



City Seeks Input on Revisions to Entertainment Sound Policies

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DECEMBER 5, 2025

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THE LOWDOWN ON LIVING COSTS



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THE FREE THROWS ARE CRITICAL!



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Film Grants to Support Local Productions



Launched in 2021, the film-incentive grant program has allocated more than \$267,500 for 26 grants to support locally shot productions. Photo courtesy of City of Sacramento

City of Sacramento News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The City of Sacramento's Film + Media office now is accepting applications for its film grant, which works to sustain and foster growth in film and television production in the city of

Sacramento.

The film grant program, now in its fifth year, is funded by Measure U funds.

"This program continues to be an important investment in Sacramento's film and media landscape," said Sacramento Film Commissioner Jennifer West.

"We're eager to support projects that advance our local industry and highlight the creativity of Sacramento's filmmakers."

Applications close Jan. 15. Six production grants of \$10,000 and two post-production grants of \$5,000 will be awarded across two grant rounds.

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Public Works Tallies Safety Improvements



City of Sacramento News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The City of Sacramento's Department of Public Works recently shared progress on the city's Transportation Safety Initiative, a comprehensive effort to make streets safer for people walking, biking and driving.

Approved by the City Council in late March, the initiative accelerates how the city responds to safety needs and expands the tools available to deliver improvements more quickly. A core component of the initiative is the new Transportation Safety Team, a dedicated unit within Public Works focused on quick-build and interim safety projects across Sacramento's High Injury Network.

These projects use low-cost, high-impact treatments - such as enhanced signage, refreshed striping, lane-narrowing elements and visibility upgrades - to reduce crashes while long-term capital improvements continue to move forward.

"Residents are asking for safer, more walkable neighborhoods, and we're listening," said City Traffic Engineer Megan Carter. "Quick-build projects help us address urgent needs now while we continue working toward the long-term, comprehensive improvements our communities need."

Carter was joined by Councilmember Rick Jennings and local resident Alena Wong at a press conference Nov. 26 to share updates on the city's progress. Wong was struck and seriously injured while biking through this intersection. The Wong family has continued to advocate for safer streets to help prevent similar crashes from happening to others. Vertical flexible posts have been installed in the intersection to help slow driver

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Sowing Seeds in Northern California

New Chicano Bookstore Opens in Sacramento



La Cultura Bookstore, located at 2017 Del Paso Blvd., offers new and used books featuring local authors as well as art from recognized area artists such as Gustavo Reynoso.

Story and photos by Idaly Valencia

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The opening of a new bookstore along Del Paso Boulevard is reviving a significant piece of Sacramento's history tied to Hispanic literature and arts, Chicano culture and social movements. La Cultura Bookstore at 2017

Del Paso Blvd. celebrated its grand opening Nov. 8 and invited the community to enjoy a day filled with tradition and art in forms that reflect both Mexican American and Chicano culture.

The celebration marked the launch of both the Sembrando Semillas Day Laborer Worker Center and the bookstore, an effort cultivated by local

advocates Richard Alcala, Fatima Garcia and Christina Alvarez.

The event drew support from local leaders and public officials, including Sacramento City Councilmember Eric Guerra and a representative from Congressman Ami Bera's office. Senator Angelique Ashby's office presented the founders with a

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Scenes from Sprouts Thanksgiving Event



Customers and families tried their hands at creating Thanksgiving turkey art during a coloring event last month at Sprouts Farmers Market, 4408 Del Rio Road in Land Park. Photos courtesy of Sprouts Farmers Market-Land Park.



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Sowing Seeds in Northern California

Continued from page 1

certificate recognizing their efforts to bring a meaningful resource to residents in District 8.

North Sacramento Chamber Vice Chair Mina Perez helped guide the ribbon-cutting and welcomed the store into the business community, thanking attending officials for their support.

While Southern California is home to several bookstores that cater to Chicano culture, La Cultura Bookstore is now one of the few in the northern part of the state.

Inside, vibrant artwork and rows of new and used books create a space for visitors to browse, buy or simply connect with Sacramento's Chicano culture. Its shelves feature books by local authors across a variety of genres as well as textbooks on the history of Mexico, Mexican American movements and Indigenous and Native American topics.

Books range from \$1 to \$20, with varied and affordable pricing for artwork. The shop is open six days a week from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and closed on Mondays.

Anthony "Tony" Perez, long active in Sacramento's Chicano scene, told Messenger Publishing Group that La Cultura Bookstore pays homage to La Raza Bookstore, a former Chicano literary hub that made a lasting cultural impact on the region. According to the National Center for Cultural Competence, the term Chicano most often refers to Mexican Americans, although it also describes a political identity tied to the farmworkers' movement under César Chavez and, for many, a symbol of Mexican Indian ancestry pride.

Perez began volunteering at La Raza Bookstore in 1973, launching a decades-long commitment to Chicano advocacy in the area. Perez attended the Nov. 8 opening as a consultant, drawing on his experience with La Raza and his time on the Elk Grove school board.

"I am very familiar with what a bookstore can do for the community. It exposes you to a variety of things: art, music. You can have a bilingual, bicultural reading program here for students in the summertime

or after school program to educate students," Perez said. "That's why I'm here as a consultant, advisor, as a supporter because I believe in this concept of this kind of space within your community you can walk to."

Alcala, a local veteran and Chicano advocate, said that the bookstore aims to provide a platform for artists and authors to share their literature, poetry and art. Plans include monthly book signings and poetry readings for creators seeking a space to present their work and connect with others who want to support the community, a space he said hasn't been available for quite a while.

"There hasn't been one since La Raza Bookstore and that was in the '70s," Alcala said.

La Raza Bookstore, formerly located on F Street, later expanded into what is now the Latino Center of Art and Culture. The original bookstore offered literature, art and resources that helped residents navigate struggles tied to the Chicano civil rights movement taking place at the time.

"We got to help our



Books at La Cultura Bookstore, 2017 Del Paso Blvd., range in price from \$1 to \$20, with varied yet affordable pricing for artwork.



