

## Council Shifts Climate Change Strategy

The Bay Area Council convened the first meeting of its Climate Change Initiative Committee on Thursday. With a long history of being at the forefront of addressing environmental issues in an economically competitive manner, a diverse set of Bay Area Council members and experts in the field gathered to create a new mission. Sean Randolph, President of the Bay Area Council Economic Institute, provided an overview of “Climate Bay Area” that will provide a management platform to unite many disparate climate change efforts, scale policies to the regional level, and make this region a global hub for climate change policy and clean technology. “Climate Bay Area” will unite the heads of the region’s regulatory and planning agencies, the business community and environmental groups. Co-Chairs Jeff Heller of Heller Manus Architects and Don Bell of Bell Microproducts led a spirited discussion of areas for Committee focus. With a repeated mantra of protecting or improving the business environment in the region with any action, the group discussed helping focused Smart Growth actually happen in the region. Reform to the California Environmental Quality Act was a hot topic. Some suggested a short-term focus on maximizing federal stimulus dollars flowing to the Bay Area for climate related projects. Others want to work on a regional economic development strategy centered on cleantech. Many discussed the need to develop finance mechanisms to spur the regional market for energy efficiency installations and renewable energy sources. Stay tuned for more action.



## Senate Majority Leader Previews Budget Deal

Senate Majority Leader Dean Florez met with Bay Area Council members last night at a private reception. He stated his strong support for a Constitutional Convention, shared details of the upcoming Budget and important developments in water negotiations. On the Budget, he said that the Senate will pass a bipartisan, all-cuts, no-taxes plan, with \$21 billion in cuts. He said that while the cuts will be very painful, a significant amount will be achieved by lifting regulations and inspections associated with them, especially in schools. He predicted that the battle with the Governor will be over a \$4.5 billion “rainy day” cushion the Governor programmed into his plan, in case the economy deteriorates even further in 2010, instead of flattens or picks up. The Assembly is still exploring tax increases, but he stated that new taxes will flat-out fail. Senator Florez was confident of a final deal by June 30. For those interested in water, he shared that he fully expects passage of the long-awaited bipartisan bond issue fashioned by the Senate by the end of June. The measure will include conveyance, environmental protections, and two major above ground storage facilities (long demanded by Republicans) in addition to additional underground storage. The measure would include new water rights protections for current water users.

