

*Remarks by CalChamber Chair Frederick R. Ruiz*

## Time for Extraordinary Leadership, Focus on Economy, Jobs in Measuring Solutions

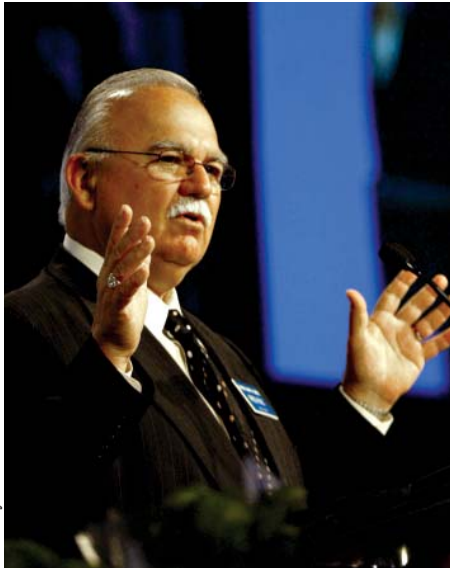


Photo by Aaron Lambert

**Frederick R. Ruiz**

*Following are remarks presented by California Chamber of Commerce Chair Frederick R. Ruiz at the Sacramento Host Breakfast on May 19. Ruiz is co-chairman and co-chief executive officer of Ruiz Foods.*

On behalf of the CalChamber's over 15,000 member companies, who represent approximately 25 percent of the private sector jobs in the state, I want to say thank you to the Sacramento Host Committee.

I am very proud to be here before you as the chair of the Board of Directors for the California Chamber of Commerce.

If you would allow me to turn back the clock 45 years to the year 1964 when our company, Ruiz Foods, was founded by my father and me in Tulare, California.

### Golden Era

By every measurement, California was "quite the place" in 1964. Some have called it the mid-point of our state's great golden era, which occurred in the late 1950s and 1960s.

It was during these years that California invested in a foundation for success by having the vision to move forward with infrastructure investments that made

California great—including water projects, transportation and highways, K-12 schools, and of course our terrific higher education university systems, which includes UC, CSU and our community colleges. It was an era like no other time before or since.

For the business community, this was also a tremendous time—an era that was full of energy, optimism, growth, success and entrepreneurial spirit.

### Humble Beginnings

1964 was the year that two men—a father and son—a team—in the Central Valley of California embarked on a journey to live out their dream of selling authentic frozen Mexican food to California supermarkets.

When my dad and I formed Ruiz Foods, we started out with humble beginnings in a small town and met the challenge of growing demand with a lot of hard work and the determination to become the largest manufacturer of frozen Mexican food in the United States.

Today our headquarters and main facility is a 300,000 square-foot state-of-the-art food processing plant in Dinuba. We have approximately 2,700 team members and have expanded with other facilities in Tulare, California and Denison, Texas to sustain our growth and better service our customers.

We have 200 different products under our signature brand, El Monterey, and our focus hasn't changed—we continue to produce authentic frozen Mexican food based on my mother's recipes—that taste great and are a good value. Thanks, Mom.

I would like to personally thank all of you and your families who purchase our products—you have helped make the Ruiz family's American dream come true. So, thank you very, very much.

### Challenges Today

Now let's fast forward to today—May 19, 2009.

During my years on the CalChamber Board and now as Chair, I have become keenly aware of the many challenges facing our state—from the cost of doing

business, and the natural resource issues like water, to the business and economic climate and the increased importance of higher education.

But on more than one occasion, I've found myself wondering if we were starting Ruiz Foods today, would we be able to succeed and would we be able to pursue our business dream here in California?

In 1964, the decision was simple and a resounding "yes." Today, I'm not so sure—it would definitely be a lot more costly and difficult and I have a lot of unanswered questions.

Let me explain.

Unfortunately, California's recent economic trends are moving in the wrong direction.

During the current recession, California has suffered more than other states. Our unemployment is 11.2 percent, real estate values continue to fall and there is a mass exodus of middle class families from the state. California's deteriorating economic condition is at least partly due to the high cost of doing business here—taxes, fees and mandates that are enacted without considering their cumulative impact on jobs and business expansion.

### Time for Action

Talk is cheap—anyone can talk a good game. But the time for talking is over. These are serious times. It's time for our elected leaders to take action and lead.

A good place to start would be to enact the CalChamber's "job creators" list of bills. This is not a cure-all list for California's business climate, but it's a good starting point. Our "job creators" include proposals to reduce costs to employers, provide sensible regulatory policies, reform our out-of-control legal climate and immediately incentivize companies with tax credits to hire new workers.

