

NONPROFIT TOWNHALL

Speaker Bios



VENTURA COUNTY
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
Dr. César Morales, County Superintendent of Schools

CENTER FOR
NONPROFIT
LEADERSHIP

California
Lutheran
University



ASSEMBLYMEMBER
STEVE BENNETT
38TH DISTRICT



MONIQUE LIMÓN
REPRESENTING SENATE DISTRICT 19



VENTURA COUNTY
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

Steve Bennett

Assemblymember, 38th District



Assemblymember Steve Bennett was elected to the Assembly in November 2020 and represents the 38th district that includes the western part of Ventura County. He currently serves as Chair of Budget Subcommittee 4: Climate Crisis, Resources, Energy, and Transportation, and the Chair of the Select Committee on Building a Zero-Carbon Hydrogen Economy.

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.

Monique Limón

Senator, 19th District



Senator Monique Limón was elected to the California State Senate in November 2020 and represents the 19th Senate District, which includes all of Santa Barbara County and more than 60% of Ventura County. Senator Limón served as the Assemblymember from 2016 to 2020. Born and raised in the 19th Senate District, Monique has worked as an educator, leader, and an advocate for causes advancing the quality of life in her community.

For Monique, education has always been a priority. She received her undergraduate degree from UC Berkeley and a Master's Degree from Columbia University. Prior to being elected to the California State Legislature, Monique served on the Santa Barbara Unified School Board and spent fourteen years working in higher education at UC Santa Barbara and Santa Barbara City College.

Monique worked with nonprofits in the community including the Santa Barbara Foundation, New Beginnings Counseling Center, the McCune Foundation, Leading from Within, and the Community Engagement Committee for the Granada Theatre.

In the Senate, Monique currently serves as Chair of the Senate Select Committee on the Nonprofit Sector where she has worked to uplift the work of nonprofits across California and ensure they have the resources necessary to serve their communities.

While in the Assembly she advocated for the creation of the first ever Select Committee on the Nonprofit Sector. As Chair of the Select Committee on the Nonprofit Sector, she worked to bring awareness to the impact nonprofits have in our economy. In 2018 she authored a bill to establish a centralized database for funding opportunities available to nonprofits that is now an important tool for nonprofits across the state. After its creation she was subsequently named Chair of the Assembly Select Committee where she held committee hearings to explore the importance of the connections between state government and nonprofits, and expanded the California Annual Nonprofits Day into an ongoing tradition statewide.

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. In 2024, Dena was named one of the Top 50 Women in Business by the Pacific Coast Business Times. She lives in Ventura with her husband Jim and a tuxedo cat who runs the show.

Dr. César Morales

County Superintendent of Schools Ventura County Office of Education



Dr. Morales is currently the Ventura County Superintendent of Schools. He also served as a District Superintendent in the Oxnard School District. He held leadership roles in the Lawndale and Lennox School Districts in Los Angeles County.

Dr. Morales leads VCOE, which employs nearly 1,000 people and provides teacher training and administrative support services to all the County's 20 school districts. VCOE also operates schools for students with special needs, at-promise students and provides career education for students countywide.

Dr. Morales received his Doctor of Education degree from UCLA and his master's and bachelor's degrees from Loyola Marymount University. Dr. Morales is currently serving as the Chair of the Board of Directors of FCMAT (Fiscal Crisis Management and Assistance Team) and an Advisory Board Member for the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence. He serves on a number of local nonprofit boards, including the First 5 Ventura County Commission and Ventura County Community Foundation. He is also a past President of the California Association of Latino Superintendents and Administrators.

Dr. Morales was the recipient of the El Concilio Latino Leadership Award and was named a "Leader to Learn From" by Education Week magazine. His areas of expertise include all aspects of public school management. He has gained recognition locally and statewide for his leadership on critical issues.

Mike Silacci

Chief Philanthropy Officer, Ventura County Community Foundation



Mike Silacci 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.

PANELISTS



Linda Braunschweiger Chief Executive Officer, Housing Trust Fund Ventura County



Ms. Braunschweiger has spent over thirty five years in finance, affordable housing development, non-profit management, and business. She spent many years in public affairs and lobbying at the federal, state, and local levels. Ms. Braunschweiger launched Braunschweiger & Associates (B&A) in 1999 assisting clients with affordable housing policy strategies and financing, strategic planning, and nonprofit management.

In 2008, Ms. Braunschweiger was selected as the founding contract CEO, becoming a full time employee in 2017, of the Housing Trust Fund Ventura County. In her role as CEO, she helped orchestrate the formation of HTFVC, raised over \$40M in public, private and charitable funds, and produced \$40M in short term loans of which the majority have been repaid allowing funds to generate new loans, producing 1766 new workforce affordable housing units. Under her leadership, HTFVC became a certified Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) at the Federal and State level.

Ms. Braunschweiger spearheaded in 2020 the creation of the Housing Land Trust Ventura County, a supporting nonprofit of HTFVC. The Land Trust's mission is to preserve donated land for the development of affordable housing in perpetuity. HLTVC's first donated piece of land is in the City of Oxnard with 110 bed homeless shelter and 55 affordable rental units under construction. In Nov 2022, the Land Trust received a second donation of land, from the City of Thousand Oaks, for 78 for-sale affordable townhomes.

