

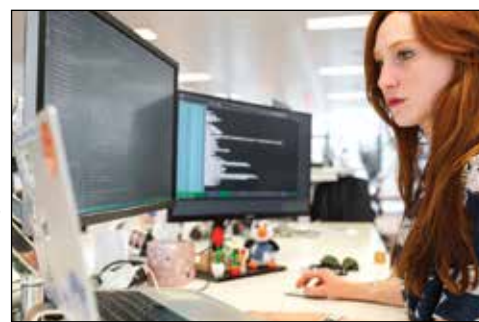


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Our Shrinking State

California's population shrank in 2020, but don't call it an exodus?



See you later! According to new data released by the state Department of Finance, California's population declined by 182,083 people in 2020. MPG file photo

By Ben Christopher, CALMatters.org

The COVID-19 pandemic has done what more than a century of past plagues, recessions, crime waves, droughts and earthquakes couldn't.

It shrank California's population. According to new data released today by the state Department of Finance, California's population

declined by 182,083 people in 2020. That's the first time that annual statistic has come with a minus sign since 1900, when the department began collecting these estimates.

The new report adds a disappointing coda to what has already been a dour few weeks for California's demographers. Last week, the U.S. Census Bureau put out its decade-long population counts showing that

though the state grew between 2010 and 2020, it did so at a slower rate than the rest of the country.

Hence, that other bummer of a historical first: The state is losing a congressional seat.

The new population estimate also provides more fodder for Gov. Gavin Newsom's critics who took last week's Census announcement

Continued on page 10

Wreathed in Honor

Story and photo by Susan Maxwell Skinner

CARMICHAEL, CA (MPG) - Veteran Sacrifice was recalled during a visit by the Wreaths Across America exhibition to Carmichael Elks last week. Maine-based, WAA sponsors a 50-foot trailer museum that recently toured Alabama, Texas, Arizona and a dozen California venues. More than 100 people inspected the exhibit during its one-day Carmichael stopover.

Volunteers from the Daughters of the American Revolution organization co-sponsored and hosted the California tour. Exhibit venues have included San Diego, Bakersfield, Grass Valley, Carmichael, Willows and Concord.

The mobile theater screens presentations about the organization's 29-year campaign to provide wreaths for veteran graves. Starting at Arlington National Cemetery in 1992, ceremonies have expanded to more than 2100 US and overseas locations. Through public



Daughters of the American Revolution organization partnered with Wreaths Across America in hosting visits to many California centers. California and Nevada DAR chapters provided volunteers for the Carmichael stopover.

subscription, millions of tributes are placed on graves every year. The nonprofit also encourages patriotism through education and by honoring those who sacrificed in times of war or crisis.

A spotlight was shone on Vietnam War service during recent stopovers. Many veterans who visited the exhibit in Carmichael were "pinned" with bronze lapel badges. Federally

sponsored, this award program serves partly to mitigate harsh treatment suffered by returning warriors in the 1970s. It honors Vietnam service – and families bereaved by the conflict – on behalf of a grateful nation. WAA among agencies distributing the badges as "a lasting memento of the nation's thanks."

To learn about WAA or to sponsor a wreath, go to

www.wreathscrossamerica.org

Living veterans of active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces from 1955 to 1975 – regardless of location – are eligible to receive commemorative Vietnam pins. To learn about this program, visit www.vietnamwar50th.com or contact Daughters of the American Revolution at celeste.cox@california-dar.org

Supervisors Approve Law Enforcement Review Commission

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - The Sacramento County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday unanimously approved the resolution for the formation of a Community Review Commission that will work with Sacramento County's Inspector General Mark Evenson to improve accountability related to investigations of the Sacramento County Sheriff's Department.

"This commission is the result of extensive public input and careful work by County staff," said Supervisor Patrick Kennedy, Second District, who brought the item forward. "The commission will improve public transparency and will offer the public greater interaction and communication with the Office of the Inspector General."

The approval of the resolution comes after two previous Board items this year related to the establishment of a commission. At its Feb. 9 meeting, the Board heard from members of the public and discussed a draft proposed framework for the creation of a Community Review Commission. At its March 23 meeting, the Board received additional input on a revised draft framework with input from multiple community organizations and interested parties and directed staff to return with a resolution establishing the Commission.

The volunteer commission will have 11 members. Two will be appointed by each member of the Board of Supervisors and one will be a member of county staff appointed by the County Executive.

The rules of conduct for the commission, including how the power of subpoena is administered, will be developed by Evenson and two members of the Board of Supervisors, with guidance from County Counsel. Finalized rules and regulations will be presented to the Community Review Commission for approval.

Commission members are required to undergo orientation on law enforcement policies and procedures prior to serving. ★

WE SUPPORT OUR MILITARY

What Happens to the Home and Economy When Women Leave the Workforce?

Commentary
by Andi Simon

The pandemic-induced recession forced many women to drop out of the workforce, with research showing they were much more likely than men to give up jobs so they could take care of children when schools went online.

The consequences of these decisions may go beyond each individual, though.

“They could have large repercussions for the economy, the home, and society as a whole, says Andi Simon (www.andi-simon.com), a corporate anthropologist, founder of Simon Associates Management Consultants, and author of the upcoming book *Rethink: Smashing the Myths of Women in Business*.

Some ramifications of this 2020 exodus from the workforce for women could include:

A drop in consumer spending. When one spouse loses a job, whatever the reason might be, it means an immediate and sudden drop in income for that household. “The impact on household earnings will lead to reduced spending,” Simon says. “That will have ripple effects throughout the economy.”

An impact on women’s careers and advancement. Eventually, many of these women will no doubt go back to work, but how



“The impact on household earnings will lead to reduced spending,” Simon says. “That will have ripple effects throughout the economy.” Image by GoogleRankFaster from Pixabay

well they will be able to just pick up their careers where they left off could be another matter, Simon says. “Will they have lost ground in the line for promotions to men who didn’t take any time away from work?” she asks. “Also, depending on how slow the recovery is, rejoining the workforce might not be that quick and easy.”

A reduction in demand for family-related industries. When both spouses work outside the home, couples often need to make use of services that developed or grew because one adult – usually the woman

– wasn’t around to take care of certain household duties. For households where a mother is now back in the home, that has changed. “They no longer need to pay someone for childcare services,” Simon says. “In addition, the need for house-cleaning services is likely to drop.”

Changes to retail markets. A woman who stays home with the kids has different needs than a woman who commutes to an office each day, and those differences could be reflected in the world of retail, Simon says. Just as an example, there could be a drop in demand for

makeup. Sales of business attire for women may plummet – or at least take a hit as more casual, comfortable clothes become more important wardrobe necessities. Restaurants could continue to struggle as people eat out less and cook at home more.

Entrepreneurial urges could shift to home businesses. Some women could still keep their career mindsets and try to establish their own businesses run from their homes, Simons says. But she cautions that there are questions about just what those businesses might be since some potential areas – such as marketing,

consulting, and business coaching – have seen a downshift in demand for their services. “That leaves you to wonder just how viable setting up a home business might be,” Simon says.

Despite all those concerns, some good can come out of this period as well for women who want a better life both personally and professionally, Simon says.

“If you’ve not been satisfied with your career and your life, this could be an opportunity to rethink and rewrite your personal story,” she says. “You need to imagine what you want to

become, focus on how to make that possible, and then begin to take steps to make it happen.”

