

Century Corridor Commission on Jobs, Tourism and Communities

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Galanter Report Finds Grim Working Conditions, Poor Business and Tourism Climate in Gateway to L.A.

**Commission Headed by Former Councilmember Calls on City, Hotel Industry to
Revitalize Century Boulevard, Alleviate Poverty in Nearby Communities**

**Mayor Villaraigosa Voices Support for Effort as Council Committee Prepares to
Issue Policy Recommendations**

A Blue Ribbon Commission headed by former Los Angeles City Councilmember Ruth Galanter released a new report today calling for a major effort by city, industry and community leaders to revitalize Century Boulevard and the LAX tourism industry.

Galanter and the other Commission members were joined at a City Hall press conference by Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, who expressed support for the growing effort to bring investment to the area and alleviate poverty for workers and adjacent communities. Councilmember Bill Rosendahl, whose district includes Century Boulevard, also appeared at the press conference and voiced his determination to move forward with a comprehensive solution to the area's problems.

The report comes as the Council's Trade, Commerce and Tourism Committee prepares to issue recommendations on how to improve conditions for workers, communities and businesses in the Century Corridor and increase revenues to the city. The recommendations could lead to a major policy proposal for the long-neglected area.

"The Century Corridor is in a downward spiral in which an underperforming industry begets poverty in the surrounding communities," said Galanter. "We believe it's time to stop the cycle."

The report by the Century Corridor Commission on Jobs, Tourism and Communities includes the following findings:

- The Century Corridor is home to the largest concentration of hotel rooms in Los Angeles County. Hotel occupancy rates here are also the highest in the County, but hotel room rates are among the lowest.
- Hotel wages in the Century Corridor are 20% below those in downtown hotels and almost 30% below those in Beverly Hills and West Hollywood.
- Many hotel workers live in the nearby communities of Lennox, Hawthorne and Inglewood, where almost one in four residents' income is below the federal poverty line. Half the families served by a local relief center are working families, many of whom work in hotels.
- Lack of affordable health insurance is a major obstacle to the health of hotel workers and their families and further contributes to local poverty. Workers must pay up to \$290 per month for employer-provided family coverage. As a result, many have no health insurance at all.

- The absence of street life, shops, plazas, or inviting restaurants discourages both vacationers and locals, while the dearth of vital commercial activities, along with the comparatively low hotel room rates, means the entire city is deprived of tax revenues that could be used to fund essential city services to address these many problems.

The Commission recommended strong steps to revitalize the Century Corridor. “We urge the City Council to seize the moment – here is your chance to transform an industry, a business district and ultimately several long-neglected communities,” said Commissioner Warren Furutani, who serves as a Los Angeles Community College Trustee. “Likewise, we urge the LAX

hospitality industry to join in this effort to revitalize an essential part of L.A.’s economy. You can make it possible for struggling workers and their families to join the middle class while generating revenue for your companies and our local government.”

Among the recommendations in the report are the following:

- The City should use all available tools to upgrade the look of the Corridor and facilitate the creation of jobs and restaurants.
- The City should take steps to improve conditions for workers, including requiring that all “service charges” or “gratuities” charged to patrons be passed on to workers.
- The City and LAX tourism industry should work together to create job training and job access opportunities to make sure that adjacent communities benefit from the jobs in the local hotel industry.
- The Century Boulevard hotel industry should raise wages and benefits to at least the county average and provide affordable family health insurance.
- Century Boulevard hotel industry should reduce overall workload, especially for housekeepers, to prevent injuries.

In the report, the commissioners noted that they had hoped to support the construction of a mini-conference center – a longtime goal of the LAX tourism industry –but did not hear testimony that would allow them to make this recommendation.

The commission, which held a public hearing in Westchester on March 23, was formed at the request of the Coalition for a New Century, an alliance of residents, community leaders, educators and religious leaders. The commission’s other members are Rev. Cecil Murray, pastor emeritus of First AME Church; Susana Reyes, Political Committee Chair of the Sierra Club of California’s Angeles chapter; and Professor Ninez Ponce of the UCLA School of Public Health.

Commissioners emphasized the need for all parties to work together. “It is all too rare that an opportunity arises to improve conditions for communities, working families, businesses and local government alike,” said Galanter. “Yet today, the city, the LAX hospitality industry and its workers, and the adjacent neighborhoods have a historic opportunity to collaborate for mutual benefit.”

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