Inside the newly-opened La Cultura Bookstore, vibrant artwork and rows of new and used books create a space for visitors to browse, buy or simply connect with Sacramento's Chicano culture.

people. Our culture, we have to keep it alive," Alcala said. "At first, I had no intention of opening a bookstore but I said we got to do something now, so this was my way of doing it."

He said partnering with Garcia and Alvarez was essential in creating a safe place where community members could confide in one another amid ongoing pressures.

Award-winning chil-

dren's book illustrator Felipe Dávalos attended the opening, where several of his works, including pieces published in National Geographic, were on display. A native of Mexico, Dávalos first came to the United States to work with Dumbarton Oaks in Washington on a project focused on pre-Columbian civilizations. He later moved to Sacramento about 25 years ago to help lead an art foundation.

Dávalos said his experience in the United States differed from that of many others, noting he did not encounter discrimination based on nationality or language. Still, as he took on more illustration projects tied to Chicano culture, Dávalos said his work expanded his own understanding of the community and movement.

"I became a cultural illustrator for children's books, I got a lot of people asking to illustrate books with a lot of different subjects that enriched and enlarged my own point of view in that area," Dávalos said. "Language and images together provide knowledge, memory and communication; that's what you can see in my works for books and magazines."

The event included Aztec blessings to honor and bless La Cultura Bookstore as it carries forward the legacy of La Raza Bookstore by providing access to literature, art and resources. Like its predecessor, the bookstore aims to create a safe space for community members while offering new opportunities for visitors to connect, learn and celebrate the region's rich Chicano and Hispanic heritage. ★

Public Works Tallies Safety Improvements

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speeds and increase awareness of the school zone and crosswalk. Curb extensions were installed to visually narrow the road, helping to slow traffic.

Public Works has already made several staffing advances to support this work. The Department has recruited a supervising engineer to lead the Transportation Safety Team, with an announcement expected in January. Two new Traffic Investigation team members will begin in December and January, with additional hiring planned

once the team's leader is on board in early 2026.

Even before the full team is operational, Public Works has accelerated safety work throughout 2025. Since April, residents and community advocates have submitted requests through 311 and council offices identifying intersections in need of better visibility, lower speeds or safer crossings.

Using existing staff – three traffic investigators and the in-house signs and markings team – Public Works has delivered a more flexible and creative approach

this year.

More than 100 traffic-safety improvements have been installed citywide so far in 2025, including 17 quick-build projects, 39 locations of intersection daylighting, 17 school-zone safety upgrades such as high-visibility crosswalks and enhanced signage and six new stop-controlled residential intersections.

One of these locations is the intersection of Sutterville Road and Mead Avenue in District 7 near William Land Park and nearby school zones.

Upgrades there include vertical flexible posts added along the centerline to help slow vehicle speeds, new yield markings,

and signage reminding drivers to stop for people in the crosswalk.

Visibility at side-street crossings was improved with new red-curb areas and clearer parking limits.

To guide future work, Public Works also is completing an update to the city's Vision Zero Action Plan using the latest five years of crash data. Building on the 2018 plan, the update will outline new strategies and identify the top 20 locations where quick-build solutions can have the greatest impact.

The plan will guide the Transportation Safety Team's work as it scales up in 2026. ★



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Classic Comfort and Modern Updates in this three bedroom/two bath Land Park home! This property features a host of improvements, upgrades and designer touches. Spacious entry, over-sized living room, many windows and fireplace. Kitchen/dining combination is crowned by beautiful coffered ceilings. The remodeled kitchen stands out with flush-frame cabinets, luxurious Quartzite counters, a Wolf dual-fuel range, SubZero refrigerator, built-in coffee maker, speed oven, microwave, dishwasher, and a spacious island with breakfast bar including a pop-up countertop charging station for modern living. Hall bath, with custom penny and epoxy flooring, a Kohler vanity, double sinks, elegant Quartzite counters. The primary bedroom features a glass door that opens to the backyard, walk-in closet, and the primary bath dazzles with octagon and large subway tiles on the floors and shower area, Kohler vanity with double sinks, and Quartzite counters for a refined touch. Discover thoughtful details, such as a hidden laundry area concealed behind custom bookcases in the kitchen, a hallway desk niche perfect for remote work, and custom light fixtures that add a stylish glow throughout. 3124 17th Street



LAND PARK

On a picturesque tree-lined street, in the sought-after College Tract of Land Park, this stately two-story home offers both charm and grandeur. The impressive entryway welcomes you with soaring ceilings, setting the tone for the home's spacious atmosphere. The formal living room is graced by a beautiful bay window, a cozy fireplace, and double French doors that lead onto the patio, creating a seamless flow for entertaining. The recently remodeled kitchen features quartz countertops, stainless steel appliances, a central island, elegant cabinetry with glass fronts and abundant storage options. Adjacent to the kitchen, the gathering room features window seat, cabinetry and French doors that lead to the backyard, ideal for relaxed gatherings. On the main level, a smaller bedroom serves perfectly as an office, accompanied by a separate guest bathroom for convenience. Upstairs, you'll find three generously sized bedrooms, including a luxurious primary suite complete with an expansive bath, walk-in closet, and dedicated dressing area. Step into the backyard where a flagstone patio, built-in pool, and mature landscaping provide a tranquil retreat, the perfect setting for outdoor entertaining and relaxation. 3621 17th Street



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Film Grants to Support Local Productions

2025 for 81 days of filming. The Film Office issued 74 permits in 2024, a figure elevated in part by the Warner Bros. Discovery production "One Battle After Another." Overall filming activity resulted in 953 local hires, 4,014 hotel nights and a direct economic impact of \$6.3 million.

The office also launched a film and media incentive program on July 1, 2025, establishing a \$250,000 rebate to attract additional large independent films, commercials and television projects to the region. ★

Continued from Page 1

Funds can be used to help subsidize permit fees, reduce the costs of safety personnel and reimburse qualified production expenses incurred in the city of Sacramento.

Launched in 2021, the film-incentive grant program has allocated more than \$267,500 for 26 grants to support locally shot productions. The recipients of

the grants represent a range of storylines with diverse cast and crews.

Funding is available to productions filming at least 50% of their project in the Sacramento region with at least two locations in the city of Sacramento. This grant is also open to productions where 75% of post-production is done in the city.

