

Policy/Executive Team



PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Allan Zarembeg 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 Zarembeg'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 print and digital handbooks, seminars/webinars and other products, including *HRCalifornia*, a continually updated website.

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

Zarembeg 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*.



EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

Jennifer Barrera oversees the development and implementation of policy and strategy as senior vice president 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. She was named senior vice president, policy, for 2018 and promoted to executive vice president as of January 1, 2019.

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. 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 Committee*

California Promise: Opportunity for All

2019 Business Issues and Legislative Guide

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POLICY ADVOCATE

Sarah R. Boot joined the California Chamber of Commerce staff in March 2018 as a policy advocate specializing in privacy/technology, telecommunications, economic development, and taxation issues.

From August 2015 until joining CalChamber, Boot was a top adviser to now-Senate President Pro Tem Toni G. Atkins. Boot served as the senator’s legislative director and also acted as lead staffer on legal, privacy, telecommunications, business, and technology issues, among many others.

Boot was principal consultant to Atkins during her time as Assembly Speaker and Speaker Emeritus, spearheading a working group to draft multiple human trafficking bills and acting as lead staffer on all women-focused legislation, as well as liaison to the Legislative Women’s Caucus.

Before working for Atkins, Boot practiced law in San Diego for seven years. Boot served for three years as an assistant U.S. attorney for the General Crimes Unit of the U.S. Attorney’s Office, Southern District of California. She prosecuted a broad array of federal crimes, including bank robbery, sex trafficking of minors, and narcotics trafficking.

In private practice, Boot spent three years litigating cases for Cooley LLP, an AmLaw Top 50 international

law firm. There, she focused on complex civil and intellectual property litigation, primarily representing internet and technology companies. She also worked for Blood Hurst & O’Reardon LLP, litigating consumer class action lawsuits in state and federal courts nationwide.

Boot has significant political campaign experience. She has been a party-endorsed candidate for the San Diego City Council. Before law school, Boot managed fundraising for the campaign of a Washington D.C. councilman at large and served as a regional field director for a New Hampshire presidential primary campaign.

Boot earned her J.D. from the University of Michigan Law School, where she was articles editor for the *Michigan Telecommunications and Technology Law Review*. She graduated from the University of Michigan with an honors degree in political science and a minor in Spanish. As an undergraduate, Boot was elected student body president, representing more than 38,000 students.

Staff to: *Privacy and Cybersecurity Committee, Taxation Committee, Energy and Telecommunications Committee*



POLICY ADVOCATE

Adam Regele joined the California Chamber of Commerce in April 2018 as a policy advocate specializing in environmental policy, housing and land use, and product regulation issues.

He came to the CalChamber policy team after practicing law at an Oakland-based law firm—Meyers, Nave, Riback, Silver & Wilson, PLC—where he advised private and public clients on complex projects involving land use and environmental laws and regulations at the local, state and federal levels. His extensive environmental and waste regulatory compliance experience includes defending California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) and Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) related matters in litigation.

Before joining Meyers Nave, Regele handled state

and federal environmental litigation and administrative proceedings as an associate at a Bay Area law firm that focused on environmental, natural resources, land use, labor and local government law.

He served as a federal judicial law clerk to the Honorable Edward J. Davila of the U.S. District Court, Northern District of California and as a legal fellow with the Oakland City Attorney’s Office prior to entering private law practice.

Regele earned a B.S. in environmental science at the University of California, Berkeley, and a J.D. from UC Hastings College of Law, where he was symposium editor and research and development editor for the *Hastings West-Northwest Journal*.

Staff to: *Chemical Policy Committee, Environmental Policy 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*



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

Leah B. Silverthorn joined the CalChamber policy team in May 2018 as a policy advocate. She specializes in climate change, air quality, energy, environmental justice, marijuana/cannabis, and transportation and infrastructure issues.

She brought to the CalChamber more than decade of legal experience in environmental, energy, and land use matters. Immediately before coming to CalChamber, she was the principal owner of Silverthorn Legal, based in Seattle, Washington. She focused on environmental litigation, contaminated property redevelopment, and environmental cost recovery and defense.

Silverthorn has represented Fortune 500 companies and property owners against claims by U.S., Washington, Oregon, and California regional environmental entities.

She also handled cases dealing with environmental recovery claims, environmental insurance, and toxic tort laws at Wooden McLaughlin in Indianapolis,

Indiana; and at Hunsucker Goodstein, with offices in California, Washington D.C., Colorado, and Seattle. Her clients at Wooden McLaughlin included large commercial and multi-family real estate developers, oil and gas companies, and insurance carriers, as well as small farms and restaurants.

Before entering private practice, Silverthorn was a staff attorney at the Indiana Department of Environmental Management Office of Legal Counsel.

She is an honors graduate of Indiana University-Bloomington, with a B.S. in public affairs and environmental management. She earned her J.D., with honors, at the Indiana University McKinney School of Law, where she was articles editor for the *Indiana International and Comparative Law Review* and a member of the Moot Court Board.

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



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 more than 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, ChamberPAC Advisory 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 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 serves 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 serves on the 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 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 for International Trade*

California Foundation for Commerce and Education



PRESIDENT

Loren Kaye was appointed president of the California Foundation for Commerce and Education in January 2006.

The Foundation is affiliated with the California Chamber of Commerce and serves as a “think tank” for the California business community. The Foundation is dedicated to preserving and strengthening the California business climate and private enterprise through accurate, impartial and objective research and analysis of public policy issues of interest to the California business and public policy communities.

Kaye has devoted his career to developing, analyzing and implementing public policy issues in California, with a special emphasis on improving the state’s business and economic climate.

Kaye also was a gubernatorial appointee to the state’s Little Hoover Commission, charged with evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of state agencies and programs. He served in senior policy positions for Governors Pete Wilson and George Deukmejian, including Cabinet Secretary to the Governor and Undersecretary of the California Trade and Commerce Agency. Kaye also has represented numerous private sector interests, managing issues that affect specific business sectors to promote an improved business climate or to resist further regulation or costs on business.

Kaye is a graduate of the University of California, San Diego, with a degree in political science.