

Joint Informational Hearing
Joint Committee on the Arts and
Assembly Committee on Arts, Entertainment, Sports and Tourism
State of the Arts:
How Current Federal Policies Are Impacting Arts, Culture and the Humanities
in California

WITNESS BIOGRAPHIES

OVERVIEW AND UPDATE ON THE STATUS OF THE ARTS IN THE UNITED STATES



Erin Harkey
CEO, Americans for the Arts

Erin Harkey has over 20+ years of experience helping individuals and communities succeed through the arts.

Erin was the Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE). She served the City of Chicago as Projects Administrator, then Deputy Commissioner for Programming and First Deputy Commissioner.

In her dual role as Senior Policy Advisor for Arts in Culture in the Mayor's Office, she advised on cultural policy and arts strategy across all City departments and agencies.

She previously managed public art programs at the Los Angeles County Arts Commission and the Arts Council for Long Beach.

Erin holds two master's degrees in Public Art Administration and Urban Planning from the University of Southern California (USC), and a bachelor's degree in Marketing from Howard University



Joely Fisher

National Secretary-Treasurer & Co-Chair National Government Affairs and Public Policy Committee, SAG-AFTRA

Joely Fisher was elected SAG-AFTRA Secretary-Treasurer in 2021 and re-elected in 2023. The daughter of former Screen Actors Guild Secretary-Treasurer Connie Stevens, Fisher continues her mother's legacy as a performer and in participating as a union leader, also serving as Co-Chair of the SAG-AFTRA National Government Affairs and Public Policy Committee. As Secretary-Treasurer, Fisher took the leading role in acquiring SAG-AFTRA's future headquarters in North Hollywood, California, a fiscally responsible move that will ultimately save the union millions. She also serves on SAG-AFTRA's TV/Theatrical Negotiating Committee, participating in important negotiations that impact the union's nearly 160,000 members.

Born in Burbank, California, to entertainers Connie Stevens and Eddie Fisher, Fisher was named Miss Golden Globe at the 1992 Golden Globe awards and would go on to be a triple threat in television, musical theater and motion pictures. After her Broadway debut as Rizzo in *Grease*, she made a "sensational and sexy" turn as Sally Bowles in Sam Mendes and Rob Marshall's critically acclaimed Broadway revival of *Cabaret*, which earned her rave reviews.

However, it was her five seasons as the monstrously ambitious and seductive Hollywood executive Paige Clark on the groundbreaking ABC show *Ellen*, that introduced her to television audiences around the world and earned her a Golden Globe nomination. She next starred opposite John Goodman in FOX's series *Normal, Ohio*, playing the hilariously fascinating combo of a young caring mother who just happened to be a "bit of a slut." She also spent two seasons starring in her own series, *Wild Card*, for Lifetime.

In 2005, Fisher joined the cast of the hit television series *Desperate Housewives* as Felicity Huffman's tough and complex boss, Nina Fletcher. She then returned to television opposite Brad Garrett for four seasons in FOX's *Till Death*, where their incredible chemistry kept audiences rolling with laughter. She also appeared in a recurring role on ABC's *Last Man Standing*, opposite Hector Elizondo.

Fisher's film credits have placed her opposite some of the finest actors in film, such as Jim Carrey in *The Mask*; Steve Martin in *Mixed Nuts*; and Nick Nolte in *I'll Do Anything*.

Her crowning achievement to date was starring with Matthew Broderick in the smash-hit Disney film, *Inspector Gadget*. She is a stand out in such indie films as *Perfect Prey*, *Slingshot*, *Killing Winston Jones* and *Search Engines*. Recently, she's been seen in *Tribes of Palos Verdes*, opposite Jennifer Garner, as well as *The Disappointments Room* and *By the Rivers of Babylon*. Her television movies include a starring role in NBC's *Thirst*, Showtime's *Jitters*, ABC's *Seduction in a Small Town* and Hallmark's *Cupid*.

Though the focus of her career seems to be acting, the underlying accompaniment throughout has been her love of singing and performing. She tells the tale of sleeping in the orchestra pit during one of mother Connie Stevens' performances, and by 12, she was singing all over the world, appearing in a USO tour with Bob Hope during the Persian Gulf War, and performing for President and Mrs. George H. W. Bush at the Kennedy Center. Joely has written, directed and performed in multiple one-woman shows, and was featured at a young age on the Tony awards, the Academy Awards.

