

Speakers Biographies

DEAN FLOREZ is a former California Senate Majority Leader, current member of the California Air Resources Board (CARB), and CEO of Balance Public Relations & Strategic Solutions. Raised in California's Central Valley as the grandson of farm laborers, Florez has dedicated much of his public career to improving the health and safety of agricultural workers. During his tenure in the Legislature, he was a leading advocate for stronger heat illness prevention standards, convening landmark oversight hearings and pushing for enforceable protections including access to water, shade, rest periods, and worker training. He also championed legislation addressing pesticide exposure and farmworker transportation safety. Today, as climate change intensifies extreme heat across California, Florez continues to advocate for innovative policies that protect workers, strengthen employer accountability, and ensure that every Californian can work safely and return home healthy.

ISAAC S. NICHOLSON has been with the Department of Industrial Relations, Office of the Director – Legal Unit, for the last 11 years, focusing his legal practice on workers' compensation, privacy law, IP and California public works matters. Prior to coming to State service, Isaac represented individual clients in personal injury and workers' compensation claims, as well as labor unions and related ERISA benefit trust plans, and groups of employee plaintiffs in class-action litigation.

Isaac received his law degree from the University of California College of the Law, San Francisco (formerly Hastings), and his bachelor's degree from the New School for Social Research in New York City.

JACI CARUSO spent over 17 years in the Workers Compensation Field prior to joining Gallagher. She developed her experience beginning with claims management as a carrier representative, moving to representing self-insured clients, and then to managing a claims operation.

In 2007, Jaci started her career with Liberty Mutual, as a Claims Examiner quickly rising through the ranks. Jaci put into practice pro-active action plans to move cases towards timely and cost effective resolution.

In 2009 Jaci began her career with Specialty Risk Services/Sedgwick CMS, as a Claims Examiner and then promoted to a Team Leader. She guided a team of claims examiners in the daily management of workers' compensation claims. She functioned as a primary technical resource, assessing best course of action for case resolution and monitored caseloads to ensure team's performance, while handling a caseload of high exposure and complex cases.

In 2012, Jaci initiated her career with Keenan & Associates as the Assistant Claims Manager. She supervised the claims office and other designated personnel to including hiring and disciplinary action. She was responsible to ensure G&I's were met and responsible for service to clients.

Jaci is dedicated and a result oriented professional with a variety of experience in claim and client management. Jaci is a strategic thinker with strong organizational, negotiation, communication, and influencing skills.

CAROL CATTICH started with Gallagher in 2012. Before joining Gallagher in 2012, Carol spent over 13 years in the workers' compensation field. She began in claims as the employer, before moving into claims management as a carrier representative and then representing self-insured clients.

Carol started her career working in the corporate office of a national staffing agency as an operational manager. She evaluated all aspects of workers' compensation claims and associated risk management. Carol also organized quarterly claim reviews, assisted with communication between branch staff and claim examiners, developed and implemented safety programs and helped build training modules to provide state guidelines to field staff.

Carol has previously worked at Liberty Mutual, as a support supervisor, serving multiple locations throughout California. She started as a claims examiner and was quickly promoted to a senior claims examiner. Carol put into practice proactive action plans to move cases towards timely and cost effective resolution. In 2009, Carol began her career with Specialty Risk Services/Sedgwick CMS, as a claims examiner and then promoted to a team leader. She guided a team of claims examiners in the daily management of workers' compensation claims. She functioned as a primary technical resource, assessing best course of action for case resolution and monitored caseloads to ensure team's performance, while handling a caseload of high exposure and complex cases.

BASIL R. BESH, M.D. is board-certified by the American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery. He specializes in Hand, Wrist, and Elbow conditions, and is one of the few hand surgeons in Silicon Valley that has the Subspecialty Certificate in Surgery of the Hand.

He has over 15 years of experience focused on orthopedic hand conditions. He is a leader in the field of orthopedic surgery and holds various leadership positions within the orthopedic medical association community. In addition to his leadership contributions, he is an active member of several medical societies. His expertise and commitment to personalized patient care have earned him several prestigious awards and recognition including Vitals' Top 10 Hand Surgeons in California Award, East Bay's Best Doctors Award, Global Who's Who Top Doctors Award, four

Vitals' Patient Choice Awards, two Vitals' Compassionate Doctor Awards, and a Vitals' On-Time Physician Award.

CATHERINE MONTGOMERY is the co-founder and CEO at daisyBill and has spent her career on the cutting edge of medical billing technology. In 2005, she co-founded Clarity Medical Billing Resources with Sarah Moray. Clarity was a free trusted resource for all parties involved in workers' compensation. As the need for simplicity and transparency became more apparent, Catherine and Sarah transitioned out of Clarity to lead the way at daisyBill.

Catherine attended Vanderbilt University and graduated with a B.A. in Economics.

LISA ANNE HURT-FORSYTHE is the vice president, government affairs for the American Association of Payers, Administrators and Networks (AAPAN). Hurt-Forsythe has over 15 years of workers' compensation advocacy experience. Hurt-Forsythe represents AAPAN at the federal and state level to ensure that the diverse workers' compensation and commercial/government health association members are represented and protected by educating, advocating and advancing the legislative and regulatory goals set forth by the board of directors. Previously employed by Coventry, an Enlyte Company as director of government relations, she was responsible for providing national healthcare government relations and advocacy services specific to the workers' compensation and personal injury protection (PIP) auto sectors and was responsible for drafting bill text, public comments, talking points, and white papers in support of Coventry's strategic goals across all products.
