



SPEAKERS

Jim Richardson

Jim Richardson has extensive experience leading government and private organizations. In government, he served as Chief of Staff to the Republican Leader in both houses of the California Legislature, Chief Administrative Officer of the California State Assembly and Chief Deputy Insurance Commissioner for the Department of Insurance. He also served as Transition Director for Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. Outside of government, Jim served as the President & CEO of The Dentists Insurance Company and sat on the Board of Directors of the State Compensation Insurance Fund. Jim served as White House Advance Representative for President George W. Bush. He started his professional career teaching high school. Jim earned a BA in English Literature from UC Berkley.

Debra Gravert

Debra Gravert is the Chief Administrative Officer of the California State Assembly, where she directs the daily operations, managing a wide range of areas including accounting, payroll, reproduction, facilities, legal affairs, security, travel, information technology, Public Records Act requests, and administrative press issues. Prior to her current role, Debra worked for a number of assemblymembers in various capacities. She has been with the Assembly for 37 years.

Hannah Skaggs

Hannah Skaggs is the Chief of Staff to Assemblywoman Diane Dixon. Previously, Hannah was the Legislative Director for Senator Melissa Melendez in the California State Senate and for Assemblyman Frank Bigelow in the California State Assembly. She also has experience in public affairs and public relations, having worked as an Account Coordinator at Randle Communications. Skaggs was both an Assembly Fellow and a student intern through the Sacramento Semester program. Hannah is a graduate of CSU Sacramento.

Aaron Skaggs

Aaron Skaggs currently serves as the Chief of Staff for California State Senator Anthony Portantino. Skaggs previously served as a consultant for the California Senate Democratic Caucus and as Chief of Staff for California State Senator Melissa Hurtado. He has also worked as a Legislative Director for California State Senator Josh Newman and as a Policy Consultant for California State Senator Isadore Hall III. Skaggs began his career in politics as a Panetta Institute Congressional Intern in the office of Congressman Fortney "Pete" Stark and as a student intern. Aaron is a graduate of CSU Chico and earned a master's degree at USC.



SPEAKERS

Robert Hanna

Robert Hanna is a successful business professional with experience in sales, operations, and management. He currently serves as Manager of the Office of Member Support & Outreach for the California State Assembly, where he has worked since 2012. Prior to this role, Hanna held multiple local and regional positions at Security National Mortgage Company, where he was responsible for national company growth and the personal development of sales teams across the United States. Robert attended Sierra College.

Katie Phillips

Katie Phillips is the Director of Capitol Community Outreach for Assembly Republican Leader James Gallagher and has been with the legislature for more than 12 years. Previously she worked for Assemblyman Frank Bigelow as a Legislative Director and then Chief of Staff. She began as a Scheduler for Assemblywoman Diane Harkey. Katie has been active in staff development efforts and founded the Legislative Directors Caucus. Katie earned a B.A. in Communications/ Public Relations from CSU Sacramento.

Steve Wertheim

Steve Wertheim serves as a Policy Consultant for the Assembly Housing Committee. Prior to this, he spent 12 years as a Principal Planner with the San Francisco Planning Department, where he developed long-range plans and policies for the city. Steve has also worked for the UC Berkeley Center for Labor Research and Education, and the Earned Assets Resource Network. Steve earned a Master's Degree in City/Urban, Regional and Community Planning from UC Berkeley.

David Creager

David Creager currently serves as a lobbyist for Capitol Strategies Group. Prior to this role, he served as Chief of Staff to Assemblyman Dante Acosta. His professional journey also included roles such as Director of Grassroots Advocacy for the California and Nevada Credit Union Leagues, Account Manager at Meridian Pacific, and Campaign Manager for Allard for Assembly. David earned a Bachelor of Arts English Literature from CSU Sacramento.

Brandon Ebeck

Brandon Ebeck is a Government Relations Representative at Pacific Gas & Electric Company. Prior to this, he served in multiple positions in the California Assembly including, Capitol Director for Assemblymembers Catharine Baker and Marc Steinorth and as a Policy Analyst for Assemblymember Chad Mayes. Brandon is a graduate of Cal Poly San Luis Obispo with degrees in History and Political Science.



SPEAKERS

Kirk Kimmelshue

Kirk Kimmelshue is a Lobbyist at Fernández Cervantes Government Affairs. Kirk has previously held positions with major corporations such as Anheuser-Busch, where he served as Region Vice President of State Government Affairs, and Chevron as a Representative in State Government Affairs. Kirk began his Capitol experience in the California State Assembly as Chief of Staff to Assemblyman Frank Bigelow. Kirk did his undergraduate work at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and earned a master's degree in Agricultural Communications at Oklahoma State University.

Lily McKay

Lily McKay is an Associate at California Strategies since January 2020, where she develops and implements project plans and provides strategic counsel for clients. Prior to joining California Strategies, she held positions as an Account Executive at Uearth, where she managed projects and liaised with media teams, and as an Executive Assistant to Senator Scott Wilk. Lily also worked as a Legislative Assistant for Assemblymember Dante Acosta. Lily earned a B.A. in Music from Azusa Pacific University.

Cynthia Bryant

Cynthia Bryant is the Chief of Staff to Assemblyman Greg Wallis. Cynthia has over 25 years of experience in California state government and public policy. She has held various high-level positions throughout her career, including Director and Deputy Director of the California Department of Finance, Chief Deputy Director of Policy for Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, and Director of the Governor's Office of Planning and Research. Bryant has also worked in the private sector, serving as Senior Vice President of Government Affairs for the California Charter Schools Association and Vice President of Russo Marsh + Rogers, Inc. Cynthia is a graduate of Lewis and Clark College and earned her J.D. at the University of California College of the Law.

