

SBTC June Primary Endorsements

By Doug Perry

Organized Labor

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State Treasurer Phil Angelides for Governor

At the top of the ticket we urge you to vote for Democrat Phil Angelides who has served as our State Treasurer since 1998. Mr. Angelides has established an unimpeachable record in protecting union pensions and taxpayer money both as the State Treasurer and as an official member of the CalPERs pension board for government employees. In the wave of corporate fraud uncovered after the market crash in 2001 Phil frequently joined with other state attorney generals such as Elliot Spitzer of New York in calling for reform of the securities industry. He was an early supporter of the Sarbanes Oxley Act of 2001 which gave the SEC more regulatory authority over the investment markets. For the last eight years Phil has led the charge to clean up Wall Street and to eliminate the kinds of massive fraud perpetrated by the executives of now bankrupt companies like WorldCom, Enron and Tyco.

In early 2002 Mr. Anglides joined with several other states in calling attention to corporations that were using offshore tax havens such as Bermuda or the Cayman Islands to avoid paying taxes. Phil joined with other state officials and, “denounced imperial CEO’s who are paid far beyond their value, and companies that acquire an offshore address to escape taxes on profits earned in the U.S.”

As Governor, Mr. Angelides would be a strong supporter of union pensions. Compare that to Schwarzenegger’s attempt last year to dump the defined benefit pension plan for state employees and substitute a cheap 401K, with no guarantees for retired workers.

Phil is endorsed by the California Labor Federation, the State Building Trades Council the San Francisco Labor Council and the San Francisco Building Trades Council. On April 30th Angelides received the endorsement of the state Democratic Party by a two-thirds vote of the delegates.

Angelides has vowed to close tax loopholes for corporations and to re-instate higher income taxes on the rich to provide for investments in infrastructure and education. “We’re going to ask big corporations like Exxon Mobil…to pay their fair share so we can have the California of our dreams.” (San Francisco Chronicle, 5/4/06) Angelides has also talked about his support for a clean environment and public health through better enforcement of existing laws governing air and water pollution. “We need a governor who has hybrids in his family not Hummers,” he said.

Phil will face Democrat Steve Westly, in the Democratic primary next month. Steve Westly has served as State Controller since 2002 and is a former top executive with the Internet auctioneer, eBay. Mr. Westly provides most of his own political funding. Westly has used his personal fortune to pay for over 80% of his campaign expenses. Westly has been effective as Controller in raising revenue through the tax amnesty programs and increased penalties for abusive tax shelters.

John Garamendi for Lieutenant Governor

The race for Lieutenant Governor is being hotly contested by three popular Democrats, including John Garamendi, who is currently serving in the statewide office of Insurance Commissioner; State Senators, Liz Figueroa and Jackie Speier, both of whom are facing term limits. All three candidates have appeared before the San Francisco Building Trades Council to ask for our endorsement. To their credit all three have agreed to accept voluntary campaign spending limits.

In his comments before the Council Delegates on January 19th Garamendi talked about his support of Labor. He said, “It is the labor unions that support a just and equitable society,” and, “they need to be able to bargain collectively.” John supported more funding for state infrastructure and said that California was not investing enough in transportation water resources or education.

Garamendi has worked hard over the last four years on workers compensation reform. He has also been a strong advocate for consumer protection in the health care arena. When Wellpoint Health Networks of Thousand Oaks California acquired Anthem, Inc. for \$16.4 billion in August of 2005, John questioned whether the merger would reduce competition and raise health care costs. Thanks to his intervention the two health care providers agreed to pay\$265 million to improve health services in California as a condition of their merger.

In the latest Field poll Garamendi was the front runner with 31% of the total, followed by Jackie Speier, 21% and Liz Figueroa, 12%. The BTC has endorsed John Garamendi for Lt. Governor.

Jerry Brown for State Attorney General

Oakland Mayor Jerry Brown, Democratic candidate for Attorney General, has received the endorsement of the San Francisco Building Trades Council for that office. In his presentation to the building trades Jerry Brown talked about his experience serving as California’s governor between 1975 and 1983, and as the mayor of Oakland from 1999 to 2007.

“As the Mayor of Oakland I have actively promoted new construction and development and in the process have generated new jobs for union construction workers. In my two terms as mayor I have attracted substantial investments in both housing and commercial structures into the City.” Mayor Jerry Brown holds a commanding lead in the statewide race. According to the Field poll-April 3-10, Brown is supported by 59% of the likely voters, with 18% for Rocky Delgadillo.