About Andi Simon
Andi Simon, Ph.D. (www.andisimon.com), author of the upcoming book *Rethink: Smashing the Myths of Women in Business*, is a corporate anthropologist and founder of Simon Associates Management Consultants (www.simonassociates.net). A trained practitioner in Blue Ocean Strategy®, Simon has conducted several hundred workshops and speeches on the topic as well as consulted with a wide range of clients across the globe. She also is the author of the award-winning book *On the Brink: A Fresh Lens to Take Your Business to New Heights*. Simon has a successful podcast, *On the Brink with Andi Simon*, that has more than 125,000 monthly listeners, and is ranked among the top 20 Futurist podcasts and top 200 business podcasts. In addition, *Global Advisory Experts* named Simons’ firm the Corporate Anthropology Consultancy Firm of the Year in New York – 2020. She has been on *Good Morning, America* and *Bloomberg*, and is widely published in the *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Forbes*, *Business Week*, *Becker’s*, and *American Banker*, among others. She has been a guest blogger for *Forbes.com*, *Huffington Post*, and *Fierce Health*. ★

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A New Chapter for Temple Kukuri



Sawako Ama and Steve Bash, founders of Temple Kukuri, consider a new beginning as they look for a new space in Fair Oaks to focus on tea ceremonies, massage services, and holistic living. Photo by Shaunna Boyd

Story and photos by Shaunna Boyd

FAIR OAKS, CA (MPG) - Temple Kukuri is a place of connection. In Japanese, the word kukuri means to tie or bond, and that is the mission of the non-profit and non-denominational holistic living sanctuary, which offers traditional Japanese tea ceremonies, meditation, breathwork, drum and dance circles, massage therapy, cooking classes, and more. But when the COVID-19 pandemic forced shutdowns last year, Temple Kukuri lost the ability to create that space for connection.

Founder and Executive Director Sawako Ama explained that Temple Kukuri is centered on bringing people together. She said, "Everything we do here is so connected to people gathering in person." Despite the challenges of the pandemic, Ama was determined to find ways to continue those connections: "As long as we have the urge of connection, we always find a way." Temple Kukuri shifted some of their offerings online, such as breathwork and cooking classes. Whether in

on May 30 from 12:00 PM to 4:00 PM. The outdoor patio will be open for dining and desserts will be served. Temple Kukuri Co-founder Steve Bash explained that food is central to the idea of holistic living, and their bento box ingredients are sourced from local organic farmers. Ama said, "Food gets us closer to nature because we're taking nature into our body." Although many people take the act of eating for granted, Ama described it as "a very sacred ritual."

As restrictions are now lifting, Ama reflected on the impact of the pandemic, noting that many people felt a deep sense of loss as they were disconnected from their support systems. For the Temple itself, Ama said the worst aspect has been "the stress of the unknown" - not knowing if or when they would be able to reopen. Financial concerns also caused significant stress: shutdowns led to loss of income from Ama's massage therapy services as well as loss of income they received from other tenants offering classes and services in the space.

Temple Kukuri's landlords allowed them to remain in the space during the shutdown while paying half the rent, which they paid out of pocket since no income was coming in. But that help will run out at the end of July - the owners are looking for new tenants if Temple Kukuri isn't able to resume paying the full rental cost. But even as restrictions are lifted and the Temple's services begin to reopen, they won't be able to afford the rent on their own. Bash said they are looking for an additional tenant who aligns with their values to share the cost for the space. If they don't find one, Temple Kukuri will be looking for a new home.

Although it would be disappointing to leave the space where Temple Kukuri began four years ago, Ama and Bash are looking at the possible move as an opportunity to refocus, and they are optimistic about a new chapter for Temple Kukuri. They are hoping to find a smaller space where they can focus on the tea ceremonies, massage services, and teaching holistic living practices. They plan to remain in Fair Oaks because they are very connected to the community here. If they can find a place where the owners share their vision and values, Bash said it will truly become a community space, a safe haven where people can find the support they need.

The mission of Temple Kukuri has always been to create a space where "people can open up their hearts to find joy," said Ama. She touched her heart, saying, "Our temple is always here. ... We can carry our mission still without the place."

Temple Kukuri is currently located at 10723 Fair Oaks Blvd. Visit <https://www.templekukuri.org/> to learn more or to contact Temple Kukuri. ★

Out & About with MaryAnne Povey



"OV" The Place to be!

ORANGEVALE, CA (MPG) - You know how it's good to be at the right place at the right time? Well, if you live or work in Orangevale you are at a great place at the right time! Orangevale is a rural gem in Sacramento County thriving in both community and business too! With a population of about 35k strong, this community has that small town feel that you can put your arms around and has a big heart too. It's the best of both worlds with an agricultural lifestyle and minutes to city living.

"Orangevale is a unique community with rural roots that make it a special place to live, work, and raise a family," said Orangevale Chamber President Brad Squires. "Over the past five years there has been a 'Renaissance' of rural living and a renewed interest in growing your own or homesteading."

Orangevale, once jokingly known as a "cow town" now ironically fits the profile of rural living made popular by HGTV. Barn weddings, farm to fork dining, and raising animals on small farms are all things Orangevale.

Over the past five years and even through the pandemic, Orangevale has not only survived but thrived! While many communities

suffered the loss of businesses and increased commercial vacancies, Orangevale stood strong, promoted, and even filled vacancies bringing new businesses to town. So, what's the secret that makes Orangevale so special? Without a doubt, its people!

"Orangevale has captured the attention of the entire region. Their effort to promote enhanced community development, placemaking, and support for local businesses is an amazing success!" said County Supervisor Sue Frost.

Most notably, a grant for commercial property improvements got the thumbs up thanks to the persistent efforts of our community leaders in "GLOVE" (The Greenback Lane Orangevale Envision).

"We recently received \$7 million in funding from the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) for road and infrastructure improvements along the Greenback commercial corridor and that would not have happened without a strong collaborative effort with Orangevale leadership. Hats off to Orangevale!" said Supervisor Frost.

Other exciting rural happenings in Orangevale

include: The Grange Community Garden where you can lease a plot of land and garden with your neighbors; The launch of the Orangevale Farm and Garden Club! They meet monthly to focus on education and networking on farming and gardening; Also new and exciting is the Food Bank Farm, a unique program to grow fresh fruits and vegetables for Food Bank distribution; Even the popular Thursday night Farmers Market, has improved its operations, expanding its location to the Orangevale Community Center with more space, vendors, and entertainment too.

On the business front, Orangevale has a growing and vibrant Chamber of Commerce with a growing membership, a healthy calendar of events, regular ribbon cutting ceremonies, and business growth. If the re-launch of Food Truck Fridays are any indication of what's ahead, things will be very good.

"This last year has proven that our community is very resilient," said Squires. "If anything, we know that we can stick together through tough times. We are already looking forward to great things." ★



The traditional Japanese tea ceremony celebrates our connection to nature. Temple Kukuri hosted a pop-up tea ceremony under the cherry blossoms in April. Photo provided by Sawako Ama.

person or online, Ama said, "You can create a deeper connection when there is intention."


One of the central elements of Temple Kukuri is the traditional tea ceremony, which celebrates nature and our connection to the natural world. The ceremony is very intimate, and the experience is not easily translated online. So, Temple Kukuri hosted an outdoor pop-up tea ceremony under the cherry blossoms in Belle Cooledge Park in April.


To maintain those important connections with its members during the pandemic, Temple Kukuri held Bento Box To Go fundraisers and continued their weekly Morning Meditation walk to the river, with just a few members meeting each Tuesday to walk together to the bluffs.


