



*Congresswoman*  
**VERONICA ESCOBAR**  
*Texas' 16th Congressional District*

February 2021

## Climate Crisis Advisory Committee

Convened by Congresswoman Veronica Escobar (TX-16), the Climate Crisis Advisory Committee (CCAC) will develop recommendations from the El Paso community to tackle the climate change crisis.

The CCAC's main mission will be to serve as an avenue for Congresswoman Escobar to gather feedback from members to help advance federal legislation. Additionally, the CCAC will encourage and enhance collaboration across the member entities for local and state-level action.

The CCAC is composed of community members and partners including local and state officials, public health and research agencies, advocates, commerce, agriculture, and other experts and interest groups.

The launch of the Committee follows [Congresswoman Escobar's appointment](#) to the U.S. House Select Committee on Climate Crisis, which is charged with delivering ambitious climate policy recommendations to Congress in order to achieve substantial and permanent reductions in pollution and other activities that contribute to the climate crisis.

In this committee, Congresswoman Escobar will work alongside Chairwoman Kathy Castor (FL-14), committee members, and the Biden administration to enact legislation to build a clean energy economy that values workers, centers environmental justice, and is prepared to meet the challenges of the climate crisis in El Paso and across the country.

Congresswoman Escobar's climate priorities for the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress include:

- Expanding clean energy, energy efficiency, and clean vehicle tax credits.
- Repealing unnecessary tax breaks for the oil and gas industry.
- Increasing funds and reducing or waiving local cost-shares for grant programs that increase resilience for environmental justice, frontline, and small/rural communities like El Paso.

- Increasing funds to conserve and protect natural landscapes on public, state, and private lands – including Castner Range – to increase carbon sequestration and improve community and ecosystem resilience.
- Increasing funds to assist farmers transitioning to climate-smart agriculture, including organic agriculture.
- Investing in communities and workers historically dependent on oil and gas.
- Creating a national climate bank to finance targeted deployment of clean energy and other decarbonization technologies and climate-resilient infrastructure.

## Committee Members

Citizen's Climate Lobby El Paso

City of El Paso

Earthworks

Eco El Paso

El Paso Chamber of Commerce

El Paso County

El Paso Electric

El Paso Zoo

Fort Bliss

Office of Mayor Oscar Leeser

Office of State Representative Art Fierro

Office of State Representative Mary E. González, PhD

Office of State Representative Lina Ortega

Office of State Senator Cesar J. Blanco

Sierra Club

Sunrise El Paso

Texas Farm Bureau

Texas Gas Service

The University of Texas at El Paso

U.S. Green Chamber of Commerce

UT Houston School of Public Health in El Paso

Ysleta del Sur Pueblo

## Committee Members Bios



**Bob Niland**  
**Advocate, Citizens' Climate Lobby El Paso**

A native El Pasoan and graduate of The University of Texas at Austin, Bob began his career in the computer industry in El Paso, Dallas, San Diego, and finally in Juarez. Bob later worked in the Texas Legislature through five legislative sessions, and now owns and operates a corporate housing company in El Paso. Bob is on several community boards, the Paul Foster School of Medicine research oversight committee, and is active in numerous civic action groups including No Labels and Citizens Climate Lobby (CCL). CCL sees that effective and successful climate legislation is enacted with the least burden on the ability of business to innovate, adapt and grow and supports H.R. 763, the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act and H.R. 2759, the Department of Defense Climate Resiliency and Readiness Act, of which Congresswoman Escobar is the co-sponsor and sponsor respectively.



**Nicole Ferrini**  
**Director, Community + Human Development & Chief Resilience Officer for the City of El Paso**

Holding degrees in both interior design and architecture from Texas Tech University, Nicole leveraged her background in design and systems thinking to launch a career building better, stronger, more prosperous communities. In 2014, Nicole became El Paso's first Chief Resilience Officer (CRO) to coordinate citywide efforts that address social, environmental, and economic challenges. After three years, Nicole led her team to complete the City's first comprehensive Resilience Strategy; a roadmap of actions aimed at propelling El Paso toward the realization of our full potential as a prospering binational metroplex. Most recently, Nicole was appointed Director of Community + Human Development for the City. She remains focused on building grassroots resilience at a regional scale emphasizing dynamic solutions to the challenges of climate instability, urban development, economic prosperity, and social justice.



