

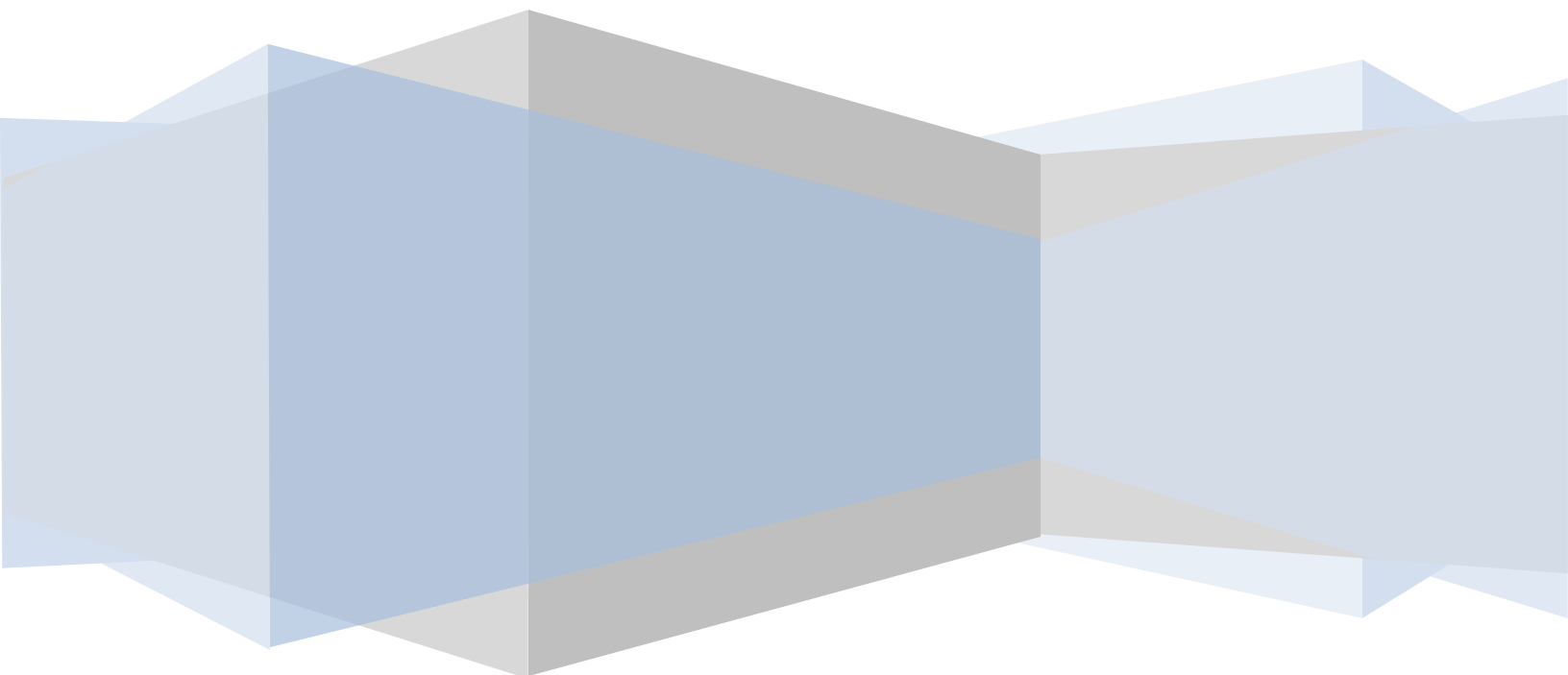
SEIU Local 721

2009 City of Ventura Candidate Questionnaire

LOCAL 721



SEIU



INTRODUCTION

Thank you for taking time to fill out this questionnaire. In order to better inform our membership about where the candidates we support stand on the issues, SEIU Local 721 requires all candidates seeking our endorsement to complete this questionnaire.

SEIU Local 721 region-wide has more than 85,000 members. We are the largest union in local government. Unions like SEIU are the economic backbone of California's middle class. Our mission is to empower workers to provide economic security and economic opportunity for themselves and their families. SEIU fights for jobs with decent wages, health care, pensions and good working conditions, with opportunity for advancement. We also work with the consumers of the services our members provide to enhance economic opportunity and the quality of life in our state by advocating for and improving the services our members provide.

