

## Policy/Executive Team



### President and Chief Executive Officer

**Allan Zaremborg** is president and chief executive officer of the California Chamber of Commerce. He took over the top staff position in 1998 after six years as executive vice president and head of the CalChamber's legislative advocacy program.

Enhancing the state's economic growth has been the goal of Zaremborg's activities. He has headed statewide ballot campaigns to close the legal loophole that permitted shakedown lawsuits, to assure adequate funding for transportation infrastructure and to oppose anti-business proposals that would have raised the cost of health care, electricity and public works. He led negotiations culminating in comprehensive reforms of workers' compensation,

endangered species laws and other key issues.

He oversees the CalChamber Business Services Division, which provides employment law expertise through handbooks, services and products, including *HRCalifornia*, a continually updated website.

Before joining the CalChamber, Zaremborg served as chief legislative advisor to and advocate for Governors George Deukmejian and Pete Wilson.

Zaremborg served as a captain and flight navigator on a KC-135 jet air refueling tanker while in the U.S. Air Force from 1970 to 1975.

He holds a B.S. in economics from Penn State University and a J.D. from the McGeorge School of Law, University of the Pacific, where he was a member of the *Law Journal*.



### Senior Vice President, Policy

**Jennifer Barrera** oversees the development and implementation of policy and strategy as senior vice president, policy, and represents the California Chamber of Commerce on legal reform issues.

She led CalChamber advocacy on labor and employment and taxation from September 2010 through the end of 2017. As senior policy advocate in 2017, Barrera worked with the executive vice president in developing policy strategy.

In addition, she advises the business compliance activities of the CalChamber on interpreting changes in employment law.

From May 2003 until joining the CalChamber staff, she worked at a statewide law firm that

specializes in labor/employment defense, now Carothers, DiSane & Freudenberger, LLP. She represented employers in both state and federal court on a variety of issues, including wage and hour disputes, discrimination, harassment, retaliation, breach of contract, and wrongful termination.

She also advised both small and large businesses on compliance issues, presented seminars on various employment-related topics, and regularly authored articles in human resources publications.

Barrera earned a B.A. in English from California State University, Bakersfield, and a J.D. with high honors from California Western School of Law.

**Staff to:** *Legal Reform and Protection Ad Hoc Committee*



### Policy Advocate

**Laura E. Curtis** joined the California Chamber of Commerce in December 2017 as a policy advocate. She specializes in labor and employment, workers' compensation, and elections/fair political practices issues.

Before joining the CalChamber policy team, she was a labor and employment attorney for The Mitzel Group, LLP in San Francisco, counseling clients on subjects including wage and hour disputes, harassment, discrimination, retaliation, Private Attorneys General Act (PAGA) claims, and administrative agency compliance.

She previously served as a labor and employment attorney at Littler Mendelson, PC, in Walnut Creek, representing employers in state and federal court on a wide range of employment law matters. She also represented applicants in all aspects of workers' compensation litigation as a workers' compensation attorney at Mastagni Holstedt, APC in Sacramento.

Before starting her legal career, Curtis was an outside sales representative for SimplexGrinnell-TYCO, provider of fire and life safety services, directing sales and service teams and leading product training in the company's San Francisco region. She also was an account coordinator at Binger Communications, Inc. of San Diego, and a congressional intern in the Washington, D.C. office of Congressman Robert T. Matsui.

Curtis holds a B.A. in communications with a minor in political science from the University of California, San Diego. She earned a J.D. from Santa Clara University School of Law, where she worked on the International Law Journal.

**Staff to:** *Labor and Employment Committee, Workers' Compensation Committee*

# Expanding Opportunity An Agenda for All Californians

## 2018 Business Issues and Legislative Guide

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**Policy Advocate**

**Marti Fisher** joined the California Chamber of Commerce in January 2006 as a policy advocate. She leads CalChamber advocacy on immigration, unemployment insurance, regulatory reform, insurance, occupational safety and health, and tourism.

She has specialized in workers' compensation, small business, and banking and finance issues. From October 2006 to December 2012, she headed CalChamber advocacy on health care issues.

Fisher brought to CalChamber more than

15 years of experience in occupational safety and advocacy. She served as director of safety, health and regulatory services with the Associated General Contractors of California (AGC) immediately before joining the CalChamber policy team.

Fisher earned a B.A. in public administration from California State University, Chico, and an M.B.A. from California State University, Sacramento.