In recent years, Fisher has embarked on a directing career in television and short films. Her black comedy short, *Sunset Fever*, is a commentary on reality television and the Hollywood family. Her first music video, "Sonte" by European artist MIRUD, has over a million views and landed her on a short list of women called upon to direct multi-camera television for the Disney Channel. This year, she will make her feature directorial debut with *Oliver Storm*, a family adventure film. In addition, she has directed socially conscious PSA campaigns for The International Fund for Animal Welfare and WelcomeUS, Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg's organization for immigrant heritage. She hopes to continue on this path and give the world delicious and compelling stories and lead the pack of women who make change in the world.

In her book *Growing Up Fisher*, she writes in gut-wrenching detail how the sudden loss of her sister, Carrie Fisher, inspired her creativity and gave her the strength to write. Fisher has been married for more than two decades to cinematographer and director Christopher Duddy. Together they have five children: Cameron, Collin, and daughters Skylar Grace, True Harlow and Olivia Luna.

PANEL 1: FEDERAL ARTS AGENCIES: THE RELATIONSHIP WITH CALIFORNIA AGENCIES



Rick Noguchi
Executive Director, California Humanities

Rick joined California Humanities as its President and CEO in 2023. Previously, Rick served as the Chief Operating Officer at the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) in Los Angeles, where he led the strategic direction of the museum and oversaw programs and external relations. Previous positions in philanthropy include the James Irvine Foundation and the California Community Foundation.

Rick earned a Masters of Fine Arts degree from Arizona State University and a Masters of Business Administration from Pepperdine University.

He serves on the board of the California Association of Museums, and he is a member of the Los Angeles Leadership team for Arizona State University. He also serves as a Board of Governor for the Japanese American National Museum.

Noguchi is a writer with two collections of poetry, *The Ocean Inside Kenji Takezo*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996, and *The Wave He Caught*, Pearl Editions, 1995, and as well as a children's book *Flowers from Mariko*, Lee & Low Publishing, 2001.

He has been an avid surfer since he was 12 years old.



Greg Lucas
California State Librarian, California State Library

Greg Lucas was appointed California's 25th State Librarian by Governor Jerry Brown on March 25, 2014. Prior to his appointment, Greg was the Capitol Bureau Chief for the San Francisco Chronicle where he covered politics and policy at the State Capitol for nearly 20 years.

During Greg's tenure as State Librarian, the State Library's priorities have been to improve reading skills throughout the state, put library cards into the hands of every school kid and provide all Californians the information they need – no matter what community they live in. The State Library invests \$10 million annually in local libraries to help them develop more innovative and efficient ways to serve their communities.

Since 2015, the State Library has improved access for millions of Californians by helping connect more than 1,000 of the state's 1,130 libraries to a high-speed Internet network that links universities, colleges, schools, and libraries around the world. Greg holds a Master's in Library and Information Science from California State University San Jose, a Master's in Professional Writing from the University of Southern California, and a degree in communications from Stanford University.



Danielle Brazell
Executive Director, California Arts Council

Danielle Brazell has had a distinguished career spanning over thirty years, marked by her transformative impact on public sector arts management and arts advocacy. In her current role as Executive Director of the California Arts Council, Brazell continues to advance support systems for creativity and promote the arts as vital to societal well-being. Her efforts are focused on fostering artistic innovation and ensuring that the arts remain a vibrant and integral part of civic and cultural life. Through her leadership, Danielle demonstrates the essential value of artists in shaping a more inclusive and culturally enriched society.

As the former General Manager of the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA 2014-2021), Brazell played a pivotal role in expanding funding programs, developing new public arts initiatives, and championing equity and access in the arts. Her leadership resulted in a remarkable increase in the DCA's budget from \$13 million to \$22 million and the establishment of a \$150 million portfolio of capital projects and programming.

She was the founding Executive Director of Arts for LA (2006-2014), transforming the ad-hoc group of executive arts leaders into a new model for local arts and arts education advocacy. In addition, she served as the Artistic Director of Highways Performance Space and the Director of Special Projects for the Screen Actors Guild Foundation.