CAMPAIGN PROFILE

***Please provide pictures of the candidate for our use. By giving us the photos, you authorize us to use them. Also, attach your biography, a list of current endorsements and any campaign literature you have printed as of yet.**

Candidate Name: Neal Andrews Campaign Address: P.O. Box 1623
Ventura, CA 93002

Campaign Phone: 651-9603 Fax: None Email: electnealandrews@att.net

FPPC #: 1277715 Party Affiliation: Republican

Occupation: Management Consultant Employer: Self-Employed, Semi-Retired Today I only do pro bono work for non-profit organizations _____

Proposed Ballot Designation: Councilmember/Businessman

Elected offices currently/ previously held:
Ventura City Councilman

Other campaigns for elected office:
Board of Directors, United Water

Appointed offices currently/ previously held:

	NAME	PHONE / FAX
Campaign Consultant:	Self in all categories below	_____
Media Consultant*:	_____	_____
Mail Consultant*:	_____	_____
Fundraising Consultant*:	_____	_____
Field Consultant*:	_____	_____
Pollster:	_____	_____
Campaign Manager:	_____	_____

Anticipated Budget: \$ 27,000

Funds Raised to Date: \$ On file City Clerk (please attach campaign finance report)

Current/Prior union membership: Laborers Union, Operating Engineers, Machinists, AFT

Other organizations you belong to: Rotary, Kiwanis, Elks, Masons, Quaker church



SEIU Local 721 2009 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Why are you seeking the endorsement of SEIU Local 721? List your qualifications and reasons for seeking this endorsement.

___I believe it is important to take an inclusive approach to political life. Accordingly, I have always sought and most of the time received the endorsement of labor organizations in my campaigns for public office. While I am a strong fiscal conservative, as you know, I have also always consistently stood strongly for progressive social policies. I have been one of the most effective members of the Ventura City Council during my time of service. Let me list some of those accomplishments:

- I led the fight against the ill-conceived 911 fee and ultimately secured its repeal.
 - I've led the way on water policy and in water conservation, saving millions upon millions of gallons of water annually. I helped draft and secured adoption of the Ahwahnee Water Principles that are employed statewide to guide development with respect to water issues. Under my leadership and at my request, Ventura was the first City in the State to formally adopt these principles.
 - I led the effort and introduced the policy initiative to assist owners of historic property to preserve local landmarks.
 - I led the effort that culminated in the City's endorsement of the Plan to End Homelessness. Our Homeless Prevention Fund was recently recognized as a national model program. I wrote the first check to start this Fund. This Fund prevented nearly 200 people from becoming homeless last year and did not cost the City a dime.
 - I proposed the request for policy consideration and led the effort to establish a formal Economic Development Committee and crafted a meaningful economic development strategy for the City for the first time.
 - I led the effort to create a program to stimulate business investment and business development in the City, the Jobs Investment Fund (JIF). This fund also spun off the City's economic development incubator. The JIF program was also recently cited by Nation's Cities weekly magazine as a national model.
 - I initiated the program to assist employees to purchase homes in the city with employer assistance that costs the taxpayers absolutely nothing.
 - I led the effort to secure passage of the State Constitutional Amendment (Prop 65 and Prop 1A) that limits the ability of the State to confiscate local tax revenues and forces the Legislature and the Governor to pay back any funds they "borrow" within three years with interest.
 - I led the effort to bring a cultural arts center to the City and to make Ventura truly the cultural pearl of the Central Coast and the New Art City. As a result, our tourist industry is still robust despite the recession and we have retained many jobs that otherwise may have been lost.
 - I introduced the concepts of Performance Based Management to the City. These and their corollary, Outcomes Based Budgeting, have significantly improved city management and supported better budgeting practices.
 - Most recently, I led the effort to de-criminalize poverty and homelessness and to initiate a pilot program in cooperation with churches to allow the homeless to safely sleep in their cars on selected church parking lots under supervision and with sanitary conditions.
 - As Chair of the Finance Committee I led the effort to cut nearly 15% from the City budget to achieve a balanced budget under the pressures of the greatest recession since the Crash of 1929, and we did so without the significant lay-offs everyone thought would be essential.
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2. What is your attitude toward unions? What experience have you had with unions?

I believe unions perform a valuable service in effectively organizing and representing the voice of labor. I have both been a member of four unions at various times in my earlier career, and also served as a member of an organizing committee for AFT when I was teaching at the university level years ago. (We lost the right of representation to the far more conservative AAUP in that election on a very narrow vote. I believe we would have won if the Teamsters had not also qualified to organize and split the vote a third way. Since I never felt the Teamsters had a credible program to represent education faculty, I always suspected that they had been induced to enter the election by university management, just to make sure AFT did not win and that AAUP did.)

