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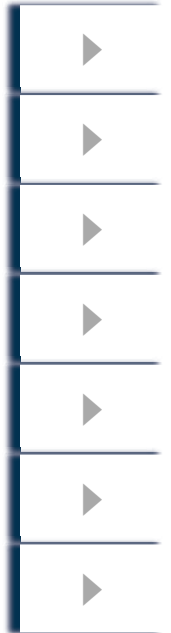
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[Home](#) | [About Us](#) | [Commissioners](#) | [President Batjer](#)

## Marybel Batjer, President

Marybel Batjer was named President of the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) on July 12, 2019, by Governor Gavin Newsom and sworn in on August 16, 2019.

President Batjer previously served as the first Secretary of the California Government Operations Agency. In this role, she led forward-looking efforts to revamp the way the state approaches data and technology, modernized the civil service system, and led the implementation of key initiatives to green state government and promote renewable energy.



Before heading the Government Operations Agency, Batjer was Vice President for Public Policy and Corporate Social Responsibility at Caesars Entertainment Inc., where she developed and promoted corporate social responsibility policy and initiatives and counseled the senior executive team during a public merger on issues pertaining to reputation management and public policy.

Batjer also served as Cabinet Secretary to Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger from 2003 to 2005, Chief of Staff to Nevada Governor Kenny Guinn from 2000 to 2003 and Undersecretary at the California Business, Transportation and Housing Agency from 1997 to 1998.

Batjer's successful and collaborative management style has gained her the respect of leaders in both the public and private sectors, where she has served on several boards and commissions, including as the former Vice Chair of the State of Nevada Colorado River Commission.

In her role as Secretary of the Government Operations Agency, Batjer has won several awards, including Governing Magazine's national 2017 Public Official of the Year, the American Society for Public Administration (Sacramento Chapter) 2018 Liz Hill Public Official of the Year and California Woman Lead: Woman of the Year. During her service at the Federal level, Batjer was honored with the Medal for Distinguished Public Service with Bronze Palm (highest civilian honor) from the Department of Defense, and the Medal for Distinguished Public Service from the Department of the Navy.



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## Highlights

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- **August 16, 2019:** [CPUC Press Release on Swearing In of President Batjer](#)
- **July 12, 2019:** [Press Release From Governor Newsom Appointing President Batjer](#)

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## Staff

### Nidhi Thakar, Interim Chief for Strategy and External Affairs

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Interim Chief for Strategy and External Affairs



*(Eryagon Eidam)*

Marybel Batjer knows how to make big moves quickly. In just five weeks in 2013, she went from being vice president of Caesars Entertainment Corporation in Las Vegas to becoming California's first-ever secretary of the Government Operations Agency (CalGovOps). As soon as she arrived, she was given a mandate by Gov. Jerry Brown to begin a prompt overhaul in how the nation's largest state government operates. But Batjer, who at age 62 has advised two other governors and been a Pentagon insider, knows how to move deliberately as well -- she has run the professional equivalent of a marathon or two already in her career. "You have to set yourself in a pace or cadence where you're not trying to boil the ocean," she says. "You're not trying to learn the depth of everything -- but you've got to get on top of everything quickly."

In her four years heading up CalGovOps, she's tackled California's slow-moving bureaucracy head-on by shaking up the state's hiring practices and project management. She is redesigning a personnel system she says has been "stuck in the last century," with individual hires taking as much as a year and employees working in walled cubicles with outdated computers. That's

completely unappealing, she says, to a generation raised online. “People who are used to everything at the tip of their thumbs on their smartphones, they walk into a state office building and they’re taken back 30 years,” Batjer says.

One way Batjer has changed the hiring process is by revamping civil service exams. More than 200 of these are now online in California, and Batjer wants to simplify things even more by consolidating exams for similar jobs offered by different state departments. She’s pushing to eliminate tests altogether for some licensed professionals, such as lawyers and doctors. And once candidates are hired, she is making sure their work environment is more responsive to the expectations of a younger generation. She has modernized employee orientation and made leadership training mandatory for supervisors.

But perhaps the biggest change under Batjer has been in the state’s IT department, where projects have historically run over time and over budget. To combat that, CalGovOps worked with the tech advisory group Code for America to introduce a new system that launches projects in stages. Known as agile project management, the system requires departments to hit specific benchmarks prior to moving ahead, such as successfully testing a procedure before applying it statewide. It sounds obvious, but for California, it is something new. The idea, says Batjer, is to “fail fast,” so that departments can find out in a matter of weeks -- rather than years -- if an idea needs to be reworked. The new approach is being tested on the state’s 20-year-old child welfare case management system, in which the traditional long-term contracting model is being dumped in favor of multiple contracts with vendors on shorter deadlines. This change has the eyes of the tech world and has made California the “epicenter of digital government services,” according to management expert Aaron Pava.

