

# Governmental Affairs Initiative works for members

## Mattiace forging strong partnerships for 2009

Bill Mattiace, former mayor of Las Cruces, has served as the vice president of governmental affairs for the Greater Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce since 2008. Through his efforts, he has brought closer attention from the Chamber to key issues in the local, regional and state government.

Mattiace said the majority of work done by elected officials is conducted behind closed doors. Through the Chamber's Governmental Affairs Initiative, he works to give business owners a heads up before laws are put up for vote.

Working with the Chamber's Issues and Governmental Affairs, Candidates and Elections and Military Affairs committees, Mattiace has given the membership an opportunity to affect ordinances and legislation – such as the city lighting ordinance and the hotly debated county wilderness bill – before it is voted on by lawmakers.

One of the biggest successes to come out of the initiative thus far was a memorandum of understanding between the Chamber, the Las Cruces Home Builders Association and Las Cruces Association of Realtors. Working together, the three organizations have formed a strong partnership to address adverse laws before they can cause unforeseen damage to the community.

One of the most important concerns facing the initiative is the Vision 2040 plan, which has several issues that



**BILL  
MATTIACE**

Mattiace said are worrisome.

Though Mattiace works as a representative for business owners and Chamber members, his goal is to bring business owners and government together to ensure the success of jobs, prosperity and good business in the entire Mesilla Valley region.

"If you're not growing, you're static. Then you have to put more burden on those already here to provide services," he said. "The Governmental Affairs Initiative endorses and supports a good plan that is necessary for the success of the City of Las Cruces and businesses. The plan must include the concerns of all stakeholders, and the Chamber realizes the rights of landowners – farmers and other private property owners – is very important to their future and their children's future."

Despite concerns over the Vision 2040 plan, Mattiace said he and the Chamber support quality of life issues that the city will face between now and 2040.

"The Chamber is very balanced when it comes to 2040. It's not just 'business as usual,' he said. "We want Las Cruces to be the best city to live in, but being the best city cannot be at the cost of farmers or commercial landowners."

Mattiace said he wants to see the City of Las Cruces keep a low property tax base and not increase the gross receipts tax or utility and impact fees for developers because these costs will be passed on to homebuyers. Instead, he suggests the city concentrate on governmental efficiency to reduce costs as an alternative to raising taxes and fees.

"Our objective is to remove unnecessary burdens on

doing business from the plan," he said. "With poor zoning codes, it will take a long time to open a new business here and may raise some property owners' taxes or drastically lower the value of other people's property."

Coming into 2009, Mattiace said the Governmental Affairs Initiative will focus on supporting the success of Spaceport America. He plans to bring together the communities of Las Cruces, Truth or Consequences and Hatch and their respective elected representatives to give their full support to the spaceport.

"It's very important that support is never derailed," he said.

Another major piece of the 2009 initiative will be Chamber Chair John Hummer's call for grassroots advocacy among the Chamber membership. Through these calls to action, the Chamber plans to mobilize the membership behind important issues. Grassroots advocacy alerts will be sent to the Chamber membership by email as issues are addressed by the Chamber Board of Directors.

Mattiace said he wants to let Chamber members know that he is available for them as well. Those business owners that feel they are getting an impediment to their business from the government or just have questions about the system are encouraged to contact Mattiace for help at [williammattiace@yahoo.com](mailto:williammattiace@yahoo.com).

"I know and work with your elected officials at the local, county and state level," Mattiace said. "I can be the bridge between their ordinances and laws and the area business owners."

For more information about the Governmental Affairs Initiative or sponsorship opportunities, contact the Chamber office at 524-1968 or email [williammattiace@yahoo.com](mailto:williammattiace@yahoo.com).