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## **Welcome/ Master of Ceremonies:**

### **Curt Hagman, San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors**



Curt Hagman was elected to serve San Bernardino County's Fourth District in November 2014. The Fourth District includes the cities of Chino, Chino Hills, Montclair, Ontario, and the southern portion of Upland. It spans approximately 133 square miles and is home to over 400,000 residents.

Supervisor Hagman works tirelessly to represent the community and is often seen working to bring new ideas and better opportunities for families, businesses, workers, and non-profit organizations in the County. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Supervisor Hagman created the Covid Compliance Partnership Program that helped distribute \$30 million in grants to over 5,000 small businesses in San Bernardino County so they could remain

open. Under Supervisor Hagman's leadership, San Bernardino County distributed personal protective equipment to nurses, first responders, and seniors to keep them safe throughout the pandemic. In 2021 Supervisor Hagman successfully led the County in updating its Charter to ensure greater transparency and accountability in government. He has also been integral in establishing sister city agreements to attract trade opportunities for local businesses; and attracting businesses like TopGolf and Starlink to invest in San Bernardino County.

Another highlight for the Supervisor has been his role in the successful transfer of returning Ontario International Airport to local control in 2016. Supervisor Hagman worked behind the scenes to reinstate serious dialogue between LAWA (Los Angeles World Airports) and OIAA (Ontario International Airport Authority) on the transfer of control that led to the final agreement. As Vice President of the OIAA, he presently serves on the Public Safety and Legislative Committees, along with Chairing the Emerging Technologies Committee.

Hagman has been recognized for his leadership and was elected unanimously by his colleagues to serve two terms as Chairman of the Board of Supervisors. Hagman also serves on the following boards, commissions, and committees: South Coast AQMD Governing Board; the Governing Board of Inland Empire Health Plan (IEHP); OmniTrans; Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), Past President; San Bernardino County Transportation Authority (SBCTA); and serves as a Lieutenant Colonel, Civil Military Operations Officer for the 40<sup>th</sup> Infantry Support Detachment, in the California State Guard..

Prior to being elected to the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors in 2014, Supervisor Hagman began his public service as a Chino Hills Parks & Recreation Commissioner. He later represented Chino Hills as a Councilmember and Mayor; served on the San Bernardino County Workforce Investment Board; and served six years in the California Legislature as a member of the State Assembly.

Supervisor Hagman holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology from UCLA. He, his wife Rossana, and his family currently live in Chino Valley.



## Biographies

### **General Session: Economic Development near Airports**

#### **Moderator: Derek Armstrong, Deputy Executive Officer, San Bernardino County**



Derek Armstrong serves as the Deputy Executive Officer for San Bernardino County, where he oversees the County's Community Revitalization Group, a portfolio focused on strengthening neighborhoods, advancing strategic reinvestment, and coordinating place-based initiatives that improve quality of life for residents across the region. In this role, Derek provides executive leadership across complex, multi-departmental programs that include economic opportunity, housing and community development, homelessness solutions, and collaborative efforts that support long-term community resilience.

Prior to this appointment, Derek served as the County's Director of Economic Development, where he led countywide business attraction, retention, export development, and strategic initiatives supporting the largest county by area in the United States. Under his leadership, San Bernardino County earned multiple state and national awards recognizing innovative programs in business support, entrepreneurship development, and international trade.

Before joining San Bernardino County, Derek held key roles within Nevada's economic and policy landscape. As Director of Economic Development & Tourism for the City of Henderson, he led citywide programs that supported business expansion, workforce development, and strategic industry growth. Previously, as Deputy Director at the Nevada Governor's Office of Economic Development, he supported more than 90 companies through major projects that contributed over \$7.8 billion in capital investment statewide and assisted in negotiating incentives for high-impact developments, including Google's \$600 million data center in Henderson.

Derek is also a former Nevada State Assemblyman, representing District 21, where he chaired the Assembly Committee on Taxation and served on Ways & Means and Education. During his legislative tenure, he advanced major economic and infrastructure initiatives, including policy frameworks supporting modernized transportation services and large-scale capital projects.

With experience spanning law, legislation, economic development, and executive public administration, Derek brings a multidisciplinary approach to leadership — one centered on strategic investment, strong interagency collaboration, and improving outcomes for communities.

