



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Equality California Endorses LGBTQ Candidates for California Legislature in 2020

LOS ANGELES — Equality California, the nation's largest statewide LGBTQ civil rights organization, announced early endorsements of two openly LGBTQ candidates for the California Legislature in 2020 on Wednesday: John Laird for Senate District 17 and Chris Ward for Assembly District 78. In order to expand the LGBTQ community's representation in Sacramento, Equality California has made recruiting and electing openly LGBTQ legislative candidates a top organizational priority for the next two years.

"Maintaining our community's representation in the Legislature is critical to our fight for full lived equality for all LGBTQ people," **said Equality California Executive Director Rick Zbur.** "John Laird is a proven champion in the fight for LGBTQ civil rights, social justice and environmental protection; and Chris Ward has spent his career advocating for LGBTQ and all San Diegans, from City Hall to the State Capitol. We can't wait to send them both back to Sacramento next year."

John Laird has served California in a variety of roles, including as Secretary for Natural Resources under Governor Brown, State Assemblymember for the 27th District, member of the State Integrated Waste Management Board, environmental policy instructor at UC Santa Cruz, Cabrillo College Trustee, Santa Cruz City Councilmember and Mayor and executive director of the Santa Cruz AIDS Project. Mr. Laird is the son of teachers, was raised in Vallejo, graduated with honors in politics from UC Santa Cruz and has been a long-time resident of Santa Cruz with his spouse John Flores.

"As an Assemblymember I worked closely with Equality California on many successful civil rights bills that were signed into law and I am truly honored by their endorsement," **said Laird.**

Chris Ward was elected in 2016 to the San Diego City Council District 3 seat, continuing a long tradition of LGBTQ representation in central San Diego. He was previously a Chief of Staff in the State Assembly and Senate, and has focused his legislative priorities on homelessness, housing policy, inclusive economic development, environmental issues and constituent services. He was the author of San Diego's Equal Pay Ordinance, the Polystyrene Ban and Plastics Reduction Ordinance, and a number of policy and program initiatives to improve homeless services in the region. He is the first openly LGBTQ parent on council, raising two children with his partner, Thom.

"Equality California works hard to promote the values of diversity, equity, and inclusiveness and I am honored to have their support for my Assembly campaign," **said Ward**. "In Sacramento I will work to ensure the LGBTQ community and other minority communities across the state have their voices heard as California continues to lead the way in creating a government that works for all."

For a complete list of Equality California's 2019 and 2020 endorsements, visit eqca.org/elections.

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Equality California is the nation's largest statewide LGBTQ civil rights organization. We bring the voices of LGBTQ people and allies to institutions of power in California and across the United States, striving to create a world that is healthy, just, and fully equal for all LGBTQ people. We advance civil rights and social justice by inspiring, advocating and mobilizing through an inclusive movement that works tirelessly on behalf of those we serve. www.eqca.org