

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 6, 2017

Senator Ricardo Lara Leads Bipartisan Delegation to Study Clean Energy Grid and Traffic-Reducing Policies in Europe

Ireland, UK and Finland have lessons as California seeks to increase clean power to 50% by 2030 and reduce traffic congestion

SAN FRANCISCO – This week, Senator Ricardo Lara and the California Foundation on the Environment and the Economy (CFEE) will lead a bipartisan delegation of state legislators, environmental and labor leaders, business executives and public policy experts to the United Kingdom, Finland and Ireland to explore best practices in tackling two of California’s biggest challenges: reducing traffic congestion and reaching the goal of 50% clean power generation by 2030.

Senator Lara is an environmental leader in the California Senate who created the landmark Clean Truck and Bus program in 2014 and helped to win nearly \$1 billion through the state’s Cap and Trade program for clean trucks, buses, and port equipment.

Los Angeles (#1) and San Francisco (#4) are in the [world’s top-five most congested cities](#), with Los Angeles residents averaging 104 hours each year stuck in traffic, and San Francisco residents averaging 83 hours. San Diego is not far behind with residents losing 46 hours a year in traffic.

The delegation will meet with transportation experts in the UK and Finland to learn how European cities are addressing traffic congestion, which contributes to carbon emissions, exacerbates local air pollution, and diminishes worker productivity.

“Los Angeles and San Francisco are among the most congested cities in the world, ” said Senator Lara. “With more and more people moving to urban centers, we can only expect soul-crushing traffic to worsen. I look forward to seeing first-hand how cities like London and Helsinki have reduced gridlock, cut air pollution and improved quality of life for their residents.”

The delegation will also learn how European countries are meeting their own clean-energy goals. California has seen a growth of local communities generating power through renewable sources such as geothermal, solar, water and wind power. Along with community choice aggregation, these local efforts partner with utilities to deliver power and increase green-power options.

“California is leading the world in reducing our reliance on fossil fuels, and as the world’s sixth largest economy we can also learn from other countries about how to empower consumers,” said Lara. “Political leaders need to keep pace with this dramatic change as we implement policies and market-based mechanisms to meet the goal of 50% clean power generation by 2030.”

The group will learn about electrical grid resources and operation by visiting a pumped storage site in Wales that is playing a critical role in balancing an energy system flooded with abundant renewable energy. The study tour will conclude in Ireland, which is learning how to manage some of the highest levels of wind power generation in the world.

The delegation will use the insights learned from Wales and Ireland to better understand how California can accomplish its ambitious clean energy goals while maintaining a reliable, affordable energy grid.

The delegation is sponsored by the California Foundation on the Environment and the Economy, and no taxpayer funds are used.

“We’re putting a spotlight on the big picture issues that California will be facing for the better part of the 21st century,” said Dr. Patrick Mason, President and CEO of CFEE. “How do we sustain climate achievements with more competing interests at the table? How do we revolutionize transportation infrastructure to make cities more livable and productive? How do we manage an energy grid powered entirely by renewable resources? These are the sort of essential, future-defining questions that must be answered by policymakers.”

The CFEE Study Travel Project, which runs Oct. 6-18, will consist of site visits and demonstrations, along with meetings with elected and appointed government officials, industry regulators and grid operators, urban planners and transportation managers, and environmental organizations and business leaders.

An independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit “think-tank,” CFEE regularly convenes conferences in California that bring together state leaders – both in government and outside of it – to examine critical issues related to California’s environment, with a view toward building consensus around long-term solutions to California’s biggest challenges. CFEE also organizes and conducts study travel projects to places in the world that are grappling with challenges similar to those in California.

“These are global challenges that will require statewide and local action,” said Lara. “Californians have never shied away from tackling the toughest environmental and economic problems, and we certainly won’t now when the U.S. needs California leadership more than ever.”

Mason added: “There are no easy answers to these questions. However, by learning lessons from other advanced societies, we move closer to creating a future where environmental goals and economic growth are jointly pursued and realized.”

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About the California Foundation on the Environment and the Economy

The California Foundation on the Environment and the Economy (CFEE) is an independent, nonprofit institution dedicated to educating public and private sector decisionmakers on, and developing creative solutions to, California's complex environmental, economic and social issues.

The Foundation brings together senior executives from California businesses, statewide labor leaders, and the leading advocates from environmental and consumer organizations to meet with legislators and regulatory officials in an atmosphere of non-adversarial cooperation.

Created in 1979 to advance consensus among those on the frontier of decision-making, the Foundation develops and conducts public policy discussion forums as well as study travel projects abroad to educate California's leaders on issues and gain insights from the experience of other states and nations.

CFEE's forums and 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.