



California Forward's Vision & Commitment

For a century and a half, California has prospered as an epicenter of innovation – from the creativity of Hollywood to the ingenuity of aerospace to the inventiveness of Silicon Valley.

In many ways, California's government has supported this ambition with physical infrastructure and investments in education. At times, the government itself has been reinvented – such as when the Progressive Movement revamped the political system to better respond to the broader public interest.

Today California is still a home to innovation, but government's contribution to that prosperity is waning. Education, transportation, and health and human service systems have largely missed out on the management and technology revolutions that have transformed other essential elements of modern life.

Californians see their government as out-of-date and out-of-touch – handcuffed by partisan gridlock and stuck in a fiscal quagmire. In turn, California's leaders – in government, business and civic sectors – have become convinced that the very governance of the state must be retooled for necessary public programs to be revived.

Our vision is for a California that is fortified by a renewed system of governance that enables elected officials and public agencies to forge the best possible solutions and provide the highest quality of services – supporting efforts by regions, organizations and individuals to thrive in this dynamic and competitive century.

Fiscal systems do not ensure that priorities get funded or that programs become more efficient and effective over time. No one can tell with confidence whether tax dollars are well spent.

State agencies struggle to deal effectively with complex issues impacting some 38 million people, while local governments grapple with challenges beyond their control.

The electoral system prevents many voters from having any real say – leaving elected officials with little incentive to effectively respond to public concerns.

And finally, sadly, Californians have grown distrustful of their government, disappointed and detached. Without pride of ownership, loyalty to place, or an emotional investment in a common vision for the future, public decision-making is abandoned to a few for the benefit of some.

Each of these problems can be solved. California can be governed. But it will require a reform effort that is politically bipartisan, committed to involving the state's diverse perspectives, and focused on developing and enacting practical solutions that are broadly supported. That's the job of *California Forward* and a cause that all Californians are invited to join.

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This vision is inspired by a sense of obligation – to honor those who came before us and gave us so many opportunities by ensuring those who follow us will have the same or greater opportunities to be safe, healthy and prosperous.

This vision is predicated on the understanding that for California to be a good political democracy it must be a good economic democracy. The governance system needs to enable Californians to be leaders in the knowledge-based global marketplace, which will require the underlying public safety, educational and economic development efforts to restore hope and progress in the most persistent pockets of despair and poverty.

This vision is focused on tomorrow as well as today. A sound governance system must ensure that public priorities and policy decisions are predicated on the long-term interest of all Californians. If essential programs are going to get better over time, major policy and fiscal decisions need to be steered toward outcomes and guided by evidence, rather than dominated by self interest and political expediency. From bridges to broadband, California needs to pursue smart infrastructure that enables economic growth. From the summits to the sea, California needs to protect its natural heritage while encouraging sustainable and efficient food and energy systems, neighborhoods and enterprises.

To achieve this vision, Californians need to rethink how leaders are selected and guided, how they make key fiscal and policy decisions, and how government agencies organize cooperative efforts around shared goals. This vision will require more Californians to be more meaningfully involved, as consumers of public services, as taxpayers, as voters, as neighbors, as citizens.

Toward that end, *California Forward* makes the following commitments:

California Forward will work to make the state’s fiscal process far-sighted – focusing beyond the next budget cycle and the next election cycle to the next generation. This will require evolving the revenue system to create stable support that reflects the changing economy, aligning authority over fiscal decisions with responsibility for delivering services, and focusing on results to create accountability and restore public trust.

California Forward will work to align state, regional and local efforts to effectively respond to public imperatives. A few promising partnerships of local and state agencies and private organizations are responding – regionally and in neighborhoods, breaking down the walls of bureaucracy and sharing resources and authority – to address economic, social and environmental needs. These examples are few, often ephemeral and predicated more on personal

leadership than institutional support, but they must become models for transforming the role of the state in encouraging regional solutions and effective local governance.

California Forward will work to make the democratic process and elected officials more responsive to the public interest and the will of the people – by giving citizens more control over the political process and ensuring elected officials are motivated and empowered to respond to the needs and priorities of all Californians.

And *California Forward* will work to make the political discourse more reflective of the state’s diversity and innovative spirit – so that the public process is more open and fair, more representative of and more responsive to the lives and views of the people.

In short, we commit to putting government back in the business of solving problems. We won’t start from scratch and we won’t work alone. We invite the participation of all Californians, incorporating their genius and voices into practical solutions with broad public support. We strive to take the best ideas and move them forward – into action, practice and laws – so they have a real impact on the daily lives of all Californians.

Every day, Californians are transforming the world – as entrepreneurs, creators, volunteers, and community leaders. In turn, Californians need an effective public sector so that the private sector can continue to innovate. *California Forward* will accelerate this transformation.