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Sacramento Magazine » July 2006 »

## 50 Most Powerful People

Ed Goldman | From July 2006



**T**hey move things. They shake things. They have the power to get their calls returned, their projects approved and their voices heard. We present, in no particular order, 50 of Sacramento's most influential individuals.

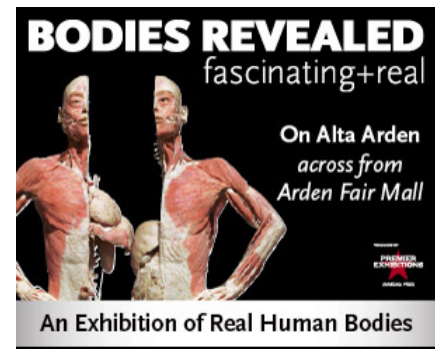
Power. For some of us, all it takes to feel powerful is getting our calls and e-mails answered within a day or scoring an 8 p.m. reservation at a favorite restaurant when we call at 7:45 p.m. For others, having a local news anchor, elected official or Sacramento King greet us by name is enough to cause severe ego bloat—even if the reason we were recognized had something to do with the name tag we were wearing at the time. • All of the individuals you're about to meet are the real power players. They are doers. And just because we don't always see them doing what they do doesn't mean they're not getting it done. They have influence, ability, connections, tenacity, money or some combination thereof. • Our list was compiled from scads of knowledgeable insiders and contributors, vetted by the publishers and staff of this magazine, and eventually handed off to one of the least powerful people in Sacramento: your humble columnist, for whom just imagining life at the top produces nosebleeds.

**Angelo Tsakopoulos** is, in many ways, a throwback: a hugely successful businessman who deploys philanthropy as both a marketing tool and a social responsibility. A devoted family man and a keen judge of people, he's also an ardent Democrat (he entertained then-President Clinton at his Sacramento home) with the remarkable ability and resources to make and keep friends on both sides of the partisan divide. As chairman of AKT Development Corp., he's brought his grown children into the family business—which includes land development, agriculture and even the news media—and passed along to them the mandate of community service.

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On the basis of his largesse, there should be scores of buildings and institutions named for him throughout the region, instead of just a few. His son Kyriakos once told us, "My father's a great man but he doesn't believe in doing that." So what about that Tsakopoulos Library Galleria in downtown Sacramento? Turns out that someone else got it named for him: a former business partner and protégé named Phil Angelides.

**David Taylor's** major urban-core projects have included One Capital Center, Esquire Plaza and the new \$90 million Sacramento City Hall (which sits either behind or in front of the old Sacramento City Hall, depending on whether you enter the government complex from H Street or I Street, and whether you prefer old or new). While most developers have equal amounts of dreams and dollars coursing through their veins, Taylor is known as the kind of guy who delivers the goods because he sincerely believes in the product. While he builds office buildings in the suburbs, he thinks the city is where the action and the region's future might well reside. That's why he's hoping to turn a segment of the long-beleaguered K Street Mall into a model of metropolitan renewal and is building the new 25-story U.S. Bank Tower at 621 Capitol Mall. If downtown Sacramento takes off in the next few years as a thriving city, don't be surprised if someone calls much of its success Taylor-made.

**Janis Besler Heaphy** became the first person to carry the title of publisher at The Sacramento Bee—and one of the country's few female daily newspaper publishers—nearly nine years ago. The soft-spoken, iron-willed Heaphy is essentially the paper's übersalesperson: its out-front booster, philanthropist and, sure, occasional apologist. A onetime English teacher, she broke into the news business at the formidable Los Angeles Times, eventually becoming its senior vice president of advertising and marketing. A fiercely intelligent woman with a charming residue of shyness, Heaphy probably is more recognizable in business and nonprofit circles than most of The Bee's columnists—although unlike them, her photo rarely appears in print. Perhaps this proves that true power rarely requires visual aids.

A day or two after **Bob Thomas** left his post as Sacramento city manager, we ran into him having lunch at the Sutter Club with Gregory Thatch, who heads up one of the region's most influential land-use law firms. (Its client list includes Angelo Tsakopoulos, K. Hovnanian Forecast Homes, the Buzz Oates Companies, Downtown Ford, Richland Communities and the Panattoni Development Company, among many others.) For years, this talented and ubiquitous attorney has made pals of clients and clients of pals, in the process representing some of the area's most media-covered developers and their most coveted developments. Thatch once characterized himself to a reporter as "notorious," a self-mocking reference to his being so well-known in government circles that he saw no harm in a move to have lobbyists identify themselves at public meetings. Most recently, he helped guide the scaling back of a Tsakopoulos family project that would have seen a replica of the classic Greek Parthenon recreated atop a high-rise on Capitol Mall. Thatch probably would have hung out there a lot: This is, remember, a man with friends in high places.

**Tina Thomas** probably isn't the best person to tell you're tired. A highly regarded land use lawyer—the Sacramento County Bar Association gave her its 2005 Distinguished Attorney Award—Thomas also is a nonstop community advocate, a fundraiser, a generous donor, a wife and a mother of three predictably overachieving kids. She helped author the invaluable, oft-cited guide to the precedent-setting California Environmental Quality Act and had the temerity (and knowledge) to fight Sacramento City Hall when the latter sued Loaves and Fishes, which feeds the area's hungry and homeless, for alleged permit violations. (The case, one of many that Thomas has taken on free of charge, was resolved in mediation.) In her spare time, when she isn't saving programs, planets and people, Thomas can be found coaching high school teams at the Center for Youth Citizenship or helping lead the fight for such groundbreaking initiatives as 2004's Prop. 63, which taxes incomes topping \$1 million a year to fund mental health services. So go ahead: If you have a worthy cause or a complex legal problem, call Tina Thomas. Just don't yawn during the call.

As a rule, if the general manager of a television station is successful at increasing ratings and profitability, he or she gets hired away by a station in a larger market.

**Elliott Troshinsky** has stuck around. When he was vice president and general