*Staff to: Tourism Committee, Immigration Ad Hoc Committee, Occupational Safety Advisory Group*

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**Policy Advocate**

**Kevin McKinley** joined the California Chamber of Commerce in May 2017 as a policy advocate. He specializes in privacy/technology, telecommunications, economic development, and taxation issues, and represented the CalChamber on workers' compensation issues in 2017.

He came to the CalChamber from the Virga Law Firm, where he was a litigation attorney representing business and consumer clients in areas such as privacy (medical and financial), cyber crimes and workers' compensation.

He previously was a litigation associate for Downey Brand LLP, representing business clients in civil litigation matters in state and federal court.

Since 2008, McKinley has been a member of the Sacramento City Housing Code Advisory and Appeals Board; he is the current chair.

He previously served as a judicial extern to the Honorable Kimberly J. Mueller, U.S. District Court judge for the Eastern District of California. He also has been a licensed real estate and insurance agent.

McKinley holds a B.B.A. from National University and J.D. with great distinction from the McGeorge School of Law, University of the Pacific, and was admitted to the Order of the Coif. At McGeorge, he served as a primary comment editor and writer for the McGeorge Law Review.

*Staff to: Taxation Committee, Energy and Telecommunications Ad Hoc Committee*

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**Policy Advocate**

**Amy Mmagu** has been lobbying for the California Chamber of Commerce since April 2011. She presents the business perspective on climate change, air quality, energy, environmental justice, and transportation and infrastructure issues.

She joined the CalChamber staff in 2006, working in a wide range of areas, including labor and employment, health, education, climate change, energy, and housing and land use. She also assisted in workers' compensation, transportation and infrastructure, tourism, telecommunications, and international relations/trade.

Before coming to the CalChamber, Mmagu worked for the California Cable and

Telecommunications Association. Prior to that, she spent three years in China working for a Spanish exporting firm and also interned with the U.S. Department of State at the American embassy in Lima, Peru.

Mmagu earned a B.A. in international relations from California State University, Sacramento, spending one year at the University of Denmark in Copenhagen, studying European politics and the European Union.

*Staff to: Environmental Policy Committee, Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Energy and Telecommunications Ad Hoc Committee*



### Policy Advocate

**Karen Sarkissian** joined the California Chamber of Commerce in July 2016 as a policy advocate on health care and education issues.

She was an associate and then partner at a nationally recognized firm of successful trial attorneys in Sacramento for more than 12 years. She litigated and resolved cases ranging from medical, dental and legal malpractice, to premises liability, employment law, automobile accidents, elder abuse, sexual abuse and civil rights. Sarkissian and a colleague tried and won the first expedited jury trial in Sacramento County in March 2011.

Fluent in Armenian, Sarkissian was commissioned by the Sacramento Superior Court to translate thousands of legal words, phrases, terms and statutes

for the English/Armenian Legal Glossary published by the court in 2005. In addition to being used in California, the glossary is in use in Washington, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Hawaii and Colorado.

Sarkissian holds dual B.A.s in political science and rhetoric and communication from the University of California, Davis. She earned her J.D. from the McGeorge School of Law, University of the Pacific, where she was an author and editor of the *McGeorge Law Review*. While at McGeorge, she received the Witkin Award of Academic Excellence in Government Lawyering.

**Staff to:** *Education Committee, Health Care Policy Committee*



### Policy Advocate

**Valerie Nera** specializes in advocacy on agriculture, water, water storage, resources, crime, and banking and finance issues for the California Chamber of Commerce.

Priority issues include water supply and conveyance, agricultural land use, balanced resource development policies for timber, protection of private property rights, federal and state endangered species laws, banking rules, graffiti, and organized retail theft.

Nera joined the CalChamber staff in 1978 as a legislative assistant on agricultural issues. She also has lobbied air, environmental, telecommunications and privacy issues for the CalChamber.

She earned a B.A. with honors from the University of California, Berkeley, and a J.D. from the McGeorge School of Law, University of the Pacific.

**Staff to:** *Water Resources Committee, Agriculture and Natural Resources Ad Hoc Committee*



### Grassroots Coordinator/Local Chamber Program Director

**Cathryn L. Mesch** has been coordinating the California Chamber of Commerce grassroots advocacy program since December 2006.

In that role, her primary duty is to enhance the CalChamber grassroots network throughout the state, working closely with the public policy staff to secure business input as early as possible on priority issues. The CalChamber grassroots program received a Star Achievement Award for both 2012 and 2013 from the National Prosperity Project, an educational foundation to promote voter awareness and registration.