Temple Kukuri's next fundraiser is a Plant Sale and Bento Box To Go event

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Seven Easy Ways to Boost Your Heart Health

By Andrea Sandoval,
Sacramento County News

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death among men and women in the United States. Stress, high blood pressure, obesity, diabetes, high cholesterol levels, smoking and congenital heart defects are all major factors. Heart disease is preventable for most people if you stick to a healthy lifestyle. This May, let's get your heart in the best shape by following seven easy tips.

When you eat, make it count. A healthy diet and lifestyle are your best weapons to fight cardiovascular disease. Start adding healthier items to your diet to create nutrient-dense, heart-healthy meals and decrease processed or "empty" calories, nutrient-poor foods and beverages. Eat a variety of nutritious foods from all the food groups. **Just the right amount.** When eating, turn off the TV, sit down and enjoy your meal. Eating while working, watching TV or on your phone can cause you to overeat. Obesity is one of the most common risk factors leading to chronic diseases such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke and high blood pressure. The good news is that each of us can take steps to reach and/or maintain a healthy weight. **Spice it up.** Ramp up the flavor of foods with herbs and spices instead of blood-pressure-boosting salt and choose foods that contain less sodium. **You are sweet enough.** Sugar-sweetened beverages are the main source of added sugars in people's diets. These beverages contribute calories, but provide no nutrients. When you're thirsty choose water or other no calories beverage such as unsweetened tea or fruit-infused water. If you do choose a sweetened beverage



Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death among men and women in the United States. Image by Gerd Altmann from Pixabay

make sure you read the label, added sugar is now on the nutrition facts label. Added sugars should not be more than 10% of your daily calories and children under two are recommended to not consume any added sugar. **Know your risky behaviors.** If you drink alcohol, drink in moderation. That means for women, no more than one drink per day, and for men, no more than two drinks per day. For your heart, there is no healthy side of using any tobacco or nicotine products and avoid secondhand smoke or vapor. **Find your groove.** We all have to start somewhere. The benefits of regular physical activity are undeniable and even small bouts can add up to big

benefits. Today is the day you can begin to make your heart a priority by finding your groove – take a quick walk around the block or break into a dance to a few of your favorite songs.

The head-heart connection. Stress, depression and anxiety can influence your mood, but they could also influence the health of your heart. Be sure to talk with your health professionals because mental illness is treatable, and recovery is possible. Learn about the County's Behavioral Health Services.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many people have delayed or avoided going to hospitals for heart attacks and strokes – leading to poorer

health conditions. Sacramento County Public Health would like to remind people that hospitals are the safest place to go when you have symptoms and care should not be delayed. The COVID-19 lockdown has also led to more people engaging in unhealthy lifestyle behaviors, such as eating poorly, drinking more alcohol and limiting physical activity. These behaviors can contribute to heart disease.

Stress due to the pandemic may already be affecting our heart health. Stress directly activates our sympathetic nervous system that can elevate blood pressure and blood sugar. Stress can disrupt our sleep and can lead us to make unhealthy

food choices as we seek comfort foods.

Stress cardiomyopathy, also called broken-heart syndrome can be triggered by the loss of a loved one, divorce or interpersonal conflict, a global pandemic like COVID-19 and natural disasters. Cases of stress cardiomyopathy have seen a significant rise during COVID-19 but fortunately, heart function typically recovers over one to two weeks. However, affected patients do have an increased risk of recurrence.

Sacramento County Public Health encourages individuals and families to make healthy choices and engage in managing health conditions. A few small changes that can have a big impact on your heart over time!

"Heart disease still happens even in the time of COVID-19, if you wait a year or two to see a doctor for a heart concern, things may be a lot farther along and less treatable," said Sacramento County Public Health Officer, Dr. Kasirye. "Live a heart-healthy lifestyle by making healthier food and beverage choices, being active, reducing stress, not smoking, getting enough sleep, and meeting with your doctor on a regular basis."

County Public Health continuously works to educate the public about the importance of good nutrition and how it can affect health. A part of that work includes the Sacramento County Obesity Prevention Program, which is implemented in a variety of community settings to bring nutrition education and physical activity programs to places people live, play, learn and shop. Public Health is also part of the Design 4 Active Sacramento team, whose goal is to improve public health by shaping the built environment to support walking, biking and other healthy activities. ★

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By County Supervisor Sue Frost

Through the generosity of the *American River Messenger*, this column serves to provide an update about matters affecting the unincorporated community of Orangevale.

As we approach the budget cycle for the 2021/2022 fiscal year, I thought I would introduce a budget item that some may already be familiar with. In September of last year, the Board of Supervisors directed county staff to begin exploring the development of a mental health crisis response system (MHCRS). The purpose of the MHCRS is to provide urgent mental health resources to individuals in the midst of a mental health crisis. For too long in Sacramento County, and in jurisdictions throughout the country, the only response for those in crisis has been law enforcement. There seems to be a consensus, even among law enforcement, that status quo for mental health response needs to change.

One of the main issues is that in a mental health crisis, law enforcement lacks the training for a safe assessment and intervention and a trained professional can have a better impact. In Sacramento County, we have seen many successes with our Mobile Crisis Support teams (MCSTs) which are composed of a mental health professional and a law enforcement officer. However, even MCSTs are not right for all situations as the presence of law enforcement may escalate the crisis already occurring in the individual's mind. In either scenario, the potential for harm to the person in crisis increases and any time it is possible, we want the risk to innocent lives reduced.

After several months

Orangevale Community Update

Alternative to 911 for Mental Health Calls

of preparation and an outstanding amount of community input, county staff came to the board with a proposal in February. While the proposal that came forward was an excellent start, my colleagues and I had some concerns. For one thing, the pilot project proposed would only run five days a week between 9:00 am and 6:00 pm. Additionally, I had concerns that while there was ample community input, law enforcement did not appear to have been adequately consulted with. While we knew that the Sheriff had been involved, I wanted the various cities with individual policy departments to provide input. Mostly, this was important because we wanted to know how these crisis calls would coexist with existing dispatch centers. We also needed to know if constituents would be able to access the MHCRS by calling a 3-digit number or a 10-digit number.

Staff returned to the board with an update and expanded proposal in March. The updated proposal addressed some of the Board's concerns and we were able to instruct staff on how we expected to prefer to move forward when the budget comes up in June. The reason this item is being discussed with the budget is, of course, the fact that it needs funding. What was presented to the board in March had a scale of three versions of the MHCRS ranging in initial cost from \$6.2 million to \$10.7 million. Given that the Board's preference is for a system that operates countywide, 24 hours a day and seven days a week with a standalone call center, the higher projected cost is what will have to be met. The \$10.7 million also includes the expansion of the mental health urgent care center to ensure that individuals contacted by the newly formed mobile response teams can be taken somewhere for safe

treatment.

Fortunately, there may be some relief for the county to cover the cost. Funds the County receives from the American Rescue Plan via the Federal Government may allow the county to be reimbursed for the cost of the mobile response team composed of a mental health professional and a peer support specialist. Beyond funding, a few other specifics remain to be finalized. For instance, county staff will need to determine what phone number will connect calls to the MHCRS. Unfortunately, all the x11 (i.e. 311, 211, etc.) 3-digit numbers are in use and a 10-digit number seems too long for an emergency situation. What may happen is an initial triaging of calls through 911 dispatch centers until the county may secure the ability to use 988 for the system which is the line proposed at the federal level for these types of programs.

Sacramento County is not the first municipality to go down this path. Our county staff looked at programs like "CAHOOTS" in Eugene, Oregon and the STAR Program in Denver, Colorado. All of these programs have seen great success in reducing incarceration and other, more severe outcomes for people in crisis. What I ultimately want for this program is for our communities to be safe for those struggling with mental health issues, for the mental health professionals who sign up to respond to these calls, and for our communities as a whole. Sacramento County is on the path to achieving this and I look forward to finalizing this program during the budget process in June.