And yet, sadly, it appears that because of the strong grip of anti-business interests in the capital, we will see the vast majority of the job creators defeated in the Legislature.

*See Time: Page 8*

## Time for Extraordinary Leadership, Focus on Economy, Jobs

*From Page 7*

On the flip side of the “job creator” list is the CalChamber’s “job killer” list—just released yesterday with over 27 bills on it! It was 25, now it’s 27 and going up.

You would think that in this recession and in this tough business climate that there wouldn’t be a legislator who could possibly introduce a bill that would negatively impact job creation. Yet this is not the case. It’s as if some of our legislators don’t understand that we are in the middle of a recession.

### ‘Do No More Harm’

In the name of improving California’s business climate, we ask our elected leaders—“Do no more harm”— Defeat the job killers.

In addition, we believe that whenever a proposal is before our elected leaders that the first question they all should be asking is: “Will it have a positive impact on jobs and the economy?”

We believe that the economy and jobs must be the litmus test used to measure any and all “solutions.”

As I’m sure you’re aware, legislation always must be reviewed for fiscal impact on the state, and of course California is the national leader when it comes to the environment, so it is no surprise that proposals are subject to environmental review and environmental impact reports.

The CalChamber believes that 2009 is the perfect time to require that all legislative proposals are reviewed for economic impact—to determine if a bill would impact jobs and the economy. Do no harm.

### Extraordinary Leadership

Some people have said that our state is ungovernable. I don’t believe that, but I do know that now is not the time for business as usual. It is time for extraordinary leadership.

We certainly have a lot of work to do if we’re going to recapture the spirit of enterprise that was alive and well in 1964 and reinvigorate our great state.

We need to rekindle the ambition of business growth to make California the land of opportunity once again.

I am an optimist and I do believe it can and will be done.

With your help, we need all of you to engage and deliver the job creation message. Now more than ever we cannot allow our elected officials to just talk a

good game; they need to lead and walk their talk, now more than ever.

With your help we will resurrect a new golden era for the next generations of mothers and fathers, and their daughters and sons to start up their own businesses and grow the California economy, and most importantly, to realize their American dream.

Thank you for this opportunity to share these thoughts with you this morning. We have a lot of work to do! One of my favorite Mexican sayings is “When the going gets tough, the tough get going!” (That’s a joke!)

Thank you so much. Have a great day and I wish all of you a great year! God bless you.

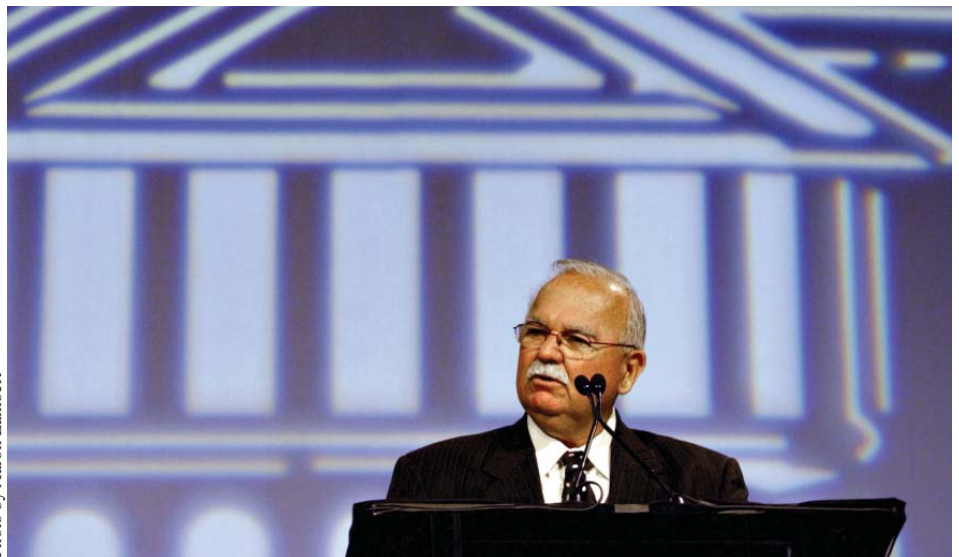


Photo by Aaron Lambert

Frederick R. Ruiz, 2009 CalChamber chair, discusses the state’s need for extraordinary leadership at the Sacramento Host Breakfast.



Ruiz Foods headquarters and main facility in Dinuba is a 300,000 square-foot state-of-the-art food processing plant. The company’s El Monterey brand is the No. 1 frozen Mexican food brand in the United States.