Mesch joined the CalChamber in August 2005 as executive assistant in the public policy unit. She

brought with her 25 years of management experience supervising office, sales and marketing staffs and operational procedural programs in a variety of settings, including construction, realty companies, courier services and packaging companies.

She also served as director of marketing for the California Foreign Trade Zone at the Port of Sacramento with responsibility for developing new Foreign Trade Zone sites throughout Northern California and implementing an intern program in partnership with the University of California, Davis.

Mesch earned an M.B.A. from the American Institute of International Marketing in Arizona.



**Executive Vice President, Corporate Affairs**

**Dave Kilby**, executive vice president, corporate affairs, joined the California Chamber of Commerce staff in December 1988 after more than 11 years in local chamber of commerce management.

In addition to working with CalChamber major members, he serves as CalChamber corporate secretary and coordinates Board relations. Kilby also serves as president/chief executive officer of the Western Association of Chamber Executives.

During his first 11 years at CalChamber, Kilby served as the CalChamber's lobbyist on economic development, land use and small business issues.

Over the years, he has coordinated local chamber relations, grassroots legislative action efforts, the CalChamber's weekly legislative conference call and the annual business legislative summit.

Kilby is a member of the U.S. Chamber's Committee of 100 and in 2011 the American Chamber of Commerce Executives named him to its "People Who Shape People" influential leaders list.

He has a B.A. in political science from California State University, Fresno.

**Staff to:** *Economic Advisory Council*



**Executive Vice President, Public Affairs**

**Martin R. Wilson**, executive vice president of public affairs, joined the California Chamber of Commerce in October 2011.

Wilson oversees all the CalChamber's public affairs and campaign activities, including the Public Affairs Council, a political advisory committee made up of the CalChamber's major members; its candidate recruitment and support program; and its political action committees: ChamberPAC, which supports pro-jobs candidates and legislators, and CalBusPAC, which qualifies, supports and/or opposes ballot initiatives.

He also serves as the CalChamber liaison to JobsPAC, an employer-based, independent expenditure committee that supports pro-business candidates.

Wilson has almost 40 years of experience in California politics, playing leadership roles in the election and re-election of two governors, and a U.S. senator. He also has orchestrated numerous successful ballot measure and public affairs campaigns.

In addition to his campaign experience, Wilson has served in government as a senior staff member at the local, state and federal levels.

Before joining the CalChamber, Wilson spent seven years as managing partner of Wilson-Miller Communications, where he also advised Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger as head of the Governor's political and initiative committee, the California Recovery Team.

Before founding his own firm, Wilson was managing director for Public Strategies Inc. in Sacramento for five years and held a similar position with Burson-Marsteller for six years.

Wilson has served as senior fellow for the University of California, Los Angeles School of Public Affairs, board member for the California State Fair and director of the Coro Foundation, a public affairs training organization.

He graduated from San Diego State University with a B.A. in history.

**Staff to:** *Public Affairs Council, California Chamber Fundraising Committee, ChamberPAC, CalBusPAC, Candidate Recruitment and Development Fund*

**Also:** *JobsPAC Executive Director*



### Executive Vice President and General Counsel

**Erika Frank**, executive vice president of legal affairs, joined the CalChamber in April 2004 as a policy advocate and began serving as general counsel shortly thereafter, leveraging her 10 years of combined legal, governmental and legislative experience. She was named vice president of legal affairs in 2009 and executive vice president at the start of 2017.

Before assuming full-time general counsel responsibilities in late 2005, Frank also lobbied the legislative and executive branches on taxation, civil litigation and lawsuit abuse issues.

Frank leads CalChamber's Legal Affairs Department, which participates in court cases having a broad impact on California's economy and business climate—including workers' compensation reform, labor and employment, taxation, litigation reform and commercial free speech.

As CalChamber's subject matter expert on California and federal employment law, she oversees and contributes to CalChamber's labor law and human resources compliance products, including *HRCalifornia*; co-produces and presents webinars and seminars; and heads the Labor Law Helpline.

Through their active involvement on the front lines of California's legal and labor law compliance scene, Frank and her team are first to know when and how changes in law affect employers. She uses her employment law expertise to develop and facilitate training courses for HR professionals, and is a sought-after speaker at industry events.

Frank holds a B.A. in political science from the University of California, Santa Barbara, and received her J.D. from the McGeorge School of Law, University of the Pacific.



