



## Northern California Chapter Earthquake Engineering Research Institute

### Candidate Biographies & Statements 2026 Election

#### Candidate for President:



#### **Sarah Atkinson**

Sarah Atkinson is the Senior Policy Manager for Hazard Resilience at SPUR, a public policy and planning non-profit that works on urban issues across the Bay Area and California. Sarah leads SPUR’s research, advocacy, and education efforts to strengthen the Bay Area’s ability to prepare for and recover from climate and natural hazards—such as earthquakes, sea level rise, flooding, and wildfires. Sarah is currently an EERI Northern California Board member, and is an active member of EERI’s California Legislative Subcommittee. Sarah holds a Master’s in City and Regional Planning and a B.A. in Environmental Sciences from UC Berkeley.

#### Candidate for Secretary:



#### **Mohamed Talaat**

Mohamed Talaat is a technical director with Simpson Gumpertz & Heger in Oakland, CA and an ASCE fellow with over 20 years of project experience. His practice focuses on structural analysis and probabilistic performance assessment for energy facilities and critical infrastructure, which exposed him to earthquake engineering challenges in five continents. He is routinely engaged as a consultant or volunteer in applied research projects focused on enhancing seismic safety and assessment methods. He currently co-leads the seismic ground motion chapter of the in-progress ASCE-92 Standard for performance-based seismic analysis and design of safety-related nuclear facilities and is a contributor to national standards, technical guidance documents, and international publications by the ASCE, ACI, DOE, FEMA, EPRI, and the IAEA. Dr. Talaat maintains an active interest in teaching and mentorship, having taught undergraduate and upper division courses as a lecturer at UC Berkeley and Cairo University (Egypt), teaching Reinforced Concrete Design at Santa Clara

University in Fall 2026, and serving on the EERI Student Awards Committee from 2019 to 2021. I am excited to join the Board to advocate, catalyse, and open doors for effective engagement and integration between academic curricula and research, policy development, and evolving industry landscapes.

### Candidates for Director At Large:



#### **Laurel Mathews**

Laurel Mathews is dedicated to advancing seismic resilience through policy innovation, cross-sector collaboration, and practical implementation. As Technical Services Program Manager in San Francisco’s Department of Building Inspection, she leads implementation of three building safety programs: A screening and voluntary retrofit program for concrete and tilt-up buildings, a façade maintenance and inspection program, and a post-earthquake building occupancy resumption program. In her last role, she managed the City’s Earthquake Safety Implementation Program (ESIP) and Lifelines Council. Her prior experience includes urban planning for several California cities and stakeholder engagement for FEMA Region IX as a consultant. She holds a Master’s in City Planning from UC Berkeley. As a Northern California EERI Board Member, Laurel aims to advocate for implementable earthquake resilience policies and foster connections among members through events that engage a wide range of stakeholders.



#### **Luis Ceferino**

Luis Ceferino is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at the University of California, Berkeley, where he leads the Disaster Risk Analysis Lab. His research focuses on earthquake engineering and multi-hazard risk modeling, with an emphasis on structural performance, infrastructure interdependencies (e.g., buildings, transportation, power), and translating probabilistic methods into decision-support tools for practice. He collaborates with public agencies, utilities, and engineering partners to improve community resilience and reduce earthquake injuries. I would like to serve on the EERI Northern California Chapter Board to contribute to a strong Bay Area earthquake-engineering community and help connect research, practice, and public-facing impact through chapter programming and partnerships.



#### **Bahareh Heidarzadeh**

Bahareh Heidarzadeh, PhD, PE, is an Associate Engineer at ENGEO with over a decade of experience in geotechnical and earthquake engineering for the design and retrofit of complex projects, including tall buildings, hospitals, schools, power transmission infrastructure, and waterfront developments in California, New Zealand, and South Korea. She earned her Ph.D. in Geotechnical Earthquake Engineering from UCLA, where her research focused on Soil-Structure Interaction (SSI) and its impact on seismic stress demands in foundation soils. Bahareh’s technical expertise includes advanced seismic hazard analysis—both ergodic and non-ergodic—ground motion studies, site response, liquefaction evaluation, and foundation design, and she

has been instrumental in implementing non-ergodic methodologies in professional practice at ENGEO. She seeks to serve on the EERI Northern California Chapter Board to bridge the gap between academic research and engineering practice by promoting technical knowledge exchange, organizing seminars on emerging seismic topics, and mentoring young professionals to advance resilient, risk-informed seismic design throughout Northern California.



### **Saeed Fathali**

Saeed Fathali, Ph.D., is a licensed Structural Engineer (SE) and seismic resilience specialist in Northern California. After doctoral work at the University at Buffalo Earthquake Simulation Lab and earning his Ph.D. in earthquake structural engineering, he began at Rutherford + Chekene, held leadership roles at WSP in San Francisco, and has since worked across consulting, construction and manufacturing, and risk and resilience assessment. He recently founded a structural engineering and testing practice that is preparing for launch. Saeed has served on SEAONC technical committees, is a member of the ASCE 7-28 Technical Committees on Functional Recovery and Nonstructural Components, and has served on the ICC-ES Board of Managers. As a candidate for the EERI Northern California Chapter Board, he aims to support the chapter's role in EERI's 2026 to 2030 strategic planning by attracting and retaining talent, accelerating practical technology adoption, and strengthening engineer-legislator partnerships that deliver implementable resilience policy.



### **Katerina Ziotopoulou**

Katerina Ziotopoulou is a Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering at the University of California, Davis, and a licensed Professional Engineer in the State of California. She received her PhD and MS degrees in Civil Engineering from UC Davis and her five-year diploma in Civil Engineering from the National Technical University of Athens, Greece. Dr. Ziotopoulou serves on the Board of Governors of the ASCE Geo-Institute and is a faculty advisor to the UC Davis Center for Geotechnical Modeling, part of the NHERI network. Her research interests lie in liquefaction and cyclic softening, their mitigation, the seismic performance of earth structures, and soil-structure interaction, informed by numerical modeling and experimental data. Her research has been supported by federal, state, and industry sponsors, and has influenced both research and engineering practice through widely adopted constitutive models and validation frameworks. She is the recipient of multiple honors, including the ASCE Casagrande Award and Norman Medal, the ISSMGE Young Researcher Award, and the USUCGER Early Career Educator Award. Dr. Ziotopoulou is eager to serve on the EERI Northern California Chapter Board to contribute leadership experience from national professional service, strengthen connections between research and practice, and support activities that advance seismic resilience across Northern California.