



## **Beverly Hills/Greater Los Angeles REALTORS® Help Elect Champion to City Council – August 2013**

In the most recent election cycle in the City of Los Angeles this past spring, six of the 11 Council Districts that fall within the area served by the Beverly Hills/Greater Los Angeles Association of REALTORS® (BHGLAAR) were electing new Council members. Most of the races were clear-cut, says James Litz, Government Affairs Director of the 6,000-member association, as candidates already supported by his RPAC trustees were running in five of those Districts. In District 13, however, one of the city's hottest housing markets, the situation wasn't as simple.

District 13's Council seat was being sought by no fewer than a dozen candidates, ranging from a local fireman to a Deputy Mayor. When Litz first encountered candidate Mitch O'Farrell, the District Director for the long-time Council Member who is just settling in as the city's new Mayor, he knew he had found his REALTOR® Champion.

In the March Primary, O'Farrell received the most votes of all 12 candidates, catapulting him to the General Election some 10 weeks later. Litz was aware, though, that O'Farrell lacked adequate name recognition and funding to win the seat. Together with fellow local REALTOR® association GADs and other members of the Los Angeles County Business Federation, Litz secured polling services from NAR, the results of which confirmed that O'Farrell was, in fact, trailing his closest competitor, John Choi. Not only was Choi, a Korean American, expected to carry the votes of Los Angeles' Koreatown, which is within District 13, but he is also employed by the labor federation, the traditional victor in Los Angeles politics.

Litz consulted Julienne Uhlich, NAR Campaign Services Manager, at the state association meetings the first week of May. He explains that BHGLAAR actually applied to NAR for services, rather than funding. "I told Julienne what I needed in terms of help, because with only a few weeks to go, I wouldn't have known where to turn with the money. What I did know is that labor wins by knocking on a lot of doors, and that we needed a campaign that knocked on even MORE doors! Julienne, of course, took up the challenge and ran with it."

Within days, BHGLAAR began to receive the \$87,000 worth of campaign services that would help its candidate win the day. Cracker-jack field teams commissioned by Uhlich canvassed District 13 in "Neighbors for Mitch" t-shirts, changing their message daily as the campaign evolved. "At first I thought, 'That's a lot of money for a field team!'" says Litz, "But when I saw them in action, that changed to, 'What a bargain!' It was a simply amazing operation." In addition, NAR funded live telephone calls to voting households, and the BHGLAAR RPAC contributed \$25,000 of its own funds to pay for direct mailers.

"The best part about NAR's campaign team is that it's super nimble," he continues. "The fact that it can jump in, change course, and respond so quickly can affect the outcome of elections – it certainly did ours." BHGLAAR's Independent Expenditure campaign on behalf of Mitch O'Farrell was the only such outside boost in the General election; he won



handily, and is now re-united in City Hall with his old boss – who is now the Mayor of Los Angeles.

In an unforeseen benefit, the campaign efforts of BHGLAAR have already enhanced relationships with at least one sitting Council member, who took note and has reached out to Litz for future collaboration. “I’ve been waiting 10 years for this kind of respect!” he laughs. “Suddenly, people are interested.” His members, he notes, are also impressed. “It’s great to be able to show them, in terms that are very close to home, that NAR is willing to step up to the plate for us.”

*To learn more about how the Beverly Hills/Greater Los Angeles Association of REALTORS® helped put a dark horse on the City Council, contact James Litz, Government Affairs Director, Beverly Hills/Greater Los Angeles Association of Realtors, at [jwlitz@jameswlitz.com](mailto:jwlitz@jameswlitz.com) or 310.704.2767.*

Canvassing teams in “Neighbors for Mitch” t-shirts made the difference.



