

Bruce Riordan ([00:02](#)):

Welcome to the Berkeley Climate Change Network podcast. I'm Bruce Riordan, I'm the director of the BCCN. Today on our podcast, we're going to spotlight a very exciting new project going on all around the June and November elections and climate, energy and environmental issues. And our special guest for the podcast is Louise Bedsworth. Louise is the executive director of the Center for Law Energy and the Environment Clee at uc, Berkeley. So welcome, Louise.

Louise Bedsworth ([00:39](#)):

Thanks. Good to see you Bruce.

Bruce Riordan ([00:41](#)):

So tell us before we talk about this new and very cool project for the election, do a brief outline for the audience about CLEE and who you are.

Louise Bedsworth ([00:50](#)):

Great. So CLEE is a research center located within Berkeley Law, but we take a very interdisciplinary approach focused on basically how do we take our climate, energy and environmental policies and make them work on the ground. So we do that through legal analysis, looking at institutional and governance structures, very often partnering with government, with business, and with other stakeholders to really figure out how we can make policy work.

Bruce Riordan ([01:19](#)):

Maybe mention a few, we're going to talk about this project, about the election, but maybe mention a couple of the other current exciting projects that you're working on.

Louise Bedsworth ([01:28](#)):

So CLEE has quite a portfolio of projects. We are working quite a bit on reducing methane emissions and so we facilitate collaboration across subnational governments, so that's cities and states around the world committed to reducing methane emission reductions. We've been doing a lot of work on the electric vehicle transition and really helping local governments in particular think about how to plan for the deployment of electric vehicle infrastructure. And that's included both building frameworks and tools and templates and also a mapping platform that local governments can use to help figure out where to locate EV infrastructure and do that in partnership with communities. We have a robust water program that has been thinking about how to reform California's water rights system, how do we implement projects like groundwater recharge, really help build resilience in our water system. And then we also house the California China Climate Institute, which helps to facilitate collaboration between California and China on a number of topics related to climate change. And so through that we do high level dialogue, research, exchange visits to really keep progress moving forward between these two huge economies.

Bruce Riordan ([02:50](#)):

So you're located on the campus at Berkeley, but a lot of your work is really impacting off campus government and others. Yes.

Louise Bedsworth ([03:00](#)):

Yes. That's a huge focus of what we do and I think there's a couple of through lines in our work, but I think one thing if you ask people at CLEE is that we work in a very engaged and partnered way. So we work quite a bit with the state of California and officials in the governor's offices and in-state agencies, but we work also very regularly with businesses. We partner with nonprofit and community-based organizations in our work. And so really we do try to serve as a bridge between campus and the policy world.

Bruce Riordan ([03:35](#)):

Great. Well let's turn to this fairly new project started in the fall with the California environmental voters as a partner and others on climate and energy and the environment and this election, this very important gubernatorial election and other offices as well coming up this year in 2026. So tell us a little bit about this new project.

Louise Bedsworth ([04:03](#)):

So California will be electing a new governor in November of 2026, and California has just come off, it's had a legacy right now of three governors going back, Schwarzenegger, governor Brown, governor Newsom, who have been incredibly strong and leading on climate, energy and environmental policies. And I think this is a critical moment that California continue their its momentum and making progress on those policies and really on the implementation of those policies. And so with this election coming up, we wanted to one, make sure that climate is part of the conversation, that the gubernatorial candidates are aware of what California has done, aware of what California still has to do, and that is part of the election. I think that's become even more critical over the last 12 plus months where we have seen very direct attacks on subnational and California in particular state authority to address energy environmental issues. So that is one piece we're seeing issues around affordability rising up within the California legislature and in other venues. And so there are a lot of challenges right now to California's leadership. And so I think we really wanted to address those head on and then really think about what do we want candidates to know about what's out there, what California can do and what's left to be done.

Bruce Riordan ([05:40](#)):

Great. And what are some of the different ways you're going to engage, we'll say with the candidates, you've got some papers that are up on the website, you have a forum. What are the ways you're thinking of doing this?

Louise Bedsworth ([05:55](#)):

So we sort of laid out four components to the work. One is the development of a set of backgrounders or briefing documents where we have tackled to date six topics. We will ultimately I think have about nine or 10 backgrounders, but they take a given topic. So for instance, we have one on California environmental leadership, what do we mean by that? What has that looked like? And that kind of is a grounding piece for the whole series. Another one on transportation. And we can just explain what are the big issues in transportation, what are the trends, where has California been going, and then what are some of the major challenges. So we've done that across a series of topics.

Bruce Riordan ([06:41](#)):

And were those done by CLEE staff or were they done by people across the campus or

Louise Bedsworth ([06:47](#)):

They were primarily done by CLEE, but in many cases we also did partner. So for instance, we have been working with the Turner Center on Housing Innovation on one on housing and climate issues. We worked with the Climate and Wildfire Institute, which is a nonprofit organization that's focused on bridging between academia and policy on climate and wildfire issues. We worked with them on our wildfire briefing. We have others that we've brought in as well to both review them and provide input on them. So we've really tried to make it collaborative. So we developed those backgrounders, they're considered also living documents, so we will update them as needed, but we have placed them up on a website, [climate.vote.org](#), which we built to sort of house all this information in one place. We will then with those briefing documents over this next month, we will be reaching out to every candidate running for governor in California and invite them, send them the briefing materials and invite them in for briefings with folks on our team or others on given topics if they have interest.

