

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

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*****For Immediate Release*****

**Coastal Commission elects environmental justice champion as vice chair**

Newport Beach, Calif. — Imperial Beach Mayor Paloma Aguirre was unanimously elected during a public hearing on Wednesday to serve as vice chair of the California Coastal Commission’s 15-member board. Aguirre was appointed to the Commission in 2023 as the representative for the San Diego region.

Aguirre received unanimous support from her fellow commissioners at the agency’s meeting in Newport Beach, taking over the role from former Vice Chair Linda Escalante at the end of the December meeting.

“Paloma has a deep commitment to the working people of California and their right to enjoy the state’s iconic coastline,” Escalante said. “She is a brilliant leader who can help the Coastal Commission thrive over the next year.”

Aguirre was born in San Francisco as a first generation Mexican American. She moved to Southern California in 2001, graduating with a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of San Deigo and earned a Master of Advanced Studies in Marine Biodiversity and Conservation from UC San Diego’s Scripps Institution of Oceanography.

In her early career, Aguirre worked as a community organizer focused on social justice in the San Diego region. Among other things, she helped low-income families address foreclosure and predatory lending issues. She joined the binational environmental nonprofit WILDCOAST / COSTASALVAJE in 2009, fighting cross-border pollution in the Tijuana River Valley.

Aguirre was selected in 2016 for a NOAA Sea Grant Knauss fellowship in Washington D.C., where she staffed U.S. Senator Cory Booker. She worked to pass bills addressing ocean pollution and to increase educational opportunities in math and science for minority communities.

In 2018, Aguirre was elected as first Latina councilmember in the city of Imperial Beach. Four years later she was elected as the city's first Latina mayor, where she continued to champion efforts to address the ongoing sewage crisis in the Tijuana River Valley.

The Coastal Commission has [12 voting members](#), including six public members and six elected officials from coastal regions. The Governor, Senate Rules Committee and the Speaker of the Assembly each appoint four seats on the commission. The agency also has three non-voting members representing the State Lands Commission, the California Natural Resources Agency and the California Department of Transportation.

Santa Cruz County Supervisor Justin Cummings was elected chair of the commission's board during Wednesday's public hearing. Aguirre and Cummings will serve one-year terms.

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