



For Immediate Release

BUILDING TRADE UNIONS URGE LOS ANGELES TO COMPLETE LA ZOO'S PACHYDERM FOREST FOR ENDANGERED ASIAN ELEPHANTS

Scrapping project one-third into construction will cost up to 1,000 jobs amid severe recession

Los Angeles, CA – Jan. 21, 2009 – Citing the potential loss of as many as 1,000 jobs, the Los Angeles/Orange Counties Building and Construction Trades Council today urged the Los Angeles City Council to finish the Los Angeles Zoo's Pachyderm Forest elephant habitat rather than bow to the wishes of a small group of activists who want to stop the project.

"Not only are we concerned that the animals in the Los Angeles Zoo are well taken care of, we are also concerned about the employment opportunities for local residents during this economic crisis. That's why the Los Angeles/Orange Counties Building & Construction Trades Council is supportive of the Los Angeles City Council moving this project forward," said Richard Slawson, Executive Secretary - Los Angeles/Orange Counties Building and Construction Trades Council

Scrapping the Pachyderm Forest would be tantamount to unnecessarily closing a factory during a severe recession. This week, the U.S. Conference of Mayors forecast that the Los Angeles area will lose 164,100 jobs in 2009, the second highest projected loss in the nation, pushing the unemployment rate to nearly 10%. According to building officials working on the Pachyderm Forest, pulling the plug on the habitat in mid-construction will cost up to 1,000 jobs over the life of the project. At any given time, up to 300 workers are employed building the new home for Billy and other endangered Asian elephants.

Said Dan Garcia of Bricklayers Local 4: "I don't know how the City Council can be considering shutting this project down. We are in the middle of a terrible recession and hundreds of jobs are at stake here. And the community loves the zoo and the elephant exhibit. There are so many upsides to completing the job that it's inconceivable to me that they would stop in the middle."

Added Raul Melendez, Business Manager of Roofers Local 36: "Los Angeles is hurting economically. We had dozens of workers at the Zoo who were bringing home a paycheck and who were provided health benefits so they could take care of their families before this project was shut down. With unemployment rising to unprecedented levels,

we can't afford to close down good jobs, particularly when the communities that visit the zoo want a first class operation that includes one of the biggest attractions - the presence of elephants for our children to see and appreciate. The Los Angeles City Council should do the right thing by finishing this project. There is no viable alternative."

Already one-third built, the Pachyderm Forest will provide Asian elephants with state-of-the-art medical care and constant monitoring in a spacious, natural habitat larger than Asian elephants enjoy at the San Diego Wild Animal Park. The forest also will allow Los Angeles working families and 20,000 schoolchildren a month to meet Billy and other Asian elephants to learn about the global dangers threatening these majestic animals with extinction. Those pressuring the council to end construction want to ship Billy to an area hundreds of miles from Los Angeles, where it will cost individuals \$200 to see him, depriving working families and children of an opportunity to learn about the Asian elephant up close. In addition, there is no guarantee Billy will ever have anywhere near the level of medical care and attention he has received from a professional staff at the LA Zoo which has known him nearly his entire life.

The Pachyderm Forest was approved by the City Council by a 13-2 vote in 2006. The fiscally responsible habitat includes funds from two separate bond measures, one approved by 8 out of 10 voters and the other by a two-thirds margin, along with \$5 million in individual donations. To further shield taxpayers, the nonprofit Greater Los Angeles Zoo Assn. is committed to structuring a plan so that no money is required from the city's general fund.

Those who want to urge the City Council to act responsibly and complete the Pachyderm Forest can find more information at www.billyshome.com.

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Source: Greater Los Angeles Zoo Assn.