

Christopher Cabaldon (He/Him)
California State Senator



Christopher Cabaldon led West Sacramento as its mayor for a record-setting two decades, transforming what was a forgotten old-industrial town into what is now the fast-growing, entrepreneurial city at the forefront an emerging American metro—a story told in Governing's feature "Small City, Big Goals: How an Unconventional Mayor is Beating the System". Cited as "America's most interesting small city", "America's most livable small city", and one of the world's "21 Smart Cities to Watch", West Sacramento under his leadership deployed entrepreneurial strategies

to tackle social challenges with how-did-a-little-city-do-that innovations. He is now Mayor-in-Residence at the Institute for the Future, Senior Fellow at the Center for Digital Government, and an advisory council member for the Kauffman Foundation. He chairs the judges panel for the Police Reform & Racial Justice national award program.

The first mayor ever elected directly by the city's voters, his groundbreaking initiatives on urban farms, universal preschool, flood protection and floodplain management, college and career pathway internships, free college, sustainable land use, and next-gen transit and personal mobility have made it to the national and international stage. He implemented a pioneering automatic enrollment initiative, sending a letter of college admission and free tuition to every graduating high school senior.

At the US Conference of Mayors, he chaired the Jobs, Education & the Workforce Committee. He was chair of the national LGBTQ Mayors Alliance, and former chair of both the Asian/Pacific and LGBT caucuses of the League of California Cities. His journey out of the closet was the subject of an episode of the Logo network's internationally-syndicated Coming Out Stories series. A column on gay marriage he wrote for USA Today with Julian Castro and Stephanie Rawlings-Blake was cited as evidence of changing social norms in cases cementing marriage equality in US jurisprudence. He has written columns and op-eds for the Los Angeles Times, Sacramento Bee, and Atlanta Journal-Constitution. A deeply personal profile in Behind Closed Doors in Comstock's magazine told the story of trauma, loss, and tragedy

underneath the arc of his career.

President Obama appointed Cabaldon to the national College Promise board, leading a successful nationwide effort to enact free college programs in hundreds of cities and states. An appointed official for five governors, Cabaldon is California's delegate to the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education. He served previously as vice chancellor of the California Community Colleges and director of the state legislature's higher education committee. He was national president for Asian and Pacific Americans in Higher Education and president of the Linked Learning Alliance. He is a board member for EdSource, College Promise, California Competes, and the California Education Learning Lab.

As chair of the Sacramento region's metropolitan planning organization and its transportation committee, his pioneering work on integrating transportation, land use, environmental justice, housing, air quality, and climate change has won numerous federal government and other national awards, and became the basis for some of California's most sweeping transportation and climate reforms.

In 2019, Cabaldon was appointed to a tenured faculty post at Sacramento State University as the Hazel Cramer Endowed Chair and Professor of Public Policy and Administration, teaching courses in design thinking and public sector prototyping, state and local government, and urban economics. He earned a B.S. in environmental economics from UC Berkeley and a M.P.P.A. from Sacramento State.