

2024

Policy Conference Lookbook



Santa Monica
CHAMBER
of **COMMERCE**

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KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



**ASSEMBLY MEMBER
RICK ZBUR**

Assembly member Rick Chavez Zbur was elected to the California State Assembly in November of 2022 to represent the 51st Assembly District.

He was appointed in July 2023 by Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas to serve as the Democratic Caucus Chair of the California Assembly, one of the Speaker's key leadership positions.

A former Executive Director of Equality California, the nation's largest statewide LGBTQ+ civil rights organization, Assemblymember Zbur worked to advance civil rights and social justice for the diverse communities to which LGBTQ+ people belong — communities of color, communities of faith, immigrants, women and people living with HIV.

After graduating from Yale College and Harvard Law School, Rick moved to Los Angeles in 1985. Assembly member Zbur has been instrumental in the Retail Theft Legislation and advocating for Santa Monica businesses.



SENATOR BEN ALLEN

California State Senator Ben Allen represents the 24th Senate District, covering the Westside, Hollywood, South Bay, and Santa Monica Mountains communities of Los Angeles County. Ben was first elected in 2014 and is now serving his third term in the State Senate.

Ben chairs the Senate's Environmental Quality Committee and co-chairs the Legislature's Environmental Caucus, is a member of the Legislative Jewish Caucus, chairs the Legislature's Joint Committee on the Arts, and the Senate Select Committee on Aerospace and Defense. He previously served as Chair of the Education Committee (2017-2019) and Chair of the Elections and Constitutional Amendments Committee (2015-2016).

Ben grew up in the 24th Senate District and attended public schools, graduating from Santa Monica High School in 1996. His father, Michael, spent his career on the English Department faculty at UCLA and mother, Elena, was a public school teacher and artist who served as Chair of the Santa Monica Arts Commission.

Ben has a Bachelor of Arts degree magna cum laude in History from Harvard University; a Master's degree in Latin American Studies from the University of Cambridge; and a Juris Doctor degree from UC Berkeley.

Fluent in Spanish, Ben is a Senior Fellow with the international human rights organization Humanity in Action, an Aspen Institute-Rodel Fellow, a Truman National Security Project Fellow, and a graduate of the Jewish Federation's New Leaders Project. He and his wife Melanie, an attorney, have a young son, Ezra, and a little daughter, Ena

I. SHAPING THE FUTURE OF BUSINESS WITH AI



 **SB 942**

 **AB 2655**

 **AB 2602**

JOIN US AT THIS PANEL AS WE EXPLORE THESE CRITICAL CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE AI LANDSCAPE.

Recently, Governor Gavin Newsom launched initiatives to safeguard Californians from GenAI risks while vetoing legislation that lacks a comprehensive, adaptable approach. As businesses increasingly rely on AI for marketing, data analysis, and process automation, questions arise:

- How can companies balance innovation with regulatory compliance?
- Will AI replace jobs, or can it drive profitability and efficiency?

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Key Recommendation

From a state level, regulation and innovation must work hand in hand. At a micro level, specifically for small businesses, mastering AI tools is essential; those who fail to adapt risk obsolescence. This is especially true for small businesses and employees in white-collar sectors where disruption is imminent.

Takeaways

- AI's potential to democratize essential services can reduce barriers and improve access and equity.
- Human oversight remains vital. Workforce readiness and AI literacy are crucial as the labor market evolves.
- Small businesses should integrate AI swiftly to enhance competitiveness and capitalize on emerging opportunities.

Action Item 1: Chamber will host a workshop focused on how AI tools can assist in increasing members' business. Date TBD.

Action Item 2: Chamber will utilize GAC to continue to support AI legislation that will help small businesses and protect against risks.

LEGISLATION

CALIFORNIA

The State of California will be the leader of AI in America, if not the world with 32 of the top 50 GenAI companies being headquartered in the state. Recent bills signed by the Governor focus on safety and responsibility of AI systems. He also signed an Executive Order to “to study the development, use, and risks of artificial intelligence (AI) technology throughout the state and to develop a deliberate and responsible process for evaluation and deployment of AI within state government.”

STATE LEGISLATION ON AI RECENTLY PASSED INCLUDES:

SB 942: focusing on allowing the public to more easily identify AI generated content by the use of watermarking.

AB 2655: requires large online platforms to remove or label deceptive and digitally altered or created content related to elections during specified periods, and requires them to provide mechanisms to report such content.

