
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 a leading expert on public opinion and survey methodology, and has directed the PPIC Statewide Survey since 1998. He is an authority on elections, voter behavior, and political and fiscal reform, authoring ten books and numerous reports on these topics. He often provides testimony before legislative committees and state commissions, and regularly hosts PPIC's Speaker Series, a public forum featuring in-depth interviews with state and national leaders. 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, where he held the Johnson Chair in Civic Governance. He holds a PhD in sociology from the University of California, Berkeley.

Phil Isenberg is the former chair of the Delta Stewardship Council. He serves on the PPIC Water Policy Center Advisory Council and has been a member of PPIC's Board of Directors since 2013. His long career in state and local government includes serving as a Sacramento city council member (1971–74), mayor of Sacramento (1975–82), and a member of the California Assembly, representing portions of Sacramento, Contra Costa, and San Joaquin Counties (1982–96). As an elected official, he focused on land use planning, water and resource issues, state budget and fiscal matters, redevelopment reform, and health care issues. More recently, he has served as chair of the California Marine Life Protection Act Blue Ribbon Task Force (2004–06) and as chair of the Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force (2007–08). The recommendations of the Delta Vision Task Force provided much of the structure for the major changes in water and Delta policy enacted in 2009. He has also run his own private law practice and served as president of Isenberg-O'Haren Government Relations (2004–10). He holds a BA in social science and government from California State University, Sacramento, and a JD from the University of California, Berkeley.

Tom Steyer is president of NextGen Climate, an organization he founded in 2013 to prevent climate disaster and promote prosperity for all Americans. A business leader and philanthropist, he believes we have a moral responsibility to give back and help ensure that every family shares the benefits of economic opportunity, education, and a healthy climate. In 2010, he and his wife Kat Taylor pledged to contribute most of their wealth to charitable causes during their lifetimes. That same year, he worked to defeat Proposition 23, an attempt by the oil industry to roll back California's historic plan to reduce pollution and address climate change. In 2012, he led a campaign to invest hundreds of millions of dollars in California schools annually by closing a corporate tax loophole. To date, Proposition 39 has put nearly a billion dollars into California schools and clean energy projects, saving millions of dollars in annual energy costs. He served as cochair of Save Lives California, the coalition to prevent teen smoking and fund cancer research. He and Kat Taylor also founded Beneficial State Bank, a nonprofit community bank in Oakland that provides loans to people and small businesses shut out by the traditional banking system. Unlike most banks, by statute Beneficial State Bank invests any profits back into the community.