He holds a Juris Doctor from the William S. Boyd School of Law at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and a B.A. in Economics from UNLV.

## Biographies

### Panelists:

#### **Mike Burrows, Chief Executive Officer, San Bernardino International Airport**



Michael Burrows currently serves as Chief Executive Officer for the Inland Valley Development Agency and SBD International Airport, overseeing the privatization of the former Norton Air Force Base in Southern California, which includes Alliance California, a Hillwood development. As an established development and transportation professional, with over 28 years of public and private sector management expertise. Michael has a proven background in municipal, special district, corporate, transportation, commercial development, real estate, international trade, foreign direct investment, and legislative sectors - focusing his efforts on delivering quality projects, programs, and services, including strategic planning, capital planning, strategic alliances, and public-private partnerships. Mr. Burrows received undergraduate degrees from California State University, San Bernardino and an M.B.A. from the Peter F. Drucker Graduate School of Management in Claremont, CA.

Since 1997, he has dedicated himself to transportation, infrastructure, and economic development in the Inland Empire region of Southern California. During his tenure with the Inland Valley Development Agency and Airport, Mr. Burrows has worked to advance over \$360M in public infrastructure projects, resulting in over \$2.6B in private investment, contributing to a total of over \$12B in assessed value across a 14,000-acre project area. The Alliance California partnership has attracted major Fortune 50, 100, and 500 firms to the former base - just reaching over 16 Million square feet of new development after over 20 years of success. In December of 2016, the community witnessed years of revitalization efforts produce 10,786 direct jobs – finally replacing the jobs lost when the base closed. In 2025, the total rose to over 18,693 direct jobs bringing over a total \$5 Billion in economic output for the region. The Airport currently serves multiple MRO's, as well as both UPS and Fed Ex scheduled air cargo gateways and the only Amazon Air Regional Air Hub in Southern California making it the 25th busiest air cargo airport in the United States for yet another year. In August of 2022, the Airport celebrated long-awaited passenger flights with daily service to San Francisco and Provo with Breeze Airways, this year adding an additional nonstop to Provo, still flying today at SBD.

Michael previously worked for the Staubach Company, a real estate/corporate services consulting firm, managing multi-jurisdictional capital and development projects and programs, including asset management and facility development for BNSF Railway Company and its transportation clients throughout the Southwestern United States. Mr. Burrows coordinated property acquisition and entitlements for transload, auto dock, intermodal, and main line freight, commuter, intercontinental rail corridor expansions throughout California, as well as related sales and lease transactions. From Federal grant administration to municipal finance, Foreign Direct Investment programs, business incentive and legislative campaigns to organizational development, environmental planning, permitting, transaction management, and resource alignment. He has successfully deployed over \$115 Million in EB-5 portfolios and over \$260 Million in municipal financings. He currently serves on several boards of directors and organizations and is a member of the California Inland Empire District Export Council (CIEDEC), a U.S. Department of Commerce Federal appointment. He continues to serve as President of SBD Cares, a California non-profit corporation and helped found and oversee the UAS Center at SBD and the new Norton Test Range advancing the next aerospace technologies and innovations the world will soon see.

## Biographies

### **Atif Elkadi, Chief Executive Officer, Ontario International Airport**



With over 17 years of extensive senior-level expertise across various facets of the aviation industry, including airport operations, strategic marketing, social media, brand management, public relations, marketing, advertising, and strategic communications, Atif Elkadi currently serves as the Chief Executive Officer for Ontario International Airport. In this capacity, he orchestrates day-to-day operations, spearheads an expansive capital development program, oversees revenue management, finance, administrative functions, marketing and communications, and information technology, consistently exploring innovative approaches to drive both revenue and passenger growth.

Bringing his expertise to the global stage, Atif made significant contributions to Dubai International Airport, the world's busiest airport for international passengers. During his tenure, he spearheaded the development and management of internal communications, customer service communications, and social media strategies, ensuring alignment with the diverse communication needs of employees and customers.

Atif holds a Master's Degree in Communication Management from the University of Southern California, an M.B.A. from the University of Phoenix, and a Bachelor's Degree in Journalism from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. His diverse educational background, combined with his wealth of experience, positions him as a highly accomplished professional in the aviation industry.

