



East Sacramento News

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Boosting Air Traffic Workforce Pipeline

Story and photos by Nathan Felix Valencia

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Rep. Ami Bera gathered with leaders of the Los Rios Community College District, Sacramento County and regional aviation on Monday, Dec. 8 at the Modern Aviation Terminal Building to recognize Sacramento City College's (SCC) process in becoming an enhanced Air Traffic-Collegiate Training Initiative (AT-CTI).

Pending final approval by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Sacramento City College would be one out of only two institutions in the nation to have dual certification for students to train for both tower and en route air traffic control.

This major milestone gives students a chance to complete the FAA training in Sacramento instead of needing to travel to Oklahoma City, where the FAA Academy is located. This provides students with benefits while attending school and a chance to be hired upon graduation. Sean Tener, adjunct professor in the Air Traffic Department at Sacramento City College, said, "We are helping California advance their economic growth by providing education and training that continuously contributes to the work force."

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"It's incredibly important that we have well trained aircraft controllers keeping us safe and confident in the skies," Rep. Ami Bera said.

California Comment on Latest Jobs Report

National Federation of Independent Business News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - California state director John Katabeck for the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) said the Dec. 4 release of the monthly NFIB Jobs Report showed that 33 percent (seasonally adjusted) of small business owners reported job openings they could not fill in November.

That's up one point from October and the first increase since June. Unfilled job openings remain above the historical average of 24 percent:

"We will shortly release our small business legislative agenda for the 2026 half of the session and topping that list will be a call for state lawmakers to pay off, or significantly down, California's unemployment insurance (UI) loans it took out from the federal government during the pandemic," Katabeck said.

"It's worth reminding everyone that only business owners pay unemployment insurance taxes, so having to calculate this debt has a big impact on whether or not to hire more employees or cut back the hours of existing employees or, worst of all, to lay off workers," Katabeck said. "It can't be a badge of honor, especially going into an election year, that California is the only state that has not paid Uncle Sam back the money it took to keep its UI Trust Fund solvent and unemployment checks going to those in need of them."

National Federation of Independent Business' Jobs Report is a national survey of National Federation of Independent Business-member small-business owners, not broken down by state. The typical National Federation of Independent Business member employs between one and nine people and reports gross sales of about \$500,000 a year.

"The economy has continued to grow steadily, despite the recent government shutdown. On Main Street, job growth continues to be constrained by a lack of qualified employees," said Bill Dunkelberg,

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'Leather and Lace' Raises Funds for Playhouse



Jazz and pop singer Denise Anya headlines "Leather and Lace," a fundraiser show for the Chautauqua Playhouse on Jan. 11.

Story and photo by Susan Maxwell Skinner

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - In its 50th season, Carmichael's Chautauqua Playhouse will kick off a golden anniversary year with an evening of jazz, rock and country music on Jan. 11.

The fundraiser event is produced by Pocket-area resident Denise Anya. The "Leather and Lace" theme reflects Anya's diverse musical taste.

Anya and guest singer Lahre Shiflet will be backed by a four-piece band.

"Part of me is lacy and all-girl," explained the Tennessee native. "But I've lived through tough times. You could say I have a right to sing the blues but I also want to sing for joy: joy from the love and music that's in my heart."

Anya has been a frequent jazz performer since moving to Sacramento 10 years ago. The career government worker began singing as a schoolgirl. In her teens, she was part of a city-wide Chattanooga gospel choir.

"I didn't imagine I'd ever be a soloist," Anya said. "I sang because I loved it. Music is a lifelong journey

for me."

Anya was 10 years old when she met gospel legend Mahalia Jackson.

"My schoolteacher accompanied her on the road," Anya said. "He knew our church pastor, who invited (Jackson) to sing for our congregation. I'd heard her on records. Seeing her in person was a totally emotional experience. That's why I love singing live. As an artist, you can give yourself so fully to a real audience."

Anya forged a Carmichael connection last summer, when she and local rockabilly singer Todd Morgan

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Boosting Air Traffic Workforce Pipeline



Adjunct Professor Sean Tener talks to CBS 13 at the Modern Aviation Terminal Building at Sacramento Executive Airport.

