
PARTICIPANTS

Toni G. Atkins is Speaker of the California State Assembly. Before she was unanimously elected Speaker by her colleagues in 2014, she served as majority leader. First elected to the assembly in 2010, she represents coastal San Diego. She has chaired the Assembly Select Committee on Homelessness and served on the Joint Legislative Audit Committee, the Housing and Community Development Committee, the Health Committee, and the Veterans Affairs Committee. She previously served eight years on the San Diego City Council, including a term as acting mayor. She began her public service career as director of clinic services at Womancare Health Center in San Diego. She has been a member of the League of California Cities, the board of the Metropolitan Transit System, the San Diego Association of Governments, the Regional Housing Working Group, and the San Diego River Conservancy. She earned her bachelor's degree from Emory & Henry College and completed the senior executive program at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

Mark Baldassare is president and CEO of the Public Policy Institute of California, where he also holds the Arjay and Frances Fearing Miller Chair in Public Policy and directs the PPIC Statewide Survey. Before assuming his current position, he was PPIC's director of research. He has authored ten books, including *The Coming Age of Direct Democracy: California's Recall and Beyond*. 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 and initiated and directed the Orange County Annual Survey. He has conducted surveys for the *Los Angeles Times*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and the California Business Roundtable. He holds a PhD in sociology from the University of California, Berkeley.

Kevin de León is President pro Tempore-elect of the California State Senate. Elected in 2010, he represents Los Angeles County's 22nd District. From 2006 to 2010, he served in the state Assembly, representing the 45th District, also in Los Angeles. As a legislator, he has focused on bills affecting the environment, the working poor, immigration, and public safety. He championed workers' compensation reform and retirement security for low-income workers. He also co-chaired the campaign for Proposition 39, the California Clean Energy Jobs Act. Before he was elected to the legislature, he worked as a community organizer, as an ESL and U.S. citizenship teacher, and as a staff advocate for the California Teachers Association. He also served as a senior associate for the National Education Association in Washington, DC, advocating for more resources for schools in low-income neighborhoods. He is a Rodel Fellow at the Aspen Institute and a guest lecturer at the University of Southern California. He attended the University of California, Santa Barbara, and graduated from Pitzer College.

continued

PARTICIPANTS, *continued*

Steven Merksamer is the senior partner in the Northern California law firm of Nielsen, Merksamer, Parrinello, Gross & Leoni, LLP. He was elected to PPIC's board of directors in 2009. He served as chief of staff to Governor George Deukmejian from 1982 to 1987. Before that, he was the special assistant attorney general of the State of California. He has also served as a California deputy attorney general, assistant to the lieutenant governor of California, and assistant to the Speaker of the California State Assembly. He was appointed by President Reagan to the President's Administration of Justice Task Force, the President's Export Council, and the National Commission on Presidential Scholars. He is currently a member of the board of directors 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 bachelor's degree from Claremont McKenna College.