AB 2602: mandates that contracts disclose the exact uses of AI-generated replicas of a performer’s voice or likeness in order to protect performers’ rights against unauthorized replication.



MODERATOR



JASSON CROCKETT **SNAP**

Jasson Crockett leads Public Policy and Government Relations for the Western Region at Snap Inc., where he oversees legislative priorities, partnerships, and civic initiatives. Before joining Snap in 2021, he was Director of Community Business in Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti's office, focusing on small business engagement and policy development in sectors like life sciences and tech. Jasson's previous roles include consulting at Nonprofit Finance Fund, teaching, and financial management. He serves on several boards and holds a bachelor's from Georgetown and an MBA from UCLA, where he received the John Wooden Fellowship.

SPEAKERS



TODD TERRAZAS **AI LOS ANGELES**

A social entrepreneur and collaboration catalyst, Todd's career passion is connecting leaders, ideas, and capital to foster creative solutions that will advance the betterment of humanity. His new venture FBRC.ai brings together academia, tech, and the entertainment industry to create the future of content production, centered on AI-supported tools, workflows, and content. His non-profit AI LA has supported the research, development, ethical application, and public education of artificial intelligence and frontier technologies through media and events in the greater Los Angeles region since 2016.



JONATHAN WELBURN **RAND**

Jonathan Welburn is a senior researcher at RAND and a professor at the Pardee RAND Graduate School. He applies methods from operations research and risk analysis to study systemic risks and market failures, with a focus on areas like cyber risk and economic disparity. Currently, he leads projects on identifying key entities in the U.S. economy, global supply chain networks, and economic disparities. His work, sponsored by federal agencies like the Department of Defense, has been featured in RAND reports, academic journals, and major news outlets such as the Wall Street Journal and NY Times. Welburn is also involved with the Aspen Cyber Group and the World Economic Forum.



DR. MEDELL BRIGGS-MALONSON, **UCLA HEALTH**

Medell Briggs-Malonson, MD, MPH, MSHS, is the Chief of Health Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion for UCLA Health and an Associate Professor of Emergency Medicine at the David Geffen School of Medicine. She leads initiatives to promote inclusivity and equity at UCLA Health and is recognized nationally as a healthcare improvement advisor, speaker, and best-selling author. Dr. Briggs-Malonson holds degrees from UCLA and Harvard, completed her residency at Harbor-UCLA, and has earned several accolades, including being named a 2021 Healthcare All-Star by the Los Angeles Dodgers.

II. CHALLENGING WAGES, TARGETING PROFITABILITY



 **SB 616**

 **SB699**

 **AB1076**

AS CALIFORNIA RAISES THE MINIMUM WAGE—NOW \$16 STATEWIDE, UP TO \$23 FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS, AND \$20 FOR FAST FOOD—THE IMPACT ON BUSINESSES IS PROFOUND.

In cities like Santa Monica, where wages for hotel workers reach \$20.32, companies face rising costs that squeeze profits. While higher wages boost employee satisfaction and retention, they disproportionately hit smaller firms and raise barriers to market entry. The Policy conference will delve into these complexities: How can business owners strike a balance between increased wages and maintaining profitability? What are the true costs and benefits of wage hikes? And why do studies on the economic impact of minimum wage show such conflicting results? Join us as we tackle these pressing questions and explore strategies for navigating the new wage landscape in California.

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Key Recommendation

The debate over raising the minimum wage revolves around its effectiveness in reducing poverty versus the economic impact of increased costs and reduced employment opportunities. While it has historically been a useful tool, the minimum wage is now a “blunt instrument” that may disrupt California’s economic balance, potentially forcing us out of the “golden triangle” where wage and employment growth align. Alternative measures, such as tax credits and rent subsidies, may provide more effective solutions. Engaging with local Chambers and officials is vital to advocate for more nuanced approaches.

Takeaways

- California’s high living costs, particularly housing and energy, limit the impact of minimum wage hikes, leaving homeownership out of reach for many in this income bracket.
- Rising minimum wages have contributed to increased youth unemployment, up 20% in recent years in California.
- Wage increases correlate with price hikes across sectors. When multiple sectors are forced to raise prices at the same time it potentially triggers inflationary pressures.
- Minimum wage adjustments affect California’s regions differently; while Santa Monica may see minimal change, eastern California areas face escalating costs that far surpass wage gains. Low Cost of Living areas may be more negatively affected by increasing minimum wages.

Action Item 1: Disseminate educational information on minimum wage increase impacts and more effective alternatives.

Action Item 2: Understand and review future legislation that will impact cost of living.