Continued from page 1

Having a lower cost, local training and being able to use financial aid toward their careers are some of the benefits that can relieve the burden that students take on when they attend the academy instead of Sacramento City College.

Students are also given a chance to make personal connections with their instructors.

They are given three semesters to absorb the needed information from the same instructors at Sacramento City College, while the academy gives the students only four

months to learn the information from multiple instructors.

Rep. Ami Bera stated, "It's incredibly important that we have well trained aircraft controllers keeping us safe and confident in the skies."

Bera said he understands how important it is to have air traffic controllers as he flies back and forth across the country on a weekly basis, especially during the government shutdown.

With the shutdown, and the shortage of controllers, there are some instances where cargo needs to divert to Reno, Nevada, or to the Bay Area before being transported to Sacramento.



Rep. Ami Bera chats with student Karyme Perez and her parents.

Karyme Perez, who is in the Air Traffic Control Program at Sacramento City College, stated, "The government shutdown made me even more motivated as a student. Seeing how much this affects us as a nation and the shortage of the controllers that are needed right now, I feel students like me are even more motivated to be able to do this career and help out the community."

Upon approval from the FAA, the opportunity is going to be higher by giving students a more direct pipeline for a career after graduation.



Sacramento City College student Karyme Perez talks about new enhanced programs in air traffic education.



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Thunderbirds Return to California Capital Airshow

California Capital Airshow News Release

MATHER, CA (MPG) - The California Capital Airshow, in partnership with Sacramento County and the City of Rancho Cordova, recently announced that the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds will headline the 2026 California Capital Airshow, returning to Mather Airport on Oct. 10 and Oct. 11.

This milestone event will mark the airshow's 20th anniversary and a celebration of America's 250th birthday, promising an unforgettable weekend of aviation excellence and community pride.

The world-renowned Thunderbird jet demonstration team will take to the skies over Sacramento with their signature precision, power and patriotism, highlighting the incredible skill and dedication of the U.S. Air Force. Their performance will lead an extraordinary lineup of military and civilian aviation talent, immersive ground displays and hands-on STEM experiences for all ages.

"This will be one of the most spectacular shows in our 20-year history," said Darcy Brewer, Chief Executive Officer of the California Capital Airshow (CCA). "We're honored to welcome the Thunderbirds back to inspire and thrill audiences while we celebrate two major milestones: CCA's 20th year and America's 250th. There's so much more to come and this is just the beginning."

Additional performer announcements, featured attractions and new fan



California Capital Airshow crowds are always dazzled by the Thunderbirds' performances, The U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds return next year to the highly-anticipated airshow. Photos courtesy of California Capital Airshow

experiences will be shared in the months ahead.

A limited number of tickets will go on sale through the California Capital Airshow's website in 2026.

Fans can gain special access to performer announcements and discount tickets by becoming an AIR SHOW INSIDER® online at CaliforniaCapitalAirshow.com.

The California Capital Airshow is a nonprofit organization dedicated to honoring the past, inspiring the future and giving back to the community.

In partnership with the City of Rancho Cordova, Sacramento County and countless sponsors and



The U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds will headline the 2026 California Capital Airshow, returning to Mather Airport on Oct. 10 and 11.

volunteers, California Capital Airshow has awarded more than

\$600,000 in scholarships and introduces thousands of students annually to

careers in aviation, aerospace and STEM. For more about the

California Capital Airshow, visit californiacapitalairshow.com. ★

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SacRT to Expand Low-Emission Bus Fleet

Sacramento Regional Transit News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - The Sacramento Regional Transit District (SacRT) is proud to announce the award of a \$39.67 million grant from the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Low or No Emission (Low-No) Grant Program. This critical funding will support the replacement of 49 aging compressed natural gas (CNG) buses with modern, low-emission vehicles and fund infrastructure upgrades that will improve service reliability, reduce emissions and enhance transit access in underserved communities.

