

CALIFORNIA

Film Commission

MINUTES

California Film Commission Board Meeting

February 21, 2025

Motion Picture Association (MPA)

15301 Ventura Boulevard, Building E, 2nd Fl.

Sherman Oaks, CA 91403

COMMISSIONERS IN ATTENDANCE

Wendy Greuel (Chair)

Jennifer Gonring (Secretary)

Senator Ben Allen

Arturo Barquet

Brian Brokaw

Cindy Capobianco

Assemblymember Rick Chavez Zbur

Andy Davis

Thom Davis

Steve Dayan

Bonnie Goldfarb

Karen Horne

Janet Knutsen

Kathy Le Backes

Alevtina "Alya" Michelson

Senator Steve Padilla (via zoom)

Kerri Wood Einertson

CFC STAFF

Colleen Bell

Leah Medrano

Joseph Cruz

Hedvig Marx

Isaiah Sandoval

Fanshen Cox

Shadina Tiffith

Leo Fialho

Heather Jennings

Megan Fleming (via zoom)

Richard Schlesing (via zoom)

Alfonso Casey (via zoom)

Lorna Leslie (via zoom)

Lori Moilov (via zoom)

GUESTS

Jamila C. Fairley

Howard Welinsky

Sabrina Jurisich

Michael Walbrecht

Max Reyes

Van T. Nguyen

Paul Audley

Tiffany Yu

Jim Schiro

Dee Dee Myers

Lauren Greenwood

Kevin McDonald

Leslie Rodriguez

Puja Navaney

Ellen Schnoor

Chiara Fornetti

Amy Johnson

Eddie Robinson

John Parker

Hannah Goldsmith

Philip Sokoloski

Ed Duffy

Larry Laboe

Lauren Pizer Mains

John Parker

Tami Grossglauser

J. Silver

Salina Valencia

Donna Washington

Vienna Montague

Manijeh Fata

Roxanne Messina Captor

Mayra Ocampo

Kevin McDonald

Yuree Henley

Jeff Schafer

Jackie Schafer



I. CALL TO ORDER and WELCOME; INTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS/GUESTS – Wendy Greuel, Chair

Meeting called to order at 1:35 p.m., Roll Call and Attendance taken to establish quorum, Board members introduced themselves. A Land Acknowledgment was made by Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility (DEIA) Initiative Manager Fanshen Cox.

II. CHAIR'S REPORT – Wendy Greuel, Chair

Chair Greuel thanked everyone who has been incredibly supportive of increasing the tax credit program and exploring ways it can be improved overall. Special thanks to Colleen Bell and her team for their leadership in shaping the program into something that truly makes a meaningful difference.

The challenges the film industry faces are undeniable. There's been extensive coverage and documentation, confirming what we've been saying for a long time, the situation is dire.

With broader recognition of the issue, we hope this momentum will help us move things forward in the legislature. It's also significant that two bill languages will be introduced simultaneously—this kind of coordination is critical to our success.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Wendy Greuel, Chair

Motion to approve the Minutes from October 25, 2024 was made by Thom Davis, seconded by Senator Ben Allen. The motion was approved with all Board members voting in favor except Supervisor Holly Mitchell who abstained.

IV. DIRECTOR'S REPORT – Colleen Bell, Executive Director

California Film Commission (CFC) – 2024 Overview

Leadership Updates

- New Board Member: Assemblymember Rick Chavez Zbur, appointed for his strong background in civil rights and environmental advocacy, is expected to bring a valuable policy perspective.
- New Permit Manager: Leo Fialho, a veteran location manager with 20+ years of experience, adds hands-on expertise to the CFC team.

California's Film Legacy & Current Challenges

- From Hollywood's early days to hits like *Black Panther* and *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, California remains a global leader in cinematic storytelling.
- Critical threat: Other states and countries are aggressively luring productions away with richer incentives, undercutting California's dominance.
- Economic warning: Production flight results in fewer jobs, lost revenue for local businesses, and declining community investment.

Governor's Proposed Tax Credit Expansion

- Increase from \$330M → \$750M/year, starting July 2025.
- Aims to:
 1. Attract & retain productions
 2. Create high-paying jobs
 3. Stimulate local economies
 4. Reinforce global leadership in entertainment
- Political Strategy: Coordinated legislation from Senator Ben Allen and Assemblymember Zbur to push the bill through in 2025.



2024 Filming Activity Report

Permits & Shoot Days

- 2,199 applications, 1,644 permits issued
- 3,076 total shoot days

Location Type	Permits	%	Shoot Days	%
State Parks & Beaches	1,099	67%	1,974	64%
Caltrans (Roadways)	340	21%	683	22%
Buildings & Facilities	205	12%	419	14%

Top Locations

- Roadways: Hwy 1, 101 Freeway (popular for car/action scenes)
- Parks: Crystal Cove, Leo Carrillo (high scenic demand)
- Facilities: Exposition Park, San Quentin (used in narrative and docu-style shoots)

Production Types

- Commercials: 409 shoot days (highest)
- Feature Films: 340 shoot days
- TV Shows: 215 shoot days

Operational Challenges

- Staff shortages: Affecting some remote parks; longer lead times are helping mitigate this.
- Federal land limits: CFC doesn't oversee BLM/NFS areas — reduced federal staffing may constrain production capacity.
- PCH closures: Eastern Malibu still impacted by wildfire damage; western PCH remains active and open for shoots.

