

# Los Angeles Daily News

## Secession advocates vow to keep up the fight

By James Nash

Staff Writer

**Tuesday, November 26, 2002** - A group of core San Fernando Valley secession activists vowed Tuesday to carry on the quest for a separate Valley city, even while conceding that a new ballot measure on the issue is years away at best. Many of the 50 people at the first meeting of Valley Voters Organized Toward Empowerment since the Nov. 5 election said they need to hold onto the trump card of secession, even if they don't plan to use it right away or ever.

"If all Valley VOTE is about is getting people to listen and being a squeaky wheel, I don't want a part of it," said Ric Hawthorne of Woodland Hills. "This is about empowerment." Earlier, Richard Bort of Panorama City suggested channeling the civic energy of the secession campaign into a drive for more city services in the Valley, rather than a new breakaway effort.

"Secession was the only means we had left to achieve that goal," Bort said.

"Secession isn't a goal in itself." After the meeting, however, Bort said Valley VOTE and other groups shouldn't rule out future secession bids because the threat alone puts pressure on city officials to improve services in the Valley.

Final vote tallies released Tuesday show that secession carried nearly 52 percent in the Valley while losing by a 2-1 margin citywide. To pass, the secession measure needed majorities in both the Valley and Los Angeles as a whole.

Valley VOTE President Jeff Brain told secession activists at Tuesday evening's meeting at Galpin Ford that the group will continue to exist, although possibly with new leadership and with a new mission.

The precise nature of that mission, however, wasn't defined Tuesday night.

Brain said Valley VOTE is exploring a lawsuit to overturn the provision requiring a citywide vote, as well as legislation to allow a future Valley-only election on cityhood.

Meanwhile, the group is looking for a new office and will keep its phone number, Web site and fax machine, Brain said.

"We sent a loud message," Brain said. "It was only Chapter 1."