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THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

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In April, the California State Assembly launched the California-Mexico Dialogue offering leaders and stakeholders a sustained, coordinated, and productive platform to carry out a more structured approach to enhancing bilateral relations and find solutions to common concerns.

Mexico and California have a longstanding relationship that cannot be understated. Trade with Mexico has created over 560,000 jobs in California and Mexico is a top importer of California goods having purchased \$26.7 billion worth of products in 2017- a 300 percent increase since 1993. Beyond trade, historical ties bind the two - California's original constitution was written in both Spanish and English.

The program is led by Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon and staffed by his Office of Protocol. The Speaker will work closely with various stakeholders in California and Mexico to determine annual topics of focus as the initiative is built out. Primary participants are legislators from both sides but other officials, including cabinet secretaries and ministers, policy experts, local leaders, representatives from non-profit organizations, and other stakeholders will be invited where appropriate.

The first forum of the California – Mexico Dialogue was held on April 5 at the Dempsey Holder Safety Center in Imperial Beach and focused on cross-border water pollution in the Tijuana River Watershed. Pollution along the river has affected citizens on both sides of the border for decades. This has caused significant health concerns for communities in the border region and inflicted economic damages to businesses, especially those involved in coastal tourism. The primary goals for the discussion were to assess progress to date on the issue, highlight efforts already undertaken by key stakeholders, and explore practical next steps in helping to address this long-standing challenge. Some of the questions considered were: What are the facts relating to the water pollution issue? What has been achieved thus far, and how might past success inform future efforts? Can we identify possible projects (public, private, or both) seen as



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particularly promising? How can leaders on both sides coordinate efforts to address this challenge more effectively?

Panel session participants included:

- The Honorable Jose Medina, California State Assembly (Welcome and Introduction)
- The Honorable Denise Ducheny (Ret.), California State Senate
- The Honorable Todd Gloria, California State Assembly
- The Honorable Luis Moreno Hernandez, Baja California State Legislature
- Dave Gibson, San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board, California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA)
- Blas Pérez Henriquez, Ph.D. & Founding Director, The California Global Energy, Water & Infrastructure Innovation Initiative, Stanford University (Moderator)