

Sierra Club Summit Informs Ambition to Build Back Better

By Daniel Barad, *Capitol Voice*

Sierra Club California's annual Summit (held virtually this year) to discuss the year ahead could not have been timed better. Only minutes before the Summit began, national news networks projected that Joe Biden had won enough electoral votes to become the 46th President of the United States.

As the relief sank in among the more than 150 attendees, so did the reality of the immense work that will be required for the country and the state to "Build Back Better."

The Summit was packed with speakers and panelists with ambitious visions for the future and plans to materialize them.

The first panel outlined what happened in the elections and what the results mean for California going forward. Dan Schnur, who teaches political communications at UC Berkeley and the University of Southern California noted that "California is the United States, sooner."

Schnur, along with the other panelists, including Sierra Club Political Committee Chair Victoria Brandon, Political Director Ariel Hayes and strategist Doug Linney, stressed the importance of California continuing to take a leadership role in the United States and pushing for progressive environmental policies.

During an outstanding keynote speech, State Controller Betty Yee relayed her vision of a California where diversity is held as its greatest strength. While she cautioned that we are living in a "era of finite resources," she highlighted the extraordinary work and potential of leaders, particularly women leaders, who aspire to be true public servants for all.

Following inspirational spoken word from Bobby Jo Chavarria, a second panel discussed opportunities to advance environmental protection in California. The panel included water policy expert Felicia Marcus, energy expert Dan Kammen and California Department of Parks and Recreation Director Armando Quintero. Each of the panelists emphasized the need to incorporate equity as leaders and activists work to promote park expansion, mass electric vehicle adoption and water conservation.



Felicia Marcus: "At a local level, you can really make a difference."

Sierra Club National Organizing Director Bob Bingaman rounded out the speakers with a personal reflection on how he has incorporated equity and justice in his environmental work.

The day concluded with breakout sessions during which participants brainstormed one big idea for activists and staff to advocate for in the coming year. Each group reported back with ideas including promoting rooftop solar, advancing water education and emphasizing park expansion and access while supporting the Governor's recent biodiversity executive order.

Throughout the day, DJ Mikey V played music during breaks in the program. As he spun his final records, activists logged off feeling renewed and inspired to protect our shared planet.

Capitol Voice E-Newsletter



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