

## Hahn Finds Safety Is Top Issue

The topic is stressed by most residents he meets, the mayor says at a meeting of area councils.

By Cara Mia DiMassa  
Times Staff Writer

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Mayor James K. Hahn focused on the economic challenges facing the city in a speech Saturday to members of almost 100 Los Angeles Neighborhood Councils.

Calling the councils "a revolution in city government," he praised their success so far at making voices of their communities heard. That is especially important, he said, during a budget crunch, with the city facing a deficit of about \$187 million.

"Since it's your money," Hahn said, "the taxpayers should have some say-so about how we prioritize."

In most conversations he has had with L.A. residents, the mayor said, they have called public safety their No. 1 priority.

Hahn expressed concern about Gov.-elect Arnold Schwarzenegger's vow to repeal the increase in the vehicle license fee. Almost all of the \$4 billion that would be returned to motorists supports city and county public safety, including police and fire departments.

About 20% of car tax money is used to help pay for local fire departments, according to the California State Assn. of Counties. Rough estimates show the city of Los Angeles spending about \$100 million each year in car tax money on fire protection.

If the increase in the vehicle license fee is eliminated, "and the state doesn't replace it in some other way," the mayor said, there could be serious consequences for the city's fire and police departments.

He added that he had asked city employees not represented by unions to forgo 3% raises they had been scheduled to receive in January for the same reason: that the city must put public services first. "This is not the year for automatic pay raises, even if they're deserved," he said.

Members of the audience praised the mayor, who spent time posing for photos and shaking hands after his brief speech.

Willie Solomon, 75, a resident of East Los Angeles, posed for a picture with Hahn. He said he had known Hahn since the mayor was a student at Manchester Avenue Elementary School, where Solomon used to work. Hahn has "the right attitude to bring the community together," he said.

Yesenia Aldaco, treasurer of the Vermont-Harbor Neighborhood Council, which serves the area around the intersection of Slauson and Vermont avenues, echoed the mayor's concern about public safety. "That is the No. 1 issue," the 21-year-old said. "Especially for our area."