Recently, Batjer was preparing for a speech about agile management and asked her team what stood out to them during the transition. Surprisingly, it wasn’t any particular substantive change. It was the revolution in how decisions were made. “You made a decision. You said “yes,” and you said “yes” fast,” Batjer remembers them telling her. “It’s a reminder that we do really cool things in government -- we just have to give people the ability to go do it.”

-- By Liz Farmer

***See the rest of the [2017 public officials here.](#)***

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CALIFORNIA

## There's a new sheriff at the California Public Utilities Commission. PG&E better shape up



California Public Utilities Commission President Marybel Batjer speaks during a meeting at CPUC headquarters in San Francisco. (Jeff Chiu / Associated Press)

By GEORGE SKELTON  
CAPITOL JOURNAL COLUMNIST

OCT. 21, 2019  
12:01 AM



SACRAMENTO — There's a new sheriff in town to regulate utilities and force them to toe the line in wildfire prevention and power shutdowns.

She's Marybel Batjer, whom Gov. Gavin Newsom recently appointed president of the California Public Utilities Commission. They don't come much better in government.

Batjer is a smart, dedicated, hard-nosed-but-likable veteran of government at both the state and federal levels, serving Democratic and Republican administrations.

She has never delved this deeply into the tricky field of energy, however, so the new gig may be a challenge.



"She's a problem solver, not a BS-er," says state Sen. Bill Dodd (D-Napa), a leading wildfire legislator.

His Senate colleague, Mike McGuire (D-Healdsburg), says "there has been a lack of supervision and enforcement by the PUC. We expect the PUC to step up and do its job."

The utilities commission regulates many things besides power utilities, including railroads and cellphones. But it's practically invisible to the public. That's largely because it's headquartered in San Francisco, off the beaten path of state government and reporters who cover it.

Moreover, the PUC's subject matter historically has been eye-glazing. That changed when the utilities' transmission lines — particularly Pacific Gas & Electric's — began igniting deadly, devastating wildfires. And recently there was [PG&E's flawed power shutdown](#) that cut off electricity to 738,000 customers in 35 Northern and Central California counties. Simultaneously, Southern California Edison cut power to 24,000 customers.



She was raised on politics and government in Carson City, Nev., the daughter of a Nevada Supreme Court justice.

In 1981, Batjer became a political liaison for Californian Caspar Weinberger, President Reagan's first Defense secretary. At the Pentagon, she began a lifelong friendship with Colin Powell and became a top aide when Reagan brought him to the White House as national security advisor. She helped arrange summits with foreign leaders, including the Soviets, and also served in the first Bush administration.

"She can deliver bad news," Powell told then-Times reporters Joe Mathews and Peter Nicholas in 2004. "No matter who you are, she is candid and pulls no punches.... She put me in my place many times."

In his autobiography, Powell wrote: "Marybel, who probably could not have distinguished an admiral from a doorman before she came to the Pentagon, displayed a native shrewdness at sizing up people."

Gov. Pete Wilson brought Batjer back west as his undersecretary for the then-Business, Transportation and Housing Agency. After Wilson departed, Batjer became chief of staff for Nevada Gov. Kenny Guinn, a Republican moderate. Then, new California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger recruited her as his Cabinet secretary.

After a stint in the casino world as vice president of Caesars Entertainment Corp., Batjer was appointed by Gov. Jerry Brown as the first secretary of his new California Government Operations Agency. Gov. Newsom kept her on as leader of a "strike team" to reform the slowpoke Department of Motor Vehicles. Now she's running the PUC.

In all, she has worked for two presidents and five governors.

Newsom calls her “one of the most accomplished management experts in state government.”

OK, a smart aleck would say that’s a low bar. But she is accomplished enough to keep being recruited by successive governors.

Batjer says she loves to figure out how to make things work better. She’ll have lots to figure out with both the PUC and PG&E. The consensus in Sacramento is that the commission has been too utility-friendly and especially soft on Pacific Gas & Electric.

For starters, the bankrupt utility’s electricity transmission grid is terribly outdated. The company’s trimming of flammable trees and brush around power lines is years behind schedule. All this is embarrassing, dangerous and needs tighter scrutiny.

Moreover, PG&E was essentially uncommunicative with anxious customers during the sprawling blackout that was aimed at keeping its equipment from torching dry vegetation as strong winds blew. Its website crashed, and phone lines were backed up so far they were useless.

At a PUC hearing Friday in San Francisco, the commission’s mild-mannered president scolded PG&E executives without raising her voice.

“What we saw play out by PG&E last week cannot be repeated,” Batjer told the company’s chief executive, Bill Johnson. “PG&E was not fully prepared to manage such a large-scale power shutoff.”

“This is not hard,” she later told PG&E officials. “You guys failed on so many levels on some pretty simple stuff.”

Johnson defended PG&E’s decision to sever power — noting no big wildfire erupted despite some heavy winds — but conceded “making the right decision on safety isn’t the same thing as executing that decision well. And on this aspect, some skepticism is in order.”

