

Federal Employees

California Job Fairs Draw Interest From Federal Workers

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- 'Virtual job fair' for those with climate expertise draws 205 participants
- Three federal workers have accepted jobs with California Public Utilities Commission
- Second job fair set for Sept. 26

By [Louis C. LaBrecque](#)

Some federal employees with expertise in climate change and energy are looking west for new opportunities.

A total of 205 people participated in a Sept. 20 “virtual job fair” hosted by California’s Public Utilities Commission, Air Resources Board, and Energy Commission, CPUC President Michael Picker told Bloomberg BNA Sept. 21. The job fair took the form of a webinar in which participants could ask the agencies’ directors questions about career opportunities related to the state’s greenhouse gas reduction program.

A second virtual job fair is scheduled for Sept. 26, Picker said. The focus of the job fairs is on recruiting federal employees, but anybody who’s interested in working for the three state agencies can participate, the CPUC said in an announcement about the events.

'Wave of Retirements' Hits Sunshine State

The job fairs are being held as California confronts “a wave of retirements,” Picker said.

This is causing the state to look far and wide for qualified job applicants, including from federal agencies whose employees may not feel comfortable with President Donald Trump’s climate change policies, he said.

The CPUC itself has 250 vacancies, out of a total workforce of 1,200 people, Picker said.

“For us, this has become an existential issue,” Picker said. “We’ve had really good retention” in some cases for employees who’ve been with the agency for 30 to 35 years, he said. “We’re having to really scramble.”

Trump’s fiscal year 2018 budget proposal calls for cutting 3,200 jobs at the EPA and sharply reducing the agency’s budget, among other changes. The president in June said the U.S. would pull out of the Paris climate accord, under which participating nations must meet goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The administration more recently has suggested it is amenable to sticking with the agreement if changes are made.

Former Federal Workers Heading West

Three federal employees, including from the U.S. Department of Energy, recently accepted jobs with the utilities commission, Picker said. A fourth job offer to another federal worker is pending, he said.

In addition to those working at the DOE, federal employees at the Environmental Protection Agency and Interior Department have expressed interest in working for the state, Picker said.

Picker distributed leaflets in Washington, D.C., about California state job opportunities for two mornings in March, at the DOE’s headquarters and at the EPA. He was in Washington for a meeting of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners.

“Those were the ones I could get to during a snowstorm,” Picker said, referencing the late winter storm that took place during his visit.

‘Win-Win’ for California, U.S.?

Jeff Ruch, executive director of **Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility**, a Washington-based nonprofit, told Bloomberg BNA Sept. 22 he’s not surprised that California is looking to poach federal employees from agencies with environmental missions.

“Most federal laws postdate what California has already done,” said Ruch, a former staffer in the California legislature whose group represents federal, state, and local government employees working for environmental agencies.

And many federal employees working at agencies with environmental missions aren't happy with the administration's stated policies on climate change and energy, Ruch said. "There's a long line at the federal get-out-of-Dodge window," he said.

Nick Loris, a fellow at the Heritage Foundation who focuses on energy and environmental issues, told Bloomberg BNA that California's efforts could be a "win-win" for both the state and federal governments.

"If there are folks who are displeased with the Trump administration's shift of priorities, it makes sense that they would want to work elsewhere," he said.

At the same time, the scientists' exits could make it easier for the president to change the federal government's environmental policies and reduce federal expenditures, Loris said. The Heritage Foundation is a Washington-based group that supports limited government.

The Energy Department, Interior Department, and EPA didn't respond to requests for comment Sept. 22.

By [*Louis C. LaBrecque*](#)

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