On January 19th the Council was also pleased to have Democrat Rocky Delgadillo appear before the delegates and present his case for serving as State Attorney General. Rocky is the City Attorney for Los Angeles and has amassed a 94% conviction rate in his fight against gangs and violence.

Cruz Bustamante for Insurance Commissioner

Cruz Bustamante, the current Lieutenant Governor has served for two terms in this office and has announced that he will seek the office of Insurance Commissioner. Bustamante a prominent member of the Hispanic community coming out of the San Joaquin Valley is endorsed by nearly all of labor for the office of State Insurance Commissioner.

Bill Lockyer for State Treasurer

Our current Attorney General has performed admirably since his election in 1998. He has moved aggressively in support of both labor law and consumer protection. Lockyer has been filing law suits against the large energy corporations like the now bankrupt Enron and Exxon Mobil since he took office.

It’s interesting that Lockyer may face Republican Keith Richman in the race for State Treasurer. It was Richman who had introduced the bill in the Assembly last year to phase out the CalPERS defined benefit pension plan for state employees. The resulting uproar from state employees forced Arnold to withdraw the legislation in February of last year. Richman has promised to continue his vendetta against union pensions if he is elected to the office of State Treasurer. “The Treasurer has to address the skyrocketing cost of public pensions,” Richman said. “We need a more fiscally responsible pension system, one that’s fair to employees and fair to taxpayers.” (SF Chronicle, May 11, 2006)

A plan that’s fair to employees is definitely not one of Richman’s concerns. The CalPERS defined benefit plan is held up as a model for public pension plans by almost all who support corporate governance across the U.S. The CalPERS plan has paid for higher funding needs with healthy annual rates of return, minimizing state government contributions. The State of California in fact has an obligation to its employees to provide for their retirement. Labor strongly recommends a vote for Bill Lockyer in both the primary on June 6th and in November.

State Controller - Dual Endorsement

The two Democratic candidates for State Controller are equally well qualified. Termed out State Senator Joe Dunn representing District 34 in Garden Grove was instrumental in cracking the Enron case. The lawsuit was ultimately carried forward by Attorney General Bill Lockyer and has provided billions in refunds for California. Joe Dunn has also worked on the Senate Labor and Industrial Relations Committee. He recently introduced a bill in the Assembly, SB1354, that would require corporations to report political contributions to their shareholders and allow refunds for those who object. The bill is supported by the California Labor Federation.

John Chiang has fought for progressive tax and fiscal policies for 20 years as a policy advisor to Barbara Boxer and Congressman Mel Levine. In his statement to the voters John promised that as Controller he would, "fight against balancing our state's budget on the backs of the poor, disabled, students or future generations."

Debra Bowen for Secretary of State

Looking at the office of Secretary of State, the incumbent, Bruce McPherson (R) will seek re-election. McPherson was appointed to run the office by Governor Schwarzenegger in 2005 after the resignation of Kevin Shelley.

In the Democratic party two state senators, Debra Bowen of Redondo Beach and Deborah V. Ortiz of Sacramento are running for the office. Bowen has worked as the chairwoman of the Senate Elections Committee and has fought hard for campaign finance reform. Debra Bowen is also endorsed by the State Building Trades Council and the San Francisco Labor Council. Superintendent of Public Instruction.

And finally, the Democratic incumbent, Jack T. O'Connell will seek re-election as the Superintendent of Public Instruction. He is also endorsed by the construction trades.

Mike Nevin Endorsed for State Senate District 8

The Council has endorsed Democrat Mike Nevin for State Senate District 8, which covers the northern part of San Mateo County and the southwestern portion of San Francisco. The Senate seat was held by Jackie Speier who is now termed out. Other Democratic candidates include San Francisco Assemblyman Leland Yee, and Lou Papan, the former State legislative leader and Assemblyman.

Mike Nevin has had a distinguished career in public service. He was a San Francisco Police Officer for 27 years and

served both as a City Councilman and as Mayor of Daly City. He had also been a member of the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors from 1992 to 2004. Mike has a solid record in support of labor and working families and has promised to make the care and protection of workers rights a priority.

Looking at the State Assembly races, the San Francisco BTC has voted unanimously to endorse current Assemblyman Mark Leno for re-election in District 13.

Assemblyman Leland Yee's seat in District 12 was vacated by Leland in his run for the State Senate. Two popular Democrats are running for Leland's old seat, including Janet Riley, Golden Gate Bridge Director, and Supervisor Fiona Ma.