Sue Frost represents the 4th District, which includes all or part of the communities of Citrus Heights, Folsom, Orangevale, Antelope, Rio Linda, Elverta, Gold River, Rancho Murieta, North Highlands, Carmichael, Foothill Farms and Fair Oaks. ★



Thoughts

Where do I begin on this special day called Memorial Day? Perhaps we need to begin with some numbers...numbers of those who fought to give us the freedom we have today and did not live to enjoy that freedom. Here are some staggering numbers...Revolutionary War, 25,000... Civil War, 600,000...WWI, 116,708... WWII, 467,000...Korea, 100,000... Vietnam, 47,434...Desert Storm, 148... Operation Enduring Freedom, 2,351... Operation Iraqi Freedom, 4,412. There have been many more deaths, but I think you get the idea. Many lives have been lost, and let's not forget those who came home with disabilities that you and I can never imagine from physical to emotional, which not only affects them but their families and friends too.

We love our parades and picnics, although this year may be somewhat low key, but there is so much more to what

those men and women have endured to keep us safe. Let's be honest, we do take our freedom for granted, but I think this last year may have gotten us to think of what we have and what we can lose with circumstances that are beyond our control.

My husband, Rick Sprunger, is a Vietnam Veteran. He was deployed just three short months after we were married. I remember that day at the airport like it was yesterday. Why? Because I did not know if I would ever see him alive again. I thank the good Lord that he came home safe, but to a country that did not give him the honor he deserved. I think we have learned to never let that happen again. He never speaks of that time and I rarely ever ask him about it. But I find most vets are that way. They did their job honorably and moved on. I am sure they still remember it all, as we should. Perhaps this poem by **Annette Wynne** will help us to remember.

*Is it enough to think today
Of all our brave, then put away
The thought until a year has sped?
Is this full honor for our dead?
Is it enough to sing a song
And deck a grave, and all year long
Forget the brave who died that we
Might keep our great land proud and free?
Full service needs a greater toll
What we who live give heart and soul
To keep the land they died to save,
And be ourselves, in turn, the BRAVE!*

And so another Memorial Day will go by, but hopefully as the poem suggests, we ourselves can be brave and appreciate their sacrifice. So, amid your getting together with family and friends...safely of course, you will take a moment or two to thank God we have those men and

women who sacrifice their lives so we can have a good life. Say a little prayer for those lives lost, and add a thank you to those who will still give their lives to keep us free. Hopefully, we can find the strength to take action ... **And be ourselves, in turn, the BRAVE!** ★

Newsom Administration Increases Efforts to Release More Violent Criminals



Jim Nielsen

By Nghia Nguyen, Office of Senator Nielsen

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - On a late Friday afternoon news dump, the Newsom Administration announced they are automatically giving "good time credit" to violent offenders and second and third strikers in

an effort to release them early. These policies will go into effect within hours of the announcement - Saturday, May 1. Senator Jim Nielsen (R-Red Bluff), former Chairman of the Board of Prison Terms, issued the following statement:

"As the former Chairman of the Board of Prison terms, I am intimately aware of these criminal justice regulations. This is ill-founded, ill-cited criminal justice policies. Violent felons are receiving good time credit for simply breathing, in lieu of demonstrated good behavior and rehabilitation. "This is another

ill-conceived policy of the Newsom Administration in its attempts to release convicted violent criminals back into our communities.

"We, the people, will pay the price for his continued follies."

Elected to the State Senate in January 2013, Senator Nielsen represents the Fourth Senate District, which includes the counties of Butte, Colusa, Glenn, Placer, Sacramento, Sutter, Tehama and Yuba. To contact Senator Jim Nielsen, please call him at 916-651-4004, or via email at senator.nielsen@senate.ca.gov. Follow him @CASenatorJim ★

California Still Mistreating Its School Kids



By Dan Walters CALMatters

The traditional school year will soon end, but the maltreatment of California's 6 million public school students - especially those from poor non-white families - shamefully continues.

Although on paper California's schools have reopened their classrooms after being closed to battle the spread of COVID-19 infection, most pupils will close out the year still struggling to learn at home or, in too many cases, having given up for a lack of technical and human support.

EdSource, an online site devoted to California education trends, detailed the educational disaster in a recent article, having delved deeply into state Department of Education data.

"Although 87% of California's traditional public schools have reopened for some form of in-person instruction, fewer than half of students have returned either full time or part time in a hybrid model," EdSource revealed. "A total of 55% of all public school students, including those in charter schools, were at home, in distance learning, as of April 30, according to an EdSource analysis of new data released by the state.

Get a veteran journalist's take on what's going on in

California with a weekly round-up of Dan's column every Friday.

"EdSource found that two-thirds of students in district schools with the largest proportions of low-income families were in distance learning, compared with only 43% of students in schools with the fewest low-income families - a disparity that may partly explain a widening learning gap between wealthy and poor students that researchers and teachers suspect the pandemic has enlarged.

"Higher COVID rates in poor communities contributed to the disparity. Parents in highly infected areas have been reluctant to send their children back to school, and teachers in those areas resisted returning. Parents in low transmission areas, meanwhile, pressured school boards to reopen."

California is something of an outlier, according to monthly surveys of school reopening by the federal government's Institute of Education Sciences. With full classroom access available to only 11% of its students, the state is at or near the bottom, according to its March survey. Other states ranged to as high as 100%. In arch-rival Texas, 93% of students have full classroom access.

Months-long stalemates between teacher unions and local school leaders over the terms of reopening have been a major factor in California's tardiness. Gov. Gavin Newsom and the Legislature's dominant Democrats, who are politically allied with the unions, have been noticeably unwilling to intervene.

However, leaving reopening decisions in local hands has undermined the

promise of universal public education and led to the disparity that EdSource noted - classroom access for kids in upscale communities and homebound status quo in poor communities.

California already had an immense "achievement gap" before the pandemic flared and there's absolutely no doubt that the disparity has widened over the last 14 months, as a December report from McKinsey & Co. on national school trends underscores.

"Educators, parents, and students know firsthand the high cost of this prolonged period of remote learning, from rising rates of depression and anxiety to the loss of student learning," the report declared. "The COVID-19 pandemic has taken an especially heavy toll on Black, Hispanic, and Indigenous communities. Along with robbing them of lives and livelihoods, school shutdowns could deny students from these communities the opportunity to get the education they need to build a brighter future."

Newsom, facing a recall election next fall, has been running around the state declaring that the worst of the pandemic is over, that California's economy will soon fully reopen and that he expects that schools will return to normal schedules after summer.

Even if those predictions come true, California's neediest children will have fallen further behind their peers with diminishing chances of ever catching up.

Dan Walters has been a journalist for nearly 60 years, spending all but a few of those years working for California newspapers. ★

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By Marlys Johnsen Norris, Christian Author

Just how long will it take mankind to look to our Creator for the answers we need today? How long will it take for professionals in many fields begin to seek miracle working answers from God? How long will it take for people to stop whining and complaining about the problem and circumstances we all face today?

Isn't it time to realize our God has all the answers to everything! Yes, He allows pain, suffering and death. We

Waiting Game!

know this because of the story of Noah and the flood to wipe out people who dishonored and sinned against God's laws. Possibly we can even realize He may be allowing a similar thing with this Virus that is now affecting the whole world He created!