Trends & Outlook

- Permit volume stable at state parks but rising at Caltrans and public facilities.
- California continues to offer diverse and desirable locations, but incentive competitiveness is now make-or-break.
- The proposed tax credit expansion and new DEIA provisions under Program 4.0 (launching July 2025) will be crucial levers for reversing production flight.

Takeaway

The California Film Commission, under the leadership of Colleen Bell, is executing a coordinated policy, advocacy, and operational strategy to:

- Retain and grow in-state production.
- Address regulatory and logistical bottlenecks.
- Build a more inclusive, accessible pipeline for future filmmakers.

However, success hinges on legislative approval of the expanded tax credit program, ongoing industry engagement, and readiness to adapt to changing workforce and infrastructure conditions.

V. TAX CREDIT PROGRAM REPORT – Leah Medrano, Tax Credit Program Deputy Director

Recent Projects & Economic Impact

Major Productions

- TV Series: *Paradise*, *The Pit*, *Skeleton Crew* – ~\$500M spent, 2,000+ jobs created.
- Indie Films: *The Accidental Getaway Driver*, *Atropia*, *Lurker* – all premiered at Sundance under



the tax credit program.

- Upcoming: *Suits: LA* and *Matlock* revival – *Suits: LA* alone created 455 jobs and spent \$50M in-state.

Fiscal Year 5 Highlights (Program 3.0)

- Ends: June 30, 2025
- 28 approved projects (since July 2024)
- \$1.1B in in-state spending, \$178.7M in tax credits, 6,700 hires
- Since October 2024:
 - +\$60M in spending
 - \$10.5B total spend to date
 - \$3.9B in labor costs
 - Nearly 50,000 jobs created
 - 170 approved projects, 1.3M principal photography days
 - \$1.3B in tax credits issued (~10% allocation rate)

Soundstage Filming Tax Credit Program

- 5 projects approved
- \$56.7M allocated, \$93.3M remaining
- \$354.3M in-state spending
- 14 certified soundstages (6 renovated, 8 new)

Force Majeure Approvals

- 11 projects (mostly small-budget or indie)
- No relocations out of state
- Projects monitored for potential reallocations

What's Next: Program 4.0 (Begins July 1, 2025)

New Features

- DEIA Provisions Introduced — no quotas, but project-specific goal-based DEIA plans required.
- Permanent regulations approved (Dec. 2024)
- Application portal in soft launch soon

DEIA Goals

- Increase Participation: Guide indie and underrepresented filmmakers.
- Improve Access to Talent: Tools and supplier directories.
- Enhance Accountability: Require good-faith DEIA plans.

Current Initiatives

- Info sessions and resource pages
- CFC Learns DEIA education series
- Jurisdictional collaboration nationwide

Compliance & Legal Safeguards

- Created with Go-Biz legal team
- Fully compliant with state law; avoids quotas
- Monitoring federal developments

Common Concerns Addressed

Concern	Response
"Too complex/time-consuming"	Streamlined process, support provided
"We're unsure about this"	Resources + info sessions



Concern	Response
"We already do DEIA"	Still must submit project-specific plan
Legal concerns	Reviewed, designed to be litigation-resistant

Engagement & Communication

- Highlighting successful DEIA case studies
- Encouraging peer learning and best practices
- Active outreach through festivals and industry events

Program 4.0 Launch

- Start Date: July 1, 2025
- Focus now: Education and industry preparation
- Data collection and assessments will begin post-launch

VI. CAREER PATHWAY UPDATE – Kevin McDonald, Director

Kevin McDonald, Director of the Career Pathways Program, highlighted how the initiative—funded by productions benefiting from California’s film tax credit—is adapting to industry hardships by adjusting training formats and focusing on upskilling. Now in its fifth fiscal year under Tax Credit Program 3.0, the program supports entry- and mid-career workforce development in film and TV.

Key Partners include:

- Hollywood CPR – union-recognized training in crafts.
- ManifestWorks – supports people impacted by foster care, homelessness, and incarceration.
- Handy Foundation – promotes diversity in technical crafts.
- A Production Accounting course was also created to fill workforce gaps, with entry- and mid-career tracks.

Program Impact:

- Since 2021, 610 participants have been supported.
- 31% of alumni have achieved guild membership.
- Participants span 14 crafts; 65% are Latino or African American.
- Entry-level accounting training resumed in 2023, with Warner Bros. hosting the graduation.
- The mid-career course has already led to placements at Lucasfilm, Fifth Season, and a Ben Affleck project.

