

# Legislative Advocates

## Presenter Bios



**Karen Lange**

**Shaw Yoder Antwih Schmelzer & Lange, Partner**

Following ten years of working with the firm's Partners and staff as a legislative advocate, Karen Lange became a Partner in 2016. Since beginning her career in public policy as a Congressional intern in 1998, Karen's vast expertise has evolved to encompass policy related to energy, health, agriculture, water, local government, and, most recently, animal welfare and the aftermarket auto industry.

Karen first came to the firm's attention in 2006, when she began working as an advocate with Peterson Consulting, Inc., which maintained a long-standing strategic partnership with Joshua W. Shaw and Paul Yoder, who eventually purchased Peterson Consulting in 2009.

Prior to becoming an advocate, Karen served two separate stints as a staff member in the California State Assembly, including time as Legislative Director for a member of the Assembly. In between, she worked for Navigant Consulting, which was advising the State of California on energy contracts procured by the state.

Karen holds a bachelor's degree in Political Science from the University of California, Berkeley. She resides in Sacramento with her husband Alan and son Griffin.



**Joe Krahn**

**Paragon Government Relations, President**

Joe Krahn, president and managing partner of Paragon Government Relations, directs the firm's day-to-day operations and provides hands-on lobbying services for the firm's clients. A 25-year veteran of Paragon Government Relations, Joe has dedicated nearly his entire professional career to promoting the interests of county governments before Congress and Executive Branch departments and agencies.

During his tenure with the firm, Joe has partnered with several organizations, large and small, to help them build and sustain successful federal government relations programs. From statewide associations to individual county governments, Joe works closely with clients to maximize their input in the legislative and regulatory arenas. Joe also has considerable experience building coalitions as a means to leverage support for client initiatives.

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Joe has policy expertise in the area of water and natural resources, transportation, justice and public safety, and tribal affairs. He has developed an outstanding reputation on Capitol Hill, among his colleagues, and within local government circles as an effective and trustworthy advocate. Joe also regularly appears before client groups and other audiences to provide his perspective on matters of policy and politics.

Prior to joining Paragon Government Relations, Joe worked as a foster care case manager at a private non-profit agency in Chicago, Illinois. As a case manager, he gained valuable experience providing direct social services to children and families in the city's foster care system.

Joe holds a Juris Master degree from George Mason University School of Law, and a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science from Loyola University Chicago.



### **Tom Joseph**

#### **Paragon Government Relations, Vice President**

Tom Joseph, vice president and managing partner of Paragon Government Relations, heads up the firm's health and human services practice and oversees various aspects of the firm's operations. His lobbying expertise, experience, and knowledge are reflected in an impressive 30-plus year history representing county governments. As such, he is highly regarded by members of Congress and the administration, as well as clients and colleagues alike.

Tom served over 16 years with the National Association of Counties (NACo) and was deputy director of the Legislative Department, overseeing its overall policy process. He provided policy direction and briefed elected officials serving on NACo's Health and Human Services Steering Committees, as well as professional affiliates of county department heads responsible for administering health and human services programs.

Tom also served seven years as one of the chief advocates for Los Angeles County's Washington Office, working closely with the County's 20-member congressional delegation. In that capacity, Tom lobbied on a wide variety of issues on behalf of the Board of Supervisors.

Tom holds a Master of Public Policy from Duke University and a Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology from St. Olaf College in Minnesota.

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**Hasan Sarsour**  
**Paragon Government Relations, Senior Legislative Associate**

Hasan Sarsour is a proven advocate for the firm's clients, serving county governments on such issues as energy policy, agriculture, natural resources, public lands, and housing. Prior to joining Paragon Government Relations in 2011, Hasan worked on the House Energy and Commerce Committee. As a committee staff member, he assumed responsibility for legislative issues within the panel's jurisdiction and was closely involved in hearings, briefings, and strategic initiatives to advance the chairman's legislative agenda.

While on Capitol Hill, Hasan also served as a legislative assistant to Congressman Dan Maffei. In that capacity, he developed, planned, and advised the congressman on a range of domestic policy objectives, including health care policy, transportation projects, infrastructure issues, appropriations, and the federal budget. He also counseled the congressman on issues arising before the House Judiciary Committee.

Hasan is a graduate of James Madison University in Virginia, where he earned a bachelor's degree in political science.



**Jonathan Shuffield**  
**National Association of Counties (NACo), Legislative Director of Public Lands and Liaison to Western Interstate Region**

Jonathan serves as NACo's legislative director for public lands and liaison to the Western Interstate Region, lobbying Congress on public lands issues including Payments In Lieu of Taxes, Secure Rural Schools, land management and endangered species. Before joining NACo, Jonathan served as both Policy Director and Executive Director for the Congressional Western Caucus. He also served as Legislative Director for Congressman Bruce Westerman (AR-04) and as Legislative Assistant for Congressman Steve Pearce (NM-02), where his primary focus was on federal lands and environmental issues.