If we believe and follow the Words of Scriptures in our lives, we know in spite of everything GOD IS IN CONTROL OF OUR LIVES. "Let your roots grow down into Christ and draw up nourishment from him. See that you go on growing in the Lord and become strong and vigorous in the TRUTH." (Colossians 2:7LB)

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I May Be a Knucklehead, but I'm Not Insane

By Rev. James L. Snyder

Nobody is perfect except maybe the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage comes close.

I've never caught her in some imperfection, or if I had, nobody would know it from me.

Often my wife will catch me in something and say, "Are you acting like a knucklehead?"

If only she knew I wasn't acting.

When it comes to fixing things, I am the classic knucklehead. If something is broken, I can make it more broken in just a few minutes.

If the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage sees something broken, she can fix it in the twinkling of an eye. I married her because of that twinkle in her eye. At the time I didn't know what it really meant.

On occasion, I've been with her when she took her van to the repair shop. It is the most delightful experience I could ever have.

When the repair person sees my wife coming in, he thinks she is just a woman. Boy, is he in for a surprise.

She takes the repair person to her vehicle and explains, in detail, what is wrong with the vehicle and how to fix it.

She will say to him, "I can fix it; I just don't have the time today."

Fortunately, for him, he fixes it precisely the way she wants it. Another life saved.

One time there was something wrong with our air conditioning, and the repairman came to fix it. Again, she told him exactly what was wrong with it.

Then she walked away. In a few moments, he came back and said, "I'm going to have to go to my garage and get a tool I need to fix this."

She looked at him and said, "What tool do you need?"

"Oh, you would not know what it is. It's something special for my work."

"Tell me what it is; maybe I have it."

He laughed a hearty chuckle and then told her the tool he needs.

"I have that tool. Let me go to my garage and get it and bring it to you, and you won't have to leave; you can fix it right away."

One time, the front bumper on my truck was broken and sagging. I told my wife that I would take it to the repair shop to get it fixed.

"No," she said as she walked back into the house, "let me fix it for you."

Well, in a few minutes, she came out with several very large paperclips, and in a few moments, she had the bumper clipped to the truck.

"There," she said, "it's fixed; you don't have to take it to the repair shop."

I left very heartily, knowing that the paperclips did not fix the problem, but I did not want to tell her in front of her. I thought I would play out the game until the paperclips fell off.

That was three years ago, and they're still in place.

Perhaps this is why our marriage is so good. She has fixed everything that was broken, and I think she has done most of them behind my back.

As I thought of this, I was reminded of one of my favorite Bible verses. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3).

To "walk together in agreement" is probably the most wonderful thing about a marriage.

Dr. James L. Snyder is pastor of the Family of God Fellowship, 1471 Pine Road, Ocala, FL 34472. He lives with his wife in Silver Springs Shores. Call him at 352-687-4240 or e-mail jamesnyder2@att.net. The church web site is www.whataffellowship.com. ★

PG&E Tips to Protect Against Scammers

By Paul Moreno, PG&E

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (MPG)

- With utility scams on the rise during the current pandemic, it is more important than ever for customers to be vigilant and to know what steps to take to prevent themselves or their families from falling victim.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, scammers have gotten deceptively creative with increased calls, texts, emails, and in-person tactics and are contacting electric and gas customers asking for immediate payment to avoid service disconnection. These impostors can be convincing and often target those who are most vulnerable, including senior citizens and low-income communities. They also aim their scams at small business owners during busy customer service hours. However, with the right information, customers can learn to detect and report these predatory scams.

As a reminder, PG&E will never contact a customer for the first time within one hour of a service disconnection, and will never ask customers to make payments with a pre-paid debit card, gift card, any form of cryptocurrency, or third-party digital payment mobile applications. Here are some steps customers can take to protect themselves and their families against being victimized: **Register for My Account** - PG&E reminds customers that they can visit PGE.com and register for My Account. Signing in will provide instant access to balance information, payment history and other account details and will provide a first line of defense against scam. If a customer receives a call from someone requesting

immediate payment, they can log in to My Account to confirm whether their account is in good standing. Customers can also call PG&E Customer Service at 800-743-5000 if they think that they are being targeted by a scam. **Add a Family Member to Your Account** - As an added layer of protection, customers can designate family members or another trusted individual to speak on their behalf to PG&E call center representatives. For example, an elderly parent could authorize an adult child to speak to PG&E on their behalf and make that person their first call should they receive a call threatening disconnection. The adult child could then call PG&E to confirm their account details. To designate an individual to speak to PG&E on your behalf, contact 800-743-5000.

"Scammers are constantly changing their tactics and tricks, so awareness is more important than ever to keep our customers safe," said Melisa Munoz, PG&E Contact Center Operations Director. "If an email, visit to your home or phone call doesn't feel right, don't fall for it. Delete it, shut the door or hang up. And, as a reminder, PG&E will never ask for your financial information over the phone or via email."

Signs of a potential scam - Threat to disconnect: Scammers may aggressively demand immediate payment for an alleged past due bill. If this occurs, customers should hang up the phone, delete the email, or shut the door. Customers with delinquent accounts receive an advance disconnection notification, typically by mail and included with their regular monthly bill. **Request for immediate payment or**

a prepaid card: Scammers may instruct the customer to purchase a prepaid card then call them back supposedly to make a bill payment. PG&E reminds customers that they should never purchase a prepaid card to avoid service disconnection or shutoff. PG&E does not specify how customers should make a bill payment and offers a variety of ways to pay a bill, including accepting payments online, by phone, automatic bank draft, mail or in person at an authorized PG&E neighborhood payment center.

Refund or rebate offers: Scammers may say that your utility company over-billed you and owes you a refund, or that you are entitled to a rebate. Again, customers should immediately hang up and call PG&E Customer Service to confirm details. **"Spoofing" Authentic Numbers:** Scammers are now able to create authentic-looking 800 numbers which appear on your phone display. The numbers don't lead back to PG&E if called back, however, so if you have doubts or have seen any of the above warning signs of a scam, hang up and call PG&E at 1-800-743-5000. If customers ever feel that they are in physical danger, they should call 911.

Customers who suspect that they have been victims of fraud, or who feel threatened during contact with one of these scammers, should contact local law enforcement. The Federal Trade Commission's website is also a good source of information about how to protect personal information.

For more information about scams, visit www.pge.com and www.utilities-united.org. ★

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May is American Stroke Month

By Liz Faris, American Heart Association

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The American Heart Association/American Stroke Association, the world's leading voluntary organization focused on heart and brain health, is raising awareness about strokes for American Stroke Month in May. Strokes don't discriminate. They can happen to anyone, at any age - and about one in four people worldwide will have one in their lifetime. The good news? 80 percent of first strokes may be prevented.

Stroke prevention is especially important now as much of what puts you at risk for a stroke, uncontrolled high blood pressure, smoking or unhealthy weight, also increases your risk for complications due to COVID-19. High blood pressure is the leading preventable cause of stroke and up to 40% of Black adults in the U.S. have high blood pressure.

Stroke recovery begins the moment you suspect a stroke. The sooner a person can be treated for stroke, the more likely they are to have a successful outcome. He advises everyone to be ready to act FAST if they suspect a stroke.

The acronym F.A.S.T. stands for: Face Drooping - Does one side of the face droop or is it numb? Ask the person to smile. Is the person's smile uneven? Arm Weakness - Is one arm weak or numb? Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward? Speech Difficulty - Is speech slurred? Is the person unable to speak or hard to understand? Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence, like "The sky is blue."

Time to Call 9-1-1 - If someone shows any of these symptoms, even if the symptoms go away, call 9-1-1 and get to a hospital immediately. (Tip: Check the time so you'll know when the first symptoms appeared.)