LEGISLATION

CALIFORNIA

California, per hour, as of 2024

- State: \$16
- Fast Food: \$20
- Healthcare: between \$18 - \$23 depending on type of facility.

In effect between October '24 and Jan '25

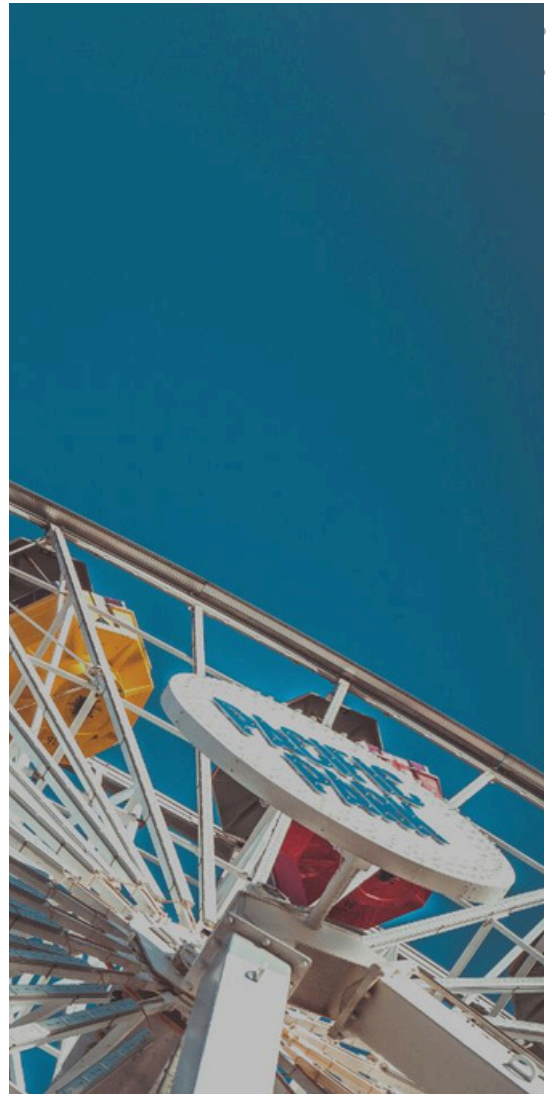
Santa Monica City

- \$17.27
- Hotel/Hotel Property: \$20.32

STATE OF CALIFORNIA LEGISLATION:

SB616: Under SB 616, employers must provide either: 1) 40 hours of paid sick leave upfront each year, 2) accrue one hour of sick leave per 30 hours worked with a cap of 80 hours and a usage limit of 40 hours per year, or 3) use a different accrual method, ensuring employees have 24 hours of sick leave by day 120 and 40 hours by day 200 of employment.

SB699/AB1076: California has long banned post-employment noncompetition and nonsolicitation agreements. SB 699 strengthens this by stating that any void contract is unenforceable, regardless of where or when it was signed, even for jobs outside California. Employers are now prohibited from entering or enforcing such agreements. Employees can sue for damages, injunctive relief, and attorneys' fees. AB 1076 requires employers to notify employees by Feb. 14, 2024, that any noncompetition agreements are void.



MODERATOR



DUSTIN PETERSON
THE ATHENS GROUP

Since joining The Athens Group in 1998, Dustin has managed the design, construction, and development of four major luxury resort projects, including The Ritz-Carlton in Half Moon Bay and Bachelor Gulch, and the Montage properties in Laguna Beach and Beverly Hills. He led the entitlement process for Montage Beverly Hills, where he later oversaw \$165 million in residential sales, and is currently spearheading the Miramar Hotel redevelopment in Santa Monica. A Cornell University graduate in hospitality administration, Dustin is also a member of the Urban Land Institute and resides in Los Angeles with his family.

SPEAKERS



STAFFORD NICHOLS
BEACON ECONOMICS

Stafford Nichols is a Research Director at Beacon Economics, specializing in economic impact and policy analysis. His expertise includes energy policy, housing, economic development, labor regulations, and econometric modeling. Previously, he was an Associate Principal at Gallup, directing research in over 32 countries. He is completing a Ph.D. in Public Policy at the University of Maastricht and holds an MBA in International Finance and a Master of Public Policy from the College of William & Mary.



