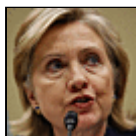


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Expo 2010: U.S. 'late' as S.F. gets spotlight

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What the 2008 Olympics did for Beijing - blasting China's capital onto the world stage - Expo 2010 will do for San Francisco's sister city, Shanghai.

More than 190 countries have signed up to put their best faces forward there. Under the theme Better City, Better Life, the \$1.5 billion international fair, which runs from May until October, is expected to attract 70 million visitors. "In terms of expos, it will create world history," said Shanghai's Vice Mayor **Yang Xiong** at Tuesday night's promotional dinner at the St. Francis Yacht Club.

Why, then, isn't a U.S. presence featured in the 50-page glossy brochure touting the expo? That's because, until recently, there wasn't going to be one, apart from corporate pavilions representing the likes of **Cisco Systems, Coca-Cola, IBM** and **GM** (jointly, with **Shanghai Automotive Industry Corp.**). The U.S. was "late," said Yang, diplomatically.

A federal law banning the use of public funds for world fairs - a prize exhibit in the Anachronism Hall of Fame, if ever there was one - was the chief obstacle. That is, until Secretary of State **Hillary Rodham Clinton** put her foot down, avoiding a faux pax that would have been laughable if it hadn't carried potentially deleterious consequences.

"Until she committed her personal prestige and the resources of her office, it was not at all clear the U.S. would participate," said **Jose Villareal**, Clinton's point person for the U.S. pavilion, who attended Tuesday night's gathering.

The pavilion, which is now being built, has since raised \$45 million in corporate contributions, including \$5 million from **Chevron Corp.**, qualifying the San Ramon oil company as a "global sponsor."

Other Bay Area contributors in the \$1 million-plus range include **Intel Corp.** and **Visa Inc.**

E&J Gallo Winery, I'm told, is providing the wine to be served "in the Pavilion's fine dining area."

"We have a number of active prospects that will get us closer to our goal (of \$61 million) but are still aggressively raising funds," said Villareal.

For the sake of comparison, Saudi Arabia came up with \$160 million and France (the first stop on Yang's Western promotional swing) with \$70 million.

With Expo 2010 (links.sfgate.com/ZIVU) focusing on sustainability, high and green tech, alternative energy and so forth - China's **Suntech**, which has a 70-person San Francisco office, is the event's prime solar panel installer - should not more Bay Area companies be helping out?

"Yes, California companies could do more," said Yang.

A best practitioner: San Francisco's banner, however, will be waving high. It is the only U.S. city to be featured in Expo 2010's Urban Best Practices Area, designed to show "programs and practices designed to improve the quality of urban life by typical cities in the world."

Details of San Francisco's involvement, and other aspects of "San Francisco week" at the expo, are being worked out. They include a sustainable energy conference, co-sponsored by **Chinese Business Network** (China's equivalent of **CNBC**).

Another Bay Area company playing a major role is **Peregrine Travel Group**. The Danville travel company is Shanghai's "designated agent" for tickets to the expo. Information at www.worldexpochina.net.

Will she or won't she? Clinton says she is definitely going to Expo 2010. A mayoral colleague said **Gavin Newsom** will definitely be visiting Shanghai next year. But is **Nancy Pelosi** going with **President Obama** to the climate change summit in Copenhagen beginning next week?

Pelosi has refused to say, although House Minority Whip **Eric Cantor**, R-Va., said Wednesday that she is.

"Not true," said Pelosi's office when I inquired. But, the statement added, "a bipartisan group of members of the House have expressed interest in attending ... and the speaker will make a decision about her own possible attendance soon."

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