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Bay Area Council Announces Opposition to SB49 and Releases Member Poll Results

88 Percent of Region's Largest Employers Oppose the Legislation

SAN FRANCISCO, January 9, 2007 – Today, the Bay Area Council, which offers a united voice for hundreds of the largest employers in the nine-county Bay Area, announced its opposition to California Senate Bill 49 (SB 49) introduced by Senator Carole Migden (D-San Francisco). The bill would eliminate the opportunity for a Bay Area city other than San Francisco to develop a public-private partnership with the 49ers, which is crucial to the team's ability to build a new stadium.

In a survey of the Bay Area Council's members – who employ more than 500,000 of the region's workers and often sponsor and support major league sports franchises – 88 percent said they opposed SB 49. Opposition came from companies located in San Francisco, the South Bay, the East Bay and the North Bay.

“The 49ers are deeply enmeshed in the social fabric of the entire Bay Area and this region cannot afford to lose them,” said Jim Wunderman, President and CEO of the Bay Area Council. “We understand that Senator Migden and San Francisco leaders are trying to do the right thing to preserve the team's 60-year heritage in the city, however this bill is the wrong way to do it. The 49ers are a regional asset. If they cannot stay in San Francisco, the next best option is a move to another part of the region, such as Santa Clara. The Bay Area Council strongly urges that the 49ers continue to discuss plans with the city of Santa Clara, as well as consider the serious proposal offered by Mayor Newsom at Hunters Point Ship Yard. We also urge Senator Migden to withdraw SB 49.”

Bay Area Council members universally voiced support of the team staying in the region. Said one member, “If the 49ers cannot reach a satisfactory agreement with the City of San Francisco, then they will likely choose to go to a location outside the Bay Area. This is a result that nobody in the Bay Area would want.”

The Bay Area Council made its opposition known to Senator Migden, as well as the leaders of San Francisco, the 49ers and the state legislature in a letter faxed out today.

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About the Bay Area Council

Founded in 1945, the Bay Area Council (www.bayareacouncil.org) develops and drives regional public policy initiatives and researches critical infrastructure issues. Led by CEOs, the Bay Area Council presents a strong, united voice for hundreds of major employers throughout the Bay Area region whom employ more than 500,000 workers, or 1 of every six private sector employees in the Bay Area.

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Note to editors: Please see below letter sent by Jim Wunderman, President and CEO of the Bay Area Council to California Senator Carole Migden.

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January 9, 2007

The Honorable Carole Migden
California State Senate
P.O. Box 942848
Sacramento, CA 94248-0001

Dear Senator Migden:

With sympathy for the motivation of your introduction of SB 49, we do however oppose it and strongly urge you to withdraw the legislation. Like you we appreciate the long history of the 49ers, that they were founded in and have always played in San Francisco. We understand the sincerity of your intentions and desire to have the team continue to play in San Francisco.

SB 49, if enacted, vastly increases the possibility of the 49ers leaving the region and its loyal fan base. The 49ers have indicated a desire to stay in San Francisco and can only do so with a plan that meets their needs in that city. But by eliminating any other Bay Area option, which is specifically what your legislation does, you are setting the stage and increasing the likelihood of them leaving.

The challenge of financing and building stadium venues for professional football teams, in more densely developed urban settings, is not new or unique to San Francisco. Construction costs, parking, highway and mass transit access and the “game day” experience requirements have led other franchises ultimately to more suburban or ex-urban sites. The Washington Redskins play in Landover, Maryland. The Dallas Cowboys play in Irving, Texas with plans to move to nearby Arlington. And of course both the New York Giants and New York Jets play in the Meadowlands, New Jersey. These teams maintained their association with their principal “home” cities when they moved within their region so all the benefits stayed put and the fans continued to enjoy the thrill of cheering for their respective historic NFL franchises.

We would urge the 49ers to continue discussions with the city of Santa Clara, as well as consider the serious proposal offered by Mayor Newsom at the Hunters Point Shipyard. The point is we must recognize that the 49ers are a regional asset and treasure that needs support in pursuing all their options for a stadium.

SB 49 opens the door to the very real possibility of the 49ers leaving the Bay Area for another locale, a course of action that has occurred in recent history in the NFL. The Los Angeles Rams left for St. Louis, and Los Angeles, the nation’s second largest media market, has been without an NFL team since the Raiders returned to Oakland in 1995. The Baltimore franchise in the dead of night moved to Indianapolis, and subsequently the Cleveland team moved to Baltimore. Certainly we do not want to put the Bay Area at risk of joining this high stakes game of musical chairs.

Let’s work together to keep the 49ers from moving away. The Bay Area Council will do all it can to make this happen. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jim Wunderman
President & CEO

cc: Mayor Gavin Newsom
John York, Owner, San Francisco 49ers
Don Perata, President pro Tempore, and
Members, Bay Area State Senate delegation
Senator Gloria Negrete McLeod, Chair, Local Government Committee