### **Session 1A: AI in Government**

#### **Moderator: Ray Ebert, Deputy City Manager, City of Fontana**



Ray Ebert serves as the Deputy City Manager for Administrative Services at the City of Fontana, California. With over 20 years of leadership experience in public administration and operations, Ray plays a crucial role in overseeing city services, driving strategic initiatives, and enhancing municipal efficiency.

Ray holds a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science and a Master of Business Administration, combining technical expertise with strategic leadership. Before transitioning into local government executive roles, he had a distinguished career in technology, including positions with the San Diego Padres, Houston Astros, and Miami Dolphins. His expertise in IT and operations extended into municipal service when he led Fontana's Information

Technology Department, modernizing the city's infrastructure and streamlining services. Now, as a senior city executive, he applies his strategic planning and management skills across multiple departments.

Beyond his professional achievements, Ray is a proud husband, father, and dog dad. He is also a passionate endurance athlete, having successfully completed the Leadville Trail 100 MTB five times, demonstrating the same perseverance and dedication in his personal pursuits as he does in public service.

## Biographies

### Panelists:

#### **Dan Munsey, Fire Chief/Fire Warden, San Bernardino County Fire Protection District**



Fire Chief Dan Munsey was appointed to lead the San Bernardino County Fire Protection District in November 2019. The San Bernardino County Fire Protection District provides fire protection and emergency medical services to both the unincorporated areas of San Bernardino County and 24 incorporated cities. Chief Munsey brings over 29 years of service to the citizens of San Bernardino County, with experience as a paramedic, firefighter, company officer, and chief officer. He has held the ranks of Battalion Chief, Division Chief, and Assistant Chief over the past 15 years. San Bernardino County Fire is recognized as one of the most innovative and technologically advanced fire agencies in the United States.

Chief Munsey holds a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration and a Master's degree in Public Administration. He is also a graduate of the California Special Districts Association Leadership Academy. Chief Munsey is a credentialed Chief Fire Officer through the Center for Public Safety Excellence and holds a California State Fire Marshal Chief Fire Officer certification. He has presented at numerous prestigious events, including Fire Rescue International, the TEEEX Leadership Academy, and various other international public safety conferences. In addition, Chief Munsey regularly publishes articles and white papers on fire service topics and actively contributes to fire service research through multiple institutions.

Chief Munsey is actively involved in the leadership of several committees and associations. He currently serves as the President of the California Metro Chiefs, a director on the prestigious FIRESCOPE board, and a member of the Western Fire Chiefs Association. Additionally, he is the former Chairperson of the California Fire Chiefs Operations Section and the immediate past Chairperson of the International Fire Chiefs Association Technology Council.

#### **Darryl Polk, Director of Education, Public Technology Institute**



Darryl Polk is a veteran public service leader, educator, and speaker with over 35 years of experience leading teams in public safety and information technology, including having served on Police Command Staff for the City of Ontario, the first Chief Innovation Officer for the City of Rancho Cucamonga, and the Chief Technology Officer for the County of Riverside, California. Darryl is a graduate of Villanova University with a master's in public administration, a Certified Government Chief Information Officer (CGCIO), and is currently completing his PhD in Philosophy of Computer Sciences.

In his current role with Public Technology Institute (PTI), Darryl develops and instructs educational programs for public sector leaders, including the flagship CGCIO course as an adjunct professor with Rutgers University.



## Biographies

### **Session 1B: Opportunity Zones 2.0**

#### **Moderator: Derek Armstrong, Deputy Executive Officer, San Bernardino County**



Derek serves as the Deputy Executive Officer, for San Bernardino County. Recently joining San Bernardino County in June of 2022, Mr. Armstrong helps promote a diversified economy by attracting new business and assisting business expansion, encouraging entrepreneurial enterprise, and working with industry partners to increase business competitiveness in the region.

Mr. Armstrong's previous economic development roles include serving as the Director of Economic Development for the City of Henderson, Nevada, and the Deputy Director of the Nevada Governor's Office of Economic Development.

Mr. Armstrong also served as an Assemblyman in the Nevada Legislature. He was the chairman of the Assembly committee on Taxation and chaired the Assembly committee of the whole for one regular session and two special sessions. While serving in the Nevada legislature Mr. Armstrong helped pass Economic Development legislation including abatement programs related to Data Centers and the Aviation industry.