Eligible productions

include feature-length films, short films, episodic television, television pilots, television movies/miniseries, documentaries, docuseries, commercials, music videos and unscripted television.

Grant applications will be reviewed and scored by a panel consisting of staff, film industry peers and economic development professionals.

To review eligibility and guidelines, and to apply, please visit the Sacramento Film + Media grants website, filmsac.com/grants.

About Sacramento Film + Media

Sacramento Film + Media office provides essential services to those interested in filming in the Sacramento area. The office works to leverage

regional location assets, strengthen local crews, assist local filmmakers and attract out-of-town productions.

The office facilitates film permitting and provides location assistance, production information, ordinance and regulatory information, internships and grant opportunities.

Forty-seven film permits have been issued in

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City Seeks Input on Revisions to Entertainment Sound Policies

City of Sacramento News Release



The proposed Community Sound Management Framework outlines several tools intended to strengthen communication, improve transparency and better align the city's permitting and oversight processes. Photo courtesy of City of Sacramento

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The City of Sacramento is inviting residents and businesses to provide feedback on a proposed Community Sound Management Framework that aims to modernize how entertainment-related sound is managed across the city.

Developed by Sound Music Cities, the framework draws on extensive public input and on findings from the Sacramento Music Census, a comprehensive regulatory review, and a three-phase sound policy study. The work highlights broad community interest – including more than 1,100 responses – in clearer and more consistent sound management.

“Sacramento’s community has clearly expressed an appetite for change in how entertainment-related sound is managed,” said Don Pitts, president of Sound Music Cities, who is also widely known as “The Sound Whisperer” for his approach to balancing nightlife and neighborhoods. “These recommendations provide a clear path toward fairness, consistency and shared responsibility.”

Key Recommendations

The Framework outlines several tools intended to strengthen communication, improve transparency and better align the city’s permitting and oversight processes. Recommendations include: Integrating Sound Impact Plans into event

and venue permitting
Scaling oversight based on event size and potential impact

Designating an accountable official to ensure consistency across departments

Using source-based sound measurement at the point of production

Expanding low-frequency management strategies to address bass-related complaints

Improving communication and education for venues, residents and city staff

The recommendations were shaped by community surveys, small-group discussions and a listening session with city staff, venues and event presenters.

“These recommendations reflect what the community has been asking for: a smarter, more predictable approach that protects quality of life while supporting Sacramento’s creative energy,” said Megan Van Voorhis, director of Convention and Cultural Services.

“This process demonstrates that meaningful

progress can happen when residents, venues and City staff all sit at the same table,” added Dustin Hollingsworth, assistant director of Convention and Cultural Services. “The Framework provides the tools to make that collaboration the norm.”

Community Meetings

To continue gathering input, the city will hold three community meetings in December for residents, venue owners and event producers:

North Area: 5:30 p.m. Dec. 8, North Natomas Community Center (2631 New Market Drive)

Central Area: 5:30 p.m. Dec. 9, Hart Senior Center (915 27th St.)

South Area: 5:30 p.m. Dec. 10, George Sim Community Center (6207 Logan St.)

Feedback gathered from these sessions will help inform next steps as the city considers implementation options for 2026.

The full Framework, along with earlier reports, is available at cityofsacramento.gov. ★

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By your local dentist Dr. Ashkan Alizadeh, Master at Academy of General Dentistry

Losing a tooth is more common than most people realize, whether it's from decay, gum disease, or an accident.

But even one missing tooth can affect more than your smile. It can make chewing more difficult, lead to shifting of nearby teeth, and even change the shape of your face over time.

The good news is, there are several ways to replace missing teeth. Understanding the options can help you make the best decision for your health and comfort.

1. Do Nothing (Not Recommended)

While it may seem easier to leave the space empty, this can cause nearby teeth to drift, throwing off your bite and leading to more tooth wear or jaw pain. Once teeth move out of proper alignment, it becomes harder to clean, increasing the risk of cavities and gum disease. It also becomes more challenging to replace the teeth if you wait too long to replace the teeth, so it's best not to wait too long.

2. Removable Partial or Full Denture

A removable denture is a simple and affordable way to replace one, several, or all missing teeth. These appliances are taken out at night and cleaned daily. While they can restore your smile and chewing function, they tend to cover a large portion of the mouth and can sometimes feel bulky or less secure.

3. Fixed Bridge

A bridge is a permanent option that connects an artificial tooth to the natural teeth on either side of the gap. This provides a more natural look and feel than a removable denture. However, the neighboring teeth must be shaped to support the bridge, and it's not ideal if too many teeth are missing.

4. Dental Implants

Dental implants are the most advanced and long-lasting option. An


implant is a small titanium post that replaces the root of a missing tooth and supports a crown, bridge, or even a full denture. Implants look, feel, and function like natural teeth, and they help preserve the jawbone beneath the gums. Implants aren't for everyone, though. Factors like bone quality, health conditions, and medications can affect whether they're the right choice. Your dentist can take X-rays and discuss if implants are a good fit for you.

The Bottom Line


Replacing missing teeth is about more than appearance. It's about maintaining good oral health, proper chewing, and a confident smile. Whether you need to replace one tooth or a full set, there's a solution that can fit your needs and lifestyle.

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Kings Korner

By V.G. Harris



Will the real Sacramento Kings please stand up. Yes, Kings fans, it's been a conundrum to say the least, and in spite of a 5 and 16 record to start the season, bright spots have actually surfaced.

Stuck with 3 paltry wins just one week ago, the Sactown boys went into the city of Denver, and handed the first place Nuggets a surprising 128-123 defeat. Perhaps equally surprising was the 117-112 win over the Timberwolves just 2 nights later before a roaring crowd at Golden One Center. Both victories came with big man Domantas Sabonis sidelined with a knee injury, leaving fans and pundits wondering what can these guys do if they play like this at full strength?

Well, that's certainly a good question, but we can all remember what the team looked like 3 seasons ago when Domantas arrived in Sacramento and led the Kings to 48 wins and a playoff berth. That team led the NBA in scoring but also had a vaunted point guard by the name of DeArron Fox.