JENNIFER BARRERA
CEO, CAL CHAMBER

Jennifer Barrera is the president and CEO of the CalChamber, a role she assumed in October 2021 after serving as executive vice president of policy for four years. Before joining the CalChamber in 2010, Barrera worked at the law firm Carothers, DiSante & Freudenberger, LLP, where she represented employers in state and federal courts on employment-related issues. She holds a B.A. in English from California State University, Bakersfield, and a J.D. with high honors from California Western School of Law.



JEFFREY B. WENGER
RAND

Jeffrey is a senior policy researcher and director of the RAND Lowy Family Middle-Class Pathways Center (MCPC). As director of the Middle-Class Pathways Center he works with RAND researchers and other scholars documenting the challenges of remaining in the middle class and focusing on the most pressing needs to expand growth opportunities for the middle class. His current research examines the effects of working conditions on remaining in the labor force, and helping military personnel transition into the civilian labor force. He is currently working with Indeed.com to examine the costs of providing flexible work arrangements and better working conditions to workers. He is also investigating the proportion of unemployed who have a criminal history record. He is a nationally known expert in unemployment insurance. From 2003 to 2015 Wenger was an assistant and then associate professor at the University of Georgia. He received his Ph.D. in policy analysis from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

III. TACKLING MENTAL HEALTH & HOMELESSNESS



SB43



AB102



Care Act

CALIFORNIA FACES A SEVERE HOMELESSNESS CRISIS, WITH 181,000 INDIVIDUALS ON THE STREETS, INCLUDING 45,000 WITH SEVERE MENTAL ILLNESS AND 43,000 BATTLING CHRONIC SUBSTANCE ABUSE, ACCORDING TO HUD.

Recent legislation, including Prop 1, which narrowly passed in March, expands Prop 63 funding to cover substance abuse treatment and authorizes \$6.38 billion for supportive housing, costing approximately \$550,000 per person. New laws like SB43, AB102, and the CARE Act, signed by Governor Newsom in 2023, redefine conservatorship criteria to include those unable to provide for personal safety due to severe mental health or substance use disorders. As we explore these legislative changes, the key question arises: Are these measures the right approach to help mentally ill and substance-dependent individuals off the streets and into care, or do they overreach, potentially infringing on civil liberties and personal freedoms? This thought-provoking discussion will kick off our conference on mental health and homelessness.

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Key Recommendation

The current system has significant gaps that prevent unhoused individuals from accessing consistent, comprehensive support. Issues such as organizational silos, misaligned care timelines, and external factors often disrupt the continuity of support. Past strategies, including the “Housing First” model, have proven too limited to address the complexity of needs effectively. A holistic, multi-agency approach tailored to each individual—covering housing, mental health, addiction treatment, and job placement—is essential. Engaging the business community to advocate for systemic improvements is vital in advancing sustainable solutions.

Takeaways

- LA County faces a critical shortage of mental health outreach teams and lacks competitive funding to retain skilled professionals.
- Prop 1 presents a unique opportunity to implement a holistic response to homelessness and addiction.
- Timely care is crucial, yet the current system struggles to deliver the right support at the right time.
- Housing should be integrated as part of a continuum of care, addressing all facets of support at appropriate stages.

Action Item 1: Advocate for Prop 1 funding to be released to Santa Monica institutions.

Action Item 2: Engage Chamber members and advocate for systemic improvements to local homelessness systems.

LEGISLATION

CALIFORNIA

According to HUD:

- California has 181,000 homeless individuals.
- Of which, 45,000 are considered severely mentally ill.
- 43,000 of the total have chronic substance abuse.

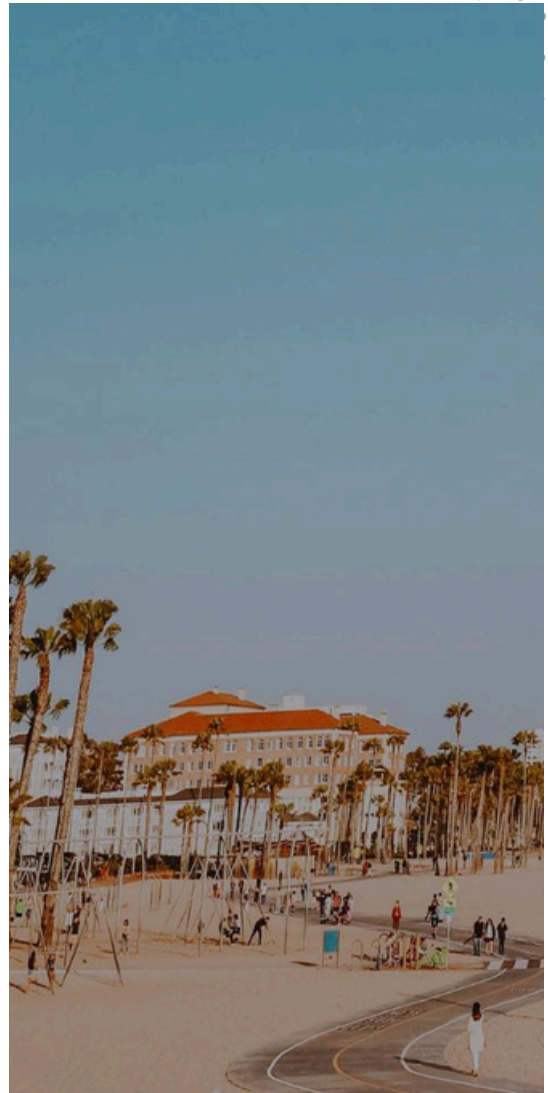
Prop 1 (Chamber Supported)

