

## PANELIST BIOGRAPHIES:

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### BENJAMIN AUSTIN

Benjamin Austin is currently running a universal preschool ballot initiative for June of 2006.

Recently, Austin served as Senior Advisor to Rob Reiner, who chairs First 5 California, coordinating media and public policy strategy for him. First 5 California raises about \$600 million per year for children's programs through a tobacco tax. Austin played a central role in developing First 5's \$600 million universal preschool initiative for all children in Los Angeles County, as well as First 5's \$100 million statewide universal preschool program.

Austin also served as adjunct professor at USC teaching media and political strategy from 2003-2004.

From 2000 to 2001, Austin served as **Deputy Mayor of Los Angeles**. As Deputy Mayor, he was the primary spokesman for the City of Los Angeles, and formulated the long-term political and media strategy for Mayor Richard J. Riordan. Austin wrote all major mayoral speeches, managed all major events, and oversaw communications of all city departments.

From 1999 to 2000, Austin served as the **Director of Communications for LA Convention 2000**, the Host Committee for the 2000 Democratic National Convention. In that position, Austin formulated all long-term communication strategy for the Host Committee and served as the spokesperson to the 15,000 local, national and international media covering the convention.

Before coming to the Host Committee, Austin practiced law from 1998 to 1999 at the Los Angeles-based firm of **Irell & Manella**, focusing on intellectual property litigation.

Prior to his stint as an attorney, Austin worked on two Northern California campaigns, before landing a spot on the **National Advance Staff for Bill Clinton's 1992 presidential campaign** in Little Rock, Arkansas. He then moved to Washington, D.C., where he served in a number of Clinton Administration posts. He worked as a press spokesman for the General Services Administration from 1993 -1994, focusing on the Administration's Reinventing Government initiative.

Austin then moved to the White House where he served in the Political Affairs Office from 1994 to 1995 as the **White House Deputy Political Director for the Western States**. In that position, he tracked political trends in the western states, including California, and briefed the President and the First Lady when they traveled to those states. From 1993 to 1999, Austin also periodically served on the **White House Advance Staff**, where he would travel ahead of the President and First Lady to negotiate political, diplomatic, media and logistical issues on behalf of the American government. In addition to numerous domestic trips, he traveled as a representative of the White House to: Japan, Korea, Moscow, Normandy, Berlin, Jerusalem, Lyon, Tel-Aviv, Thailand, Tanzania, Brazil, Siberia, Senegal, London and Morocco.

Austin graduated with honors from **U.C. Berkeley** in 1991, and graduated *cum laude* and on Law Review from **Georgetown Law School** in 1998.

## **EDWARD CONDON**

Edward Condon is currently the Executive Director of the California Head Start Association (CHSA). Located in Sacramento, CHSA is committed to developing programs and services for our diverse Head Start and Early Head Start system. With over 104,000 children, served by more than 161 agencies, California is home to our nation's largest and most dynamic Head Start community.

Mr. Condon has his Bachelors in Government and has completed his course work for a Masters in Education Administration & Public Policy from California State University, Sacramento. He has over 15 years experience in Early Childhood Education as an Administrator with a private, for-profit organization of Montessori Schools. In addition, he has worked in sales, marketing and consults on special projects in the area of facility development, business planning and funding of child care centers.

In addition to CHSA, Edward is on the Board of Directors of Child Action Inc., Sacramento County's Resource and Referral agency. He has been active for the past four years on the board of the Child Development Policy Institute and a variety of other human service organizations.

## **MARY JANE MAGUIRE-FONG, M.S.**

Mary Jane is professor of early childhood education at American River College in Sacramento, California. In the first ten years of her career, she served as teacher and administrator in children's centers serving infants and young children of migrant farm worker families. Her favorite topics are: reflective, responsive, and respectful teaching-learning relationships; educational and facility program design for infants and young children; and child-friendly and family-friendly public policy. She has been following the development of the universal prekindergarten movement for several years as a representative of California Community College Early Childhood Educators (CCCECE).

## **KATHI WALKER**

Kathi Walker has facilitated the Preschool For All (PFA) Planning Project in Sacramento County resulting in PFA Plan for Elk Grove Unified School District approved by the Commission in April 2005. Prior to joining the First 5 Sacramento Commission, Kathi worked for seven years as the child care coordinator in El Dorado County serving the Board of Supervisors and the Superintendent of Schools in planning quality, affordable early care and education services accessible to all members of the community. In 2003, she was inducted into El Dorado County's Early Childhood Hall of Fame and was recognized for her distinguished service by the county Association of California School Administrators. Kathi holds both a Masters of Arts and Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from California State University, Sacramento.