I think it's important to take a closer look at these back-to-back wins that the Kings recently put together and try to find a common thread. It's actually very obvious. In both wins the Kings shot remarkably well from the free throw line, something that has been seemingly impossible for this team to do. Against the Nuggets the Kings went 22-23 missing amazingly only one shot the entire night. Two nights later against the Timberwolves the Kings went 26-28 from the line missing only 2 shots.

Now compare that with Sunday night's game against the Grizzlies. 59% from the free throw line in a tight game converting on only 13 of 22 attempts in a 115-107 loss.

Unfortunately, the game against the Grizzlies has been the pattern we've seen all too often when the Kings put together that alarming 8-games losing streak.

So, even with Domantas Sabonis sidelined, the Kings are capable of taking down some of the best teams in the NBA, but making their free throws is absolutely critical!

Unfortunately, the Kings are among the worst shooting NBA teams when it comes to free throws, and as we've seen, if wins are to come that pattern has to change.

Doug Christie can talk all he wants to

about defense and playing for 48 minutes, but if his team can't convert from the line the stats don't lie.

But the Sacramento Kings can only play the players on the court, and this year's pattern of substitutions has been a head scratcher. Last year's first round draft choice Devin Carter has been all but forgotten as he sits game after game on the pines. A solid defender, good rebounder, and efficient scorer around the rim, Devin appears not to be in the Kings future and fans want to know why.

The coaching staff talks about a youth movement while second year player Isaac Jones was recently cut from the team. 6'9" with a huge wingspan, Isaac was scooped up by the first place Detroit Pistons almost immediately, and it won't surprise me to see them utilize Jones moving forward.

The number 1 problem has been identified and it's the inability to shoot free throws with any consistency, but what is #2?

The coaching staff and entire franchise can't evaluate talent! Drafting talent over the years, and talent that resides already on the team.

Allowing Jonas Valanciunas to get away was a huge mistake, and one that has benefited the Denver Nuggets greatly.

No one could see or even imagine a Kings team with Domantas at the #4 and moving Valanciunas to the #5.

Any way you look at it, the Kings shot themselves in the foot when they let Jonas walk away.

Defensive standout Keon Ellis is getting less and less playing time, logging all of 6 minutes in the loss to the Grizzlies, and fans attending home games have taken to collectively calling, "we want Keon, we want Keon!"

This is not a good look, but it begs the question, why? Why do fans have to beg the coach to play a player that could obviously help the team?

Player evaluation, it's as simple as that. Don't put all the blame for a 5-16 record solely on the players and give the coaching staff a pass.

All the best!

Your thoughts are always welcome at vgharriskingsfan@gmail.com. ★

New Studies Gives Lowdown on California's Sky-High Living Costs



By Dan Walters,
CALMatters.org

We Californians know, or should know, that while living in this state has many positive aspects, we are paying through the nose for the experience.

A flurry of recent studies drives home how deeply California residents must dig to meet costs of living that are either at or near the highest of any state.

One comes from the Legislative Analyst's Office, the Legislature's advisor on the state budget, delving into the astronomic costs of buying a home.

The LAO study found "California home prices far exceed the rest of the country." Mid-tier homes, those roughly in the middle of the price range, are more than twice as expensive as the typical mid-tier home elsewhere in the U.S. Monthly payments for such homes run about \$5,500 in California, 74% more than what they were 25 years ago.

The study also found that the annual household income needed to qualify for a mortgage on a mid-tier California home in September was about \$221,000 — more than two times the median California household income in 2024, which was \$102,000.

For a bottom-tier home, about \$136,000 in annual income is needed to qualify for a mortgage — about 33%

higher than median household income was in 2024.

The data illustrate why California has the second lowest rate of home ownership in the nation. Just 55.3% of Californians live in homes they or their families own, slightly higher than New York's ownership rate.

It's not surprising that hundreds of thousands of California residents, unable to aspire to home ownership, have decamped for more affordable states, such as Texas, where home prices are a fraction of California's.

Those who do migrate to other states find not only are houses much less expensive but fuel for their cars and utilities to light, heat and cool their homes are markedly less expensive.

The Center for Jobs & the Economy, an offshoot of the California Business Roundtable, continuously monitors energy costs in California and other states. Its latest report says gasoline, averaging \$4.64 a gallon in California, is as much as \$1.50 a gallon higher than in Texas and other states. California's electrical power rates are roughly twice as high.

Another take on California living costs comes from the Transparency Foundation, a conservative economic think tank.

It gathered a wide variety of factors and calculated living costs for an upper-middle class California family with a \$130,000 annual income. It concluded the family would pay \$29,753 more per year than the national average for housing, utilities, health care, taxes and other costs of living.

"This report should be a wake-up call to all Californians, that they are

being unfairly punished by the bad policies imposed on them by their politicians — and they are literally paying the price for it," Dave McCulloch, the foundation's chairman, said in a statement about the report.

A new poll by the Public Policy Institute of California confirms that Californians worry about living costs. Nearly a third of those polled said they, or someone in their household, have reduced food purchases to save money.

The California Farm Bureau revealed that a traditional Thanksgiving dinner for 10 people will cost a California family \$72.61, well above the national average of \$55.18.

Finally, there's a new report from WalletHub, a website devoted to personal finance, implying that Californians are taking on more debt to pay their rising bills.

In this year's third quarter — July through September — the average California household added \$880 in new debt, increasing the total owed to \$259,773, second only to residents of Hawaii.

All together, Californians' personal debt increased by \$11.8 billion during the quarter.

Now it's nearly \$3.2 trillion, just a bit lower than their \$3.6 trillion in annual personal income.

A truly staggering number.

Dan Walters is one of the most decorated and widely syndicated columnists in California history, authoring a column four times a week that offers his view and analysis of the state's political, economic, social and demographic trends. ★

Social Security Matters Is Social Security Really a "Good Deal?"