Previously, Mr. Armstrong founded and practiced at the Arlint & Armstrong law firm, providing service to individuals and businesses in the areas of Tax, Trust and Estate and Contract Negotiations.

Mr. Armstrong graduated from the William S. Boyd School of Law with a Juris Doctor in Law and a Bachelor's degree in Economics from the University of Nevada Las Vegas. He also served five years in the United States Marines Corps achieving the rank of Staff Sergeant (E-6), receiving numerous medals and decorations.

#### **Panelists:**

#### **Brian Coleman, Project Financing Manager, California Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development**



Mr. Coleman is the Project Financing Manager on the Regional Engagement team at the California Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development serves as the Project Financing Manager on the Regional Engagement team at the California Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz), where he supports economic development stakeholders across the state in identifying funding sources to advance local projects and initiatives.

In his previous role, Brian served as the Place-Based Incentives Specialist at GO-Biz, where he specialized in federal incentive programs, including Opportunity Zones. He is currently playing a lead role in organizing California's Opportunity Zones 2.0 selection process. Brian is a graduate of California State University, Sacramento, where he earned a degree in Economics. He currently resides in San Luis Obispo, California.



## Biographies

### **Melissa Howlett, Regional Business Development Manager, California Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development**



Melissa Howlett is the Regional Business Development Manager for the Inland Empire region with the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz), supporting business expansion, job creation, and investment across Southern California's Inland Empire. An experienced economic development professional, she collaborates with regional partners and companies locally, nationally, and internationally on site-selection, state incentives, and workforce initiatives that strengthen the regional economy.

Melissa is a graduate of Chapman University in Organizational Leadership and Communication.

### **Session 2A: Preparing the Next Generation of the County's Workforce**

#### **Moderator: Brad Gates, Director of Workforce Development, San Bernardino County**



In this role, Brad oversees the County's workforce development programs, including the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the America's Job Centers of California.

Prior to his current role, Brad served as Assistant Director of Workforce Development for San Bernardino County, and as the Business Operations Director for the City of Ontario.

Brad holds a Master's degree in Public Administration from Cal Poly Pomona.

#### **Panelists:**

#### **Leo Gonzales, Director of Human Resources, San Bernardino County**



Leo Gonzales has over 30-years of professional experience dedicated to public service and believes in the motto of "People Serving People." He is currently the Human Resources Director for San Bernardino County. Leo's previous roles include being the County Labor Relations Chief. Prior to joining the County, Leo worked in Human Resources at the University of California, Riverside, and the City of Riverside.

Leo holds a Master of Public Administration with an emphasis in Human Resources along with a Bachelor of Science in Workforce education and Development.

## Biographies

### **Chelsea Ramirez, Workforce Development Coordinator, San Bernardino City Unified School District**



Chelsea Ramirez brings a unique combination of leadership experience across education, public service, and private industry, with a career dedicated to strengthening communities and building meaningful connections between education and the workforce. She began her career as an English Learner and Advanced Placement Literature teacher in the San Bernardino City Unified School District, where she served for 13 years supporting diverse student populations and preparing students for academic and professional success. She later moved into school leadership and spent six years as a high school administrator in Beaumont Unified School District, where she focused on advancing student achievement, leadership development, and workforce readiness.

For the past two and a half years, Chelsea has applied her combined experience in education and business to workforce development initiatives throughout San Bernardino County. In her current role as the Coordinator over Workforce Development, she leads efforts to build and expand Career Technical Education (CTE) pathways, creating strategic partnerships between the school district, local industry, and community leaders. Her work centers on designing programs that connect high school students to meaningful career opportunities after graduation while helping businesses develop a strong, skilled talent pipeline—ensuring both students and employers benefit from these collaborative efforts.

Chelsea also brings significant private-sector experience as one of the former owners of Hallmark Southwest Corporation. Hallmark was one of the largest family-owned manufactured housing businesses in the region, which operated successfully for more than 40 years. In addition, she has served for the past six years as a San Bernardino County Juvenile Probation Commissioner, providing oversight and leadership to support positive outcomes for youth in the justice system. A resident of Yucaipa, Chelsea is a proud LEO wife and mama and remains actively involved in her community through youth sports and local civic engagement.

