



### California State Legislature Rural Caucus

The California State Legislature Rural Caucus (Rural Caucus) currently consists of 46 members representing both houses of the Legislature and both political parties. The Rural Caucus was revitalized in January 2003 by Assemblymember Dave Cogdill and Senator Chuck Poochigian to protect and promote rural California and its interests.

#### The Rural Caucus has focused on the following goals:

- Provide a mechanism for rural residents and organizations to carry their concerns and needs to the California State Legislature.
- Serve as a voice for rural communities by conducting research and analysis on legislation and providing this information to Caucus members, other legislators, and the Governor's office.
- Generate support for, and understanding of, rural issues for Caucus members, other legislators, and constituents, utilizing town halls, summits, and seminars on policy issues impacting rural California.
- Foster partnerships with key stakeholder organizations working on behalf of rural residents and communities.
- Serve as a liaison between the Governors' Office and the Legislature to develop and coordinate rural policy development.

#### Future Goals of the Rural Caucus

- Continue to generate support for, and understanding of, rural issues among legislators and constituents through regional forums, town hall meetings and other educational programs.
- Develop a coalition of strategic partners, stakeholder organizations and constituents to represent effectively the needs of rural communities and gain support for common goals through the legislative process.

### Members of the Rural Caucus

#### Assembly

Anthony Adams  
 Greg Aghazarian  
 Juan Arambula  
 Anna Caballero  
 John Benoit  
 Patty Berg  
 Tom Berryhill  
 Sam Blakeslee  
 Julia Brownley  
 Paul Cook  
 Noreen Evans  
 Jean Fuller  
 Ted Gaines  
 Cathleen Galgiani  
 Joel Anderson  
 Jared Huffman  
 Bonnie Garcia  
 Guy S. Houston  
 Kevin Jeffries  
 Rick Keene  
 Doug La Malfa  
 John Laird  
 Bill Maze  
 Alan Nakanishi

Nicole Parra  
 Sharon Runner  
 Audra Strickland  
 Mike Villines  
 Mimi Walters  
 Lois Wolk  
 Fabian Núñez (Honorary)

#### Senate

Sam Aanestad  
 Roy Ashburn  
 Dave Cogdill  
 Dave Cox  
 Jeff Denham  
 Denise Moreno Ducheny  
 Bob Dutton  
 Dean Florez  
 Dennis Hollingsworth  
 Mike Machado  
 Abel Maldonado  
 Pat Wiggins  
 George Runner  
 Dick Ackerman (Honorary)  
 Don Perata (Honorary)

### Officers of the Rural Caucus

Assemblywoman Jean Fuller (R-Bakersfield), Chair  
 Assemblywoman Cathleen Galgiani (D-Tracy), Vice Chair  
 Assemblyman Tom Berryhill (R-Modesto), Secretary

### Staff Support

Chuck Hahn serves as the volunteer Executive Director of the Rural Caucus and can be reached at 916-307-8749 or [chuck.hahn@sen.ca.gov](mailto:chuck.hahn@sen.ca.gov).

# A Voice for Rural California



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California State Legislature  
**Rural Caucus**

## Budget Victories

Each year during State budget negotiations, members of the Rural Caucus work diligently to advocate for items that will continue to enhance and protect the quality of life in rural California.

### 2005-2006

- Allocated 24 million in funds for the costs associated with the opening of the UC Merced campus, providing education access and opportunities for students of San Joaquin Valley.
- Maintained current funding level for UC Cooperative Extension (UCCE) programs. UCCE has farm, 4-H, and nutrition, and consumer sciences advisors based in more than 50 county offices.
- Funded the Governor's Career Technical Education Initiative that requires California Community Colleges to work with middle and high schools to align career technical education coursework, providing rural residents great opportunities.
- Continued funding for Rural Health Care Equity Program to provide reimbursement for out-of-pocket health care costs incurred by State employees and retirees living in rural areas that are not served by HMOs.
- Ensured funding for the Central Valley Rural Crime Prevention Program, used to implement new crime prevention strategies in an effort to reduce rural crimes, specifically agricultural property crimes.
- Protected funding for methamphetamine prevention in the Central Valley.
- Maintained funding for the replacement and enhancement of fire-fighting vehicles for the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.
- Ensured funding for emission reduction projects to reduce air pollution and improve air quality monitoring.
- Continued funding for Williamson Act agriculture tax exemption.
- Provided funding for medical school loan assistance to physicians that serve in medically underserved areas for up to three years.
- Increased funding for additional Rural Health Demonstration Projects providing access to health care in rural areas for underserved populations.
- Allocated funding to smaller counties to reimburse private physicians, emergency physicians and hospitals more fairly for voluntary care.
- Provided resources to expand Medi-Cal Managed Care into 13 counties including El Dorado, Placer, Imperial, Merced, Madera, Kings, Ventura, San Luis Obispo, San Benito, Lake, and Mendocino.

### 2004-2005

- Reinstated Rural and Small County Law Enforcement Grant Program.

- Repealed State Responsibility Area (SRA) fees, a duplicative property tax that unfairly burdened rural parts of the State.
- Secured millions in funding for Rural Health Clinics (RHCs) and Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), increasing their ability to provide primary care services to the State's most medically underserved populations.
- Allocated additional funding to the Carl Moyer Program for replacing or rebuilding heavy-duty diesel engines with new clean-technology engines, thereby reducing emissions for smog-forming pollutants and helping to reduce health care costs for Californians.
- Eliminated timber harvest fee that would have severely threatened the viability or solvency of timber companies and impacted the economies of rural California.
- Ensured millions for Rural Municipal airports construction, maintenance, and security upgrades that will be matched with Federal funds.
- Ensured additional funding to help combat West Nile Virus.