Since I have been on Council, I have taken numerous opportunities to reach out to all our bargaining units through their representatives, as you are well aware. I believe we have a strong and healthy relationship, you and I.

When the County threatened horrendous cuts in mental health services a number of years ago, cuts that entailed significant lay-offs of county personnel, as Chair of the County Mental Health Board at the time I led a public protest effort and mobilized NAMI, patients and consumers, their families and sympathetic members of the public and we flooded the Board of Supervisors Chambers with more than 300 protesters while we established a picket line outside the County Administrative Building and held a press conference. As a result we reduced the number of lay-offs dramatically. I was honored a few years ago by the National Alliance for Mental Illness in part for that achievement.

I managed the campaign against Measure O in 2000 when Community Memorial Hospital with the support of the other private hospitals in the County proposed to take hundreds of millions of dollars in Tobacco Settlement Funds from the County to be given to the private hospitals. They spent more than \$3,000,000 and we were only able to raise about \$140,000, but we ran a great campaign, we picketed their hospitals, we held protest rallies throughout the County, I spoke one evening alone to 3,000 voters, and we crushed them in the election. You were a big part of that effort. That effort saved countless County jobs that otherwise would have been lost, and the Tobacco Settlement funding has been a mainstay of County health services funding ever since.

Most people give Pierre Durand the credit for establishing the County Clinic System and the County Employee Health Plan, but, as the Assistant Administrator of the County Medical Center in the early 1980's, I designed both when Pierre was still just an analyst in the County Auditor's Department and long before he became Health Care Agency Director. Pierre simply had the good sense to take those designs and expand them. Those innovations have provided both hundreds of jobs for county employees over the years, but also lower cost quality health services to county employees.

When County employees struck for better wages and benefits a few years ago, I contributed to their relief fund. I stood with them on their picket lines. I delivered food and drinks to the protestors at my expense. And I spoke on their behalf at County Board meetings and elsewhere.

When the County was being bankrupted by Ordinance 4088 and non-public safety jobs were being eliminated to support the Sheriff's and DA's bloated budgets, I supported its

repeal and publicly endorsed the County Board's efforts to defend repeal or alteration of Ordinance 4088 against the lawsuit filed by the Sheriff and DA.

When our City Council has proposed to privatize and contract out jobs of City employees, **I have been the only member of the Council who has systematically opposed that idea**. Let me repeat that: the **ONLY** Council Member who has consistently opposed contracting out routine jobs. My position is and has always been that a routine job essential to an on-going city program should be performed by a regular city employee who receives standard pay and benefits and should not be contracted to a private sector company that may pay sub-standard wages or benefits. When the City management has repeatedly proposed exempting outside contractors from the Living Wage Ordinance, especially the golf course contractor, **I was the only vote to oppose**.

A few years ago, when SEIU needed help to break loose an impasse in negotiations with the Ventura Port District, you came to me, not some other member of the Council, and asked for my help. I talked to the Commissioners. After that the negotiations moved forward to a mutually successful conclusion.

A few years ago when the Firefighters Association found themselves in an apparent impasse with the City, they came to me. I asked the Council to listen to the tapes of the negotiating sessions as I had with some concern, and shortly thereafter the negotiations began to move forward again. Of course, the Firefighters conveniently forget any of that because I didn't support their last contract that required us to increase their pension benefit by 50% and commit well over a million dollars a year to their pension funds that we did not have.

Several years ago when the City unbundled retirees from coverage under its standard employee health plan in order to avoid a 30% hike in costs for regular employees like you, but with the result that the retirees' out-of-pocket cost for health insurance more than doubled, I was the one who stepped in and said we should be able to do it differently and at lower cost. I successfully called for a temporary City subsidy until we could work out a different arrangement. Because of my health care and insurance experience, I was able to lead the successful effort to secure alternative options at reasonable cost for your retirees.