By Russell Gloor,
AMAC Certified Social Security Advisor

Dear Rusty: You've said in the past that most people recoup their SS contributions within five years of starting benefits, thus Social Security "is an exceptionally good deal." Your calculation is correct but misleading; if it were not, SS would have been insolvent long ago. I will, in fact, get "my" contributions back in about five years, but my employer's contributions will take another five years, and that is money that my employer could have been paying me, so they are really "my" contributions. But even that ignores the time value of money. I did a calculation as if my contributions, along with those of my employer, were invested in an account earning 5% per year. That would provide me the equivalent of SS income for 24 years, approximately what my life expectancy was when I retired. So, it's not a bad deal, but it is hardly exceptional. It is roughly the equivalent of me investing that money throughout my career and using the total to buy an annuity.

Of course, Social Security does have the advantage of certainty, at least until it goes broke. My portfolio

would not earn a steady 5% every year, though that is at the low end of what financial managers would expect over a long period. And it does force people to save, many of whom would otherwise make no provision for retirement. Signed: Realistic Senior

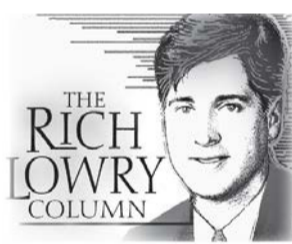
Dear Realistic: Thanks very much for your feedback on my previous article. I think it's important to draw a distinction for SS contributions made by an employer, because that is not money the individual personally pays, but rather an obligation for employers to help fund the Social Security program. Without that federal obligation, it is doubtful that employers would, instead, provide employees with equivalent additional compensation, so the thought that these are really your contributions is not a fair assessment. Indeed, they are contributions which happen to be tied to your earnings level (to a cap), for which employers receive relief on their corporate income tax, and likely would not make if not required by law.

As you have noted, Social Security has the advantage of certainty, something which is lacking when it comes to investing the equivalent amounts in the financial markets. And, as you have hinted, there exists a substantial failure by future American retirees to save adequately for their retirement, a problem well known in most financial circles. Thus, the certainty of Social Security makes it a crucial part of everyone's retirement planning — and it will be there! Despite all the

angst attributed to the current financial issues facing the program, there is little doubt that Social Security is here to stay. The question is — what reform is needed to make the program fully solvent for generations of future Americans? The Association of Mature American Citizens (AMAC) has developed a proposal to sensibly reform Social Security and avoid the currently projected 2033 date that the SS Trust Funds are expected to be depleted (which will necessitate an across-the-board cut for everyone). We have little doubt that the reform needed will happen (it would be political suicide for Congress if it did not), and hopefully soon. You can read about AMAC's proposed solution at this link: www.amac.us/social-security-guarantee.

Again, thank you for your feedback and commentary. Please know that we very much appreciate your thoughts and are always willing to discuss these issues.

This article is intended for information purposes only and does not represent legal or financial guidance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of the AMAC Foundation's staff, trained and accredited by the National Social Security Association (NSSA). NSSA and the AMAC Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration or any other governmental entity. To submit a question, visit our website (amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory) or email us at ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org. ★



The Epstein Conspiracy in Plain Sight

Regardless, populists have a different narrative at hand that is consistent with the known record. Namely, that some of the most privileged members of our society — at the very top of the financial, academic, political, media and social worlds — had no standards or ethics, and embraced Epstein as a friend and consigliere.

Epstein knew influential people, so influential people felt that they should know him. They considered him fun, and useful — for advice, for banter, for introductions, for information and for donations. The emails suggest that Epstein missed his calling as a high-level, seamy advice columnist to the rich and powerful.

Want to know more about the reputation of the woman you are having an affair with? Seeking advice on how to gain political influence in Europe? Wondering how you're handling your interactions with a potential mistress? Looking for insights about Donald Trump? Trying to survive sexual harassment allegations? Need a reference for a gastroenterologist? Well, then, ask Jeffrey Epstein.

He emailed with former Harvard president Larry Summers, the linguist Noam Chomsky, venture capitalist Boris Nikolic, Emirati businessman Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem, Trump activist Steve Bannon, the journalist Michael Wolff, the artist Andres Serrano, the department store scion Jonathan Farkas and former White House counsel Kathryn

Ruemmler, among others. It's not as though Epstein was particularly insightful, but if he knew so many important people, he must know something, right?

As for his scrape with the law, clearly all had been forgiven and forgotten. If he was in the good graces of the social wrangler Peggy Siegal, whose job was to get bold-faced names to accept invitations, he must be OK. For some of Epstein's correspondents, it was part of his appeal that he was disreputable. Larry Summers, who leaned on Epstein for romantic advice, asked him at one point: "How is life among the lucrative and louche?"

Epstein's social currency is one reason that he got off so easily the first time he was prosecuted — he hired the best, most connected defense attorneys, who outclassed and intimidated his prosecutors.

As for Trump, he is guilty of enjoying Epstein's company a couple of decades ago, presumably for the same reason so many others did. But he had a falling out with Epstein long ago. Trump didn't have anything to do with him at the time that so many others in these emails were socializing with Epstein, confiding in him and asking him for insight on Trump. That's a disgrace, and it's always been in plain sight. In the Epstein story, it's not so much follow the money — although that's important and still mysterious — as follow the social network.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review. (c) 2025 by King Features Synd., Inc. ★

Apply Now for 2026-27 County Grand Jury

By MPG Staff

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - Applications are being sought for new jurors to serve on the independent watchdog Sacramento County Grand Jury.

The application period opened Nov. 21 and closes Jan. 2.

Nineteen Sacramento County residents and 11 alternates will be selected from among qualified applicants. The one-year term for volunteer jurors runs from July 1, 2026, to June 30, 2027.

The Sacramento County Grand Jury is appointed to provide oversight of Sacramento County, its cities, public schools, including community colleges, and special district agencies and operations.

The grand jury has a different function from that of a jury. Unlike cases presented in a courtroom, grand jurors review and investigate the performance of county, city and local governing entities, recommending changes for improving local government.

The grand jury is authorized to hear criminal indictments and is tasked with visiting regional detention facilities, along with the Sacramento County District Attorney's Office Crime Lab and the Sacramento County Coroner's Office.

The grand jury also investigates complaints submitted by the public and issues reports of its findings. Past grand jury reports and government responses can be found at sacgrandjury.org/reports.aspx.