PANEL 2: COMMUNITY VOICES/POLICY IMPACTS



Leslie A. Ito
Executive Director, Armory Center for the Arts

Leslie A. Ito is Executive Director of the Armory Center for the Arts in Pasadena. Armory Center for the Arts is the region's leading independent institution for contemporary art exhibitions and community arts education. The Armory's mission is to nurture our community and its young people by creating, learning, and presenting art to advance equity and social justice, we envision joyful, healthy, and equitable communities shaped by imagination, creativity, and diverse voices. Leslie is highly regarded as one of the most skillful, entrepreneurial arts executives in the Los Angeles region with over 20 years of proven leadership and fundraising expertise to her credit. Ito's reputation for cultural "bridge-building" and advocacy underscores her deep commitment to arts equity and access for all people.

Prior to this position, she was the President & CEO of the Japanese American Cultural & Community Center, one of the largest ethnic arts and cultural centers of its kind in the U.S. She has also held the position of Program Director for Arts and Health at the California Community Foundation, and Director of Grant Programs at the Los Angeles County Arts Commission. She has served as Executive Director of Visual Communications, the nation's premiere Asian American media arts organization, and as Program Associate in the Media, Arts Culture Division at the Ford Foundation in New York.

Ms. Ito currently served as a Community Trustee for the Durfee Foundation. She has also served on the Board of Directors for Arts for Healing & Justice Network, Little Tokyo Community Council, Americans for the Arts, TELIC Arts Exchange in Los Angeles' Chinatown, and Films By Youth Inside (FYI Films), inspiring incarcerated youth through filmmaking. She is also a co-founder of the LA Asian American and Pacific Islander Giving Circle.

In 2016, Leslie was awarded the prestigious Stanton Fellowship from the Durfee Foundation, focusing on how community-based, ethnic-specific organizations can reinvent themselves for a new generation in a changing social context and evolving cultural ecology. Japan's Ministry of

Foreign Affairs appointed her as a Japan House, Los Angeles Steering Committee member. Leslie was also part of the 2017 Japanese American Leadership Delegation through the U.S. Japan Council. In 2019, she received the Cultural Leadership Award from the Vincent Price Art Museum.

A native of Pasadena and a *Yonsei*, fourth-generation Japanese American, Ms. Ito attended Stanford University Graduate School of Business's Executive Program for Nonprofit Leaders. She received a Master of Arts in Asian American Studies from the University of California, Los Angeles, and a Bachelor of Arts in American Studies from Mount Holyoke College.



Jacob Kornbluth

Documentary Screenwriter and Director, Jacob Kornbluth Productions

Jacob Kornbluth is an Emmy award-winning filmmaker with experience in Film, Television, and Theater. Jacob has directed five theatrically released feature films and over 200 shorts.

Jacob was awarded a Special Jury Prize for excellence in Filmmaking from the Sundance Film Festival for his feature documentary *Inequality For All*.

Jacob founded Inequality Media, with Robert Reich, which has been called a "light house" brand for economic storytelling and played a crucial role in framing an economic case for policies in ways everyone can understand. His short-form His short-form videos have been viewed over a billion times on social media.



Edward Tepporn
Executive Director, Angel Island Immigration Station

Edward Tepporn is the Executive Director of the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation, the primary nonprofit organization working in partnership with CA State Parks to preserve the buildings at the former US immigration station on Angel Island. Edward joined the AIISF team in November 2019. He has over 29 years of experience in the nonprofit sector. He previously served on staff at the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF) for nearly 16 years, most recently as APIAHF's Executive Vice President.

During his time at APIAHF, he oversaw multi-million dollar national programs, functioned as chief strategy officer, served as key liaison to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation-funded national racial equity collaborative, and helped secure over \$32 million in funding.

Edward received a B.A. in Biology and Psychology from Washington University. He was also a Nelson Mandela Scholarship recipient in the M.S.W. program at the George Warren Brown School of Social Work. In 2019, Ed was awarded a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Award for Health Equity. He was also recognized as a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Culture of Health Fellow. He currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Western Museums Association.



Carlos Cristiani

Director, Corporate & Government Affairs, Fleet Science Center

Carlos Cristiani is the Director of Corporate and Government Affairs at the Fleet Science Center. Concurrently, he is the Legislative Analyst and Lobbyist for San Diego ART Matters, a regional arts and culture advocacy organization. He led Design Forward Alliance, a design and creative non-profit organization in San Diego as its Executive Director, advocating for human-centered design and design-driven innovation practices for community impact.