Notable Success Story: Valerie Lopez Flores, who entered the industry with no prior connections, now works on a Lucasfilm feature thanks to Career Pathways.

Looking Ahead:

- Universal Pictures is running a Production Accounting Accelerator exclusively for alumni.
- Applications are open for the next training course, and more spring events are planned.

Kevin McDonald emphasized the importance of collaboration with studios, unions, and nonprofits in creating equitable access to careers in entertainment.

VII. GUEST SPEAKER – Dee Dee Myers, Senior Advisor to Governor Newsom and Director of the Governor’s Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz)

Role of GO-Biz

- GO-Biz functions like a state Department of Commerce, handling business incentives, regulatory support, tourism, clean energy, and film.
- Its flexibility allows it to respond quickly to new legislative priorities.



Small Business & Recovery

- Small businesses make up 95% of California's businesses and employ half the private sector.
- Disaster recovery (especially from wildfires) and post-COVID frameworks (like \$4B in grants) are central to current efforts.

Economic and Competitive Challenges

- High housing costs and complex regulations hinder sustainable growth.
- Despite being a global economic leader, California faces competition from other states and countries.

Creative & Clean Industries Focus

- GO-Biz oversees both the California Film Commission and Visit California, supporting synergy between creative industries and tourism.
- Clean energy initiatives, including hydrogen and zero-emission vehicle efforts, are also key priorities.

Film Tax Credit & Legislative Push

- There's strong momentum to expand the film tax credit via the Governor's \$750M proposal and companion legislation.
- However, the tough state budget, and past challenges related to refundability and reforms, could complicate passage.
- Unified advocacy from labor, studios, grassroots groups, and vendors (e.g., "Stay in LA") is essential.

Advocacy Strategy

- Focus messaging on working-class benefits — highlighting union jobs, trades, and community impact.
- Emphasize the economic return of keeping productions in California.
- Use local stories and testimonials to build support and convey urgency.

Senator Ben Allen:

Senator Allen expressed gratitude to Dee Dee Myers, the Governor, and Assemblymember Rick Zbur for their leadership and support in advancing a \$750 million initiative aimed at addressing challenges in the production industry. Companion bills have been introduced in both legislative houses, with ongoing discussions involving labor and studio stakeholders to refine the proposal. Although details are currently limited, a press conference is scheduled for next Wednesday at SAG-AFTRA. The initiative enjoys broad support, including from the Mayor, but Senator Allen acknowledged the need for widespread legislative backing and emphasized continued advocacy and unity moving forward.

Assemblymember Rick Zbur:

Assemblymember Rick Zbur emphasized his strong partnership with Senator Allen on the companion bills supporting a \$750 million initiative to strengthen California's film and television industry. He expressed gratitude to Senator Allen, Dee Dee Myers, and the Governor, noting the unified support across government is a significant advantage. Assemblymember Zbur stressed the importance of not just backing the program but also enhancing its competitiveness and ensuring its long-term viability.

He acknowledged boardmember Thom Davis for his critical role in uniting diverse stakeholder groups and highlighted the need to maintain strong legislative support for both funding and the program's goals. Assemblymember Zbur pointed to the economic strain on workers—exacerbated by recent wildfires—as a pressing reason to act. He warned against repeating past mistakes like the decline of aerospace in California and underscored the dramatic drop in the state's share of U.S. film and TV production, from two-thirds to just 10% over two decades.



VIII. NEW BUSINESS – Wendy Greuel, Chair

Next Board meeting: June 20th in Los Angeles

IX. PUBLIC COMMENTS – Wendy Greuel, Chair

Common Themes

- **Competitive Disadvantage:**
California is losing productions to other states and countries due to more attractive incentives elsewhere.
- **Need for Comprehensive Reform:**
 - Expand and adjust tax credits (especially for comedies, new series, and post-production).
 - Reconsider restrictive elements like the jobs ratio and per-project caps.
 - Focus on policies that keep productions in California long-term—not just attract them temporarily.
- **Protecting Middle-Class Jobs:**
The decline in local crew employment is seen as urgent. Strengthening incentives could help preserve these essential middle-class jobs.

Key Recommendations

- **Expand Tax Credits to First-Year Shows & Comedies**
Encourage creative risk-taking and job continuity by supporting newer and often underfunded projects.
- **Add Incentives for Above-the-Line and Post-Production Work**
Compete more effectively with other regions by supporting the full production pipeline.
- **Reevaluate or Remove Structural Caps/Formulas**
Modify or eliminate constraints like the jobs ratio to better accommodate diverse projects, including indie films.
- **Promote Domestic Hiring & Retention**
Adopt policies that encourage U.S.-based hiring, especially to keep American companies from outsourcing abroad.
- **Include Industry Stakeholders in Policymaking**
Collaborate with producers, studios, and creatives to shape practical, sustainable legislation.

X. ADJOURNMENT – Wendy Greuel, Chair

Meeting was adjourned at 3:35 p.m.