Stroke is largely beatable through high-quality rehabilitation and patient support as well as implementation of the Association's Rehabilitation Guidelines. Stroke rehabilitation can help patients build their strength, capabilities and confidence, potentially regaining skills and returning to independent living. Rehab can also help patients better manage other conditions they have, which may affect daily living or their risk for a second stroke.

For more information, visit www.StrokeAssociation.org. ★

**Publisher,
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 - Mend, healthwise
 - Deadly snake of south-eastern Asia
 - Multicolored horse
 - Estimator's phrase (2 words)
 - "The Addams Family" manservant
 - *Northernmost European capital
 - One of British Isles
 - EUR, pl.
 - Ensign, for short
 - Pieces of glass, e.g.
 - Vacuum cleaner alternative
 - ... the land of the free...
 - Oxygenate, as in lawn
 - Insane, in Spain
 - Just harvested, e.g.
 - A in IPA
 - Church song
 - Tiny amount
 - Military marksman
 - Fake tooth
 - Devoid of liquid
 - Jet setters' vessels
 - Address abbreviation
 - Sports stadium
 - Japan's highest mountain
 - *Capital that hosts Nobel Prizes
 - Sophia, Italian actress
 - Genesis twin
 - Curved molding
 - Tequila source
 - Non-permanent office worker
 - Like dental surgery
 - *Capital on a fjord
 - Possesses
 - Big top
- DOWN
- Unit of pressure named after Torricelli
 - Post sun-bathing relief
 - Wallace & Gromit modeling material
 - Desire
 - Gas station
 - Desert wanderer's hope
 - Alexander Alexandrovich, Russian poet
 - *Also the capital of European Union
 - James Jones
 - Paddy grain
 - To the degree
 - Like voice after a pep rally
 - "A Fish Called Wanda" actor Kevin
 - Judea, alt. sp.
 - Mama sheep
 - *Bulgarian capital and actress Vergara's given name
 - Long-necked bird
 - Rocky ridge
 - Pas
 - Hunt illegally
 - Audience's approval
 - Frolics
 - "Atlas Shrugged" author Ayn
 - Cassius Clay
 - *Balkan capital and 1984 Olympics location
 - Practical joke
 - Canine command
 - Eyeball washing vessel
 - Offer two cents
 - Collusion
 - Away from harbor (2 words)
 - Drifts
 - *London was famous for these pea soup particulars
 - Russian mountain chain
 - Comedian Rogan
 - Shrek, e.g.
 - Not fatty
 - Patty
 - Tzu

Crossword Puzzle Solutions on Page 7

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
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7		6			3		
			4				
	1			7			5
8	3					2	
			7	3		9	
6		1					3

Solutions on Page 7

Find Puzzles on Page 7

T	A	C	H		S	O	B			B	E	R	N			
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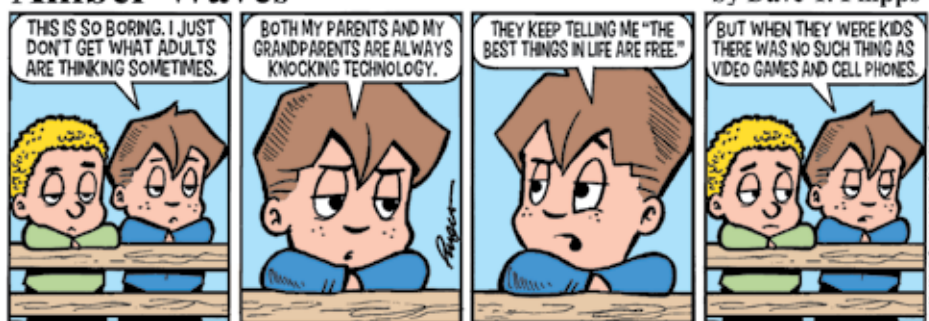
Sudoku Puzzle on Page 7

5	8	9	4	3	1	2	6	7
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2	3	6	7	9	5	4	1	8
7	4	5	6	1	9	3	8	2
3	6	8	5	4	2	9	7	1
9	2	1	3	8	7	6	4	5
8	1	3	9	5	6	7	2	4
4	5	2	8	7	3	1	9	6
6	9	7	1	2	4	8	5	3

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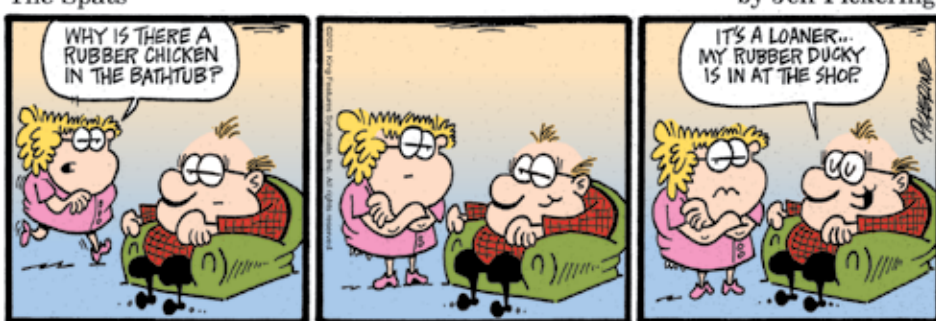
WEEKLY COMICS

Amber Waves



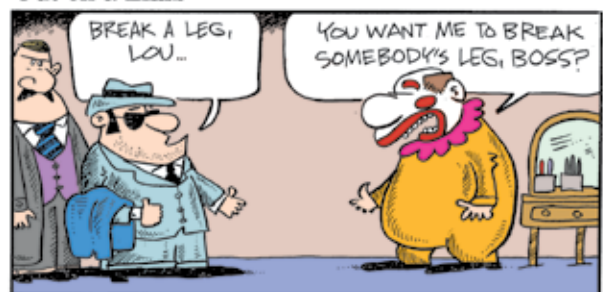
by Dave T. Phipps

The Spats



by Jeff Pickering

Out on a Limb



by Gary Kopervas

THEY'LL DO IT EVERY TIME

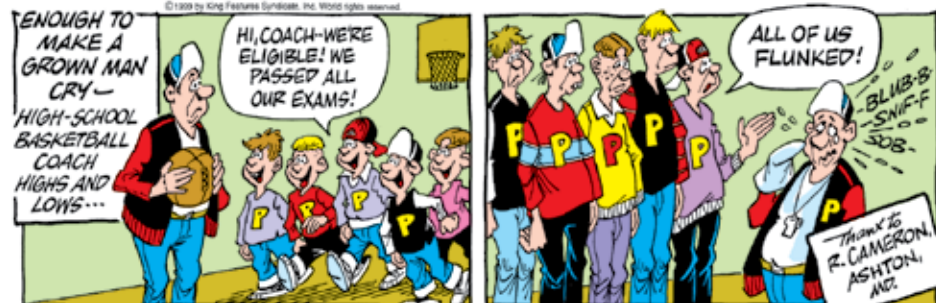


BY AL SCADUTO

R.F.D.



by Mike Marland



GRIN FOR BEAR IT



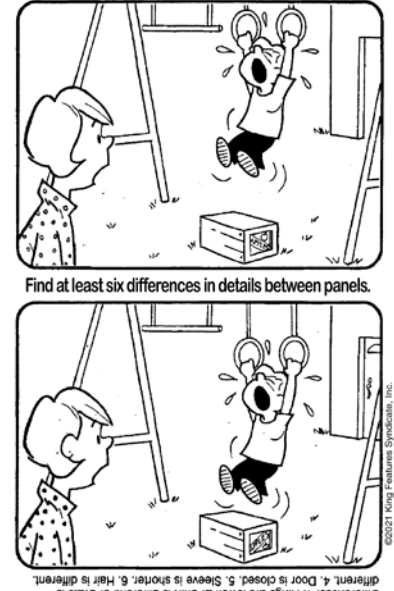
LAFF-A-DAY



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We Beat Almost All Online Prices on Premium Brand Pet Foods. Including Blue Buffalo, Chicken Soup, Earth Born, Diamond Naturals, Pinnacle, Taste of the Wild, & Royal Canin.