Nghia Demovic

Nghia is the Chief of Staff for Assemblyman Vince Fong. She has a long history of service in the Capitol. Previously she served as the Press Secretary to several members of the legislature in both houses and the Communications Director for the Senate Minority Leader where she developed statewide media strategy and worked with the press corps across the state. Prior to coming to Sacramento, Nghia was the Manager of Government and Public Affairs at John Wayne Airport in Orange County. Nghia is a graduate of U.C. Irvine.



SPEAKERS

Erin Ivie

Erin is the Communications Director for Assemblymember Buffy Wicks. Erin has a diverse background in all areas of media. Over the course of her career, Erin has done strategic communications consulting, public affairs, crisis communications, been a news reporter, copy editor and writer for both traditional and social media. Erin is a graduate of the University of Utah.

Eytan Wallace

Eytan Wallace is a multimedia journalist and reporter for FOX40 News. Prior to joining FOX40 in August 2021, Eytan worked as a multimedia journalist for KGET-TV 17, the NBC affiliate in Bakersfield, for three years. There, he reported on the active Central Valley political scene, where he had the opportunity to present stories and conduct interviews across the political spectrum, from local school boards to state representatives, to members of Congress and presidential candidates. While at KGET, Eytan won an Emmy Award for his coverage ahead of the 2020 presidential election. Eytan earned a BA degree in broadcast and digital journalism from the University of Southern California Annenberg School.

Michael Saragosa

Michael is a public affairs professional with nearly 20 years of experience in government and government relations. Michael and his wife Brenda operate Quintana-Saragosa Public Affairs. Prior starting his own business, Michael served multiple high-level positions within California state government. During the Schwarzenegger Administration, Michael served as Chief Deputy Appointments Secretary, Undersecretary at State and Consumer Services and Deputy Cabinet Secretary. In addition to his public affairs work, Michael currently serves as the Mayor of Placerville. Michael is a graduate of Azusa Pacific University.

Nanette Endean

Nanette is the Senior Vice President at Randle Communications, a leading Public Relations firm in Sacramento, where she oversees a diverse portfolio of clients and projects. Prior to this, Nanette had a successful career in California state government where served as the Director of the Office of Member Support & Communications for the Assembly Republican Caucus, Chief of Staff to Assemblywoman Catharine Baker and as Deputy Director of the Department of Consumer Affairs. Nanette was also the Deputy Director for the Whitman for Governor campaign in 2010. She is a graduate of CSU Sacramento.



SPEAKERS

Michael Lienhard

Michael is a senior account representative at Randle Communications, a leading Public Relations firm in Sacramento. Michael has expertise in coalition development, stakeholder mapping and strategic planning and helps lead operations across multiple accounts. Before joining Randle, Michael served as a Regional Representative for Public Lands and Natural Resources for former United States Senator Dean Heller. He also previously worked for the Charter Schools Association of Nevada and worked on numerous political campaigns and ballot measures at the federal, state, and local levels. Lienhard is proud a two-time graduate of the University of Nevada, Reno, where he earned a BA in Political Science and a MA in Public Administration and Policy.

Chad Mayes

Chad Mayes is a Partner at Capitol Advocacy where advises clients on issues spanning the intersection of public policy and industry. 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. He quickly established himself as a dynamic and effective leader 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. 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. Mayes is a graduate of Liberty University.

Ryan Underwood

Ryan Underwood is a lifelong long advocate of Career Technical Education and Career Technical Student Organizations. Following his service as a CTSO state and national officer, Ryan and his wife Carrie Underwood founded TEAMTRI, a business service agency for leaders. TEAMTRI's global team of 75 specialists has served each of America's CTSOs ranging from marketing, public policy and advocacy to association management, leadership development and event production. TEAMTRI has provided service to the past 4 U.S. Presidents, the U.S. Congress, 9 federal agencies, and 12 state agencies. Ryan is a Senior Partner at GiANT Worldwide and a graduate of Pepperdine University.



SPEAKERS

CTSO Leadership Legends Panel: Learning from Public Service

Host Bryan West

Former FBLA National Vice President and Emmy Award Winning NBC Journalist, News Anchor, Winner of the Edward R. Murrow Award in Journalism. Bachelors from Northwestern University.

Piper Merritt

Former FFA National Vice President and Government Affairs Associate, Combest, Sell & Associates Public Policy Firm in Washington, DC. Bachelors from Texas A&M.

Moksh Jawa

Former California DECA State President and Schwarzman Scholar to China Honoree, Wharton School of Business Class President. Bachelors from the Wharton School, Bachelors from the University of Pennsylvania, Masters from the University of Pennsylvania.

Antonio Hernandez

Former HOSA National President, UC Davis Medical Student, and Elected School Board Trustee of the Antioch Unified School District. Graduate of Stanford University, Masters in Governance from the California School Boards Association.

Trent Misak

Former FCCLA National Vice President and Marketing & Communications Director at the City of Enid Regional Development Alliance, Governors Economic Development Marketing Team. Masters Degree from Northwestern Oklahoma State University and Bachelors from Southwestern Oklahoma State University.

Taylor Sarman

Former FBLA National President, Partner at Mahonia Public Affairs, and former Intern – White House Fellows, State Representative Chief of Staff. Bachelors from Oregon State University.

Dustin Chiang

Former California DECA State President and Past Appointments Team Member for Biden-Harris Transition Team, National Political Coordinator Biden for President, Special Assistant Pete for America, Deputy Political Director Gil Cisneros for Congress. Bachelors from Harvard University.



SPEAKERS

CTSO Capitol Leadership Experience Leadership Team

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