When the Central Labor Council came to me on behalf of UFCW and asked that I support Martell Frazer's appointment to the City Planning Commission, I not only agreed to do so, but I made the motion to recommend her appointment and argued in support of her candidacy. Now it was no secret that that appointment was requested in hopes of giving UFCW a strong seat at the table in dealing with any proposal for a Wal-Mart in Ventura. It was no secret that I did not and do not personally support the use of land use and planning policy to achieve UFCW objectives and will not use them specifically to block Wal-Mart from opening a store in Ventura. I think those goals are properly achieved through the collective bargaining process. If necessary they are achieved on the picket line. But I also believed that **labor should have a prominent voice in the policy discussion, and I was happy to support you in securing that seat at the table**. I will be happy to support a boycott of Wal-Mart to achieve labor objectives if they do open a store in Ventura, but I will not condone the subversion and abuse of what should be a rational and objective land use planning process to achieve a political objective that is unrelated to land use.

I have always been willing to sit down and discuss realistically and candidly any issue of concern to labor at the City. I have frequently come to your labor representatives to bring my concerns to them as well. I don't play games with you, I don't tell you one thing and do another, and I am as straight-forward and clear about my analyses of the circumstances and about what I believe I can support as I know how to be, and your representatives know that. I will never be and have never been unfair to our employees.

I have not been able to support the most recent contract agreements between the City and the public safety unions, and everyone knows that. My issue is simple: We don't have and haven't had the money to support those salary and benefit increases. On the other hand, I

have always felt that our SEIU employees were getting the short end of the stick.

When the Chief Financial Officer certified that there will not be enough money to pay the salaries and benefits that police and fire demanded without radical cuts in other high priority core programs or a tax increase, and when we have failed twice in a row to secure voter approval for such tax increases, even one so little as \$11.00 per year per land parcel, and when it was absolutely clear that a recession was on the horizon if it had not already begun, then only an irresponsible elected official could vote to accept those contract terms. You are taxpayers too as well as being labor representatives. Would you really prefer to be represented by someone who throws fiscal prudence out the door, or would you rather have a fiscal realist? The bottom line is that the proposals that I have put on the table with respect to pension reform would, I believe, give you a better deal than you have today. They would be sustainable. And they would permit us to be able to offer better pay to your members. I am acutely aware that, while the police got a 17% increase in their last negotiation, and fire got an 8% increase and a 50% bump in their pensions, SEIU has been repeatedly asked to accept raises that sometimes did not even keep up with the cost of living. What is wrong with this picture?

3. Wright Library serves 2/3rds of Ventura's population and is in danger of shutting down because of budget shortfalls. Is closing the busiest library in town appropriate when there may be other solutions to the budget deficit?

No, and I do not support closing Wright. I do not know at the moment just what can be done to save Wright, but even at reduced hours I would definitely keep it open so long as we have a lease from the College. I also believe that under current economic circumstances it is unlikely that the College will insist on our exit from that property in 2015. They may be willing to extend the lease year to year for several more years after that date. My preference in the long run is to build another library in the immediate vicinity of the College, perhaps even on the vacant lot across the street adjacent to the day care and nursing facility. I do not believe the capital funding would be the obstacle. The obstacle is probably how to carry the annual operating costs, just as it is today. However, I think there are options that we have not yet fully explored. I am prepared to buy as much time as we can to stay right there in Wright until we can find the correct alternative. I do not think building a new library at Kimble Community Park is the best idea. I think that we can grow our normal revenue streams over the next five years sufficiently to be able to pay to keep Wright or its equivalent in operation, but I am also willing to use part of the revenue from a sales tax measure to save Wright if it passes. An alternative that I am willing to explore is a library specific parcel assessment, or an entertainment tax that would add a small increment to any entertainment ticket or cover charge within the City and would be used exclusively to benefit the arts and cultural activities of the City, including the libraries. There are probably a dozen other ideas that others may come up with, and I am open minded about all of them.

4. City employees this year took a 6% cut to their salaries and had to implement furloughs to help the city meet its budget needs. What will you do to help make those city employees whole again?

My first priority, as we regain economic prosperity in the City and as our tax revenue regenerates, is to restore the cuts voluntarily agreed to by our City employees, particularly those at the lowest echelons of compensation. That would generally be SEIU employees.

5. There's a lot of talk about pension reform in the public retirement system. Do you support it and what does that process mean to you?