**Elizabeth Triggs**  
**Strategic Partnerships Officer, City of El Paso**

During her nine-year tenure with the City, Elizabeth has served in various capacities in the Planning and Inspections Department and as Assistant Director of the Economic and International Development Department where she focused on real estate development through public-private partnerships and the use of targeted finance tools. In her current role as Strategic Partnerships Officer, Elizabeth is responsible for overseeing the development, implementation, and evaluation of partnerships that advance

initiatives aligned with the City's mission to support a high quality of life. Earlier in her career, Elizabeth worked for an economic and policy research arm of the University of Texas at El Paso. A native El Pasoan, Elizabeth is a graduate of the University of Texas at El Paso with a bachelor's degree in economics and political science.



**Miguel Escoto**  
**West Texas Field Associate, Earthworks**

Miguel organizes with communities impacted by Permian Basin oil and gas production and helps document Texas' failure to regulate the oil and gas industry. Growing up on both sides of the border – El Paso, TX / Ciudad Juárez, Mexico – he sees climate justice as a fight for immigration justice. Based in El Paso, he has worked with youth-led environmental organizations like the Sunrise Movement and as a legal assistant for environmental law firm Baake Law and the Sierra Club. Earthworks' climate change priorities are informed by decades of documenting

regulatory failure to protect communities from the oil and gas industry. They advocate for the President to declare climate change a national emergency and take executive action to avert the climate crisis.



**Sharon Wilson**  
**Senior Field Advocate, Earthworks**

Sharon, a 5th generation Texan, has briefed the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, EPA regulators and former Administrator Gina McCarthy on the impacts of oil and gas extraction. In 2014, she became a certified optical gas imaging (OGI) thermographer and now travels across the U.S. making visible the invisible methane pollution from oil and gas facilities and giving eye-opening tours to the media, members of Congress, state lawmakers, state and federal regulators and investment

bankers.



**Shelby Ruff**  
**Board President, Eco El Paso**

Shelby has served as Eco El Paso's Board President for the past two years and a Board Member for the past five years. He has also served on the U.S. Green Building Council West Texas Chapter, USGBC Texas Chapter, Solar San Antonio, Texas Solar Energy Society Chapter Representative for the new West Texas Chapter, and recently on the Regional Renewable Energy Advisory Council, which provides renewable energy policy recommendations to El Paso's City Council. Shelby has worked in and supported the renewable energy industry for over

fourteen years and has developed solar energy, small wind, and battery storage projects across the US and Mexico, including his own solar rooftop in El Paso. Shelby also has more than fourteen years of recruiting and employer branding experience and is currently a Senior Talent Scout at USAA. Shelby has an MBA in Management from the Greehey School of Business at St. Mary's University in San Antonio.



**David Michael Jerome**  
**President and CEO, El Paso Chamber of Commerce**

David became President and CEO of the El Paso Chamber in January 2020. The Chamber is 1,400 members strong and is committed to transforming business and improving lives in the El Paso metropolitan area. David is also the Adjunct Professor of Corporate Enterprise at the College of Business Administration, University of Texas at El Paso. David was the Senior Vice President for Corporate Services and Corporate Responsibility at InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) where he founded and led IHG's Global Corporate Services Team from IHG's headquarters

in the United Kingdom from 2006 until the end of 2012. He has published on branding and sustainability and presented at TED Global on hotels v2.0. Before IHG, David led Corporate Affairs for AB InBev, the world's largest brewer, and worked for General Motors Corporation in a variety of staff and operational roles including President and CEO of GM Korea. He has a Juris Doctor from the Washington College of Law.



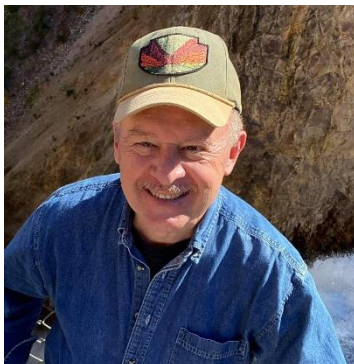
**David Stout**  
**Commissioner, El Paso County**

David was sworn in as El Paso County Commissioner for Precinct 2 in 2015. He worked in communications as an advocate with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in Washington, D.C. and as a Bilingual Communications Specialist and Binational Affairs Liaison for Texas State Senator José Rodríguez. Climate change affects virtually every issue, and in each capacity, David has addressed social and environmental justice. As Commissioner, he helped create the Healthy Food Financing Initiative and the Office of New Americans, among his efforts to address climate-driven migration, support sustainable agriculture, and build green infrastructure. As a fronterizo, David has worked to create spaces for cross-border conversation and collaboration on sustainability and environmental issues.