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FREE
1 LB SPORT MIX PREMIUM DOG BISCUITS
with the purchase of pet, fish food or supply.
Limit 1 LB PLU 332 CHM
Limit 1 Coupon per family
Effective 5/19/21 - 5/25/21

\$5.00 OFF
ANY PURCHASE OF \$15.00 OR MORE OF PET OR FISH SUPPLIES (Excluding Pet Food or Litter) Cannot be used in conjunction with similar dollar or percentage off coupons & advertised sale items.
Limit 1 PLU 351 CHM
Limit: 1 Coupon Per Family
Effective 5/19/21 - 5/25/21

Look for Advertised Sale Items Everyweek at www.petclubstores.com

NATURAL BALANCE DRY DOG FOOD
•Lamb Meal & Rice (Reg & Lrg Breed)
•Sweet Potato & Salmon •Sweet Potato & Venison •Sweet Potato & Bison
•Sweet Potato & Chicken 24-26 Lb Bag

\$5 OFF
Our Super Low Prices
Limit 2 Bags Per Family
Effective 5/19/21 - 5/25/21

FRISKIES BUFFET CANNED CAT FOOD
5.5 Oz All Varieties

ON SALE Everyday
Limit 2 Cases Per Family
Effective 5/19/21 - 5/25/21

AVODERM NATURAL DRY DOG FOOD
26-30 Lb Bag Limit 2 Bags Per Family
•Lamb Meal & Rice •Chicken Meal & Rice
•Lite •Senior •Large Breed

\$4 OFF OUR DISCOUNT PRICES!
Effective 5/19/21 - 5/25/21

ARM & HAMMER SUPER SCOOP CLUMPING CAT LITTER
20 Lb Box •Unscented •Double Duty
•Clump n Seal •Slide 19 lb
•Absorbix 15 lb

ON SALE
Limit 2 Boxes Per Family
Effective 5/19/21 - 5/25/21

NUTRO WHOLESOME ESSENTIALS DRY DOG FOOD
Lamb Meal & Rice 30 Lb Bag
•Adult •Small Bites •Large Breed

Limit 2 Bags Per Family **\$38.99**
Effective 5/19/21 - 5/25/21

NUTRO CANNED DOG FOOD
•Healthy Stew •Premium Loaf
All Varieties except Limited Ingredient Grain Free (IAMS Canned Dog Food 13 Oz. \$1.15)

12.5 Oz Can **\$1.69**
Limit 2 Cases
Effective 5/19/21 - 5/25/21

FRISKIES TENDER & CRUNCHY COMBO DRY CAT FOOD
16 Lb Bag

Limit 2 Bags per Family **\$9.99**
Effective 5/19/21 - 5/25/21

SCOOPAWAY CLUMPING CAT LITTER
42 Lb Bag
•Multi-Cat Formula

Limit 2 Bags Per Family **\$12.99**
Effective 5/19/21 - 5/25/21

WILDERNESS DRY CAT FOOD AS MARKED
•Chicken •Duck •Salmon •Indoor
•Weight Control 100% Grain Free
11-12 Lb Bag Limit 2 Bags

\$4 OFF OUR REGULAR LOW PRICES!
Limit 2 Bags Per Family

EUKANUBA DRY DOG FOOD
30 Lb Bag
•Med breed •Lrg Breed (Adult & Lmb) (Large Breed •Senior •Puppy) \$45.99

\$43.99
Limit 2 Bags Per Family

SCIENCE DIET FELINE MAINTENANCE DRY CAT FOOD
16 Lb Bag
•Adult •Lite •Sensitive Stomach 15 Lb •Urinary 15.5 Lb •Perfect Weight 15 Lb

\$35.99 •Urinary 15.5 Lb •Perfect Weight 15 Lb **\$39.99**

CORE GRAIN FREE DRY DOG FOOD
22-24 Lb Bag
3 FREE Core Dog Food 12.5 Oz Can With Each purchase
•Ocean •Reduced Fat

\$61.99 •Ocean •Reduced Fat **\$64.99**
35 Lb Bag Limit 2 Bags

NATURALLY FRESH CAT LITTER 100% Natural Walnut-based
14 Lb Bag 10 Lb Pellets **\$4.99** Clumping **\$7.99** Multi-Cat **\$8.99**

NATURE'S MIRACLE PREMIUM ORGANIC CORN COB LITTER
Bio-Enzymatic Formula 10 Lb Bag Limit 2 Bags **\$6.99**

BLUE BUFFALO TASTEFUL CANNED CAT FOOD As Marked
•Pate •Flaked 3 oz & 5.5 oz. **20% OFF** OUR REGULAR PRICE

GRAVY TRAIN DRY DOG FOOD
35 Lb Bag Limit 2 Bags **\$14.99**

PURELY FANCY FEAST CANNED CAT FOOD
2 oz. All Varieties Limit 1 Case **\$1.09**

9 LIVES DRY CAT FOOD
•Grilled Tuna & Egg 12 Lb Bag Limit 2 Bags Per Family **\$7.99**

SOLID GOLD DRY DOG FOOD
•Wolf King Bison (24 Lb) •Wolf Cub Bison (24 Lb)
•Hund n Flocken •Holistique •Millennia
•Fit n Fabulous 28.5 Lb Bag Limit 2 Bags **10% OFF** OUR REGULAR LOW PRICES

BOXIE CAT CAT LITTER Veterinarian Recommended Limit 2 Bags
16 Lb **\$2.00 OFF** 28 Lb **\$3.00 OFF**

ASPEN PETMATE PET BEDDING
All Varieties, Including Self Warming Bedding **20% OFF** OUR SUPER LOW PRICES

SCOTT PET PORK CHOMPS NUTRI CHOMPS BAKED PORK ROLLS All Varieties Rawhide Free **20% OFF** OUR SUPER LOW PRICES

KAYTEE BIRD FOOD & SMALL ANIMAL FOOD (Small bags 2 Lb-5 Lb) All Varieties •Fiesta •Forti-diet •Exact Including Wild Bird 10 Lb Song Bird, Sunflower Seeds, Waste Free **15% OFF** OUR SUPER LOW PRICES

CANI-BITES MUNCHIES MINI-BITES Made with CBD oil from hemp 4 Oz Tub, 16 Oz Jar •Pumpkin •Peanut Butter •Cheesy Bacon **20% OFF** OUR SUPER LOW PRICES

BOXED GLASS TANK WITH STARTER KIT
10 Gal Tetra LED Deluxe... **\$63.99** 29 Gal Tetra LED Deluxe... **\$133.99**
20 Gal Tetra LED Deluxe... **\$109.99** 55 Gal Tetra LED Deluxe... **\$229.99**

AQUEON BOXED 10 GALLON TANK With Economy Kit Just add Heater For Tropical Fish **\$44.99** Limit 1 Per Family

PENN PLAX PLASTIC AQUA-PLANTS **20% OFF** OUR SUPER LOW PRICES

REEF CRYSTALS 50 Gal. Salt Mix **\$18.99**

BONUS COUPON
FANCY FEAST GOURMET CANNED CAT FOOD
3 Oz - All Varieties Except Elegant Medley
Limit 1 Case Per Family
Limit One Coupon Per Family
Price Valid Only With Coupon
Effective 5/19/21 - 5/25/21

ON SALE Everyday CHM PLU 361

BONUS COUPON
FRISKIES PARTY MIX CAT TREATS
2.1 Oz •Selected Varieties
Limit 2 Pkgs with Coupon
Limit One Coupon Per Family
Price Valid Only With Coupon
Effective 5/19/21 - 5/25/21

\$1.19 CHM PLU 573

BONUS COUPON
BONNY CAT PREMIUM CAT LITTER
20 Lb Bag
Limit 1 Bag With Coupon
Limit One Coupon Per Family
Price Valid Only With Coupon
Effective 5/19/21 - 5/25/21

\$4.19 CHM PLU 362

Our Shrinking State

Continued from page 1

as evidence that the Golden State is in decline.

