FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kevin de León Joins Faculty at UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs

Former state legislative leader who bolstered California’s role in fighting climate change and building a clean-energy economy will teach public policy courses and provide insight on issues of special importance to Latinos

President pro Tempore Emeritus of the California State Senate Kevin de León has joined the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs as a distinguished policymaker-in-residence and senior analyst.

“Kevin de León has led the way for more than a decade on issues as important as environmental protection and climate, immigration, education, and so much more. Our students and researchers will both benefit greatly from his insights and vision,” Dean Gary M. Segura said in announcing the appointment.

De León began his new role as UCLA Luskin on Jan. 22, 2019, and will teach his first courses at UCLA in the spring quarter that begins in April. His courses will focus on topics of interest to the School’s graduate students studying public policy and to undergraduates in UCLA Luskin’s new major in public affairs.

As the first Latino in more than a century elected to the position of president pro temp of the California Senate, de León championed California’s global leadership role in fighting climate change and building a clean-energy economy. He also focused his attention on rebuilding the state’s infrastructure; improving public education; ensuring workplace and health-care equity for women, immigrants and low-wage workers; and enhancing public safety.

In Sacramento, de León also led the creation of a first-of-its-kind retirement savings program for low-income workers. He pushed for a requirement that a quarter of all cap-and-trade revenue be spent in disadvantaged communities. As Senate leader, he shepherded legislation that set California on the path to a 100 percent clean energy future — the largest economy in the world to do so — thereby creating the most ambitious renewable energy goals in the nation.

His role at UCLA Luskin will include an advisory position with the Latino Policy and Politics Initiative (LPPI), which is a multifaceted laboratory designed to support Latinos around domestic policy challenges. Research and policy briefs from LPPI
tackle major legislative issues that directly impact Californians, particularly communities of color.

In December 2017, de León served as keynote speaker for the launch of LPPI, saying that UCLA is “arguably the finest public institution in the nation, if not the entire world.” De León also spoke enthusiastically of the promise that LPPI represents for elected officials. “We need the empirical evidence, and it’s about time we have this institution established at UCLA.”

Last year, de León launched a historic challenge to unseat U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein. He prevailed in a tough primary battle, earned the overwhelming endorsement of the state’s Democratic Party, and secured more than 5 million votes.

He has an extensive record on women’s rights, gun-violence prevention and workers’ rights. De León has also worked to create solutions to address the state’s transportation, housing and infrastructure goals.

Another aspect of de León’s appointment at UCLA Luskin will be a collaboration with the Luskin Center for Innovation (LCI) to design implementation strategies for signature laws that he shepherded during his time in the State Capitol, including legislation to ensure that disadvantaged communities have access to clean transportation options.

Other collaborators with LCI will advance efforts to move the state to 100 percent zero-carbon energy and provide support for policies designed to ensure that California continues to lead the country with its climate policies. De León will help craft community-based solutions that advance these statewide goals.

In Sacramento, de León authored a law requiring that a quarter of all carbon cap-and-trade revenue — now totaling over $8 billion — be spent in disadvantaged communities. He also led the creation of a first-of-its-kind retirement-savings program for low-income workers.

De León attended the University of California, Santa Barbara, and he graduated from Pitzer College.

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The UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs identifies and develops emerging areas of research and teaching, cultivating leaders and change agents who advance solutions to society’s most pressing problems. The School will commemorate its 25th anniversary in April 2019.

Note to Editors: Please direct any questions to Les Dunseith, executive director of communications for the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, at (310) 206-5252, or email ldunseith@luskin.ucla.edu.