

# COALITION OF LA CITY UNIONS

## AFSCME LA City Local Unions

- 164 -- CRA Basic Unit
- 665 -- CRA Professional Unit
- 741 -- LA City Part Time Recreation Unit
- 901 -- Recreation and Parks Prof. Unit
- 1990 -- CRA Management Assn.
- 2006 -- LA City Prof. Medical Employees
- 2204 -- CRA Supervisory Unit
- 2626 -- Librarians' Guild, Supervisory and Rank & File
- 3090 -- LA City Clerical and Support Services Employees
- 3672 -- Executive Administrative Assistants

## International Union of Operating Engineers Local 501

## Laborers' Local 777

## LA/Orange Counties Building & Construction Trades Council

## Service Employees

## International Union Local 721

- LAPMA -- LA Prof. Managers Assn.
- LACAA -- LA City Attorneys' Assn.

## Teamsters Local 911

# LA Works Because We Do!

Cheryl Parisi, Chair

July 18, 2011

Councilmember Tom LaBonge  
 Councilmember Ed Reyes  
 Councilmember Herb Wesson, Jr.  
 City of Los Angeles  
 200 N. Spring Street  
 Los Angeles, CA 90012

*FM*

Dear Councilmember LaBonge, Reyes, and Wesson:

On Tuesday, July 19, 2011, CAO Miguel Santana will ask the Arts, Parks, Health & Aging Committee to approve a Request for Proposal to contract out of one of LA's most cherished public institutions, the Los Angeles Zoo. This is the next step in Santana's plan to privatize City services, a part of a "Tea Party" agenda to outsource the sectors of Our Government that your constituents hold most dear.

Privatizing the Zoo has little to do with money; rather, it is part of a motivated agenda by CAO Miguel Santana to outsource City services to lower wages and eliminate health care and retirement benefits. This is bad news for LA's sputtering economy.

Further, experience shows that very little near-term savings will be achieved. Dallas, whose zoo is about the same size as Los Angeles', continues to pay about \$11 million dollars a year toward its zoo operations. That's because it takes time to completely hand a public entity like a zoo over to a private operator.

The City of Los Angeles needed near-term and structural changes, and City employees have delivered. Through an employee-funded early retirement incentive program, we have slashed the City workforce. We have embraced pension reform by increasing contributions to LACERS. We have agreed to generate significant savings to the City for health care benefits. And we have deferred pay raises into the future.

Privatizing the LA Zoo will undoubtedly lead to higher ticket prices – that is how private Zoo operators make money! – which means that the LA Zoo will be less accessible to the families and school kids that count on you to keep this valuable educational institution available to them. The LA Zoo costs just \$14 for adults and \$9 for kids, and the affordable annual family membership makes the Zoo a regular outing for low and moderate-income families. When comparing the LA Zoo to the privatized San Diego Zoo, which charges \$40 for adults and \$30 for kids, it is easy to see why Our Zoo attracts so many Angelenos while the San Diego Zoo is a primarily a tourist attraction.

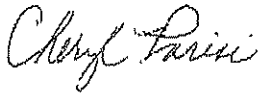
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City employees understand the need to minimize General Fund support for the LA Zoo. Already, the Zoo is a public private partnership, with the LA Zoo Association operating all of the concessions. There are many other ways that we can explore to reach our shared goal of generating additional revenue while keeping Our LA Zoo accessible to all Angelenos.

We would like to meet with you before you vote on the CAO's proposal to issue a costly Request for Proposal. We will have the Coalition scheduler, Melissa Arrigoni, contact your scheduling secretary to set up a meeting.

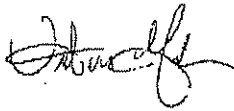
Sincerely,



Cheryl Parisi, Chair  
AFSCME District Council 36



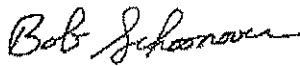
Gavin Koon  
Operating Engineers Local 501



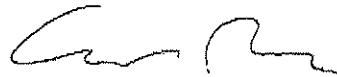
Victor Gordo  
LIUNA Local 777



Ron Miller  
Los Angeles County Building &  
Construction Trades Council



Bob Schoonover  
SEIU Local 721



Carlos Rubio  
Teamsters Local 911

Enclosure: Zoo Privatization Fact Sheet

cc: Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa  
Councilmember Richard Alarcon  
Councilmember Tony Cardenas  
Councilmember Eric Garcetti  
Councilmember Janice Hahn  
Councilmember Jose Huizar  
Councilmember Paul Krekorian  
Councilmember Paul Koretz  
Councilmember Bernard Parks  
Councilmember Jan Perry  
Councilmember Bill Rosendahl  
Councilmember Greig Smith  
Councilmember Dennis Zine  
CAO Miguel Santana

CP:BJM:ma  
OPEIU #537

# Zoo Privatization Fact Sheet

**Privatizing the LA Zoo has nothing to do with money.** Dallas, whose zoo is about the same size as Los Angeles', continues to pay about \$11 million dollars a year toward its zoo operations. That's because it takes time to completely hand a public entity like a zoo over to a private operator. So why the rush toward privatization? The City budget is \$14.5 billion. Privatizing Our Zoo will save, at most, a tiny fraction of the City budget. CAO Santana is overstating the savings privatization would bring.

**Privatizing the LA Zoo will undoubtedly lead to higher ticket prices, which means that the LA Zoo will be less accessible to your constituents.** The LA Zoo costs just \$14 for adults and \$9 for kids, and the affordable annual family membership makes the Zoo a regular outing for low and moderate-income families. When comparing the LA Zoo to the privatized San Diego Zoo, which charges \$40 for adults and \$30 for kids, it is easy to see why Our Zoo attracts so many Angelinos while the San Diego Zoo is a primarily a tourist attraction.

**New workers may not have experience with animals.** Plumbers fix pipes, sinks, toilets, and drains. Zoo plumbers maintain 24-hour life support systems for hundreds of animals. Under the CAO's privatization scheme, the Zoo won't have to hire specialists who know how to maintain these systems.

**About half of the City employees at the LA Zoo will lose their jobs at the Zoo.** The CAO cannot lay off any City employees to hire private workers because our contract protects our members, but if a worker's job isn't specific to the Zoo, then he or she will be transferred to another City department and location. Where? No one knows.

**Under the CAO's privatization scheme, the LA Zoo will become a "starter zoo."** Animal keepers will keep their jobs at the Zoo, because their duties are specific to a zoo. But the new crop of animal keepers that will be hired will be paid less and won't get City benefits. As a result, the LA Zoo will quickly become like The Living Desert – a place where people take short-term jobs in order to launch their careers. As these new workers move in and out of the revolving door, your constituents will not develop relationships with them. And, this means the new keepers won't have the opportunity to develop long-term experience working with the Zoo's animals.