State forecasters stress that the factors that contributed to this population dip are unique to this period – and therefore temporary. In 2020 roughly 51,000 Californians died of COVID-19. Travel restrictions and fear of contagion also dramatically tamped down the number of new arrivals from abroad, the main source of the state's population growth over the last decade.

“Going forward, we anticipate that those two factors that tipped us temporarily into negative territory are going to change over the next few months,” said Department of Finance spokesperson H.D. Palmer.

But even if California reaches herd immunity, the state isn't likely to experience a serious growth spurt anytime soon. Our pre-pandemic plodding rate of growth is thanks to a few long-term trends.

The state birth rate, which took a dip in 2020, has been on a gradual decline for years.

The number of Californians who have left the state for more affordable corners of the union has also been a drag on the state's head count for three decades. That “net-domestic outmigration” exceeded the number of new immigrants from around the world for the first time in 2018, according to Department of Finance estimates.

Palmer went out of his way to stress that Californians packing it up for Texas and Colorado are not the primary cause of the state's striking population decline.

“Some people who run with statistical scissors will try to extrapolate or

hyperventilate that this is evidence of some sort of ‘Mad Max’ style ‘exodus’ from California and that is not the case,” he said.

California's conservative critics have spent the better half of this century warning that the state's relatively steep tax rates on higher-income individuals and voluminous regulations will chase the Golden State's job creators to less taxed and regulated states.

But a new analysis from the Public Policy Institute of California says the state remains as attractive as ever for the well-off. It's people in the working and middle classes who are leaving, largely due to high housing and other costs. “In the past five years the flow of middle-income residents out of the state has accelerated,” wrote Hans Johnson, a demographer with the institute.

The overall numbers of Californians coming and going mask much larger changes within the state. The more dramatic “exodus” has not been from California to Florida, but from the Bay Area to the Central Valley and from Los Angeles to the Inland Empire.

According to the state's new estimates, San Francisco's population declined by 1.6% while Los Angeles' population dropped by 1.3%. The beneficiary of all those work-from-anywhere emigrants lie inland. Since January 2020, the populations of Merced, Manteca and Tracy in the north San Joaquin Valley and Banning and San Jacinto in Riverside County all grew by more than 2%.

Ben covers California politics and elections. Prior to that, he was a contributing writer for CalMatters reporting on the state's economy and budget. ★

Two Officer Safety Bills Stall in the Senate

**By Will Hixson,
California Association
of Code Enforcement
Officers**

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - As acts of violence and threats towards code enforcement officers rise, two California Senate bills aimed at increasing safety measures have stalled after being placed on the Senate Appropriations Committee's suspense file. At a time when violent acts against code enforcement officers are on the rise, stalling these two bills on the suspense file is particularly alarming.

Code enforcement officers risk their lives to uphold the public health, safety and general welfare standards that protect people, property values, and the environment. In many jurisdictions, code enforcement officers are now tasked with enforcement of various violations traditionally addressed by sworn police/sheriff personnel. These violations include, but are not limited to, illegal cannabis operations, illicit massage operations and homeless encampment abatement. Code enforcement officers are also the first-line enforcers of COVID-19 regulations, and do considerable enforcement against slumlords who operate in underserved communities.

Since 2015, the California Association of Code Enforcement Officers (CACEO) has received 86 reports of safety incidents including, but not limited to: nine death threats,

11 physical assaults, 10 occurrences of weapon brandishing, 17 physical threats, and six stalking incidents. Tragically, 20 code enforcement officers have given their lives over the years. Because there is no requirement to report safety incidents to CACEO, the true numbers are likely higher than the aforementioned figures indicate.

Code enforcement officers are now, more than ever, living with the fear of threats to their lives. In January, a Sacramento County inspector was stabbed outside of a strip mall. The week prior, a Tracy resident was accused of attempted homicide after he intentionally hit a code enforcement officer with his vehicle. Sadly, these are just two recent examples of the many incidents of homicide or attempted homicide on a code enforcement officer in recent years.

Earlier this year, CACEO introduced Senate Bills 101 and 296 which are aimed at increasing code enforcement officer safety. Senate Bill 101, sponsored by Senator Jim Nielsen, would close the loophole in existing law by prohibiting the disclosure of the home addresses of code enforcement officers by the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). This bill will add an important layer of safety that will help ensure that all code enforcement officers will have their DMV information protected.

Senate Bill 296, sponsored by Senator Monique Limón, would require cities and

counties to establish safety protocols specific to the duties and risks faced by code enforcement officers in their particular jurisdictions. Currently, many jurisdictions do not have programs to properly train and help protect code enforcement officers from threats, assaults, batteries, or worse.

Both senate bills have been placed on the Senate Appropriations Committee's suspense file. The suspense file is where the committee pigeon holes all bills that are purported to have cost issues. This despite the fact that SB 101 includes language which provides that all costs associated with its adoption will be covered through a fee paid by the applicant for the service provided by the DMV. SB 296 also does not require new spending or costs. As written, jurisdictions will retain the control to design and implement training and safety protocols within their existing budgets based on the dynamics of their community.

CACEO is urging the Senate Appropriations Committee to remove both bills from the suspense file to allow them to proceed with the legislative process. With the rise in violence and threats towards code enforcement officers, the stakes have never been higher. It's time for state representatives to demonstrate that code enforcement officer safety matters and that a dollar value cannot be placed on the life of a public servant. ★

SMUD Asks Customers to Make Call Before Digging

SMUD News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Spring is the time to begin outdoor projects. From small projects like planting a tree or building a fence, to big ones like putting in a swimming pool, be sure to call 811 before you dig.

Notifying Underground Service Alert (USA) North a minimum of two full business days before beginning to dig will determine if there are any dangerous or costly underground utilities in the area. The service is free by phone or internet.

Whether you are doing the job yourself or hiring a professional, be smart and dig safe by calling 811 or visiting usnorth811.org to request a utility-locate before each ground disturbance job; using the website via smartphone for your notification can also save you time.

The notification is valid for 28 days, so if the excavation project goes beyond this timeframe, notify USA North again to renew your ticket.

SMUD and other area utilities such as gas, water, and telecommunications will respond to determine whether they have underground facilities within your project area, and if so, the locations will be marked at the excavation site. Underground utility lines are not always located in the street; some utilities may be located in back or front yard easements or even driveways. Digging into an underground utility line can cause power outages and/or personal injury or death.

Be aware, it is the law to notify USA North via 811 before you dig. Besides the legal requirement, it's the way to stay safe and avoid financial and legal responsibility for repairs and/or injuries. For more information, visit usnorth811.org. ★

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