In 2024, Housing Trust Fund VC was named Nonprofit of the Year by Assemblymember Steve Bennett. In 2020/2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024, Ms. Braunschweiger was selected as one of the Pacific Coast Business Times "Top 50 Women in Business" from San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura Counties. In 2022, she received the Rodney E. Fernandez Excellence in Visionary Leadership Award from the Ventura County Community Development Corporation. Ms. Braunschweiger has a BA in Speech Communications and Industrial Psychology and an MBA with a focus in Public Policy.

Kelly Brown

Community Information Officer, Interface Children & Family Services



Kelly Brown is a seasoned nonprofit executive with over 14 years of experience in program design, management, and strategic growth within the social services sector. Currently serving as the Community Information Officer at Interface Children & Family Services, where she spearheads initiatives to enhance service delivery and support for communities in need across Ventura County.

With a deep-rooted commitment to social justice and community engagement, Kelly has played a pivotal role in developing partnerships across local, state, and national levels to improve access to critical services. Her efforts focus on advocating for policies that support the most vulnerable populations, including initiatives that integrate health and social care services to provide comprehensive support to individuals and families.

A passionate advocate for inclusive and equitable community development, Kelly actively participates in various boards and committees, including her role on the board of Friends of Fieldworkers, where she champions the rights and well-being of agricultural workers and their families. Her leadership is characterized by a strong dedication to fostering collaboration between nonprofit organizations and governmental bodies to enhance community well-being and resilience.

As a wife and mother of two, she balances her professional endeavors with an active family life, continually striving to serve as a model of leadership and commitment in both her personal and professional communities.

Geoff Green Chief Executive Officer, California Association of Nonprofits (CalNonprofit)



Geoff Green is the CEO of the California Association of Nonprofits ([CalNonprofits](#)). From 2015 through 2023 he served as the CEO of the SBCC Foundation, where he led the effort to establish the [SBCC Promise](#). During his tenure the SBCC Foundation distributed \$50 million in support to students and the college and grew its assets to more than \$90 million.

Born and raised in the San Francisco Bay area, Geoff came to Santa Barbara in 1990 as a UCSB student. He found his passion in campus and community organizations working for social justice and environmental health. He was elected UCSB Associated Students President in 1993 and as a Director of the Isla Vista Park & Recreation District in 1994.

Geoff pursued his dream job as a Yosemite National Park Ranger/Naturalist for several years before returning to Santa Barbara in 1997 and joining the [Fund for Santa Barbara](#). He served as Executive Director from 2003 to 2015, during which time the organization tripled in size, built new partnerships, and launched the Youth Making Change program.

With nearly 30 years of experience in (and a love of) the nonprofit sector, Geoff also consults professionally. As a volunteer auctioneer, he has raised over \$6 million for more than 60 nonprofit organizations and frequently emcees events, moderates panels, and facilitates discussions on community issues. His other community work includes more than ten years of public affairs radio programming and as a campaign field organizer.

Geoff served as President of the Board of the Santa Barbara Ventura Counties Chapter of the [Association of Fundraising Professionals](#) in 2012, President of the [Foundation Roundtable of Santa Barbara County](#) from 2014 to 2015, and as Chair of the Board of Directors for the [California Association of Nonprofits](#) from 2016 to 2018. He also served on the Board of Commissioners for the [Housing Authority of the City of Santa Barbara](#) from 2008 through 2021.

Geoff previously served as Chair of the Board of Directors for the Chamber of Commerce of the Santa Barbara Region, and co-led the three-way merger with the Goleta and Carpinteria chambers in 2020. He continued to serve on the newly merged [Santa Barbara South Coast Chamber of Commerce](#) Board of Directors until he termed off in 2021. He also served as President of the Board of Directors for the [Network of California Community College Foundations](#) from 2021-23.

He joined the Board of Directors of [Peabody Charter School](#) in 2020, [Latinos LEAD](#) in 2021, and the [Community Environmental Council](#) in 2022. He also serves on several advisory boards including the [Center for Nonprofit Leadership at California Lutheran University](#), and the Steering Committee for [YouthWell](#).

Nicki Parr

Chief Executive Officer, Women's Economic Ventures



Nicki Parr is the Chief Executive Officer at Women's Economic Ventures (WEV), a non-profit organization that focuses on entrepreneurship as a means for women to achieve 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 \$750,000 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 California Jobs First Initiative.

Originally from the UK, Nicki qualified as a Chartered Accountant with PricewaterhouseCoopers specializing in forensic accounting, 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 Foundation as Treasurer and when she's not singing along at live concerts, she enjoys hiking, hot yoga and most definitely not appearing on the leader board on the Peloton.

Nicki can be contacted by email at nparr@wevonline.org. To learn more about WEV, please visit www.wevonline.org.

Mike Silacci

Chief Philanthropy Officer, Ventura County Community Foundation



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