Airbus Americas, Inc. Chairman, Allan McArtor declared that Southern California is ripe and ready for resurgence in the aerospace industry. During the luncheon portion of the Valley Industry and Commerce Association’s (VICA) 24th Annual Business Forecast Conference, McArtor noted that the Los Angeles region is perfectly poised to grow the state economy with advanced manufacturing and our proximity to numerous airports.

Staying with the theme of the afternoon’s event, Cleared for Takeoff, McArtor touched on Airbus’s growth and accomplishments, as well as the expansion of Los Angeles international airport. “Southern California is an attractive region for manufacturing due to the skills, dependability and schools,” he said, explaining Airbus’s investment in the area. McArtor also commended VICA for its strong advocacy efforts. “VICA is one of the most powerful business organizations in the country,” he said as he started his luncheon address.

California Governor Jerry Brown also spoke at the event to thank VICA for their support of his ballot initiative, Proposition 30. He called for the rest of the business community to follow in VICA’s footsteps and support Prop. 30.

Expert economists offered their view of the coming year’s outlook during the breakfast forecast panel at VICA’s Business Forecast Conference. Despite the theme of the event, the overall tone was pessimistic, though sprinkled with bits of optimism.

William Roberts (San Fernando Valley Economic Research Center at CSU, Northridge) closed the discussion with notes on the local economy. Though relatively pessimistic about issues surrounding the state budget and government impact on business, he did offer optimistic reports on the housing and construction industries making a slow recovery. Gary Schlossberg (Wells Capital Management) offered a modest view of the economy, though tried to remain optimistic in the process.

Demosthenes Vardiabasis (Pepperdine University) spoke on the importance of innovation, entertainment and tourism to the California economy. He offered interesting views on the European economic crisis and the impact of debt, particularly Chinese debt, on the American economy. Don St. Clair of Woodbury University served as the panel moderator.
Battle Royale—Are the Odds in their Favor?

Moderated by Dan Schnur, Unruh Institute of Politics at USC
- Dick Castner, U.S. Chamber of Commerce
- Paul Mitchell, Redistricting Partners
- Garry South, California Strategies LLC
- Rob Stutzman, Stutzman Public Affairs

The political experts discussed everything from legislative races to their predictions for the Presidential election. Redistricting was a hot topic as the panelists discussed the possible negative consequences associated with changing constituent bases.

Death and Taxes—2012 Ballot Initiatives

Moderated by Fiona Hutton, Fiona Hutton & Associates, Inc.
- Brandon Castillo, Bicker, Castillo & Fairbanks
- Christine Aghassi, The Dolphin Group
- Roger Salazar, Mercury Public Affairs

Attendees were given a unique insider’s perspective on the state initiative process and what to expect come Election Day.

Running on Empty

Moderated by Hector Madariaga, Southern California Gas Company
- Jamie Hall, CalSTART
- Robert Sturtz, United Airlines
- Catherine Reheis-Boyd, Western States Petroleum Association

Agreeing on the need for California to seek out cleaner, renewable alternative fuels for the state, panelists discussed the implementation of AB 32 and climate change regulations.

Sinking in Quicksand

Moderated by Janelle Bieler, Manpower
- California Assemblymember, Tim Donnelly
- Wendy Mitchell, WM Consulting, Inc.
- Dorothy Rothrock, California Manufacturing and Technology Association
- Kim Stone, Civil Justice Association of California

In this panel, experts spoke on the over-regulation and the difficulties of doing business in the state. They stressed that the state’s leadership does not believe that California has a “regulation problem” or a bad business climate.

The Right Prescription?

Moderated by Michael Turpin, USI Insurance Services
- Jim Lott, Hospital Association of Southern California
- Herb Schultz, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- Jessica Waltman, National Association of Health Underwriters
- Bill Wehrle, Kaiser Permanente

Panelists discussed the five biggest myths of the Affordable Care Act. There was also an explanation of Health Benefits Exchanges, how and when they would be set up, and how they were expected to work.

Back to Black—The Need for Pension Reform

Moderated by Coby King, Ek & Ek.
- Marcia Fritz, California Foundation for Fiscal Responsibility
- Tyler Izen, L.A. Police Protective League
- California State Assemblymember Cameron Smyth
- Adam Summers, Reason Foundation

Following the passage of the recent pension reform bill, AB 340, this panel discussed the need for state leaders to continue moving forward in changes to the California Public Employees Retirement System (CalPERS) and California State Teachers Retirement System (CalSTRS).

Casting Your Mobile Net

Moderated by Shayna Englin, Fission Strategy
- Bridget Ayers, Get Smart Web Consulting
- David Chou, Microsoft
- Eric Wise, Avenue Mobile, an ISBX Company

Mobile experts spoke to attendees about building a company brand and using that brand across all media platforms. Panelists also discussed the need for mobile strategy and mobile websites.

Move It! Move It!

Moderated by Javier Angulo, Walmart
- Chris Chase, Port of Los Angeles
- Dr. John Husing, Economics & Politics, Inc.
- Scott Moore, Union Pacific Railroad
- Chris Shimoda, California Trucking Association

With Southern California being the second biggest retail market in the country, panelists stressed that the region is one of the best places for importing goods. Panelists also discussed the minimal impact that the expansion of the Panama Canal is expected to have on Southern California and our ports, and the expectation that the railroads will continue to grow throughout the region.