- Passed - but barely, in March voting
- Allows for the original act (known as Prop 63, which passed in 2004) to also now include treatment for substance abuse disorders.
- Allows for an additional \$6.38b bond used to build supportive permanent housing for those experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

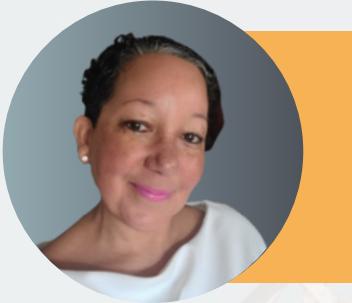
STATE OF CALIFORNIA LEGISLATION:

SB43 Conservatorship Rule: need to be implemented from 2026, allow people to bring people in 'from the LPS perspective . LA claims they don't have the infrastructure for it - but Prop 1 will allow this.

- Signed into law by Newsom in 2023.
- The law updates the definition for those eligible for conservatorship to include people who are unable to provide for their personal safety or necessary medical care, in addition to food, clothing, or shelter, due to either severe substance use disorder or serious mental health illnesses.



MODERATOR



ALISA ORDUÑA, PHD, FLORENCE ALIESE ADVANCEMENT NETWORK

Alisa Orduña, PhD, is a practitioner, policy analyst, collaborator and thought leader in homelessness services for the past 25 years. Her life's mission to re-imagine neighborhoods as beloved communities where residents of all diversity have a sense of belonging and resources to thrive. During her career, she has worked on the cutting edge of homelessness policy formation and system refinement in the public and nonprofit sectors in Philadelphia, PA; Los Angeles, CA; and Santa Monica. Dr. Orduña is a graduate of Xavier University of Louisiana (BA-English), the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public and International Affairs (MPIA- Social and Economic Development), and Pacifica Graduate Institute (PhD and MA-Depth Psychology with a specialization in Community, Liberation, Indigenous, and Eco-Psychology).

SPEAKERS



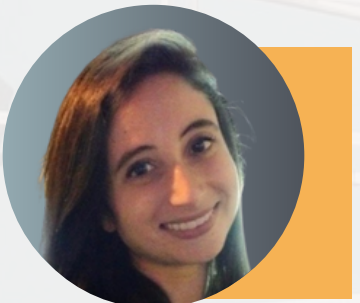
MAURICE LYLES SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA REGIONAL DIRECTOR

Maurice Lyles serves as the Southern California Regional Director for Governor Gavin Newsom. In this role he oversees the 3 Southern California offices of the Governor's External Affairs team. The External Affairs team uplifts the priorities of the Governor and our communities by providing a pathway of direct communication between the Governor's Office and stakeholders to facilitate more effective and responsive governance. Previously, Maurice served for The Office of US Senator Barbara Boxer and led policy work for UCSD.



KATIE HREN CEDARS-SINAI, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR: COMMUNITY HEALTH

Katie Hren is a healthcare professional with strong clinical skills, experience in systems work, and a demonstrated commitment to serving others. She holds a B.A. in Human Development from CSULB and an MSW/MPH from USC. In Katie's professional experience she has worked in a variety of social service and health care settings including mental health facilities, community-based organizations, hospitals, and private practice. Currently, Katie serves as the Associate Director of Community Health at Cedars-Sinai. In this role, she leads the design and implementation of an enterprise-wide social determinants of health program, aiming to improve patient and community health through addressing social care needs with standardized screening and linkages to community-based providers. Prior to this position, Katie worked in the Psychiatry department at Cedars-Sinai. Katie also has project management experience focusing on improving transitions of care for vulnerable patient populations.