To serve on the Sacramento County Grand Jury, you must be a U.S. citizen 18

years old or older, a Sacramento County resident for at least one year, and available to serve 25 to 35 hours a week. Applicants must also be able to speak, read and write the English language. In addition, grand jury members cannot have been convicted of malfeasance in office, a felony or any other high crime; are not elected public officers; and have not served as grand jurors within the last year.

The deadline to apply is Jan. 2.

The 2026-27 Grand Jury will be empaneled next June. Grand jurors receive a small stipend for their volunteer work.

For more information, visit bit.ly/SCGrandJury2627.

ABOUT TOWN

Breakfast with Santa Dec. 21

Elks Lodge 6, 6446 Riverside Blvd., invites families to take photos with Santa Claus during its Sunday breakfast from 9 a.m. to noon Dec. 21.

The Elks breakfast will include a ham-carving station. Cost is \$20 adults, \$10 for ages 6 to 10 and under 5 free. For parties four or more, reservations are requested; call 916-422-6666.

Area Museum Experiences

A sampling of must-see and must-do experiences and special activations offered by local museums include the following:

Aerospace Museum of California – "Snoopy and the Red Baron," through

Dec. 31. On loan from the Charles M. Schulz Museum, this national traveling exhibit brings the full story of the World War I Flying Ace to life. Featuring original comic strips, vintage toys and rare memorabilia, it's a fun, family-friendly look at one of Peanuts' most iconic storylines.

The exhibit will delight fans who grew up with Snoopy the Flying Ace and introduce new audiences to Snoopy's adventures in the sky. Details at aerospaceca.org.

California Automobile Museum – Sunday Drives. The third Sunday of every month, enjoy a free ride (with paid museum admission) in one of the museum's

many beautiful cars from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. There's no better way to enjoy history than to experience it firsthand down the streets of downtown Sacramento. Details at calautomuseum.org.

California Museum – "Revolutionary Grain: Celebrating the Spirit of the Black Panthers in Portraits and Stories," through Dec. 14. This temporary exhibition features striking contemporary portraits and deeply personal stories of former members of the Black Panther Party.

The exhibit portrays former Panthers as lawyers, social workers, teachers, and political activists who continue to make a difference in their communities. Details at

californiamuseum.org.

California State Railroad Museum – The Chinese Railroad Workers' Experience offers visitors a view of the Chinese workers who built the western portion of the nation's first Transcontinental Railroad. Marginalized by history, the Chinese workers were more than a nameless group of laborers. Details at californiarailroadmuseum.org.

Sacramento History Museum – RCAF in Mictlán: 50th Anniversary of Día de los Muertos, through April 5, 2026. The exhibit will be highlighted by public programs that document and celebrate the 50-year history of the Día de los Muertos (DDL M) observance in Sacramento.

The exhibit will demonstrate why the anniversary is a major milestone in our city's cultural history, as well an example of the enduring impact of the Royal Chicano Air Force (RCAF), a seminal collective of artists and activists.

It will also offer the museum's audience an exhibition and related programming that introduces or expands their knowledge of the RCAF's contributions to Sacramento's history. Details at sachistorymuseum.org.

SMUD Museum of Science and Curiosity – Laser Concert Series is an immersive music experience, paired with spectacular full-dome

lasers. Taylor Swift laser concert, Dec 5-6. Bad Bunny laser show, Feb. 6, 2026. Details at visitmo-sac.org.

Elks Lodge 6 Calendar of Events

Elks Lodge 6 Sunday Breakfast, 8:30 am-11 am; \$15 tax included.

Yoga, Monday 12 p.m., Wednesday 3:30 p.m. Lodge members free.

Karaoke Nights, Thursdays and Saturdays, 7 p.m.

Martial Arts, Monday 5 p.m.

Pickleball, Monday, Wednesday, 9 a.m.-12 p.m.; Thursday, 4:30-7:30 p.m.; Sunday, 4-7 p.m.

Wednesday Night Dinner, 5:30 to 7 p.m. See elks6.net for weekly menu. ★

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A Push of a Button, A Gift of Hope

By Omella Rossi

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - With holiday shoppers looking on, community leaders and non-profit representatives gathered Nov. 21 at the Westfield Galleria at Roseville to cut the ribbon on the annual Light the World Giving Machines, vending-style kiosks that allow visitors to purchase symbolic gifts for people in need.

Installed Nov. 17 and available through Dec. 8, the machines offer items such as hygiene kits, meals, school supplies and even baby goats, with 100% of every purchase going to designated charities. Each nonprofit participates for one year only, rotating annually.

"It's my pleasure to host this again," said Jeff Richardson, senior general manager of the Galleria. "Our community keeps growing, our center keeps growing and we are significantly up in traffic this year, and I think the Giving Machine has something to do with that."

Shoppers choose gifts by tapping a touchscreen and paying by card or mobile wallet. A card representing the selected item drops into the display box, symbolizing the purchase.

Santa J. Claus made a festive entrance, handing out baby-goat plush toys to children who gathered near the machines.

"Isn't it just wonderful when we can listen to our heart and that little voice that says we should think of others in need?" Claus said. "The secret to being on the nice list is kindness. Choosing kindness toward others and toward ourselves."

Five local nonprofits are featured in this year's Roseville machines, along with two global organizations.

Jake's Journey Home focuses on veterans and community members facing homelessness. Founder Jeanne Shuman said the organization was established in



Santa J. Claus made a festive entrance, handing out baby-goat plush toys to children who gathered near the machines. Photo by Omella Rossi

2019 after the death of her son, Jake, a Seabee veteran.

"We're finding a way to honor and remember his legacy," Shuman said. "This initiative collaborates with a lot of nonprofits, which is amazing, but it also allows us to keep doing our mission. We are small, we are mighty and we are all volunteers."

Stand Up Placer, which supports survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and human trafficking, is offering donors the chance to fund therapy sessions, children's crisis support and emergency food.

"Our partnership with the church and their community is a blessing," said executive director Gary McDonnell.

Sunrise Christian Food Ministry, serving families throughout Sacramento County, gives shoppers the option to purchase meals, hygiene kits and student food packs.

"We are so blessed to be a part of this amazing experience," said President April Jacek.

Volunteer Allia Adams made the season's first purchase, a pantry pack, hygiene kit and pajamas. "It's exciting," Adams said.