This project builds on SacRT's momentum from the nearly \$77 million Low-No grant awarded in 2024, which is supporting the transformation of SacRT's McClellan facility into a state-of-the-art bus maintenance hub. Located at the former McClellan Air Force Base, SacRT's McClellan facility was originally acquired in 2005 to relieve overcrowding at the Downtown Bus Maintenance Facility. However, SacRT's McClellan facility has faced years of deferred maintenance.

A 2021 redesign enables the facility to house and maintain up to 270 buses, including the 49 new compressed natural gas buses funded through this grant and future clean-fuel vehicles. Together, these investments in



Federal Transit Administration funding will support replacing 49 Sacramento Regional Transit aging buses with modern, low-emission vehicles and fund infrastructure upgrades that will improve service reliability, reduce emissions and enhance transit access in underserved communities. Photo courtesy of Sacramento Regional Transit

fleet and facility will relieve pressure at the Downtown Bus Maintenance Facility and improve service reliability.

SacRT is facing an urgent need to modernize its bus fleet. By the end of Fiscal Year 2025, 78 buses will be due for retirement, with 129 reaching the end of their useful life by 2028. The 49 buses being replaced through this project, some dating back to 2008, average 510,000 miles and 16 years in service and operate at just 56 percent availability, due to frequent mechanical issues.

"This funding is another major step forward in our ongoing efforts to deliver cleaner, more efficient and more reliable transit for the Sacramento region," said SacRT General Manager/CEO Henry Li. "These new buses will improve the rider experience and help SacRT continue to operate frequent bus service through the region."

Said Representative Ami Bera, M.D. (CA-06), "Clean and reliable public transportation is essential to the health and economic vitality of our region. I'm pleased to see SacRT receive this critical

funding to replace aging buses and invest in infrastructure that supports underserved communities. These improvements will help reduce pollution, create good-paying jobs, and ensure that more residents have access to safe and efficient transit."

Said Congressman Kevin Kiley, "This federal investment in SacRT's bus fleet and maintenance infrastructure is a win for the Sacramento region. This project demonstrates that good things can happen when we work across party and geographic lines to get

things done for local communities and residents."

The new 2027 compressed natural gas buses will replace outdated models and are expected to significantly improve service reliability, reduce breakdowns and ensure compliance with the Federal Transit Administration's spare ratio guidelines.

The project will modernize 69 percent of SacRT's all-day bus routes, serving 26 percent of total riders, and is projected to cut lifetime emissions by more than 6 million kilograms of carbon dioxide (CO₂), which is equivalent to taking 1,300 passenger vehicles off the road for a year.

In addition to environmental and service improvements, the project will generate substantial operational savings. During the first two years of the manufacturer warranty, SacRT anticipates saving approximately \$1.19 million annually on spare parts, \$827,800 on non-preventive maintenance labor and \$463,097 per year in fuel costs due to reduced consumption of 154,882 gasoline gallon equivalents.

This funding is part of the Federal Transit Administration's broader effort to modernize transit systems nationwide. In 2025, the Federal Transit Administration awarded approximately \$2.1 billion to 167 projects across 47 states and territories through the Low-No and Buses and Bus Facilities programs. ★

Dr. Abdalla Recognized for Leadership in Opioid Treatment



Dr. Jacqueline Abdalla recently received an honor from the Western Association of Correctional Healthcare Services for her leadership in improving medical care within Sacramento County's correctional facilities. Photo courtesy of Sacramento County

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - Sacramento County recognizes Dr. Jacqueline Abdalla for receiving a major honor from the Western Association of Correctional Healthcare Services (WACHSA) for her leadership in improving medical care within the county's correctional facilities, especially through the expansion of Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT). "This award really represents the collective effort of our entire team. I

can get so focused on the next challenge, so this has been a nice opportunity to pause and reflect on progress we've made together in advancing patient care," Abdalla said.

A cornerstone of that progress is Sacramento County's robust Medication-Assisted Treatment program, which Abdalla describes as a "humane and outcomes-oriented" approach to opioid withdrawal and addiction.

Medication-Assisted Treatment medications not only treat the extremely uncomfortable symptoms of withdrawal but also stabilize cravings in the long term, allowing patients to feel "normal" again so they can begin the difficult work of recovery. Since the program rolled out, the jail has seen a significant decrease in overdoses and overdose deaths.