CHRISTINA DIALYNAS MILKEN INSTITUTE

Christina worked on the Milken Institute's Business and Program Development team as their project manager. Ahead of joining the Milken Institute, Christina had worked on the research team at Feeding America, the Assertive Community Treatment team at Trilog Behavioral Healthcare, and as a special projects associate at College Advising Corps. Christina holds a bachelor's degree from Duke University and a master's degree from the University of Chicago. She also serves as Co-Chair on the Duke Southern California Alumni Board.



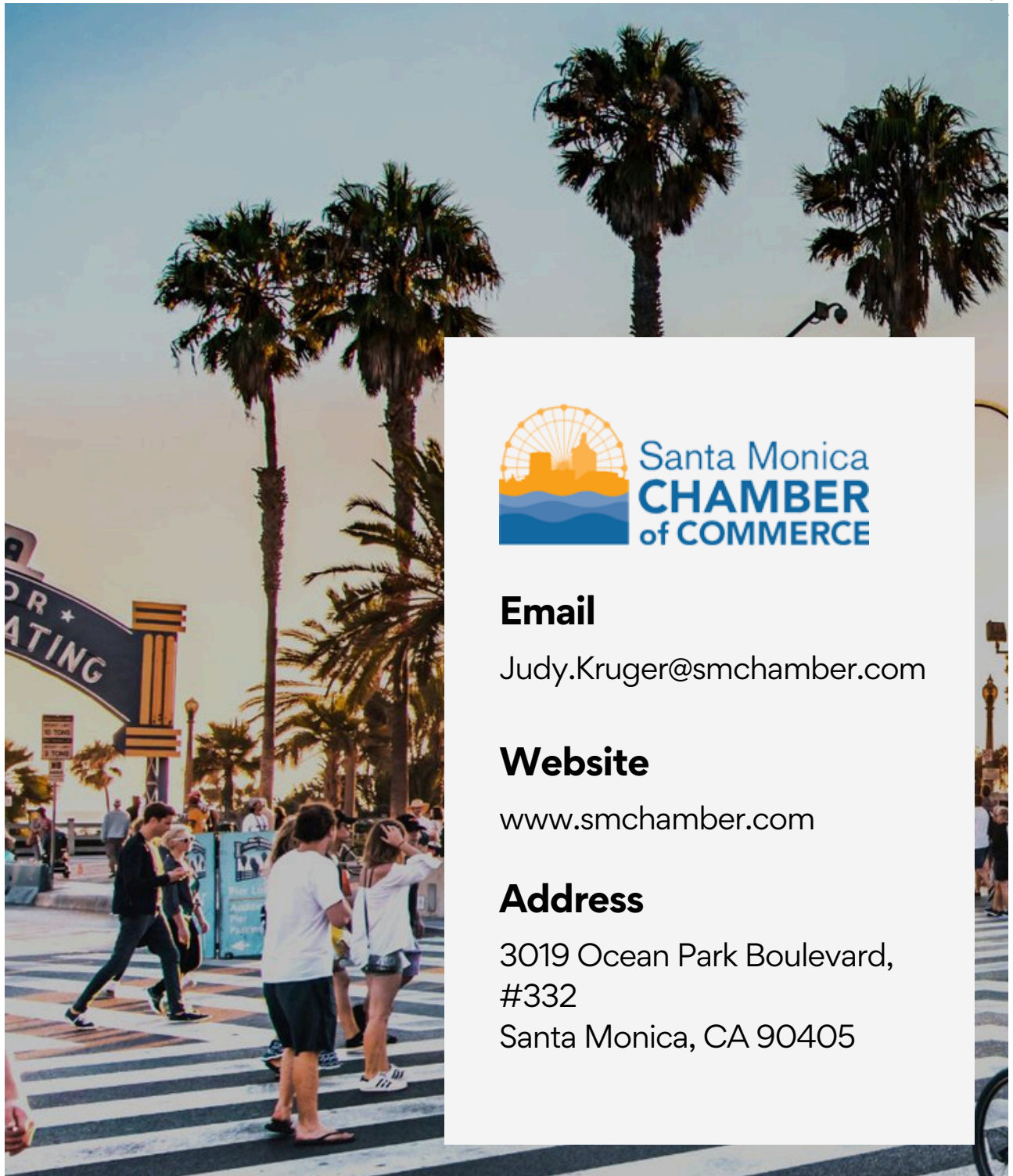
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