### 2003-2004

- Protected funding and secured additional funding for methamphetamine prevention in the Central Valley.
- Fought to reduce burdensome fees on agricultural industry.
- Maintained funding for incentives for biomass energy producers to burn agricultural waste providing for much cleaner air.
- Eliminated a fee on timber harvesting that would have threatened the viability or solvency of timber companies and negatively impacted the economies of rural California.
- Amended agricultural waiver discharge legislation to make it less burdensome on agriculture while maintaining clean water.
- Prevented the elimination of the Williamson Act agriculture tax exemption

## Legislative Victories

Rural Caucus representation in the California Legislature ensures a voice for rural communities and Rural Caucus members authored and/or supported passage of legislation addressing critical issues in their constituent communities.

### 2005-2006 Legislative Session

- Assembly Bill 7 created the Hatchery and Inland Fisheries Fund into which 33 1/3% of sport fishing license revenue will be deposited and used for hatcheries, wild, and heritage trout programs.
- Assembly Bill 354 added the asynchronous store and forward teledermatology and teleophthalmology to the definition of telemedicine, and would limit the practice of those services to board certified dermatologists and ophthalmologists.
- Assembly Bill 365 clarified that greenhouse operations on agricultural

reserves are eligible under the Williamson Act and shall be not assessed at any higher rate than the normal rate provided in Williamson Act contracts for that county.

- Assembly Bill 453 provided one additional year for local agencies to complete state-funded grade separation projects in rural and remote areas.
- Senate Bill 70 this bill provided significant investment in vocational or Career Technical Education (CTE) and strengthens the partnership between community colleges and high schools to reform and expand vocational programs in rural California
- Senate Bill 453 this bill eliminated the statutory sunset of the Central Valley Rural Crime Prevention Program and reinstated its historical funding. The program coordinates the efforts of Central Valley law enforcement and citizens to develop and implement new crime prevention strategies in an effort to reduce rural crime, specifically agricultural property crimes.

### 2003-2004 Legislative Session

- Assembly Bill 923 protected funding for the Carl Moyer program.
- Assembly Bill 2706 delivered more federal grant funds earmarked for technology projects to smaller Northern California school districts.
- Assembly Bill 2758 continued funding for the California Teleconnect Fund which provides discontinued rates to qualifying schools, libraries, hospitals, health clinics, and community organizations.
- Assembly Bill 1963 encouraged the use of promotores de salud and community health workers to provide better health outcomes for rural and underserved communities through the various public health programs.
- Senate Bill 260 authorized the California Department of Corrections (CDC) and Health Care Districts to create regional Inmate Health Service Joint Powers Agencies (JPAs) which, if fully utilized, could help reduce inmate health care costs by an estimated 20,000,000 annually.
- Senate Bill 1276 continued the State Public Utilities Commission (PUC) High Cost Fund programs which provide affordable and equitable basic telephone service in rural and remote areas.

## Educational Events

The Rural Caucus has sponsored and/or cosponsored numerous events since its inception to foster better understanding of rural issues within rural communities and among urban and rural legislators and state government representatives.

### Public Safety Town Hall Series (2003-2006)

These successful educational and informational town halls are conducted in rural districts statewide to educate citizens on how to protect children in school, prevent identification theft, and fight crime in our rural communities.

### Legislative Natural Resources Tour (2002-2006)

This annual tour is designed to allow urban legislators to learn first hand about rural areas and the struggles they face to maintain economic development and healthy forests.

### Natural Resources Summit (2002-2006)

This annual summit features various forestry and agricultural experts who address current natural resource issues surrounding forest preservation and protection in rural California.

### Rural Education Summit (1999-2005)

This bi-annual statewide event, begun by former Senator Monteth and Assemblyman Cardoza, covers issues that pertain to the unique needs of rural schools including, but not limited to: implementation of "No Child Left Behind", transportation costs, class size reduction, school facilities, declining enrollment, and access to quality teachers.

### Rural Health Legislative Workshop Series (2004-2006)

CSRHA and the Rural Caucus hosted a series of three educational workshops for Rural Caucus members and their staff, government representatives, and rural leaders throughout the state to address priority issues for improving the health of rural communities in California.

### Colorado River Seminar (2003)

This educational seminar was held in the State Capitol. Speakers discussed issues surrounding the statewide impact of the Quantification Settlement Agreement that apportions water from the Colorado River. This event was open to all California State Legislators and staff.

### A Forum on Climate Change (2006)

### Delta Conveyance/San Joaquin Valley Water Tour (2005-2006)

Partnering with the California Farm Water Coalition the Caucus held aerial and ground tours of the California Delta and the State Water Project. This allowed legislators to view the water delivery systems and ground water banks that help store and move water throughout our state.

### A Forum on Climate Change (2006)

This forum, co-hosted by the Rural Caucus and the Forest Foundation, was presented to legislators, legislative staff and interested stakeholders on what the role of forests, forest management and biomass energy play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

In addition, the Rural Caucus maintains a website that provides legislative staff, rural stakeholder organizations and rural Californians a tool to access vital government information. The website address is [www.assembly.ca.gov/ruralcaucus](http://www.assembly.ca.gov/ruralcaucus). (This website is currently under review for improvement and updating.)