### Vice President, Communications

**Ann Amioka** has been a communications specialist at the California Chamber of Commerce since 1980. Since 1982, she has been executive editor of the CalChamber's legislative newsletter, *Alert*. She oversees editing and production of CalChamber communications and the corporate website.

Before joining the CalChamber staff as editor of the CalChamber's agricultural labor relations newsletter, Amioka was a reporter for a daily newspaper in Yolo County. She has a B.A. in history from Stanford University and an M.A. in history from California State University, Sacramento.



### Vice President, Media Relations and External Affairs

**Denise Davis** is the chief liaison with the news media for the California Chamber of Commerce. As vice president for media relations and external affairs, she oversees communications strategy and outreach, and manages the CalChamber's involvement in select issue advocacy and ballot measure campaigns.

Before joining the CalChamber, Davis was a senior-level communications consultant working on a number of high-profile campaigns, legal matters and policy issues. She was Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's chief deputy communications director and has 14 years of experience serving three California attorneys general as a spokesperson and

victim advocate. She also directed media relations for a national, nonprofit legal foundation.

Over the course of her career, Davis has worked closely with statewide officeholders, Cabinet members, major corporations and a variety of trade associations. As such, Davis has developed expertise in the areas of environmental law, land use regulation, water law, resource management, criminal justice issues, correctional law, consumer law, health care and labor relations.

Davis graduated from the University of California, Davis, receiving a B.A. in communications.



### Vice President, Local Chamber Relations

**Russell Lahodny** joined the California Chamber of Commerce as vice president of local chamber relations in October 2014. He serves as an information resource for and CalChamber liaison with local chambers of commerce.

From 2010 until joining the CalChamber staff, Lahodny was senior vice president, communications for the Anaheim Chamber of Commerce. His role was to maintain the quality and consistency of the chamber's messaging to its members and the business community. He created and oversaw all Anaheim Chamber communication tools, including a member newspaper, weekly e-newsletters, press releases, marketing materials, and website design. He also oversaw the Anaheim Chamber's legislative actions

and coordinated monthly meetings featuring local elected officials.

Before relocating to Anaheim, Lahodny was vice president of communications at the Irvine Chamber of Commerce. During his seven years in Irvine, he helped the chamber earn 15 communications awards from the Western Association of Chamber Executives.

In his CalChamber position, Lahodny also will serve as vice president of the association.

Lahodny received his B.A. in communications with an emphasis in photojournalism from California State University, Fullerton, where he served as photo editor for the college newspaper, *The Daily Titan*.



### Vice President, Corporate Relations

**Drew Savage** was named vice president of corporate relations at the beginning of 2001, a position dedicated to enhancing the CalChamber's profile with major corporations.

Savage came to CalChamber in 1990 as a membership specialist following three years in a similar position at the Illinois Chamber. He was named manager

of the CalChamber's membership sales team in October 1994. After taking on additional responsibilities for working with the state's growth industries and developing relationships with larger companies, Savage was promoted to vice president of membership in late 1999.

He holds a B.A. in political science from the University of Illinois at Chicago.



### Vice President, International Affairs

**Susanne Thorsen Stirling** has headed California Chamber of Commerce international activities for nearly four decades.

She is a gubernatorial appointee to the California International Trade and Investment Advisory Council, which advises the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development on strategies to expand international trade and investment for California businesses.

She also serves on the District Export Council (appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Commerce), the National Export Council Steering Committee, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce International Policy Committee, the California International Relations Foundation, and the Chile-California Council.

The CalChamber supports free trade worldwide, expansion of international trade and investment, fair and equitable market access for California products abroad, and elimination of disincentives that impede the international competitiveness of California business. The CalChamber sponsors and participates in

trade, investment and other international events. It also assists members with general export and import activities, maintains [www.calchamber.com/international](http://www.calchamber.com/international) and provides international trade publications, including a weekly e-newsletter.

The CalChamber is a past recipient of the U.S. Presidential Award for Export Service, and received the Presidential Citation from the government of the Republic of Korea.

Before joining the CalChamber, Stirling held positions in public affairs and public relations for Burmeister & Wain A/S, an international shipbuilding company based in Copenhagen.

Stirling, originally from Denmark, studied at the University of Copenhagen and holds a B.A. in international relations from the University of the Pacific, where she now serves as a member of the Board of Regents. She earned an M.A. from the School of International Relations at the University of Southern California.

**Staff to:** *Council on International Trade*