([07:59](#)):

We also, last month, at the end of January, co-hosted a forum that four candidates participated in. We partnered with California Environmental Voters and they extended invitations to the top six polling candidates running for governor. And four accepted the invitation and we hosted a forum which I co-moderated with a climate journalist named Sammy Roth, where we went through a series of questions with the four candidates. And then finally we will be developing over the summer a document that really is a roadmap document for the incoming governor to really lay out what these key issues are, what are the things California needs to be doing, what can the governor be doing to continue California's forward momentum on climate energy and the environment.

Bruce Riordan ([08:52](#)):

So the papers, and they're up at you said [@climatevote.org](#) and then the forum that you had with four of the six. And I know from watching it, you invited the other two to send in answers to some of the questions. And then this roadmap, are there other things or that's a big campaign?

Louise Bedsworth ([09:15](#)):

Yeah, I mean that's a lot. We'll be continuing to put other resources on our website. So there are a lot of people producing information to support candidate and voter education around the election. So we'll continue to put that information up. We have links there to every candidate's website and so we'll continue to really build that out. And I think we would love to see more opportunities to bring candidates in for conversation or dialogue to campus or in partnership with other organizations. So we will sort of see as those opportunities come along or if we can create them, we will. But yeah, those are the major components of the project.

Bruce Riordan ([10:01](#)):

So if somewhere out there in podcast land has got an idea for something, a forum or whatever, they could contact you or contact others on the project?

Louise Bedsworth ([10:14](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. They could reach out to us at CLEE. And that's also feedback ideas and we know there are a number of groups that are working on these topics and some are covering different areas. And so I think to the extent we can help also make connections with some of those other efforts, we certainly can.

Bruce Riordan ([10:37](#)):

Great. But climatevote.org would be the main website where you're pushing all the info. I did watch the recording. I was curious because you and Sammy Roth were the interviewers, what you thought of the candidates in terms of their responses around climate and climate issues. What were some of your takeaways from that?

Louise Bedsworth ([11:03](#)):

Yeah, I mean I thought it was really interesting to work with Sammy and to build out the questions and sort of figure out what we had 90 minutes, not even quite, there's a lot to cover. So trying to figure out what to cover. One thing we really tried to focus on were questions where we thought we could start to see some differences among the candidates. How do we actually start digging in on some issues where we're not just going to have everyone say yes or everyone say no? And so I do think what was interesting is we did see differences across the candidates. I think there were a lot of differences around where should we be driving solutions from. There was discussion of statewide approaches and then there was discussion of much more bottom up community led approaches. So I think that was interesting. I think there was some general agreement, I thought they all said they don't support the Delta tunnels pretty emphatically and very quickly, which I also thought that was interesting. I think we really tried to dig in on how are we going to continue the progress? How are we going to pay for this? What's that going to look like? And I think you saw some different ideas there. I think none quite as concrete as we probably are going to need, recognizing those are really hard questions. So I thought it was, there was a lot more space between the candidates than I thought we might otherwise see. So I thought that was really good.

Bruce Riordan ([12:39](#)):

Looking forward, you're going to try to get some of the other candidates also involved. The couple that weren't were invited but weren't there and all. And you're going to do, I think you said some invitations for people to come in. Is that one-on-one kind of with all of you?

Louise Bedsworth ([12:59](#)):

Yeah, so that would be one-on-one. So essentially what we'll do is we will extend an invitation, we'll attach the briefings and just basically say we're a resource and we're here to answer questions and we will send those to everybody who's running obviously regardless of party. The intention here is really to try to engage with all candidates in whatever way they feel comfortable. So if that's just reviewing some documents that we send, that's great. If they want to come in and maybe they want to sit down and talk to someone about water, we could pull some people together to really dig in on those issues. I mean, these are incredibly complex topics. California is the fourth largest economy in the world, and so no one knows all of these things. And so I think to the extent we can be a resource on some of these really critical issues, that's what we want to be.

Bruce Riordan ([13:53](#)):

That's great. Just one final question, and you hinted at this a minute ago, we're focused and your project is focused on California and on the California gubernatorial election in particular, June primary and November final, but looming over all of this and engaged with all of that are the federal actions or non-action and all. How much do you think looking forward over the next what we're in February, so the next eight, nine months on this project, are you going to focus on, let's hear from the candidates and let's

work with the candidates on what they're going to do in California or how they're going to deal with the federal government? Or is it obviously both?

Louise Bedsworth ([14:47](#)):

I think in many cases it's very hard to separate them. So obviously what California does on water in many cases is closely entwined with other states and with the federal government, likewise, transportation, a key pillar of California's transportation policy has been basically the electrification of the vehicle fleet driving towards zero emission vehicles. And we've seen Congress and the federal government come after California's authority to do that. And specifically around our most recent set of regulations. So there are topics like that that are just naturally interconnected. I think there are others where there's maybe more that you can do just within California and I think some or in with a couple of other states. And I think about electricity, affordability as a topic that we have a briefing on and is obviously a really important topic for people right now. There is a lot underneath the control of state authorities, whether the governor or the California Public Utilities Commission, California Energy Commission and others to start working on that topic. And so I think we want to both highlight what are the tools that you have, where are the places, what are the alternative tools you have, maybe where the federal government is standing in the way, and then where do we need to really work on that, where we have that confrontation? How is that going to carry forward and why is it important that we continue to fight for California's authority under the law to do certain actions?

Bruce Riordan ([16:25](#)):

Great. Well thank you Louise. And let's do the website one more time. Climatevote.org is where the papers are, news about the project and other forums, the various things going forward, and also how people who could reach out to you with ideas or questions further.

Louise Bedsworth ([16:45](#)):

Yes, that's right.

Bruce Riordan ([16:47](#)):

So thank you all for listening. I'm Bruce Riordan with the BCCN. We will see you next time on the BCCN Podcast.