A native Texan, Jonathan is a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin, and lives in Phoenix with his wife, Kathryn. In his spare time, he enjoys exploring our nation's public lands, reading history and collecting original vinyl albums.

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**Catherine Freeman**  
**California State Association of Counties (CSAC), Senior Legislative Advocate**

Catherine Freeman has over 25 years of experience working in environmental, water, energy, land use, and housing policy. Ms. Freeman received her Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Studies and Economics from the University of California at Santa Cruz and her Master of Science in Science, Technology and Environmental Policy from the University of Minnesota. Her research and published topics have included reports on California water policy, infrastructure planning and bond financing, groundwater, air quality emission controls, and coastal land use policies. Ms. Freeman joined the California State Association of Counties in 2020. Prior to her appointment, from she was the Chief Consultant to the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee. From 2010 to 2017, she worked at the California State Senate as the Consultant to the Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee on Resource, Energy and Environmental Policy. Previous to her work at the Senate, Ms. Freeman served as a Principal Fiscal and Policy Analyst to the California Legislative Analyst's Office, a nonpartisan fiscal advisor to the State Legislature. Ms. Freeman has also worked in county government, nonprofit management, and agriculture and ranching food policy.



**Tracy Rhine**  
**Rural County Representative of California, Senior Policy Advocate**

Tracy Rhine joined the Rural County Representative of California (RCRC) staff in 2016 as a Legislative Advocate. RCRC represents 38 rural counties and advocates on behalf of the Board of Directors in state and federal regulatory and legislative matters. Ms. Rhine has represented RCRC on a variety of issues including telecommunications, emergency services, housing and land use planning, and health and human services.

Prior to joining RCRC, Ms. Rhine held multiple positions within the California Department of Consumer Affairs, most recently as the Chief Deputy Director for the Department. Ms. Rhine worked in the Legislature before entering the Administration, both as a Member Consultant with the Speaker's Office of Member Services, and as a Committee Consultant with the Assembly Committee on Business and Professions. Ms. Rhine began her career as a graduate research assistant with the Governor's Office for Innovation in Government and holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Government from California State University, Sacramento.

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**Steve Frisch**

**Sierra Business Council, President**

Steve is President of Sierra Business Council and one of its founding members. Over the last 20 years, Sierra Business Council has leveraged more than \$100 million of investment in the Sierra Nevada and its communities through community and public-private partnerships. Sierra Business Council also manages the Sierra Small Business Development Center focusing on advancing sustainable business practices and linking new and expanding businesses to climate mitigation and adaptation funding. Steve manages SBC's staff and programmatic development, as well as serves leads it legitimize advocacy efforts.

Prior to joining the Sierra Business Council, Steve owned and operated a small business in Truckee. He serves on the board of the California Stewardship Network, the Large Landscape Practitioners Network, the National Geographic Geo-tourism Council, Capital Public Radio, and Leadership for Jobs and a New Economy. Steve is also a former Fulbright Exchange Program Fellow, sharing information and knowledge gained in the Sierra Nevada in China and Mongolia. He is a graduate of San Francisco State University with a B.A. in Political Science.

Steve lives in Truckee with his wife Lisa. He is an avid reader of history, politics, community planning and Sierra issues. Steve enjoys traveling the back roads, connecting to local history, camping, and cooking.



**Justin Caporusso**

**Mountain Counties Water Resources Association  
(MCWRA), Executive Director**

Justin Caporusso is a seasoned public affairs professional with experience in association management, internal and external communications, including media relations, community relations, government relations, stakeholder engagement, and crisis and issues management. With nearly two decades of public affairs and issue advocacy experience, Caporusso has worked with public and private organizations to develop and execute winning campaigns that deliver sustained results and effective change.

As an independent contractor with nearly 20 years of leadership and governmental advocacy experience on behalf of both private and public entities, Caporusso is familiar with developing strategies and leading cross-functional teams to plan and direct initiatives that support, enhance, and advance the goals of an organization's strategic plan. From development to execution, Caporusso has experience uniting stakeholders, educating audiences, conducting

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targeted outreach, and driving successful advocacy campaigns on behalf of members and clients. Caporusso has formed and led lasting coalitions with key stakeholders to advance issues through difficult challenges – delivering sustained results and effective change.

Previous to his work as the MCWRA Executive Director he served with the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), where he had the opportunity to partner with the Association of California Water Agencies, California Farm Bureau Federation, The Nature Conservancy, and the California Forestry Association in the founding of the California Forest Watershed Alliance (CAFWA). CAFWA was established in 2014 as a nonpartisan, urban-rural coalition representing water interests, local governments, the conservation community, agriculture, and the forestry sector, created to promote the restoration and improvement of California's forested watersheds. Caporusso received his B.A. in Communication Studies from CSU Sacramento, and lives in Placer County with his wife and four children.