He talked about long-range plans for upgrading the electrical grid. And he vowed to do better. But he also warned it could be 10 years before extensive blackouts no longer were needed.



“You will be judged by outcomes and not by plans,” Batjer told Johnson.

And Dodd issued a statement declaring: “Ten years is an unacceptable amount of time to wait for PG&E to strengthen its electric grid so that it does not spark yet another catastrophic wildfire.”

Johnson sent Newsom a letter suggesting that the state, rather than PG&E, might want to assume responsibility for deciding when blackouts are necessary. Perhaps the PUC, he said. There was no immediate response.

You can bet no elected official wants any part of that no-win liability.

But I’d trust the new sheriff with it.

CALIFORNIA

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Political columnist George Skelton has covered government and politics for more than 50 years and for The Times since 1974.

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Marybel Batjer



## Marybel Batjer

President at California Public Utilities Commission

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## About

Batjer is a high-level executive proficient in driving public and private sector organizations to deliver transformative change. An influential thought leader who has served in mission-critical positions for Governors Gavin Newsom, Jerry Brown, and Arnold Schwarzenegger (CA), Governor Kenny Guinn (NV), President Ronald Reagan, President George H.W. Bush, and national leaders such as, Caspar Weinberger and General Colin Powell. Batjer served as a C-suite executive at Caesars Entertainment during the merger and rebranding of the largest gaming company in the world. A well-respected advisor and sought-after national speaker, continually recognized as best-in-class for ability, decision-making, risk-taking, and tolerance for ambiguity.

## Experience



**President**

California Public Utilities Commission

Marybel Batjer

rail transit, and passenger transportation companies. As President, Batjer will oversee reforms that increase procedural efficiencies, establish a new Wildfire Safety Division to reduce the threat of wildfires, and implement climate initiatives to protect California.



## Secretary

California Government Operations Agency

Jul 2013 – Sep 2019 · 6 years 3 months

Sacramento, California

Appointed the first Secretary of the California Government Operations Agency by Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. Oversee diverse business operations including human resources, information technology, procurement, real estate, building regulations, taxation, and pensions across 11 separate departments and boards with 21K employees and a combined budget of \$48B.

Accomplishments:

- Modernized California's civil service processes, leadership training, and performance measures.
- ...

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## Chair

California Complete Count Census 2020

Nov 2018 – Apr 2019 · 6 months

Sacramento, California Area

Appointed by Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. as chair of a diverse cross-section of the state participants, from both the public and private sectors, to guide California's outreach for the 2020 federal census to ensure a complete and accurate account of California's population.

Marybel Batjer

Developed corporate social responsibility policy and initiatives, counseled senior executives on reputation-management and public policy, and directed internal and external communications for company that became the largest gaming company in the world, and rebranded itself as Caesars Entertainment.



### **Cabinet Secretary**

Office of Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger

2003 – 2004 · 1 year

Sacramento, California Area

Chief Policy Advisor to California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. Directed 13 cabinet secretaries overseeing a \$100B budget for the sixth largest economy in the world.



### **Chief of Staff**

Office of the Governor - State of Nevada

2000 – 2003 · 3 years

Washington D.C. Metro Area

Chief of Staff to Nevada Governor Kenny Guinn. Oversaw 20 cabinet secretaries, legislative initiatives, policy development and implementation, and budget administration.

### **Executive-in-Residence, Hotel Management/Casino Operations**

Mirage

1998 – 2000 · 2 years

Las Vegas, Nevada Area

### **Undersecretary**

California Business, Housing & Transportation Agency

1997 – 1998 · 1 year

Sacramento, California Area

### **Chief Deputy Director**

Marybel Batjer

**Special Assistant to the Secretary of the Navy**

U.S. Defense Department

1989 – 1992 · 3 years

**Special Assistant, National Security Affairs to President Ronald Reagan**

The White House

1987 – 1989 · 2 years

Washington D.C. Metro Area

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## Education



**Mills College**

BA



**Harvard Kennedy School**

National and International Security



**The Johns Hopkins University - Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS)**

International Public Policy

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## Volunteer Experience

**Former Co-Vice Chair**

Desert Research Institute Foundation Board



**Former Chair**

The National Judicial College

**Former Vice-Chair**

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Marybel Batjer

**Former Board Member**

Nevada Women's Fund

**Board Member**

Nevada Women's Lobby

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## Honors & Awards

**2017 Public Official of the Year**

Governing Magazine

**Liz Hill Public Official of the Year**

American Society for Public Administration (Sacramento Chapter)

**Maya Miller Egalitarian Award**

Nevada Woman's Lobby

**Medal for Distinguished Public Service**

Department of Defense

**Medal for Distinguished Public Service with Bronze Palm (highest civilian honor)**

Department of Defense

**Woman of the Year**

California Woman Lead

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## Groups

**Las Vegas Women In Business**