**Jessica Christianson**  
**Sustainability Director, El Paso Electric**

Jessica is an environmental professional with a diverse work portfolio spanning the public, private and nonprofit sectors. She has been with El Paso Electric Company since 2013, acting as a Principal Scientist, Environmental Manager and currently as the Director of Sustainability. Jessica is committed to combatting climate change through the implementation of policies and strategies that facilitate solutions ranging from natural resource conservation to accelerated development and adoption of clean technologies. She is equally committed to the El Paso region, serving on the Board of Directors for the YWCA, El Paso del Norte Region and the Lands Committee of the Frontera Land Alliance, a regional conservation land trust.



**Rick LoBello**  
**Education Curator, El Paso Zoo**

Rick has worked in the field of conservation education since 1973 when he started his career as Zoological Curator at the Kansas City Museum of History and Science. For nearly 25 years he worked as a park ranger and Executive Director at Big Bend, Yellowstone, Guadalupe, and Carlsbad Caverns National Parks. Since coming to work at the El Paso Zoo in 2002, his main goal has been to help people in El Paso connect with the animals that live there and to encourage them to take specific actions in their personal lives to help the zoo with its mission of saving endangered species. The zoo is focused on becoming a leader in promoting sustainability in El Paso.



**Shane Offutt**  
**Pollution Prevention Branch Chief, Fort Bliss**  
**Directorate of Public Works**

Shane joined the U.S. Army in 1988, making him a veteran of Desert Storm. He attended the University of Texas at El Paso where he received a B.S. in anthropology and geology and then joined the Environmental Directorate. In 1992 he joined the conservation branch as an archeologist, and later became lab director for the Hot Well site. Later, he was attached to the range operations to coordinate access for all the Environmental Division and later reviewed all military training for environmental compliance. In 2020, he was named Pollution Prevention Branch Chief.



**Benny Joe "BJ" Tomlinson, Jr.**  
**Division Chief for Sustainability & Energy, Fort Bliss**  
**Directorate of Public Works**

BJ has been with the Directorate of Public Works for over 10 years. His Division addresses privatized utilities, utility commodities, reimbursable customers, building controls, energy and water conservation/security, sustainability, supporting recycling and mitigation of effects from climate change for the 1.1 million acres of Fort Bliss. He has a bachelor's and master's degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Texas at El Paso. His professional experience includes military service as an officer in the United States Air Force, research engineer at the Air Force Research

Laboratory, and Operations Manager for the High Energy Laser System Test Facility.



**Laurence Gibson**  
**El Paso Group Chair, Sierra Club**

Laurence is a retired professor of music (violinist/symphony conductor) living in El Paso for forty-nine years now. A Sierra Club member since 1981 and dedicated backpacker, he has served as El Paso Group Chair and Rio Grande Chapter Secretary for nineteen years now. He serves out of a feeling of obligation to "preserve and protect" our world. Laurence's philosophy is that small contributions from many of us will get the job done. He is a grass-roots guy who believes the club should be driven from the bottom up as opposed to the

top down.



**David Baake**  
**Policy Counsel, Sierra Club**

Born and raised in El Paso, David has a degree in biological sciences from Arizona State University and a Juris Doctor from Harvard Law School. He has worked on climate and clean energy law at the Natural Resources Defense Council in Washington, D.C. and completed two federal clerkships. In 2017, David started his own law practice which represents national non-profits, clean energy trade groups, and community groups in litigation related to climate and energy policy. In 2018, David represented Familias

Unidas del Chamizal and the Sierra Club in a federal lawsuit forcing the EPA to redo El Paso County's designation as a non-attainment area for ground-level ozone pollution. Other representative cases include co-authoring a petition for Supreme Court review in a case involving regulation of high-global-warming-potential refrigerants and representing environmental and community groups before New Mexico agencies seeking to limit methane pollution from the state's oil and gas sector.