I do strongly support pension reform, particularly as it relates to public safety pension systems. On the other

hand, I have never proposed taking anything away from our current employees or reducing in any way their benefits duly agreed to by the City in past legitimate collective bargaining actions. My proposals would only apply to new hires going forward, except where an existing employee may voluntarily wish to switch to the new system. I strongly believe we must together examine the current system and come to a mutual understanding of what the problems are with it and why it is unsustainable, then try to identify the ways in which those problems could be fixed. I am not wedded to any specific solution, though I have proposed movement to a defined contribution system as one that is typical of most modern pension systems. There are certainly other options such as a cap on retirement benefits, employee share investment, increased age of retirement, or many other options or combinations. I do not pretend to have the final solution. I only say I understand the nature of the long term problem, and I appreciate the fact that if we do not find a solution, the current system will eventually make it impossible for the City to responsibly and intelligently pursue a solution. I do know this. If we do not develop a solution of some sort, the public safety pension benefits will continue to eat up a disproportionate share of the budget and will continue to grow far more rapidly than our revenues, with the result that we will continue to have to cut other areas of the budget to compensate for the public safety retirement program. Public safety already represents more than 54% of the entire General Fund budget. As their retirees grow in numbers and live longer and longer, as they have been doing, God bless them, the required budget allocation just to meet their retirement obligations will crowd out every other sector of the budget, making it impossible to maintain other programs, forcing cuts in other personnel sectors, and increasing the inequity of our current employee relationships with SEIU employees slipping further and further behind. I don't think that is right. Are you aware that today the public safety sector PERS contribution takes \$8.5 million out of our meager \$84.5 total budget – a full 10% and rapidly growing. **All the rest of the employees of the City, including all your members, take only \$5.1 million.**

6. What is your opinion on in-sourcing of work?

As I indicated earlier in this questionnaire, I have been the only Council Member who has consistently voted against contracting out routine work and who has refused to exempt contractors from the requirements of the living wage ordinance. My position is and has always been that a routine job essential to an on-going city program should be performed by a regular city employee who receives standard pay and benefits and should not be contracted to a private sector company that may pay sub-standard wages or benefits. When the City management has repeatedly proposed exempting outside contractors from the Living Wage Ordinance, especially the golf course contractor, **I was the only vote to oppose.** (Are you beginning to see a pattern here?)

7. In election races, candidates and office holders always say they value public employees. What will you do to show the employees you do value them? What will you do to demonstrate that to the public?

I'll continue to do what I have always done. No more, no less. I'll come to every retirement that I can, to express my support and good wishes. I'll come to every reward ceremony that I can to express my appreciation, I'll continue to be your friend, whether you think it is important or not. When you have a baby, if I learn about it, I'll tell you how happy I am for you. When you achieve something important, if I know about it, I'll share your pride in it. If you get an award, and I learn about it, I'll be there to celebrate with you. We are family, even if you don't think so much of me. I am coming to your party just like your uncle who sometimes may not be your favorite guy and the one who might sometimes embarrass you at your kid's wedding reception, because I think you are my family even if I make you uncomfortable, so get ready to live with it.

8. If elected, what relationship do you expect to have with SEIU? Would you consider including SEIU and its members in future planning? Would you consider appointing qualified SEIU members to appointed Boards or other

positions in your office or in City governance?

Our relationship would not change. As I indicated previously, I have always supported making sure labor has an appropriate seat at the table. I will continue to do so. I have been one of the strongest members of Council to assure that we include labor in all our deliberative bodies, and I have frequently corrected the oversight of my colleagues on the Council when they sought to appoint an advisory body or a public commission without taking steps to include organized labor. I have generally been successful in causing them to reconsider their neglectful actions.

9. Describe your priorities if elected or re-elected?

My first priority is to do everything I can to restore prosperity to our local economy. Everything else is contingent upon that. We can't hope to solve future budget problems without higher revenues. If we raise taxes, we will sooner or later simply find the public unwilling to continue to allow us to do so, and we will become increasingly uncompetitive in the regional economy. We'll lose jobs, sales, revenues, and our ability to maintain our tax base. What we need to do is to raise our natural revenue streams without raising taxes. We need to increase tourism, retail sales, and property values. That's how we raise revenues without raising tax rates.

Today, for example, we have a competitive advantage over neighboring cities with our existing sales tax at a half-cent lower rate. Because of that difference, we are attracting people who want to make large taxable purchases to our stores, and we are holding our position better in sales in this recession than some of our neighboring communities who have raised their sales tax. I have strongly supported the small programs we have funded in the arts in Ventura. They have benefited you and especially your children. More importantly they have continued to bring into this City large numbers of cultural tourists and out of town day visitors, and those "cultural" tourists have spent far more money in town than regular tourists. For example, the Scottish festival, on whose Board of Directors I sit, has every year since we founded it, brought thousands of outside visitors to town, and it has not cost the City a dime. Last year we brought over 20,000 people to Ventura and sold every hotel room in town for the weekend of the festival. Consequently, we are faring much better in retaining our tourist base and their contribution to our revenues than our neighbor cities.