Attendees at the ribbon-cutting browse the donation cards, each representing a gift they can give through the Giving Machines. Photo by Omella Rossi

"It doesn't take a lot of effort to shine a light on what people can do."

The Salvation Army's offerings include summer camp, Christmas dinner and job training.

Major Osei Stewart said the partnership is "an opportunity to bring light into the darkness" and "serve those who need it the most."

Sacramento Children's Home, serving children and families for nearly 160 years, offers donors the chance to purchase baby food,

pajamas or parenting classes. CEO David Becker said their mission aligns with the event's spirit.

"A community of people coming together and saying, 'we are going to make a difference,'" Becker said. "We are going to be a light in the world."

Global nonprofits United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Mentors International provide international gift options such as school kits, malnutrition treatment

and supplies for small family businesses.

"These gifts remind us that generosity here can ripple outwards across the globe," said "Thank you for helping lift lives not only in our local communities and neighborhoods but also in communities far beyond our own."

Retired Sacramento County Sheriff John McGinness, who served as emcee, highlighted the program's impact and efficiency.

"Everything that is given to the Giving Machine goes to the intended recipient," McGinness said Nancy Pinney, a Giving Machine committee member. "Some of the things that are requested, most of us view as the most basic essentials."

Local officials echoed the spirit of unity.

"We are very proud of our mall," said Roseville Vice Mayor Karen Alvord. "It gives us an opportunity to focus on the true meaning of the season, to give hope, care and comfort."

Karen Wilkes, a Giving Machine committee member, noted that the program has grown from 26 locations to 126 worldwide in four years.

"It's such a blessing to us and to the people who will receive donations," Wilkes noted.

Wilkes also noted one "secret feature" of the giving machines.

"If you punch in 777, it will purchase every single gift. Thirty cards will drop, and it comes to about \$1,800. So come out, bring your friends, coworkers and families," Wilkes said.

The Light the World initiative, sponsored globally by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, encourages giving during the holiday season. This is the fourth year the Roseville Galleria has hosted the machines.

"They connect our community," McGinness said, "not only to our neighbors here in the Sacramento area but also to families around the world." ★

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Sacramento Superior Court Hosts Adoption Day Event

Sacramento Superior Court News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Sacramento Superior Court finalized and celebrated the adoptions of children from foster care on Adoption Day, Nov. 15.

Adoption Day is an opportunity to increase public awareness of the need for adoptive parents and educate prospective adoptive parents about the adoption process. It is also a time to celebrate local families who have opened their lives to children needing permanent homes.

“Courthouses are often stressful places to visit but this is a special opportunity to witness love and joy, and we are delighted to host this annual adoption day event,” said Juvenile Court’s Presiding Judge Kristina Lindquist.

Adoption Day in Sacramento County is a collaborative effort between multiple agencies.

“I am proud of the hard work our court staff and community partners put into this successful event, as well as the collaboration, dedication and care they put into every single case throughout the year,” Lindquist said.

During Adoption Day, judges



The Sacramento Superior Court finalized the adoptions of 26 children from foster care at the Juvenile Courthouse on Nov. 15. Photo courtesy of Sacramento Superior Court

and court staff were joined by community partners, including the Department of Child and Family Adult Services, Court Appointed Special Advocates of Sacramento (CASA), Parent Cooperative Community, Sacramento Sheriff’s Department Youth Services Unit, Sacramento Public Library, Zeta Phi Beta and Wayfinder.

“All children deserve to have a family and strong connections for life. Adoption is a great work of love and provides a child the

opportunity to develop secure attachments and be supported to achieve optimal physical and emotional growth and health overall,” Sacramento County’s Deputy Director of Child Protective Services Melissa Lloyd said about adoption.

Adoption Day festivities included adoption proceedings, refreshments and children’s activities, such as face painting and balloons.

The Nov. 15 event from 9 to 11:30 a.m. was at the Juvenile

Courthouse, 9605 Kiefer Blvd., Sacramento.

“We are glad to celebrate the adoptions that are occurring on Adoption Day but we should also take this time to reflect that there are many more children and youth who are still looking for permanent homes,” Lindquist said. “It is important to raise awareness of the need in our community for additional foster and adoptive families. Every child deserves the love and connection of a supportive family.”★



Adoption Day in Sacramento County is a collaborative effort between multiple agencies. Lend a Heart is an all-volunteer organization that provides animal-assisted therapy to the Sacramento area and surrounding counties with teams of certified handlers and therapy dogs. An adoptee plays with one of the therapy dogs on Adoption Day. Photo courtesy of Sacramento Superior Court

Keeping Your Peace Through the Holidays



A group sits at a table for a holiday feast. Photo courtesy of Sacramento County

By MPG Staff

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - While many residents spend the season preparing Thanksgiving meals, lighting the menorah, decorating their homes or planning festive gatherings, others experience the holidays as a period of heightened stress.

Feelings of overwhelm stemming from financial strain, social pressures, loneliness or challenges related to substance use are common this time of year.

To support residents navigating these emotional ups and downs, the Sacramento County Department of Health Services is sharing guidance to promote behavioral health and help the community cope with

holiday-related pressures.

Health officials say that the first step is acknowledging how you feel. Recognizing signs of stress or disruptions to normal routines can make it easier to respond early. Maintaining consistent sleep schedules and mealtimes can also support emotional stability during a busy season often filled with additional events.

The Sacramento County Department of Health Services also encourages residents to make a plan for managing stress. Whether it’s taking a walk, relaxing in front of the television or connecting with friends through online games, identifying enjoyable activities provides a reliable outlet when

emotions run high.

Connecting with others is another key recommendation. A quick phone call, text message or social media check-in can lift both your spirits and the recipient’s. Officials emphasize that reaching out, no matter the method, helps strengthen support systems.

County health professionals also urge residents to remain mindful of alcohol and substance use. For individuals in recovery or those who find holiday gatherings triggering, planning ahead can be critical. Strategies such as having an exit plan, contacting a trusted person or choosing a nonalcoholic drink can help prevent setbacks. Resources are available for anyone concerned

about their use or their ability to cope.

