

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 9, 2018
Contact: PJ Johnston, (415) 260-8417

ASSEMBLY UTILITIES CHAIR HOLDEN TO LEAD BIPARTISAN DELEGATION TO CHILE

'Sister States' Chile, California Share Best Practices on Emergency Preparedness, Climate Resiliency

SACRAMENTO – This week, Assemblyman Chris Holden (D-Pasadena), chair of the Assembly Utilities and Energy Committee, will lead a bipartisan delegation to Chile to see firsthand how the South American country is adapting to climate change; preparing for wildfires, earthquakes and other natural disasters; and expanding its clean energy infrastructure.

The research tour is organized by the California Foundation on the Environment and the Economy (CFEE), and the delegation is made up of state legislators, environmental and labor leaders, business executives, and public policy experts. No taxpayer funds are used.

“California is already experiencing the consequences of a changing climate,” said Assemblyman Holden. “We see more intense weather patterns that can lead to droughts, then torrential downpours, and with that, the increased likelihood of natural disasters like wildfires, flooding and mudslides. These climate impacts, along with our vulnerability to earthquakes, are something that Chile experiences as well. We have much in common and much to learn from each other.”

Given these similar threats, California and Chile already have agreements in place that enable intergovernmental cooperation. The California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services (CALOES) and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) are collaborating with their Chilean counterparts, by helping each other prepare for and respond to emergency situations.

The CFEE delegation will also spend time examining how Chile is integrating high levels of renewable energy into its power system. Until recently, Chile lacked the infrastructure and policies to tap into the vast renewable capabilities of the Atacama Desert, which possesses the highest solar potential in the world. In 2017, Chilean energy officials announced the interconnection of the country’s northern and southern power grids and are making substantial headway on their ambitious clean energy goals.

“Tremendous strides made by the energy sector are success stories for both Chile and California,” said CFEE President & CEO Jay Hansen, pointing to tangible outcomes from the sharing of best practices.

“After a CFEE study tour to Chile in 2014, our respective grid operators continued to build on their relationships by traveling to each other’s facilities and exchanging knowledge and insights on grid operation,” he said. “It’s an important example of California’s climate leadership and its willingness to grapple with the technical and cost-related challenges to increasing renewable energy.”

The CFEE Study Travel Project, which runs Nov. 10-20, will consist of field visits and demonstrations, along with meetings with elected and appointed officials, emergency management personnel and energy sector practitioners, and environmental and business leaders.

The delegation will also study marine fisheries and mountainous wetlands to see how regulatory officials, local industries and natural resource specialists are managing climate impacts and competition for limited resources.

“The effects of climate change also mean our natural resources – like our water supplies and sensitive ecosystems – must be managed more carefully to prevent the degradation or depletion of these shared, essential assets,” said Holden. “Chile is very familiar with these pressures and it will be valuable to see what actions they have taken to ensure long-term sustainability.”

“Chile and California should be seen as ‘sister states’ with uniquely similar challenges that offer insights into the work of public authorities, private industry and civil society,” Hansen said. “By meeting with our Chilean counterparts, we will learn how we are each addressing common problems, with the goal of bringing best practices back to California.”

###

An independent, nonpartisan, 501(c)3, the California Foundation on the Environment and the Economy has convened state leaders for more than three decades to examine critical issues related to California’s environment, with a view toward building consensus around long-term solutions. CFEE’s bipartisan forums and study travel projects put a diverse cross-section of California leadership into direct contact with their counterparts around the world. This sharing of views and experiences leads to a broader understanding of complex issues and encourages the exchange of policy and technology ideas while also promoting what makes California special.