Supervisor Fiona Ma Endorsed for State Assembly

The San Francisco Building Trades Council formally endorsed Supervisor Fiona Ma to represent the City in District 12. Fiona served as a legislative aide to John Burton for seven years in Sacramento, a position that gave her valuable experience in dealing with state issues. She vigorously opposed Proposition 75 in the special election, that would have set up onerous accounting requirements for union political financing.

As a member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, Fiona has generally sided with the Building Trades on issues of development, the Office of Labor Standards Enforcement, and union apprenticeship programs. The Building Trades ask you to give her your support.

National Races

The Council is also urging you to vote in the Democratic primary for Dianne Feinstein for re-election to the United States Senate. In Congress we strongly recommend that you vote for Nancy Pelosi in District 8 and Tom Lantos in District 12.

State Propositions

The California Labor Federation and the San Francisco Labor Council have recommended approval of Proposition 81. The act would provide \$600,000,000 in bond financing for the construction and renovation of public library facilities around the state. The funding mechanism is similar to that of the \$350 million bond issue for libraries that was passed in 2000; in that local agencies are required to provide matching funds covering 35% of the project cost. Prop 81 would provide new jobs for construction workers and permanent jobs for the library staff. Public works projects are subject to the prevailing wage, with fairly strong compliance oversight. The majority of the work is done by union members. We urge you to vote yes on this general obligation bond.

Both the State Building Trades Council and the California Labor Federation are urging approval of Proposition 82, that would provide preschool education for all four year olds in California. This is the constitutional amendment by actor Rob Reiner. Funds for the program would be provided by a higher state income tax on personal incomes. The additional tax of 1.7% would be levied on individual filers with incomes over \$400,000 and upon joint filers with combined incomes over \$800,000. This measure would provide a half-day of public preschool education for all four-year-olds, beginning in 2010.

Support for preschool by educators is overwhelming. Praise for Preschool, a study by Preschool California, found that 96% of teachers believe it is important for children to go to preschool before they start kindergarten ready to learn and do their best. With the majority of women of childbearing age now in the workforce, preschool, daycare or nursery school, childcare is a necessary investment in our children.

This is a social equity issue. As the legislative analyst points out in the state voter information guide, "About 80% of 4-year olds in high income families attend center based (preschool) programs, while the comparable figure for low-income families is 49%.

San Francisco Propositions

Proposition A is a charter amendment that would budget an additional \$10 million annually for the next three fiscal years to fund violence prevention. The proposal would create a Homicide Prevention Planning Council that would target people at high risk including those on probation, residents in neighborhoods with a high incidence of homicide, people in public housing, and communities with high unemployment rates. The Board of Supervisors voted to present this proposal to the electorate by a vote of 6 to 5. The mandatory funding requirement take some decision making away from our elected representatives. However, the increasing levels of violence in our City demand attention, and we recommend approval of the funding. Vote Yes.

Proposition B would require that sellers of residential property with two or more units to disclose to the buyer if evictions were used in delivering the unit or units vacant. Buyers often prefer vacant units when purchasing income property so that they can charge market rate rents and obtain a positive cash flow on their investment. The objective of the legislation is the protection of elderly and disabled tenants who have been protected by rent control. Generally a move to greater disclosure in the transfer of real property is preferred and seen as an issue of consumer protection. We recommend a yes vote on Proposition B.

Proposition C would change the way people are appointed to the five member board of the Transbay Joint Powers Authority. Prop C would give the Board of Supervisors the power to appoint two of the three San Francisco Transbay board members, eliminating the current representative from the Municipal Transportation Agency. Mayor Gavin Newsom has opposed the change. The Labor Council and the Building Trades Council have taken no position on this proposal.

Proposition D would limit the types of patients that could be treated at Laguna Honda Hospital. Roughly 30% of the existing patients would be excluded, specifically those that pose a danger to themselves or others. According to the City Controller, most of those who would be moved from the home have dementia with illnesses such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. Many of these patients would need skilled nursing care and would be moved to San Francisco General Hospital or to convalescent homes outside the city. Costs to the City would increase by roughly \$27 million per year. The San Francisco Labor Council has urged a no vote on this proposal.

Please VOTE -Unions Can Make a Difference

One of the things that sets union members apart from the rest of the labor force is our benefits, a fair wage, a pension when we retire, and decent health care. Any reduction in union benefits reduces our standard of living. The onslaught on pensions, Social Security, health care and the prevailing wage over the last six years by the Bush Administration, and more recently by Arnold in Sacramento, has been unrelenting. It's time we voted in our own self-interest. Elect representatives in Congress and to state government who are committed to protect the common good and the middle class, not the investor class and the very wealthy. May 22nd is the last day for voter registration.