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Fiorina Talks Ports, Unions & More In Long Beach

by Ryan ZumMallen | Long Beach News | 03.29.10 |

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11:30am | As she campaigns to unseat Barbara Boxer in the upcoming race to represent California in the U.S. Senate, Republican candidate Carly Fiorina roused a Long Beach crowd with talk of creating jobs, limiting government, controlling spending and much more last Wednesday.



The former CEO of Hewlett Packard spoke during a luncheon hosted by the Long Beach Chamber of Commerce at the Hilton hotel downtown. Fiorina faces fellow Republican Tom Campbell in the primary race this June, and the winner will face Boxer in November's general election.

Fiorina spoke at length about statewide and nationwide issues, but offered her views on local industry as well. She took particular interest in the goods movement industry, noting that approximately 40-percent of the nation's products are unloaded at the nearby ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles. The key to strong goods movement, Fiorina said, is encouraging free trade and not caving to demands from unions.

"Trade is good for us because we have the most competitive products and services in the world," Fiorina said.

"And so you might ask yourself why Barbara Boxer has voted against virtually every free trade agreement that has ever come to the floor of the U.S. Senate, including the free trade agreement with South Korea and Colombia that would provide more work right here in Long Beach - why has she voted against that? Because the unions don't like them."

Fiorina noted that a significant portion of the region's jobs are directly related to traffic at the Ports, and said that unions have attempted to eliminate competition under the guise of environmentalism. She credited Long Beach mayor Bob Foster for allowing the Clean Trucks Program to include independent operators, unlike a similar ordinance at the Port of Los Angeles. Fiorina continually voiced opposition to the Federal Aviation Administration Act (F4A), which she says is a union-backed effort to eliminate independent truckers and destroy jobs.

"California ports will lose their competitive advantage over east coast and gulf ports, it will reduce competition, it will raise costs at the ports, it will further expand the patchwork of unbelievably burdensome state and local regulatory frameworks, without improving air quality or safety. It is a bad idea all the way around that is emblematic of the inside dealing that is going on in Washington D.C. every day."



Fiorina's strong words for unions bore a stark contrast to her admiration for the many jobs produced by the Port of Long Beach - which begs the question: when so many of those employees belong to local unions, can your message be anti-union but pro-jobs? In a region with a historically flammable relationship between the two - including a crippling Port strike in 2002 and a close call in 2007 - the attempt can be a balancing act.

"They mayor of this city has demonstrated that there is [a way to work with unions without bowing to their interests]," said Fiorina as she departed the hotel. "He has demonstrated - and the results of the work here have demonstrated - that you can make great strides in improving the quality of the environment and you can create more jobs by permitting competition."

She also voiced opposition to a container fee that was proposed repeatedly by local State Senator Alan

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Ryan ZumMallen is a graduate of the CSULB School of Journalism, writing for the campus' Union Weekly newspaper and serving as Sports Editor for one year. He has written for numerous news and sports websites and magazines, as well as television experience with Fox Sports and ABC Channel 7.

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Lowenthal in an effort to raise funds for local environmental efforts.

"Adding costs and fees is just another way of taxing," Fiorina said.

*Disclosure: LBPOST.com publisher Shaun Lumachi is a government affairs advisor to the Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce*