcal.org