

Getting to Know Your Elected Leaders – Part 1

By Alan Smith

As you read this, you are probably looking forward to the upcoming holiday season and time with family and friends. At the same time, we are probably collectively glad the recent election is over and TV ads have returned to normal.

However, the next major election is just about 18 months away. You might ask, why should I care now? The answer is besides the usual primary issues (including an expected hotly contested governor's race) will be a proposition of vital importance, the \$600,000,000 California Reading and Literacy Improvement and Public Library Construction and Renovation Bond Act of 2006 (Library Construction Bond Act). This is the culmination of SB1161 by Senator Dede Alpert, for which many of you sent support letters to your legislators and the governor.

While now on the ballot, the need for your support has not ended. It's going to be needed to educate our fellow library lovers, as well as our local elected leaders (city council, mayor, Board of Supervisor members etc.), so that they will help spread the word to their constituents. Or they may help provide opportunities so share a few words with others about the reasons library construction and renovation is important.

But you may be thinking, I don't know my local leaders well enough to ask for their support. That's the purpose of this column that will appear in the next several issues leading up to the June 2006 primary.

One way to start meeting local leaders on an informal basis is to attend some of your county's Mayors' conferences. These meetings are held in the evening, in most urban and suburban counties, rotating between the various cities. There is no cost to attend (unless you stay for dinner) and time before the meeting starts, affords an opportunity to mingle and introduce yourself (wearing your CALTAC "Support Your Library" button). In about 15-30 seconds you can introduce yourself including what your position is with your library board, and that you will be supporting the Library Construction Bond Act.. Then you can close with a short reason why it is important to support this bond and thank them for their present and future support of libraries.

Finally, the Library Construction Bond Act is not the only library issue that needs support. Given the forecast for the state's budget, on-going support for PLF (Public Library Fund) will be as important next year and the following years, as it ever has been.

This column will continue with more ideas of how to influence your local elected leaders. We would also welcome methods you have used successfully as well, that might be shared in the column.

In the meantime, see you sooner than you know it, on the campaign trail.

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