



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**NEWS RELEASE**

**Commissioner Jones appoints new Insurance Diversity Task Force**

*Industry representatives, diverse business suppliers and insurance experts come together to increase diversity in the industry*

**SACRAMENTO, Calif.** – Insurance Commissioner Dave Jones today announced the members of the 2015-2016 Insurance Diversity Task Force, which will make recommendations to the commissioner regarding ways to increase diversity in procurement and governing boards within the insurance industry.

“I am honored to announce the members of the new Task Force, who all share the common goal to create greater diversity in the insurance industry,” said Commissioner Jones. “Insurance is a \$257 billion a year industry in California and I remain committed to making sure our state’s diverse business owners have the opportunity to benefit from this industry, which so greatly impacts our economy. I am confident the wide array of expertise our new Task Force members bring will benefit our work in meeting these goals.”

Task Force members will identify actions the commissioner and the department can take to encourage insurance companies to utilize diverse suppliers and to increase diversity amongst their governing boards. They will also make recommendations for changes to the law and collaborate and partner with state and national leaders on diversity issues.

Since 2011, the Department of Insurance has conducted surveys of the nation’s top insurers to understand whether they are purchasing goods and services from the state’s minority-, women-, disabled veteran-, and LGBT-owned businesses. Last year the department also conducted a first-in-the-nation survey of the state of diversity across insurer governing boards. The results reveal approximately 80 percent of insurer board members are men, and nearly 83 percent of board members are Caucasian.

The first Task Force meeting will be held on Monday, March 23, 2015.

**Media Notes:**

**Members of the Task Force include:**

**Linda Akutagawa** is President and CEO of Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics, Inc. (LEAP) where she is responsible for LEAP’s strategic direction, sustainability, relationships, and collaborations, including its A+ Leadership Program which seeks to increase diversity on corporate boards. Akutagawa joins the Task Force as an advocate/expert of governing board diversity.

**Danielle K. Beavers** is the Economic Equity Program Manager at The Greenlining Institute and is recognized as a diversity expert across many sectors. She advocates for a more diverse financial sector by leading Greenlining’s work with the federal Offices of Minority and Women Inclusion. Beavers joins the Task Force as an advocate/representative for minority business enterprises.

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**Robin M. Billups** is the Director of Business Development at the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC) where she leads the organization's business development efforts in the West. Billups is a seasoned financial services executive and joins the Task Force as an advocate/representative for women business enterprises.

**Janice P. Brown** is the Owner and Founder of Brown Law Group, a leading Southern California litigation law firm. Brown also serves as an Executive Committee Member for the National Association of Minority and Women Owned Law Firms (NAMWOLF). Brown joins the Task Force as an advocate/representative for minority business enterprises.

**Pat Fong Kushida** is the President and CEO of the Sacramento Asian-Pacific Chamber of Commerce (SACC) and President and CEO of the California Asian Pacific Chamber of Commerce where she assists ethnic minority-owned businesses that seek contract opportunities. Fong Kushida joins the Task Force as an advocate/representative for minority business enterprises.

**Melinda Guzman** is CEO of the Melinda Guzman Professional Corporation, a certified Woman and Hispanic owned law firm. Guzman has previously served as the General Counsel for the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce—where she was involved in the creation of supplier diversity programs within corporate America—and as Chair of the inaugural Insurance Diversity Task Force and rejoins as an advocate/representative for women business enterprises.

**Craig E. Holden** is a Senior Partner and Chairman of the National Commercial Litigation Department for the law firm of Lewis, Brisbois, Bisgaard & Smith. Holden has been recognized for his efforts to increase diversity and inclusion in the legal profession and to increase access to legal services for people of modest means. Holden joins the Task Force as an advocate/expert of supplier diversity.

**Ramon Jones** is the Regional Vice President of Nationwide Insurance—the first and only insurer to have a representative on the inaugural Insurance Diversity Task Force—where he manages premium and distribution goals for the Nationwide brand in 10 western states, including California. Ramon Jones has remained an active participant with the Insurance Diversity Initiative and has served as a speaker for many Initiative events. He joins the Task Force as an insurance industry representative.

**Michael G. Keeley** is the President and CEO of MGK Risk and Insurance Services, specializing in commercial insurance broker and risk financing expertise. He has in-depth knowledge of increasing supply chain diversity and focuses on governing board diversity as a member of Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity. He rejoins the Task Force as a representative for diverse business owners.

**Mark Morales** is Vice President of the SBA (Small Business Administration) Division of HomeStreet Bank and co-owner of Charles Jacobsen, Inc. – a certified LGBT Business Enterprise. Morales serves as Board Member and Treasurer of the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, and also works with the National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce (NGLCC) to help with minority business certifications for the LGBT community. Morales joins the Task Force as an advocate/representative for LGBT business enterprises.

**Salvador Peinado, Jr.** is the Sr. Supplier Diversity and Innovation Advisor at CSAA Insurance Exchange where he is responsible for developing and implementing CSAA's Supplier Sourcing programs, which include Supplier Diversity, Innovation, Environmental Sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility. He previously served as Manager of Purchasing for California Water Service Company and developed the company's supplier diversity program under General Order 156. Peinado joins the Task Force as an insurance industry representative.

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**Cathy Schwamberger** is an Associate General Counsel for State Farm and serves as lead attorney for State Farm's legislative and regulatory activities in 10 western states, including California. Schwamberger has previously served as President of Equality California Institute, an LGBT advocacy organization that advances equal rights for LGBT Californians. Schwamberger joins the Task Force as an insurance industry representative.

**Melanie M. Shelby** is the Managing Director at Gray, Greer, Shelby & Vaughn LLC where she increased economic development opportunities for diverse vendors by \$300 million and developed national and statewide supplier diversity campaigns for Fortune 200 companies. Shelby joins the Task Force as an advocate/expert of supplier diversity.

**Randy Sinnott** is the founding partner of Sinnott, Puebla, Campagne & Curet, a Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise believed to be the largest DVBE law firm in California. Sinnott served in the United States Marine Corps, and retired after 30 years as a Colonel. He is active in the DVBE community, including providing pro bono legal help for SDVOB (Service Disabled Veterans Owned Businesses). Sinnott joins the Task Force as an advocate/representative for disabled veteran business enterprises.

**Scott Syphax** is the President and CEO of The Nehemiah Companies - a Sacramento-based national social enterprise and real estate development corporation. Syphax serves on the boards of Federal Home Loan Bank of San Francisco, Norcal Mutual Insurance Company, Medicus Insurance Company, Valley Vision, and American Leadership Forum. He rejoins the Task Force as an advocate/expert of governing board diversity.

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The California Department of Insurance, established in 1868, is the largest consumer protection agency in California. Insurers collect \$257 billion in premiums annually in California. In 2014 the California Department of Insurance received more than 175,000 calls from consumers and helped recover over \$54 million in claims and premiums. Please visit the Department of Insurance web site at [www.insurance.ca.gov](http://www.insurance.ca.gov). Non-media inquiries should be directed to the Consumer Hotline at 800.927.HELP or 213.897.8921. Telecommunications Devices for the Deaf (TDD), please dial 800.482.4833.