

Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson, Fifth District

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Press Release

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A Community Collaboration: Town Hall Meeting in Berkeley with special guest Congresswoman Barbara Lee

On Thursday, June 5, 2014, more than 200 residents attended a unique town hall meeting in Berkeley hosted by Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson. The event focused on collaboration between elected leaders at the federal, state, county and city levels of government.

Supervisor Carson opened the event by emphasizing that open channels of communication between members of the East Bay delegation allow for elected officials to effectively advocate for policies and resources that benefit residents of Berkeley and the other communities they serve.

“On a regular basis on your behalf, we collaborate in a proactive way through meetings, legislative visits and conferences,” Supervisor Carson said. “Many of us serve on regional bodies that represent another form of collaboration between the various levels of government.”

In her remarks, Congresswoman Barbara Lee underscored her efforts in conjunction with Berkeley residents and officials to preserve the historic post office in downtown Berkeley, which was slated for sale by the U.S. Postal Service. Congresswoman Lee championed an Appropriations Committee bill that put a moratorium on the sale of historic buildings and called for a report to review the sale of historic properties.

“I have been relentless in my efforts to keep this post office here,” Congresswoman Lee exclaimed and was met with loud applause from the audience.

Speakers also highlighted as areas of collaboration projects related to transportation, education and public safety.

“The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) handles all of the federal and state dollars that come in for transportation projects in the region,” noted Mayor Tom Bates, who represents Berkeley on the commission. “We are talking about billions of dollars that come through MTC,” including \$12 million to upgrade the Downtown Berkeley BART station, improve traffic flow on Shattuck Ave. and make Hearst Ave. into a “complete street” safe for pedestrians, bicyclists and transit riders.

Assemblymember Nancy Skinner, Chair of the Budget Committee, was represented by her District Director Mark Chekal-Bain, who discussed the budget negotiations in Sacramento and changes in funding for education through the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF). Mr. Chekal-Bain noted that the LCFF provides a higher level of funding for low income, current or former foster youth and English language learners; more than 40% of students in the Berkeley Unified School District qualify for one or more of those categories.

Nathan Rapp, a representative from State Senator Loni Hancock’s office, stressed the need for reinvestment in crucial services following years of state budget deficits. As chair of the Senate Public Safety committee, Senator

Hancock is working in conjunction with county and city officials to develop programs to support people re-entering from prison to ensure lower rates of recidivism.

Dozens of attendees lined up to ask questions of the elected officials on topics ranging from funding for education in the University of California system to recent controversies over racial profiling in Berkeley

Hazel Weiss, a member of the Commission on Disability in Berkeley, asked what steps the elected officials are taking to “ensure and increase access for people with disabilities, for example in planning for development in downtown Berkeley and urging the U.S. Senate to ratify the U.N. Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.”

Congresswoman Lee and other speakers praised the City of Berkeley’s policies towards persons with disabilities and singled out the Ed Roberts Center at the Ashby BART station as a shining example of the integration of services in an accessible location. “As the congressional representative to the U.N., I can say the convention should have been passed a long time ago,” she declared and encouraged activists to target U.S. Senators who are holding up ratification.

The town hall took place at Martin Luther King Middle School in Berkeley and was sponsored by Berkeley Youth Alternatives, The Berkeley Democratic Club, The Berkeley YMCA, Alta Bates Summit Medical Center, The Wellstone Democratic Club, and Meyer Sound; the fiscal sponsor was Building Opportunities for Self Sufficiency (BOSS).

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Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson represents the Fifth District, which includes Albany, Berkeley, Emeryville, Piedmont, and parts of Oakland (North Oakland, Rockridge, Grand Lake, Fruitvale, and Dimond District neighborhoods). For more information about District 5 and Supervisor Keith Carson, please call (510) 272-6695 or visit <http://www.acgov.org/board/district5>