

Dems back curbs on eminent domain

By [Edward Carpenter](#)

Staff Writer

DALY CITY — The California Democratic Party has adopted a resolution opposing the use of eminent domain for redevelopment purposes, thanks in large part to the leadership of two local politicians.

The resolution, presented by Daly City Councilwoman and county Democratic Central Committee member Judith Christensen, along with fellow Central Committee member and Jefferson Elementary School District Board member Annette Hipona, received wide support from the party's executive board at a weekend conference at the end of January.

“It was exhilarating and

scary,” Christensen said of the pair's presentation of the resolution to the board, of which she is also a member. “It is such a critical issue that affects millions of people in the state of California and the responsibility fell on the two of us.”

For Democrats it is important to take a stand on eminent domain as a human rights issue, as opposed to the Republicans who view it as a property rights issue, Hipona said, referring to a bill authored by state Sen. Tom McClintock, R-Simi Valley, that she says attacks rent control and environmental laws related to development.

California Democratic Party spokesman Joe Molica said support of the resolution was key because of a recent Supreme Court case that he called “troubling in the mind of many and [that] needs to be clarified.”

She never imagined that a campaign that grew out of a volunteer effort in her garage opposing a Daly City condo development six years ago would eventually garner such wide attention, Hipona said.

“It's tremendous, especially

in light of the Democratic

theme from the last convention, ‘Democrats Protect Real

People,’ because working-class neighborhoods of minorities or immigrants are often targets of eminent domain,” Christensen said.

The next step in the campaign will be to gather 800,000 signatures before May 1 in order to take the

issue to voters as a proposition. “The hope is that the voters of California will download our petition and send money to help us move it forward,” Hipona said.

Attorney Pete McClowskey said his clients, Aristides and Andrina Sofos, now retired in Nevada, would likely have supported the resolution. The couple settled for \$1.8 million in cash last fall after Daly City reclaimed an auto body shop they owned on Mission Street to build the mixed retail, condominium, parking garage development called the Landmark Plaza.

Jeff Ira, member of the Redwood City Council and mayor at the time the city used eminent domain to reclaim property for its theater project, said he doesn’t support such a blanket resolution. “I still think it is a great tool, but needs to be used with caution,” Ira said. He opposes using eminent domain to reclaim homes

E-mail: ecarpenter@examiner.com