



LA Mayor Villaraigosa Funnels Taxpayer Cash To Obama Fundraiser

by Ben Shapiro

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Controversy has broken out in Beverly Hills over the proposed construction of a subway tunnel under Beverly Hills High School. Locals are irate about the construction, which endangers property values and presents significant safety issues for students.

But what takes this issue from the realm of the local to the realm of the national is the fact that the subway tunnel isn't being constructed merely to help Angelenos to and fro. As the Beverly Hills Courier has reported, it's being constructed as a **payoff to one of Barack Obama's biggest donors** – and it's being constructed in coordination with one of Obama's biggest allies, Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa.

JMB Realty owns the land on which the local subway station, which necessitates the tunnel, would be built. They would receive \$38.7 million for a small piece of land on a larger tract; the entire tract was assessed at just \$18.8

million in 2011. The station itself should net JMB hundreds of millions of additional dollars. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, JMB has given significant amounts of cash to Villaraigosa, and has even hosted a fundraiser for Villaraigosa. Villaraigosa largely controls the decision making process as to the location of the station – he can stack the Metro Board with four members out of a total of 13.

According to Metro's own draft environmental impact statement, the new route for the subway will cost \$60.4 million more than the prior approved route. So where is the money coming from? Apparently, Metro decided to do away with stations and links that largely serve LA's black community.

The biggest backers of the deal, aside from JMB and Villaraigosa's office, are the folks at We Do Our Part LA (WDOPLA), a supposed grassroots group formed by business and unions. Erin Lehane, who is leading the campaign, is being paid by JMB Realty. WDOPLA lists as union friends the Teamsters Joint Council 42, as well as SEIU 1877.

JMB realty is co-owned by Neil Bluhm, a Chicago real-estate mogul who threw Barack Obama's 50th birthday party. Those invited had to shell out \$30,000 per plate to come. The event was slated to raise \$1.5 million for the Democratic National Committee. That was only the latest in Bluhm's pro-Obama arsenal of cash giving. During the 2008 cycle, he maxed out for Obama and raised another \$200,000 for him. Bluhm has visited the White House to hang with the president, as well.

The nexus is clear. Antonio Villaraigosa tosses the new subway station to JMB; Bluhm raises him tons of cash. But Villaraigosa gets another perk, too – he’s pleasing one of Barack Obama’s biggest supporters. No wonder so many people think Obama will appoint Villaraigosa to his cabinet if re-elected. It’s just too bad that high school kids, local homeowners, and disadvantaged blacks have to pay the price for JMB’s greed, Villaraigosa’s aspirations, and Barack Obama’s campaign expenditures.