



ASSEMBLY MEMBER

**Steve Bennett**

ASSEMBLY DISTRICT 38

# NONPROFIT TOWN HALL

*Speaker Bios*

# Assemblymember Steve Bennett, Assembly District 38



Assemblymember Steve Bennett was elected to the Assembly in November 2020 and represents the 38th district that includes the western part of Ventura County.

Born and raised in the Midwest, Steve developed a strong sense of community responsibility. After graduating from Brown University with an Honors Degree in Economics, Steve served his community as a high school Economics and American History teacher for over 20 years. At the same time, he advanced solutions to community problems of urban sprawl, money corrupting politics, and problems encountered by disadvantaged communities.

He was elected to the Ventura City Council in 1993 and served until 1997. There he co-authored the Save Open Space and Agricultural Resources (SOAR) initiatives that have made Ventura County a national leader in land-use planning. SOAR slows urban sprawl by requiring a vote of the citizens before greenbelt areas outside of the cities can be rezoned for development. During his time on the city council, he also authored one of the State's toughest campaign finance reform laws; as he fought to decrease the role of money in politics.

From 2000 to 2020, Assemblymember Bennett served his community as a Ventura County Supervisor. He first brought fiscally responsible policies to county government. He then led efforts to improve conditions for the disadvantaged and the voiceless. He co-authored a first of its kind Farmworker Resource Program that has dramatically improved the county's assistance to this vulnerable and valued population. He beat back opposition to the creation of Ventura's first municipal homeless shelter.

Steve has a particular passion for supporting the foster children of Ventura County and the 11,000 seniors residing in hundreds of nursing facilities. He spent 20 years leading the Board in efforts to improve conditions for foster children and ensure that the thousands of seniors who have outlived their friends and family receive a weekly visit by an Ombudsman solely focused on their welfare in the facility.

Steve launched his bid for the Assembly with a recognition that the window to effectively address climate change is rapidly closing. His first climate change efforts focus on improving storage capacity of renewable energy which is an essential step to achieving the goal of 100% renewable energy.

Steve and his wife Leslie share a passion for education. Leslie spent three decades as a high school Spanish teacher. For the past 14 years, they have shared their home with an immigrant family from Mexico. The experience of their adoptive family has led to a desire to leave a better world for those trapped by growing income inequality. Improved educational options, access to good medical care, and affordable housing are essential to doing that and a focus of Steve's service in the Assembly.

PARTNERS

# Dena Jenson, Director, Center for Nonprofit Leadership, California Lutheran University



**Dena Jenson** serves as the Director of the Center for Nonprofit Leadership (CNL) at California Lutheran University. Once an initiative of the Ventura County Community Foundation, where it was founded in 1991, the Center for Nonprofit Leadership provides leadership development, training, technical assistance, and access to resources that reflect its name, strengthening the leadership of nonprofit organizations serving the region.

With over 25 years of nonprofit executive experience, Dena frequently serves as a speaker and trainer on leadership development, organizational capacity, board governance and nonprofit business development. She believes deeply in the power of philanthropy and the nonprofit sector's role in creating a just society. From small efforts taking shape around a kitchen table to our community's most recognized charitable organizations, Dena is committed to the Center's mission of "helping nonprofit leaders do better at doing good".

Dena has a Master's in Public Policy from the University of Southern California and a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science with a minor in Women's Studies from California State University, Long Beach. Dena has served on the boards of the Association of Fundraising Professionals, Santa Barbara & Ventura Counties Chapter and the Townies Podcast, Inc. She is also a former board member of the California Association of Nonprofits (CalNonprofits).

A lifelong learner, Dena completed Courage to Lead, a yearlong leadership development program for experienced executives. In 2018, she was selected Nonprofit Leader of the Year by the Ventura County Leadership Academy and was recognized as Community Advocate of the Year by the National Association of Women Business Owners, Ventura County Chapter. She lives in Ventura with her husband Jim and a tuxedo cat who runs the show.

# Mike Salacci, Chief Philanthropy Officer, Ventura County Community Foundation



Mike Salacci recently joined the Ventura County Community Foundation team as its Chief Philanthropy Officer, responsible for growing relationships and creating more pathways into our community foundation to continue to grow philanthropy in our region.

Mike is leveraging his prior deep experience with the VCCF having had the privilege of serving on its Board of Directors for 14 years, with half of that service as Board Treasurer and serving as chair of the Board Finance/Administration and Investment committees.

Prior to joining the VCCF team, Mike completed a 40-year career with AT&T, where he served in various management assignments in Corporate Accounting, Information Systems, Finance, Regulatory Compliance, and External/Government & Community Affairs (EA). He spent the final 25 years of his career representing AT&T to local, state, and federal government officials and community leaders and community/civic organizations across the greater Los Angeles region, covering Los Angeles, Ventura, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, and Kern counties, including nearly 10 years leading the AT&T greater LA EA team as its Regional Vice President.

Over the past several years, Mike has been active on over two dozen community non-profit boards, mainly in Ventura and Los Angeles counties, including having the privilege to serve as board chair for the Economic Development Collaborative, Ventura County Economic Development, El Concilio del Condado de Ventura, Ventura County Civic Alliance (Inaugural Chair), United Way of Ventura County, CSU Channel Islands Alumni & Friends Association, Ventura Chamber of Commerce, Ventura County Library Foundation, and Economic Vitality Corporation of San Luis Obispo County.