### **Renay Sehgal Mehta, Vice President, Chino Valley Chamber of Commerce**



Renay Sehgal Mehta leads efforts to advance regional economic growth, expand workforce opportunities, and support small businesses. She plays a central role in driving Upskill Chino Valley, an award-winning initiative focused on workforce development, leadership pathways, entrepreneurship, and economic growth.

She also leads partnerships that support justice-impacted individuals in accessing employment and long-term career pathways, working closely with employers, educators, and community organizations to develop inclusive talent pipelines that address workforce needs and promote economic mobility. In collaboration with the Chamber team, she helps deliver programs, convenings, and resources that strengthen businesses and the regional economy.

Renay has been recognized as one of ACCE's Top 40 Under 40 Emerging Leaders and was named 2023 Woman of the Year by Assemblymember Freddie Rodriguez and the City of Chino, as well as Staff Member of the Year by W.A.C.E. She is a graduate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Business Leads Fellowship and Talent Pipeline Management programs.

Guided by the belief, "Let the beauty of what you love be what you do," Renay brings a collaborative and purpose-driven approach to her work. Outside of her professional role, she enjoys traveling, hiking, and spending time with her two sons.

## Biographies

### **Session 2B: San Bernardino Regional Housing Trust**

#### **Moderator: Monique Reza-Arellano, Director, San Bernardino Council of Governments**



Monique Arellano serves as the Director of San Bernardino Council of Governments for San Bernardino Council of Governments and San Bernardino County Transportation Authority (SBCTA/SBCOG). In this position she works to implement the diverse and vast priorities of the Board of Directors and works to establish and implement policy in matters both internal to the agency and among external projects within the boundaries of the member agencies. Her responsibilities include projects in the sectors of housing, homelessness, public safety, resiliency, energy, and economic development. Prior to this, she served at the City of Fontana for 10 years and worked as an analyst supporting Transportation Project Management, Planning, and the City Manager's Office.

She is a graduate of the UCR School of Public Policy with a Master's Degree in Public Policy, and she earned her Bachelor's Degree in Political Science at Cal State San Bernardino.

#### **Panelists:**

#### **Bill Higgins, Executive Director, California Association of Councils of Governments**



Mr. Higgins is an enthusiastic regionalist and enjoys working on the day to day policy issues that improve the ability of regional governments to serve their member cities and counties. Mr. Higgins joined CALCOG as its executive director in 2011. Previously, he spent 11 years as a senior staff attorney, program manager, and legislative representative for the League of California Cities and its nonprofit affiliate, the Institute of Local Government. There, he focused his efforts on local and regional planning, housing, economic development, and land use policy. He has been an adjunct professor at Sonoma State University and teaches periodic classes through the UC Davis and UCLA Extension Programs. In his college years, Mr.

Higgins demonstrated an odd preference for bucked-tooth mammals, getting a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture & Resource Economics from Oregon State University (Go Beavers) and a law degree from the University of Minnesota (Go Golden Gophers)

#### **Chris Gray, Interim Executive Director, Western Riverside Council of Governments**



Christopher Gray is the WRCOG Interim Executive Director. Since 2016 he has overseen the nation's largest regional transportation mitigation fee program and leading initiatives that have funded more than 150 major infrastructure projects. Under his leadership, WRCOG has expanded regional services, secured over \$67 million in grant funding for member agencies, and pioneered one of California's first regional VMT mitigation programs.

A longtime Riverside County resident and frequent statewide keynote speaker, Chris brings extensive expertise in transportation, economic development, and regional planning.



## Biographies

### **General Session 2: Developments and Housing in the Inland Empire**

#### **Moderator: Greg Devereaux, Retired, Managing Partner, Worthington Partners**



Mr. Devereaux served in state and local government for over 40 years, holding various leadership positions, including City Manager of both Fontana and Ontario. He finished his public sector career as Chief Executive Officer of San Bernardino County. He retired and opened his own consulting firm nine years ago working with public and private clients.

Mr. Devereaux holds a Juris Doctorate from West Virginia University. He is a Fellow at the National Academy of Public Administration. He is a Past President of the California Redevelopment Association and served on numerous committees at the League of California Cities and the California State Association of Counties.

#### **Panelists:**

#### **Randall Lewis, Executive Vice President, Lewis Group of Companies**



With over 50-years' experience in the real estate industry, Randall Lewis is Executive Vice President and a Principal of Lewis Management Corp., a member of the Lewis Group of Companies.

