

Georgian News from the West Coast: Consulate General of Georgia in San Francisco by Fall 2020

Former Georgian Association President Elisso Kvitashvili recently chatted with Levan Beridze about the opening of the first Consulate General of Georgia in San Francisco, California. Levan, previously served as Economic Counselor at the Georgian Embassy in Washington D.C. for four years. He was appointed the Consul General of Georgia in San Francisco in March 2020 and arrived in San Francisco shortly thereafter.

Over coffee in San Francisco's Italian community of North Beach, the Consul General indicated that the Consulate's geographic responsibilities cover every US state west of Iowa and Missouri. San Francisco was chosen due to the relatively large number of Georgians in the Bay Area, estimated at approximately 1200 - 1500 individuals, and certainly for its enormous endowment to the innovation ecosystem in the United States and in the world. Although the Consulate is not yet formally open, Levan has focused on establishing working contact with San Francisco city authorities and completing the staffing of the Consulate. He expects the Consulate to be fully operational by fall 2020.



Levan Beridze, Consul General of Georgia in San Francisco

In our discussions Levan stated that the Consulate General of Georgia in San Francisco is committed to serve the purpose of protection and promotion of Georgian interests in the Western United States. It will work to enhance the partnership between Georgia and the states of the Western U.S. through active engagement with the Georgian diaspora, private and public organizations, and the local governments. The Consulate aims to further strengthen economic, educational and cultural ties between Georgia and the Western States by intensifying Business-2-Business, people-to-people and Business-2-Government interactions, including exchange of knowledge, experience and best practices. In addition to the essential services that the Consulate will provide in the form of administration of passport and citizenship applications, identification cards, travel documents and many more services, it will dedicate its efforts to contribute to the development of the innovation and technology ecosystem in Georgia by providing closer connections with appropriate companies in California and the other 18 states, including Alaska and Hawaii in its area of responsibility.

Given COVID-19 and continued restrictions in San Francisco and the Bay Area in general, several planned events are on hold. The Gvino Forum to be held in November at the University of California - Davis with the America-Georgia Business Council may have to be delayed as well.

The Consulate can be contacted on the following address:

Consulate General of Georgia in San Francisco

930 Montgomery Street, Unit 301

San Francisco, CA 94133

Email: ConsulateSF@mfa.gov.ge

Phone: +1 (415) 528-3706 (*Not yet active. Will be activated as the Consulate opens*).

Website: <http://sanfrancisco.mfa.gov.ge> (*Under construction*)

The Georgian Association in the US welcomes Levan and his new team to the Bay Area. Board members Zaza Pachulia, David Kharadze and Elisso Kvitashvili hope to host an event when permitted to celebrate the arrival of an official presence of Georgia to this area. For his part, the new Consul General says that the Consulate certainly looks forward to welcoming Georgian citizens, members of the diaspora and friends of Georgia to the Consulate General in San Francisco once it opens. But in the meantime, he is confident that with the motivation and resilience of our communities here, we will overcome the challenges brought by the pandemic and continue improving the lives of people in both of our countries.