



United States  
of America

# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 110<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 154

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2008

No. 25

## House of Representatives

### A TRIBUTE TO THE LATE RUSSELL HAMMER

#### SPEECH OF HON. LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD OF CALIFORNIA IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the late Rusty Hammer, a dedicated leader and advocate on behalf of the Los Angeles business community and a dear friend, who passed away recently after a long battle with cancer. I had the privilege of working with Rusty during his 5 years as President and Chief Executive Officer of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce.

At the chamber's helm, Rusty dedicated himself to improving the quality of life and economic prosperity of the Los Angeles Chamber's 1,500 members and their more than 600,000 employees throughout the Los Angeles region.

Under Rusty's dedicated leadership, the Los Angeles Chamber successfully built partnerships between business, community, labor and civic organizations. Today, these partnerships have reestablished the Chamber as the Los Angeles region's premier business advocacy organization.

Rusty's talents, innovative strategic thinking and willingness to work with stakeholders on all sides of the political spectrum played an integral role in the Los Angeles area's economic growth. I observed this first hand during the chamber's annual trips to Washington, DC, which became immensely productive and influential under Rusty's leadership.

While we all deeply miss Rusty, I know his work and many contributions will continue to benefit the Los Angeles business community for many years to come. My thoughts and prayers are with Rusty's special wife, Pam, and their family during this difficult time. Madam Speaker, in honor of Rusty's life, I would like to submit for the Record his obituary that appeared in the Los Angeles Times on January 30. It provides more insight into Rusty's full and accomplished life.

#### **RUSSELL HAMMER, 54; HEAD OF L.A. BUSINESS GROUP (By Elaine Woo)**

Russell J. "Rusty" Hammer, former president and chief executive of the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, died Monday at a hospice in San Jose. He was 54.

The cause was leukemia, according to a chamber spokeswoman.

Hammer was credited with revitalizing the Los Angeles business group, which he led for five years until 2006, when he stepped down because of his illness. During his tenure, chamber membership grew from 1,200 to 1,600 companies, and new initiatives helped to refocus the organization on local, state and national policy issues.

"He had a substantial impact on the chamber and also on

the people he worked with," said George Kieffer, a Los Angeles attorney who was chairman of the chamber during the first few years of Hammer's presidency. "The chamber has an extraordinary legacy but ..... had become less active in the business community and the greater civic community. Rusty played a very big part in turning that around."

Born on May 12, 1953, in Orleans, France, Hammer grew up in San Jose. He received a bachelor's degree in political science at the University of Santa Clara in 1975 and a master's in public administration from San Jose State University in 1979.

He entered politics at an early age, organizing high school students for Sen. Robert F. Kennedy's presidential campaign in 1968. Hammer ran for office himself in 1972, becoming at 18 the youngest person elected to the Campbell, Calif., City Council. At 21, he became mayor and made headlines as the nation's youngest mayor.

After two terms as mayor, he entered business and served in a variety of management positions, later rising to president of Quadrex Corp., an engineering firm.

In 1994 he was recruited to become chief executive of the Sacramento Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce. Over the next seven years he raised the profile of the Sacramento chamber, leading it to take a prominent role in local issues, such as the effort to save McClellan Air Force Base, and starting a public policy seminar that attracted world figures, including Henry Kissinger and Margaret Thatcher.

When he arrived in Los Angeles in 2001, Hammer worked in a similar fashion, finding ways to make the Los Angeles chamber more relevant to members. He reached out to other local business groups, small companies and entrepreneurs and organized events that offered a regional perspective, such as a 2002 conference on transportation that drew 500 participants from business and government.

In 2003 he was diagnosed with a rare form of leukemia and spent 303 days in a hospital undergoing intensive treatment. While battling his illness, he helped organize a Silicon Valley branch of the Wellness Community, a support group for cancer patients.

He also wrote a book, "When Cancer Calls ..... Say Yes to Life," which he published on his own last year. The book discusses how his battle against cancer forced major adjustments in his life and changed his values.

He told the San Jose Mercury News last year that he was inspired to write the book by his children, twins Gerald and Jennifer, who told him he could not die until he had taught them everything he could about how to approach life. He is also survived by his wife, Pamela.