



SOUTH COAST AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT DISTRICT
PRESS RELEASE

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Chairman Dr. William A. Burke Announces Retirement from South Coast AQMD Governing Board

A trailblazer for Environmental Justice, retirement ends unprecedented 23 years as Chair

DIAMOND BAR— Today at the March 2021 Governing Board meeting for the South Coast Air Quality Management District (South Coast AQMD), Dr. William A. Burke announced his retirement after 27 years of service on the Board, including an unprecedented 23 years as chair. South Coast AQMD will hold a special election at the April Governing Board meeting to elect the next Chair of the Board.

Chairman Burke will officially step down on May 31, 2021. He is the longest-tenured member and the longest-serving chairman of the South Coast AQMD Governing Board. In February, the Governing Board voted to name the auditorium located in the Diamond Bar headquarters after Dr. William A. Burke for his lifelong dedication and service as an environmental justice trailblazer.

“As I’ve said before, clean air is a right, not a privilege. I have spent my career fighting to be a voice of the unheard, so that all people, have the opportunity to breathe clean air,” said Dr. Burke, Chairman of the South Coast AQMD Governing Board. “I’m so proud of the work accomplished during my tenure and when the sun sets on my last day of service, I know I will be able to sleep because I did the best that I could.”

Chairman Burke has a long list of accomplishments in tackling regional air quality issues, improving public health and providing a voice for the public on air quality issues.

On his first day as chair in 1997, he announced environmental justice would become a central focus of South Coast AQMD. Since that time, Chairman Burke has achieved great success in improving air quality, including but not limited to the expansion of South Coast AQMD’s monitoring of air pollution in areas known as toxic hot spots, the establishment of the Asthma and Outdoor Air Quality Consortium to better understand the relationship between air pollution exposure and asthma, the introduction of the Helping Hands Initiative to sponsor green job training during the Great Recession of 2009, a call for

incentives for the clean-up, removal and replacement of diesel engines, an eight-point initiative reviewing regulations governing toxic air pollutants linked to cancer and birth defects, and the proposal and adoption of four guiding principles for enhancing environmental equity.

In 2015, Chairman Burke announced the agency's Environmental Justice Community Partnership to build stronger ties with environmental justice groups and local communities. This partnership enabled projects to address environmental inequities in communities of color. More recently, he played a major role in the hiring of South Coast AQMD's first Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer to advance efforts for racial justice and equity in agency programs and initiatives.

Chairman Burke expanded outreach initiatives to youth and young adults by spearheading the Why Healthy Air Matters (WHAM) school program to increase awareness of air quality issues and empower youth to drive positive change. He also developed the agency's Young Leaders Advisory Council to engage young adults and gain greater insight into the concerns, values and priorities of younger generations.

Chairman Burke has delivered a diverse and versatile range of expertise to South Coast AQMD, as he worked in health care, gold mining, auto racing and founded the Los Angeles Marathon prior to joining the Board.

South Coast AQMD is the air pollution control agency for major portions of Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino and Riverside counties, including the Coachella Valley. For news, air quality alerts, event updates and more, please visit us at www.aqmd.gov, download our award-winning app, or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

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