
PARTICIPANTS

Mark Baldassare is president and CEO of the Public Policy Institute of California, where he holds the Arjay and Frances Fearing Miller Chair in Public Policy. He is an expert on public opinion and survey methodology, and has directed the PPIC Statewide Survey since 1998. He has authored ten books and numerous reports on elections, voter behavior, and political and fiscal reform. He often testifies before legislative committees and state commissions, and regularly hosts PPIC's Speaker Series. Previously, he served as PPIC's director of research. Before joining PPIC, he was a professor of urban and regional planning at the University of California, Irvine, and held the Johnson Chair in Civic Governance. He holds a PhD in sociology from the University of California, Berkeley.

Kevin McCarthy represents California's 23rd District in the US House of Representatives. First elected to Congress in 2006, he became chief deputy whip in 2009 and majority whip in 2011; in 2014 he became majority leader. He has served on several House committees, including Financial Services, Homeland Security, Natural Resources, Agriculture, and House Administration. From 2002 to 2006, he represented the 32nd Assembly District in the California Legislature; before that, he was district director for former congressman Bill Thomas. Prompted by his experiences as a small business owner, he began his career in public service as a trustee for the Kern County Community College District. He holds an MBA and a BA from California State University, Bakersfield.

Steven Merksamer is the senior partner in the Northern California law firm of Nielsen, Merksamer, Parrinello, Gross & Leoni, LLP. He joined PPIC's Board of Directors in 2009. He served as chief of staff to Governor Deukmejian from 1982 to 1987. Before that, he was the special assistant attorney general of the State of California advisor. He also served as a California deputy attorney general, assistant to the lieutenant governor of California, and assistant to the Speaker of the California Assembly. He serves on the boards of the California Chamber of Commerce and the Stevenson School and is a past chairman of State Law Resources, Inc., a national network of independent law firms. He holds a JD from the University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law and a BA from Claremont McKenna College.