Carlos was born and raised in Mexico City and moved to San Diego, California to attend UCSD in 2002. He has served in several boards of directors in arts and culture organizations in San Diego such as Mingei International Museum, San Diego Art Institute, House of Mexico, and as Commissioner in the City of San Diego Arts and Culture Commission. He currently serves on the board of the VAPA Foundation (Visual and Performing Arts), an arts education nonprofit organization focused in San Diego Unified School District students, teachers and schools.



Ann Burroughs
President & CEO, Japanese American National Museum

Ann Burroughs is the President and CEO of the Japanese American National Museum. She is an internationally recognized leader in the field of human rights and social justice. She serves as the Chair of the Board of Directors of Amnesty International USA and was formerly Chair of Amnesty International's Global Assembly.

Her life-long commitment to racial and social justice was shaped by her experience as a young activist in her native South Africa where she was jailed as a political prisoner for her opposition to apartheid.

For over 25 years, she has worked with leaders, organizations, and networks in the US and abroad to promote diversity, racial justice and a rights-based culture. She has previously served as Executive Director of the Taproot Foundation and as the Executive Director of LA Works, and has worked as a consultant to the Omidyar Network, the Rockefeller Foundation and the government of South Africa.

PANEL 3: VALUING AND ELEVATING THE ARTS



Adam Fowler
Founding Partner, CVL Economics

Adam J. Fowler is an economist and founding partner at CVL Economics. His work focuses on the intersection of economic development and the creative economy.

Recent engagements include designing and implementing creative placemaking initiatives and developing strategies for supporting creative talent pipelines. Adam serves on the California Arts Council (CAC) Creative Economy Workgroup and the Entertainment Industry Foundation's (EIF) Careers Program Advisory Council, where he chairs the Data and Research Working Group. He is a member of the Entertainment Equity Alliance (EEA) and teaches strategic planning for the Economic Development Certificate Program at Fresno State University.

His research, thought leadership, and expert commentary have been cited in a wide variety of media outlets, including the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, Bloomberg, the San Francisco Chronicle, and National Public Radio.



Jennifer Caballero
Executive Director, California Association of Museums

Jennifer Caballero joined the California Association of Museums (CAM) staff as Interim Executive Director in March 2022, following three consecutive two-year terms as a member of the CAM Board, with the final two years in the role of Board President.

Prior to joining the CAM staff, she was the Marketing Director for the Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles, creating general and targeted marketing initiatives using multimedia promotion, in-kind and paid sponsorships, community-based marketing, branding, and market research.

Jennifer has particularly deep experience in promoting a culturally-specific institution to a broad audience; before the Skirball, she was Manager of Marketing, PR, and Audience Development at the Pacific Asia Museum in Pasadena.

She holds a BA in American Studies from Scripps College.



Julie Baker
CEO, Californians for the Arts

Julie has been the CEO of California's statewide arts advocacy organizations since late 2018. During her tenure, she has increased the legislative influence and visibility of arts and culture communities by building coalitions across for-profit and non-profit sectors of California's creative industries. She has championed a month-long arts awareness and advocacy campaign every April and fought for resources and legislation to serve and protect artists and cultural workers. Julie has served in various leadership roles, including California State Captain to Americans for the Arts' National Arts Action Summit, co-chair of the creative economy working group at the CA Economic Summit, and co-chair of the Western Arts Advocacy network for Creative West, where she is also a member of the Board of Trustees. In 2025, she was appointed to the CalNonprofits Board of Directors. She also serves as Board President of California Heritage: Indigenous Research Project. Her past roles include serving on the Nevada County school board (2020-2024) and as an appointed member of the State of California's 2022 Entrepreneurship & Economic Mobility Task Force (EEMTF) and the Creative Economy Working Group (2024-25). In 2021, Julie received the Americans for the Arts Alene Valkanas State Arts Advocacy Award, which honors an individual at the state level whose arts advocacy efforts have dramatically affected the political landscape.

Julie Baker's extensive experience in the arts includes owning a fine arts gallery showcasing emerging artists, co-founding the Flow art fair, establishing Julie Baker Projects, a consulting firm, and curating a world music series at the Crocker Art Museum. Previously, she served as President of her family's arts marketing firm in New York City and worked at Christie's Auction house. Her non-profit leadership experience includes eight years as Executive Director for The Center for the Arts, a performing arts organization and the California WorldFest. In recognition of her contributions, she received the inaugural Peggy Levine Arts & Community Service Award from the Nevada County Arts Council.