I created the Jobs Investment Fund (JIF) that is designed to improve the attractiveness of Ventura for new businesses at the same time that it increases the tax base for the City, and that program is today being recognized just this month by the National League

of Cities as a model for the nation for cities who wish to stimulate economic growth in their communities. I fought hard on the Council to keep the JIF program alive when other Council members often wanted to strip out the few dollars we had there to spend on their favorite one time projects with no long term benefits to the community except that a few dozen people would probably vote for them at the next election. Thank God, I won those battles, because today we have a one of a kind program that is setting us apart from every other city in the area and making us a potentially more attractive place for industry to bring new jobs.

10. Do you support Measure A, the City's Tax initiative a sales tax increase to protect government services and jobs against further cutbacks and some restoration? What impact do you see its passage having on the city workers?"

I have agreed with my Council colleagues that I would remain neutral on Measure A. Ordinarily I would oppose Measure A as a misguided attempt to raise tax revenues by raising tax rates when it actually will tend to defeat our competitive position in the regional marketplace. However, for good reason or poor, my Council colleagues feel strongly that they must try to raise taxes to pay for more public safety personnel, and in view of their strong concerns and desires I have agreed not to oppose their efforts. In exchange they have agreed to do a number of things that I believe will help increase economic growth in Ventura, and if I am correct it may permit us to grow our local economy faster than our competing communities and in the end make the impact of the sales tax increase less harmful. This is political compromise in action. We'll have to wait and see who made the better bargain. I am confident in any case that the bargain I made will benefit the City as a whole and provide more funds for essential services whether or not Measure A passes.

11. If further salary cuts were necessary in a worsening economy, do you support a furlough option?

I support any option that would permit us to save the basic jobs of our employees and protect their families from the worst outcomes of this recession, while maintaining adequate levels of service to our community and the balanced budget we are legally required to maintain.

12. Are there any other comments you would like to make to explain why SEIU should endorse you for office over your competition?

I've already said all I should need to say, and in any case I've said enough.

13. List all other endorsements you have received:

2009 Endorsements *

Former Mayor, Councilman Carl Morehouse
Oxnard Councilwoman Irene Pinkard
Former Oxnard Councilman Bedford Pinkard
John Zaragosa, Ventura County Supervisor
Deborah Schreiber, Kalorama Coalition, Ventura Social Services Task Force Steering Committee, Cabrillo
Economic Development Corporation Board of Directors
Jon Sharkey, Mayor, City of Port Hueneme
Walter (Pete) Marriott
Ventura Deputy Mayor Bill Fulton
Rosa Lee Measures, Former Deputy Mayor and Ventura City Councilwoman
Albert Harris
Mohammed Hasan, Owner, Hasan Associates Engineering
Paul & Carolyn Leavens, Former Chairs, Ventura County Republican Central Committee
Bill & Marilyn Kellar
Andres Herrera, Council Member, City of Oxnard
Charlotte Craven, Council Member, Former Mayor, City of Camarillo
Bill Locey, Freelance Writer and Bon Vivant
Ivor and Sally Davis, Chairman and Member of the Board, Ventura Music Festival
Former Ventura Mayor John McWherter
Joanie Morrison Abou-Samra,
Mailie Halme Brocke,
Julianne A. Case,
Karl B. Keller, Former Chair, Ventura Social Services Task Force
Former Ventura Mayor Sandy Smith
Former Congressman Bob Lagomarsino
Bill Hicks, Director, Casitas Municipal Water District
David and Allison Carlson
Ventura County Republican Central Committee
John Ashkar, President, Pacific Heritage
Cathy Brudnicki, Executive Director, Ventura County Housing & Homeless Coalition
Rev. Luther and Mother Oratio McCurtis, Total Life Christian Center
John Jones, Chair, Midtown Community Council, Chair, Ventura Social Services Task Force
Lincoln Club of Ventura County
Jim Gray, Businessman
Many others.

(2005 endorsements are also listed on www.electnealandrews.com.)

* Titles and organizational affiliations are provided for identification purposes only and do not imply endorsement from the underlying organization or its general membership