

Qualifications of Justin Cummings' in Support of his Reappointment to the California Coastal Commission

Letters can be sent to:

Speaker of the Assembly's Appointments Unit

Legislative Office Building

1020 N Street, Room 367

Sacramento, CA 95814

Attn: Appointments Unit, Dolores Duran-Flores

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The nomination deadline is April 18th, and Assembly Speaker Rivas has 30 days after that to make the appointment. Justin's current term ends on May 20, 2025.

Scientific Expertise/Commitment to Environmental Conservation and Coastal Protection:

- Justin Cummings is a dedicated environmental scientist with a Ph.D. in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from UC Santa Cruz, where he focused on invasive species management and tropical forest restoration.
- His research and work in sustainable fisheries, tropical forest restoration, and climate change make him exceptionally qualified to contribute to the Coastal Commission's mission of protecting and enhancing California's coastal resources.
- As co-founder of the UCSC Doris Duke Conservation Scholars Program, Justin has mentored and trained underrepresented students to become future leaders in environmental conservation, fostering a new and more diverse generation committed to coastal and environmental protection (conservationscholars.ucsc.edu).
- His leadership in the UCSC CITRIS Initiative for Drone Education and Research highlights his commitment to using cutting-edge technology for environmental monitoring and management (cider.sites.ucsc.edu)

Demonstrated Leadership and Policy Expertise:

- Justin has a proven track record of leadership at the city and county levels, serving as Mayor of Santa Cruz (2020) and currently as the Third District Supervisor for Santa Cruz County.
- His leadership during crises—including the CZU wildfires, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the movement for racial and social justice after the murder of George Floyd—demonstrates his ability to navigate complex challenges and bring communities together.
- His experience in public policy includes championing affordable housing, climate resilience, tenant protections, and environmental justice—key issues impacting coastal communities.
- Justin has played an instrumental role in policies that reduce carbon emissions, protect vulnerable communities, and advocate for sustainable development along the Central Coast.

- In December 2024, he was unanimously elected Chair of the California Coastal Commission, reflecting his peers' confidence in his leadership

Advocacy for Equity and Inclusion in Coastal Access:

- As the first African American man elected to both the Santa Cruz City Council and the County Board of Supervisors, Justin has been a trailblazer for equity and inclusion in local government.
- As the second African American chair in the history of the California Coastal Commission, Justin serves as an important model to young African Americans regarding, not only the importance of education, but as a statewide leader.
- He has consistently worked to ensure that all communities—especially historically marginalized groups—have equitable access to California's coast and its resources.
- His leadership aligns with the Coastal Commission's goals of ensuring public access, environmental justice, and protection of coastal resources for all Californians.
- Justin is currently one of three renters, one of three african americans, and the only environmental scientist on the Commission.

Proven Record on Coastal and Environmental Issues:

- As County Supervisor, Justin has prioritized coastal infrastructure, climate resilience, and sustainable development, ensuring that environmental protection remains central to local decision-making.
- He serves on key regional boards, where he works to advance environmental sustainability initiatives (pull list).
- He has been a strong advocate for disaster preparedness and climate adaptation efforts, including securing resources for wildfire recovery.
- His support for the North Coast Rail Trail, infrastructure investments, and habitat restoration initiatives reflects his commitment to balancing responsible development with environmental preservation.

A Visionary for Coastal Resilience and Sustainable Growth:

- Justin has a deep understanding of the unique challenges facing coastal communities, including sea level rise, habitat degradation, and equitable public access.
- His approach emphasizes science-based decision-making, stakeholder engagement, and long-term sustainability to protect California's coastal environment.
- He has been a leading voice for investments in renewable energy, green infrastructure, and conservation strategies that ensure California's coastal regions remain resilient for future generations.

Conclusion: Dr. Justin Cummings' reappointment to the California Coastal Commission ensures that the Central Coast has a strong advocate for environmental protection, equity in coastal access, and sustainable coastal development. His scientific expertise, leadership

experience, and deep commitment to conservation make him an invaluable asset to the Commission, to safeguard California's coastline for all residents and future generations.