

**QUALITY AND PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION**  
**22<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE, JUNE 4, 2025**

**NAVIGATING THE NEW NORMAL: WHAT MATTERS MOST**  
***Building Resilience in an Era of Polycrisis***

**CONFERENCE SUMMARY**

**Supervisor Kathryn Barger, Chair:** Opened the conference with a call to “mission, focus, and commitment.” She called on the County workforce to: “First, assure that all residents have access to county services;” and second, “to look after the well-being of every resident, especially our most vulnerable populations.” Supervisor Barger lauded the “collaboration and resilience” across myriad County departments throughout the polycrisis challenges. “Your determination and talents are the heartbeat of our County,” she said.

For Supervisor Barger’s presentation, click here: <https://vimeo.com/1091983287>

**Supervisor Hilda L. Solis:** Addressed the extreme “fiscal and political pressures facing County departments and praised “all of the capable County staff who have truly exemplified resilience.” In reference to the fires, she cited the overlapping challenges of worker displacement, food insecurity, and housing ramifications. “The question before the County is ‘How are we going to stand up for communities to help rebuild?’” Supervisor Solis called on County staff to practice “resilience, patience, cooperation, partnership, and stability...letting people you work with know that you can be depended on.”

For Supervisor Solis’ presentation, click here: <https://vimeo.com/1091971257>

**Keynote Address:**

**Dr. Manuel Pastor,** Distinguished Professor of Sociology and American Studies at the University of Southern California (USC) and Director of the USC Equity Research Institute: Opened his remarks with a long list of “shocks to the system” since 2016, particularly affecting civil rights, education, and the environment. “It’s easy to think of this as something new, but it has been building for some time,” Dr. Pastor said. “Its roots are demographic change, income inequality, and economic anxiety.” With provocative slides illustrating social, educational, and economic divides challenging the region, Dr. Pastor called for “a new interdependence” across age cohorts and a “new take” on race and racism that works to “call people in rather than calling people out.” He prevailed on the audience to “understand that we are in the midst of a fundamental transformation – what’s at stake is everything. Understand that it’s time for a vision, not an issue; for a long conversation not a quick conversation; and to combine urgency and patience; protect communities, strive for scale, be open to rethinking, and show and tell the world what our future could be.” Dr. Pastor closed with an allegorical, personal story from the January fires. He described how his family and their neighbors defended their North Pasadena backyards with “measly” garden hoses, buying enough time for firefighters to stage a barrier line up the road. From that long afternoon, he drew three lessons: First, “sometimes when there’s a fire, you have to go to it.” Second, “it’s better if you go into the fire with your neighbors and friends.” And third, “it’s even better if the government is a few houses up—not tossing kerosene on what’s already wrong—but actually trying to help.” He concluded, “We have a lot of fires. We need you to be the government that stands with us against the forces that are trying to burn us down.”

For Dr. Manuel Pastor’s presentation, click here: <https://vimeo.com/1091970147>

### **Resilience in Polycrisis Panel:**

Moderator **Dr. D'Artagnan Scorza**, Executive Director, Racial Equity, Anti-Racism, Diversity & Inclusion, Chief Executive Office (CEO), set the tone for the panel by asking: "How do we safeguard our work and minimize the impact of these crises? How do we uphold our government, maintain our values, and strike a balance that ultimately allows us to keep our integrity and get through these challenges in front of us?"

**Rafael Carbajal**, Director of the Department of Consumer and Business Affairs, reminded the audience in all crises: "Those who are the most marginalized are the most impacted." He added, "it does make me proud that as a County, we have become more adept at recognizing the multiple impacts of the challenges and collectively we have become more adept at addressing them more effectively."

**Dr. Carrie Miller**, Senior Manager of the Policy and Implementation Branch of the Chief Executive Office, told the success story of four departments coming together after the fires to streamline the building permitting process, a long-standing ordeal for County residents. "For years, the average time to complete the permitting process has been from six months to a year," she said. "After the fires, four departments (Regional Planning, Public Works, Public Health, and County Fire) came together and said 'let's jam on this.' Together, over the past three months, they have brought the average permitting time down to 33 business days."

**Dr. Curley Bonds**, Chief Medical Officer for the Department of Mental Health, said that what impressed him the most after the fires was the ability for his staff to be adaptable. "We went to the evacuation centers. Our pharmacists, for example, said, 'you know we're here to provide psychotropic medications, but we had folks showing up who needed asthma or blood pressure medication' and the pharmacists immediately figured out how to use technology (telehealth) to deliver those medicines," illustrating that "with adaptability there has to be some behavioral change," he said.

Addressing the topic of staff frustration and burn-out, **Dr. Rita Kampalath**, Chief Sustainability Officer with the Board of Supervisors Executive Office, observed, "For myself, one thing I recognize is that the ability to even think about giving up or checking out is, in itself, a kind of privilege. A lot of communities we're in don't have the ability to say that they don't want to think about the fires—or poverty. I don't have a right to check out."

For the Leadership Conference Panel Discussion, click here: <https://vimeo.com/1091967659>