

Hahn speaks to Valley VOTE
Mayor offers conciliatory message
By Rick Orlov, Staff Writer

Los Angeles Mayor James Hahn, who two years ago bitterly fought back a ballot measure to allow the San Fernando Valley to secede, delivered a conciliatory message Monday night to the people who started that drive.

"To me, Valley VOTE had an important message," Hahn told about 50 members of the group at their monthly meeting at Galpin Ford. "It was a message that they weren't getting the services they deserved or wanted.

"It was a message I told people at City Hall we had to listen to. And, while I didn't support secession, I did support getting you and getting people involved in government. We work for you. That's one of the messages from Valley VOTE."

Hahn received a polite reception from the group of neighborhood and community activists who peppered him with questions ranging from modernization of Los Angeles International Airport, police expansion and government salaries.

It was Hahn's first appearance before Valley Voters Organized Toward Empowerment, which has continued to meet monthly to discuss government services to the Valley.

"I thought he did about as well as he could," said Norm Hufferblum, a Valley VOTE member. "I'm just glad he was here and seemed to be listening to us."

Hallie Kemper of the Greater Valley Glen Neighborhood Council said she appreciated Hahn's appearance and looked forward to hearing more.

"Yes, he gave us some political answers, but I admire that he came here," Kemper said.

Others, however, said they were unimpressed.

"If he had a vision for the Valley, I didn't hear it," said Michael Trujillo, a former city commissioner and Valley VOTE board member.

Jeff Brain, former president of Valley VOTE, said he believes Hahn will have a difficult time in the March 8 election in winning San Fernando Valley voters.

"I'm not sure I heard anything that will convince Valley voters the mayor understands what we need out here," Brain said.

But Hahn said he had been listening and ticked off rapid-fire a series of projects and initiatives that he has advanced from completion of the Marvin Braude Constituent Service Center in Van Nuys, construction of a new police station in the North Valley, several branch libraries and other services.

"People in the Valley told me they didn't feel they were getting their fair share in services, and we've tried to correct that," Hahn said.

The mayor also said he had worked to put into effect the neighborhood council program that had only barely started when he took office in 2001.

Since then, 85 neighborhood councils have been formed with each getting \$50,000 from the city to be used to make improvements in their neighborhoods.

In addition, Hahn said he had involved the groups in determining budget priorities for the city and wants them to get involved in rating the performance of general managers.