The Lewis Group of Companies is one of the most active real estate developers in California and Nevada. They are developing over a dozen significant master planned communities and own over 35 shopping centers. In addition, the Lewis Group has many apartment and industrial projects underway throughout California and Nevada. The Lewis Group owns over 13,000 apartments and controls land for over 40,000 future homes and apartments. Throughout its history, they've well over 60,000 homes and apartments.

Randall served as president of the Building Industry Association Baldy View Chapter and also served as a lifetime director of the National Association of Homebuilders. He currently serves on the Southern California Leadership Council. Randall served 12 years on the Executive Committee of the Southern California Association of Governments. He supports the Urban Land Institute (ULI)/Randall Lewis Center for Sustainability and the ULI/Randall Lewis Building Healthy Places Forum. Randall is an active and philanthropic supporter of health, education, entrepreneurship, and the arts. Through his generosity and support, Randall has helped establish the University of La Verne's Randall Lewis Center for Well-Being and Research, and the University of La Verne's Randall Lewis Center for Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Social Impact, as well as Claremont McKenna College's Randall Lewis Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, and because of his generous support, Chaffey College has opened the Randall Lewis Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation and has made a naming gift to California State University of San Bernardino for the Randall W. Lewis School for Entrepreneurship and Innovation.

Randall has received numerous awards including the 2016 Inland Empire Champion Award from the Inland Empire Hispanic Leadership Council, and the 2019 Ontario Museum Art & Culture Award. In 2021, Randall received the UC Riverside Policy Innovator Award and in 2024, he received the Growing Inland Achievement Award in Innovation. In 2026, Randall was named in Inland Empire Magazine one of its "50 Players Who Shaped the Region in the Last 50 Years."

In 2021, Randall received an Honorary Doctorate in Humane Letters from California State University San Bernardino. He also received an Honorary Doctorate in Humane Letters from the University of La Verne in 2022.

## Biographies

### **Mark Torres, Division President, Lennar – Inland Empire Division**



Mr. Torres manages Lennar's operations in San Bernardino and Riverside counties. His responsibilities include growing Lennar's market share and managing Lennar's business operations.

Mr. Torres joined Lennar in 1998 and has held the positions of Controller, Vice President of Land Acquisition, Vice President of Sales and Division President. In his tenure at Lennar Mr. Torres, executed joint venture transactions, implemented innovative product concepts and managed operations of over 300 associates and 2,400 annual deliveries.

Prior to Lennar, Mr. Torres spent four years at Price Waterhouse Coopers in Los Angeles earning his California CPA credentials. Mr. Torres graduated from the University of Southern California in 1992 with a bachelor's degree.

### **Legislative Roundtable**

#### **Moderator: Chad Mayes, Partner, Capitol Advocacy and California State Assembly Retired**



Chad Mayes is a Partner at Capitol Advocacy. He advises clients on issues spanning the intersection of public policy and industry. With over two decades of experience in the public sector, he brings a unique perspective and unparalleled expertise to the firm's clients. Mayes began his career as a financial advisor and small business owner. He then served as Mayor and Council Member at the Town of Yucca Valley, and as a board member of the San Bernardino Associated Governments and the League of California Cities. He later served as Chief of Staff to the Chair of the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors.

In 2014, he was elected to the California State Assembly, representing the 42nd District in the Inland Empire. He quickly established himself as a dynamic and effective leader, earning the respect and trust of his peers and was elected Assembly Republican Leader after only 10 months in office. In 2019, he dropped his Republican party affiliation and was successful in running for re-election as an Independent in 2020.

Throughout his time in the Assembly, Mayes was known for his ability to identify pragmatic policy solutions that improved the lives of Californians and helped the state maintain its position as a global leader in the 21st century. He traveled extensively throughout the state, engaging with a wide range of stakeholders, groups, and businesses to better understand issues and build support for key policies. He was particularly successful in his district, earning high marks as a consensus builder and getting things done for his constituents.

On statewide issues, Mayes played a key role in crafting and passing some of California's most significant policy reforms, including California's landmark Cap and Trade Law, the SB 901 Commission that reformed wildfire response and mitigation efforts, and the bill that created the California Wildfire Fund, which protected ratepayers, held utility executives accountable, and helped victims regain their lives.