Knowing when and how to seek support is essential. Residents experiencing serious feelings of depression, anxiety or isolation are encouraged to reach out for help. The 9-8-8 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline connects callers to local crisis centers, and in situations requiring in-person support, Sacramento County’s Community Wellness Response Team could be dispatched.

The Behavioral Health Services Screening and Coordination Team operates a 24/7 hotline offering brief screenings and referrals to appropriate mental health services at 916-875-1055 or 888-881-4881. The Mental Health

Urgent Care Clinic at 2130 Stockton Blvd., Building 300, in Sacramento provides walk-in crisis services for all ages and can be reached at 916-520-2460.

Sacramento County officials remind residents that holiday stress is common and that it is acceptable and encouraged to seek peace wherever possible. They emphasize that no one needs to face these challenges alone and recommend turning to friends, family members or professionals for support.

More information and additional behavioral health resources can be found on Sacramento County’s Behavioral Health webpage at dhs.saccounty.gov/BHS/Pages/BHS-Home.aspx. ★

Help Pets Safely Enjoy Holidays

By MPG Staff

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - The holidays bring gatherings, festive décor and plenty of special meals but the season can also present hazards for household pets, according to Sacramento County’s Bradshaw Animal Shelter.

Shelter officials are encouraging pet owners to plan ahead to ensure that celebrations remain safe for cats and dogs.

Food is among the most common holiday dangers. While some seasonal dishes are safe for pets in small portions, such as plain turkey or chicken without skin or bones, plain sweet potato or pumpkin, simple fruits and vegetables, and xylitol-free peanut butter, many traditional items should be kept out of reach.

Chocolate, onions, garlic, grapes, raisins, sugar-free foods containing xylitol,

cooked bones, alcohol and raw dough are dangerous and life-threatening for pets. The shelter urges owners to stick with pet-specific treats when in doubt and to secure trash bins to prevent scavenging.

Decorations also pose potential dangers. Tinsel, ribbon and string can cause intestinal blockages if swallowed. Glass ornaments can break and injure pets, while holiday lights and electrical cords may tempt chewers. The shelter recommends keeping candles out of reach or opting for flameless versions to avoid burns or fires.

Several popular holiday plants can be toxic as well. Poinsettias can cause mild stomach upset, while mistletoe and holly can lead to vomiting and diarrhea. Lilies are especially dangerous for cats and should be avoided entirely. Artificial greenery can offer a festive alternative

without the risk.

In addition, the shelter notes that the holiday season’s busier household routines can be stressful for animals. Visitors, parties and frequent door openings could overwhelm pets or create opportunities for escape. Officials advise providing a quiet retreat, reminding guests not to feed pets table scraps and ensuring collars, ID tags and microchip information are up to date.

If a pet ingests a potentially harmful substance, owners should contact their veterinarian immediately or call the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) Animal Poison Control Center at 888-426-4435.

Bradshaw Animal Shelter staff wish the community a safe and happy holiday season and encourage residents to keep their pets in mind as they celebrate. ★

Holiday Airport Travel Ramps Up

By MPG Staff

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - The Sacramento International Airport (SMF) has prepared for another busy holiday travel season, with passenger volumes expected to exceed last year’s total.

Between Thanksgiving and the New Year, hundreds of thousands of travelers will pass through the Sacramento International Airport.

During the Thanksgiving period, the busiest day was expected to be Sunday, Nov. 30.

For the winter holidays (Dec. 24 to Dec. 31), 30-percent more seats are available compared to the same week in 2024, which means the potential for even more travelers at the Sacramento International Airport.

“We know how important these trips are for our passengers,” said Sacramento County Department of Airports’ Airport Operations and Public Safety Deputy Director Sheri Thompson-Duarte. “We’re ready for a safe, efficient and festive holiday season and we encourage travelers to plan ahead so they can start their journeys stress-free.”

In addition to preparing for higher passenger volumes, travelers will find new dining options throughout the terminals.

Sidewalk Juice and West Coast Sourdough are now open in both terminals, offering fresh sandwiches, soups and smoothies, while Terminal A welcomes Golden Grove Market and a new Starbucks location.

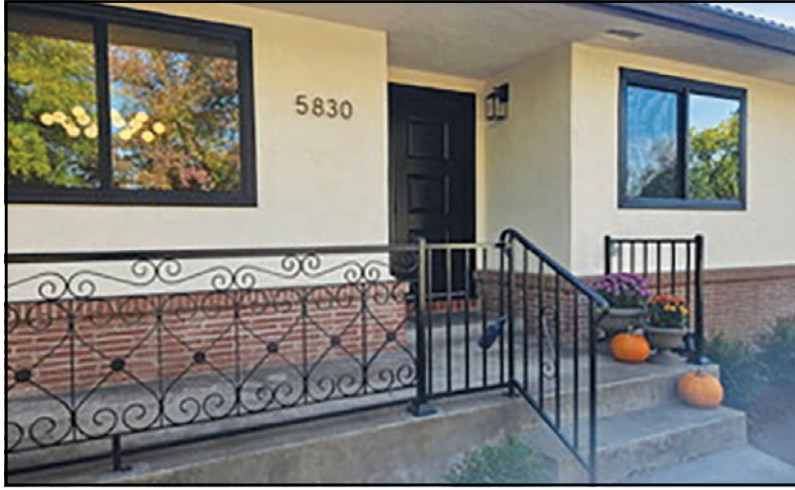
Travelers can make their holiday trips smoother by arriving early and allowing extra time for the busiest travel days. Airport officials recommend getting to the terminal at least two-and-a-half hours before domestic flights and three hours before international departures to accommodate parking, check-in and security screening.

Drivers should check parking availability in advance, as the parking garage and daily lot often fill quickly during peak morning hours. Officials suggest using an economy lot and taking a shuttle to the terminal. Real-time parking updates are available on the Sacramento International Airport website at flightsmf.gov.

Those picking up arriving passengers can avoid curbside congestion by using the airport’s free cell-phone waiting lot until the passengers are ready for pickup.

Travelers are also encouraged to pack smart and review Transportation Security Administration (TSA) guidelines for carry-on items, especially when bringing food, gifts or liquids. ★

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