**Carlos Gallinar**  
**Committee Appointee by the Office of Mayor Oscar Leeser**

As a native El Pasoan, Carlos has held leadership positions at the El Paso Community Foundation, the La Fe Community Development Corporation, the City of El Paso, and El Paso ISD. He helped manage several notable projects including: the Plaza Theatre restoration; the Magoffin Park Villas, the first mixed-used and mixed-income housing development in the city; Plan El Paso, the city's comprehensive plan; and the La Fe Youthbuild Academy, a leadership and educational program for

non-traditional students. Carlos served as the Chairman of the City Plan Commission and has been on multiple nonprofit boards. He holds a B.A. from the University of Texas at El Paso and a master's in city and regional planning from Rutgers University.





**Lauren Jones**

**District Director, State Representative Art Fierro**

Born in South Africa and raised in Houston, Texas, Lauren is a graduate from the University of Texas at Austin with a B.A. in international relations and global studies. After organizing on multiple political campaigns and working at the Texas State Capitol as a Policy Director for the 86th Legislative Session, she was captivated by the issues currently facing Texans, especially on the Texas-Mexico border. Since being in El Paso, her main climate priorities have been to look at ways El Paso can move towards renewable energy, preserve the region's natural habitat, and establish more sustainable agricultural practices while supporting our local businesses and industries. She hopes to see the Sun City

lead in solar energy and water preservation practices for other American and international cities.



**Josie Arellano,**

**District Director, State Representative Mary E. González**

Josie retired from Clint ISD after serving the students, parents, and community for 35 years. She worked across elementary, middle, and high school levels as well as the district alternative program. Working in Rep. Gonzalez' district office has allowed Josie to gain knowledge in her own community and work with constituents she has known her entire life. Her climate change goals include encouraging pride in the Montana Vista community to promote the reporting of illegal dumping in the area and help deter future illegal dumping. Josie has physically driven out to locations in the Montana Vista area reported by constituents to monitor and ensure positive action is taken to help

resolve this situation.



**Gabriella Mata**

**Policy Aide, State Representative Lina Ortega**

Gabriella is a recent Texas A&M University graduate originally from McAllen, Texas. She received her Bachelor of Arts, majoring in maritime studies and minoring in marine biology. Gabriella has had a life-long devotion to the environment with interests in science, law, and policy. For over seven months, Gabriella worked under the Texas Marine Mammal Stranding Network in Galveston, Texas assisting with animal necropsies and rehabilitation. Her policy interests include combatting global climate change, natural

resource security, investing in renewable energy resources, and increasing public environmental education.



**Cassandra Urrutia**  
**District Director, State Senator Cesar J. Blanco**

Born and raised in El Paso, Texas, Cassandra received her Master of Public Health Degree from the University of Texas at El Paso with a focus on Hispanic and Border Health Issues. She has worked for the Texas Legislature for two years and is passionate about advancing the health and quality of life for all Texans through equitable policies. Senator Blanco’s climate priorities are to protect students from environmental hazards, support research into the economic feasibility of clean energy sources, prepare Texans for a transition to clean energy, fight environmental inequality, and ensure marginalized individuals have equitable access to information regarding potential or existing environmental hazards in their communities.



**Josh Simmons**  
**Organizer, Sunrise El Paso**

A native El Pasoan, Josh earned a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering from the University of Texas at El Paso with a Fields and Devices focus including Renewable and Sustainable Energy in 2013. He currently serves on the Regional Renewable Energy Advisory Council (RREAC) for the El Paso City Council and has been a founding active volunteer with environmentalist non-profit organization Sunrise El Paso, as well as a board member for Eco El Paso and Community First Coalition. Josh is an

unmoved strong advocate for renewable energy generation, specifically direct generation via solar photovoltaics and similar technologies to allow the El Paso region to adapt and execute upon a future that will harness and take full advantage of the most abundant limitless resource available to our Sun City.



**Warren Cude**  
**State Director, Texas Farm Bureau**

Warren is from Fort Stockton and was elected to Texas Farm Bureau’s (TFB) board of directors in December 2020. Warren has a commercial cow-calf operation and raises registered and commercial sheep. He also operates a helicopter service for livestock gathering and predation management. He previously served as president and vice president of Pecos-Reeves County Farm Bureau. He has participated in TFB’s leadership program, FarmLead, and served on TFB’s Sheep and Goat, Animal Health and Predator advisory committees, as well as the

state Resolutions Committee.