Mayes also co-founded New Way California along with former Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, an organization dedicated to putting people above political parties and improving the lives of all Californians.

Throughout his time in the assembly, Mayes served on several committees, including the Assembly Health Committee and Insurance Committees, the Utilities and Energy and Governmental Organization committees. Mayes was appointed by then-Speaker Toni Atkins to serve on the Little Hoover Commission. Mayes was an original founder and co-chair of the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus.



## Biographies

### Panelists

#### **Bill Higgins, Executive Director, California Association of Councils of Governments**



Mr. Higgins is an enthusiastic regionalist and enjoys working on the day to day policy issues that improve the ability of regional governments to serve their member cities and counties. Mr. Higgins joined CALCOG as its executive director in 2011. Previously, he spent 11 years as a senior staff attorney, program manager, and legislative representative for the League of California Cities and its nonprofit affiliate, the Institute of Local Government. There, he focused his efforts on local and regional planning, housing, economic development, and land use policy. He has been an adjunct professor at Sonoma State University and teaches periodic classes through the UC Davis and UCLA Extension Programs. In his college years, Mr.

Higgins demonstrated an odd preference for bucked-tooth mammals, getting a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture & Resource Economics from Oregon State University (Go Beavers) and a law degree from the University of Minnesota (Go Golden Gophers)

#### **Jason Rhine, Senior Director of Legislative Affairs, League of California Cities**



Jason oversees state and federal governmental relations and manages a team of seven Legislative Advocates and three Policy Analysts.

Before joining the League of California Cities, Jason served as Director of Advocacy for the California Outdoor Heritage Alliance where he focused on issues related to wildlife conservation, natural resource management, land use, and water. Jason has also worked for the California Waterfowl Association, former Assembly Member Barbara S. Matthews, and numerous political campaigns.

Jason lives in the foothills east of Sacramento with his wife and teenage daughter. Jason has a Bachelor's degree in Social Science from California State University, Sacramento.

The League of California Cities (Cal Cities) has been shaping the Golden State's political landscape since the association was founded in 1898. Cal Cities defends and expands local control through advocacy efforts in the Legislature, at the ballot box, in the courts, and through strategic outreach that informs and educates the public, policymakers, and opinion leaders. Cal Cities also offers education and training programs designed to teach city officials about new developments in their field and exchange solutions to common challenges facing their cities.

## Biographies

### **Nicole Wordelman, Legislative Advocate, Precision Advocacy Group LLC**



Nicole is a legislative advocate with more than 20 years of experience representing local governments and mission-driven organizations before the California State Legislature, administration, and state agencies. Registered since 2006, she is known for navigating complex policy and budget issues with a steady hand, and just enough creativity to get things across the finish line.

Nicole currently serves as a Legislative Advocate with Precision Advocacy Group LLC, where she has been since 2019. She previously held advocacy roles at Platinum Advisors and Suter, Wallauch, Corbett & Associates. Over her career, she has represented a wide range of clients, including Avenu

Insights & Analytics, Alameda County, the City and County of San Francisco, the City of Berkeley, Habitat for Humanity, Innovage, the City of Ontario, Orange County, San Bernardino County, the City of Santa Cruz, and Ventura County, among others.

Her work spans legislative and budget advocacy across key policy areas such as homelessness, housing, public safety, elections, health, and human services. She has extensive experience guiding sponsored legislation through the process, securing budget investments, and ensuring local government priorities are well represented at the State Capitol.

Outside of the Capitol, Nicole brings the same curiosity and appreciation for detail to her personal interests – she’s an avid art enthusiast, a devoted dog person, and someone who never passes up a good glass of wine. That balance of creativity and pragmatism carries through in her work, helping her approach complex policy challenges with both perspective and precision.

She holds a Bachelor of Science in Art from the University of Oregon.

### **Economic Update**

#### **Dr. Chris Thornberg, Founding Partner, Beacon Economics LLC**



An expert in economic and revenue forecasting, regional economics, economic policy, and labor and real estate markets, Dr. Thornberg has consulted for private industry, cities, counties, and public agencies. He became nationally known for forecasting the subprime mortgage market crash that began in 2007 and was one of the few economists on record to predict the global economic recession that followed.

Dr. Thornberg holds a PhD in Business Economics from The Anderson School at UCLA, and a B.S. degree in Business Administration from the State University of New York at Buffalo.