Mike is a native of San Luis Obispo and graduated from California Polytechnic State University – San Luis Obispo, in 1981, with a B.S. in business administration/finance emphasis. He and his family have lived in Newbury Park for over 25 years.

# PANELIST

## Kelly Brown, Community Impact Officer, Interface Children and Family Services



Kelly Brown is a committed community leader with over 13 years of service at Interface Children & Family Services, where she drives the innovative 2-1-1 program. A champion for accessibility and data-informed decision making, she leverages partnerships with local health and social services to connect vulnerable communities with vital resources. In addition to her work with 2-1-1, Kelly Brown and her team are helping to build the Community Information Exchange for Ventura County (VCCIE) and will operate the system's Community Hub once the VCCIE launches. Beyond her professional dedication, she values family time with her husband and two teenage sons.

# Nicki Parr, Chief Operating Officer, Women's Economic Ventures



Nicki Parr is the Chief Operating Officer at Women's Economic Ventures (WEV), a non-profit organization that focuses on entrepreneurship as a means for achieving economic equity, based in Santa Barbara and Ventura counties, California.

Nicki joined WEV in 2018 to support small business owners who had been impacted by recent natural disasters and was instrumental in creating their business recovery and resilience program, overseeing WEV's first grant program which awarded over \$450,000 to impacted business owners in the region. She went on to introduce financial education as a key element of WEV's focus, as well as leading the transformation of its business education programs and other strategic initiatives. She was a founding board member of the Los Angeles County Long-Term Recovery Group and has written and presented on small business recovery following disasters. Nicki was recently appointed to sit on the Uplift Southern Region Steering Committee as part of the Uplift's coalition planning for the Community Economic Resilience Fund.

Originally from the UK, Nicki qualified as a Chartered Accountant with PricewaterhouseCoopers, and demonstrates a broad experience in finance, operations, and risk management. She is a graduate of the University of Leeds, UK, and holds a master's degree in Psychology. Nicki serves on the Board of the Santa Barbara Bowl as Treasurer and in her spare time enjoys hiking, yoga and most definitely not appearing on the leader board on the Peloton.



# Lisa Safaeinili, Executive Director, Westminster Free Clinic



Lisa Safaeinili, M.P.H., has experience working with public and private non-profits agencies since 1988. She has a B.S. degree from Iowa State University in Pre-Medical Studies, is a Registered Dietitian and Nutritionist, and has a Masters Degree in Public Health from UC Berkeley.

Lisa is a speaker at national and international conferences, as well as at the state, county, and local level. She has been instrumental in starting a variety of programs including a countywide health and safety program for Cooperative Extension through Cornell University in New York. She also founded the S.A.R.T. International Victimization Prevention Program through Federal Stop Violence Against Women funds and was recognized by U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno for this model program. Her work has been featured both locally and nationally, including federal publications like Promising Practices for the Get A Grip Teen Healthy Communities / Alcohol Prevention Program she developed for the State of Iowa, and a social norms project called "Filling the Media Gap," which she began in the 1990's for universities in Iowa. Lisa has written, developed, and managed grants of over \$10 million for various non-profit organizations.

Since 2002, Lisa has been the Executive Director of Westminster Free Clinic. She has been able to grow the organization from serving the needs of 500 homeless patients/year to serving the health needs of over 12,000 uninsured working poor and homeless families of Ventura County each year. She has grown the student volunteer program from 7 high school students each year to over 200 high school Interns (more than 50% are low-income and bi-lingual). She developed WFC's 2-year training healthcare training and internship program, which allows local high school students the opportunity to serve their community, develop transferrable job skills, and consider careers in healthcare.

In addition to growing the many free medical services offered by the Clinic, Lisa has spearheaded many programs and services addressing the social determinants of health and whole person care over the past 20 years, and has developed many successful community partnerships, making WFC a Community Care Center that is able to offer many life enriching services, all supporting individuals and families at the Clinic. Her focus has also been on creating environments where clinic patients and their families live healthier, and the healthy choice is the easy choice. Lisa is a huge proponent of empowering youth and adults of low-income, uninsured families to reach their goals; offering them the tools and skills to grow, thrive, and support and inspire others in their local community.

Lisa is vice president of the California Association of Free and Charitable Clinics and is an executive board member of the Greater Conejo Valley Chamber of Commerce.

## Lucas Zucker, Member, Central Coast Climate Justice Network



Lucas Zucker is Co-Executive Director at CAUSE. He was raised in Oakland and Ventura, CA and graduated from UC Berkeley with a bachelor's degree in Political Economy. First volunteering for CAUSE at 13 years old, Lucas joined the CAUSE staff in 2012 as a youth organizer and researcher, and went on to serve as the organization's Policy Director. At CAUSE he has worked on community organizing campaigns and policy advocacy around voting rights, healthy food access, public transit, environmental justice, education equity, immigrants' rights, housing affordability, and workers' rights. Lucas was the lead staff member on CAUSE's efforts to stop the Puente power plant from being built in Oxnard, respond to the Thomas Fire disaster, and create the Ventura County Farmworker Resource Program. Lucas serves on the board of Powerswitch Action, California Calls, the Community Advisory Committee for Clean Power Alliance, and the Planning Commission of the City of Ventura.