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**Riley Stinnett**  
**Government Affairs Manager, Texas Gas Service**

Riley serves as the Texas Government Affairs Manager for ONE Gas and its division company, Texas Gas Service. ONE Gas is a 100 percent regulated natural gas distribution company that provides natural gas distribution services to more than 2 million customers in Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas. ONE Gas is committed to the communities it serves and is proud of its efforts to make natural gas a part of a clean energy future. In his role, Riley represents the company on legislative and regulatory matters. Before joining ONE Gas, Riley worked in the Texas Senate as a Legislative & Media Relations Director. His areas of public policy expertise include utilities, regulated industries, and natural resources.



**Craig Tweedie,**  
**Professor of Biological Science and Director of**  
**Environmental Science and Engineering Program, UTEP**

Dr. Craig Tweedie earned his PhD in subantarctic climate change biology and switched to Arctic terrestrial ecology when he began his postdoc at Michigan State University in 2000. With many active collaborations both in the US and internationally, he maintains an active research program that is focused on land cover change and the impact this has on terrestrial and coastal ecosystem structure and function in the north Alaskan and Beringian Arctic and in the Chihuahuan Desert. Dr. Tweedie also has strong interests in education and outreach and the use of cyberinfrastructure to advance environmental science.



**Michelle Thatcher**  
**CEO, U.S. Green Chamber of Commerce**

With experience and passion for disruptive innovation, regenerative economy, purpose-driven enterprises, and social justice, Michelle is a leader in the green economy with her role as the CEO and Co-Founder of the U.S. Green Chamber of Commerce, the fastest growing sustainability-focused chamber in the United States. Utilizing her 25 years of non-profit conservation leadership experience, she is building a global and national advocacy, networking, and education platform for green businesses. On the international climate front, Michelle and her team have developed the Global Climate Pledge, an inspiring, timely and action-oriented approach to engage extensive populations globally in climate action. Michelle recently relocated to El Paso, and her advocacy focus for the committee includes green jobs, energy transition to renewables, and Paris Climate Accord NDCs.



**Kristina D. (Crabtree) Mena, MSPH, PhD,  
Dean of the Houston School of Public Health and Associate  
Professor and Program Head of Environmental and  
Occupation Health Sciences, El Paso Campus of University of  
Texas**

Dr. Mena earned a B.A. in Biology and English at Franklin College, a MSPH at the University of South Florida, a PhD in environmental microbiology and epidemiology at The University of Arizona, and completed a Post-Doctoral Fellowship at Kansas State University in the Food Animal Health & Management Center. Dr. Mena has 30 years of experience addressing the relationship between humans and the environment. Specifically, her work in quantitative risk assessment evaluates adverse impacts to develop mitigation strategies that promote human and environmental health. Her research has been applied in a range of environmental industries informing best protection practices for various venues including the International Space Station, as well as the 2016 Olympics in Rio. Dr. Mena recently completed second terms on both the USEPA Chartered Science Advisory Board and the USEPA Drinking Water Committee, serving under both Obama and Trump presidential administrations. Her roles evaluated the research and policy-making for environmental contaminants impacting air and water, including those associated with climate change.



**Javier Loera  
War Captain, Ysleta Del Sur Pueblo**

Hwislawede (War Captain) Loera was born and raised in Ysleta del Sur Pueblo (YDSP) and has served the Pueblo in this position for over ten years. The Hwislawede is a lifetime position and the second-highest spiritual leader and a guardian of the Tribe. Previously, he served as a Traditional Captain and was responsible for overseeing traditional ceremonies. As a member of the Ysleta del Sur Pueblo Tribal Council, he provides input and guidance for the strategic direction of the Tribe, fiscal oversight, and passes tribal legislation. Loera also serves on several YDSP Department committees. His concerns include the Pueblo's water rights, the preservation of traditional tribal lands, and the reintroduction of traditional farming. As a tribal leader, he aspires to improve the quality of life of all Tigua, create a positive and empowering tribal environment, and protect and preserve tribal lands for the next generations of Tigua.