
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 forum featuring in-depth interviews with state and national leaders. 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.

Steven A. 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 and became board chair in 2018. From 1982 to 1987, he served as the chief of staff to Governor George Deukmejian. Before that, he was the special assistant attorney general of the State of California, serving as the attorney general's senior counselor and policy advisor. 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 serve on the President's Administration of Justice Task Force, the President's Export Council, and the National Commission on Presidential Scholars. He is an honors graduate of Claremont McKenna College, and received his law degree from the University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law. 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.

Gavin Newsom is governor of California. His administration's top priorities are tackling California's affordability crisis, alleviating homelessness, creating inclusive economic growth and opportunity for every child, and standing up for California values—from civil rights to immigration, environmental protection, and access to quality schools. He served as lieutenant governor for two terms under Governor Jerry Brown. Shortly after being elected lieutenant governor in 2010, he gathered ideas from key stakeholders around the state to develop a strategy for economic growth and job creation, which ensured California's place as one of the top ten economies in the world. From 2004 to 2011, he served as mayor of San Francisco, where he legalized same-sex marriage, bringing national attention to the issue. He was a member of the city Board of Supervisors from 1997 to 2004. In his career, he has focused on some of the state's most challenging issues, including gun safety, marijuana, the death penalty, universal healthcare, access to preschool, criminal justice reform, and the minimum wage. He is the author of *Citizenville: How to Take the Town Square Digital and Reinvent Government*. He holds a BA in political science from Santa Clara University.