Abdalla's leadership has extended beyond addiction treatment. Less than two years ago, the jail faced a backlog that left patients waiting months for specialty care and off-site appointments. Today, thanks to major process improvements, urgent referrals are now scheduled within two weeks and routine referrals within three months.

Additionally, high-risk patients, including those needing cancer care, are closely tracked to ensure their care is coordinated quickly.

Abdalla said this work is especially important because incarcerated individuals are among the country's most medically vulnerable. Many enter custody with chronic medical or mental health conditions and face barriers such as unstable housing.

"Their time in jail can be a big opportunity for us to provide health care services that they may otherwise not have access to. I feel grateful to be a part of that. My hope is that they leave in a better place than they came in," Abdalla said.

Abdalla credits Sacramento County's strong on-the-ground collaboration between custody and medical leadership for creating the environment that allows these improvements to take shape and the county credits her leadership for guiding the team forward.

To learn more about adult/juvenile health, visit Sacramento County's Primary Health Services' online page at dhs.sac-county.gov/PRI/Pages/PRI-Home.aspx. ★

Sacramento County Maintains Class 2 FEMA Rating

Class 2 Rating Provides 40% Discount on Flood Insurance

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has renewed Sacramento County as a Class 2 in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Community Rating System (CRS).

The rating allows residents and businesses within Special Flood Hazard Areas of unincorporated Sacramento County to receive a 40-percent discount on flood insurance for most National Flood Insurance Program policies issued or renewed on or after Oct. 1, 2026.

Through the Community Rating System program, the Federal Emergency Management Agency ranks communities based on a point system for activities implemented to reduce flood risk. This includes promoting mitigation measures to the public, implementing flood warning systems and promoting the purchase of flood insurance.

The ranking ranges from 10 (lowest) to 1 (highest). According to Federal Emergency Management Agency, there are 22,600 participating National Flood Insurance Program communities. Nationwide, there are 1,504 communities taking part in the Community Rating System program.

Nationwide, there are two Class 1 Community Rating System communities and 10 Community Rating System Class 2 communities. California has 97 Community Rating System Communities with only one Class 1 community and one Class 2 community, which is Sacramento County.

"In the unincorporated parts of Sacramento County, we have 4,539 properties that purchase their flood insurance coverage through the National Flood

Insurance Program," said Department of Water Resources Director Matt Satow.

"The Class 2 rating we have achieved and corresponding 40% discount will save our residents over \$500,000 in 2026 on their flood insurance policies and on average, \$121 per policy," Satow said.

When Sacramento County joined the program in 1992, Federal Emergency Management Agency initially gave the County a Class 9 rating. Over the years, Sacramento County's Department of Water Resources has steadily worked to improve its rating by meeting the criteria set by Federal Emergency Management Agency to protect Special Flood Hazard Areas of unincorporated Sacramento County.

The first Class 2 was awarded in 2017. The renewal of the Class 2 rating comes as the county embarks on its update of the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. The plan is updated every five years to address the list of hazards and assessed risks that make the area vulnerable.

The updated plan will help improve the resilience of Sacramento County to weather future disasters. The Local Hazard Mitigation Plan allows agencies to apply for pre- and post-disaster mitigation grant funding and lessen the cost of flood insurance to the residents of Sacramento County, and the surrounding cities through Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) National Flood Insurance Program.

You can learn more about the Sacramento County's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan online at stormready.org and the county's Class 2 status at the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Community Rating System visualization website at crsviz.com. ★

'The Ripple Effect' Project Wins Award

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Sacramento County Department of Health Services' Behavioral Health Division is celebrating a major national win after its Safer Sacramento Team earned a 2025 Shorty Impact Award for "The Ripple Effect" documentary blog series.

The Shorty Awards honor the most influential and purpose-driven digital campaigns in the world, recognizing work that creates real social impact through storytelling, creativity and community engagement. Receiving

this award places Sacramento County's project among the top public-health campaigns nationwide.

"The Ripple Effect," a nine-part documentary blog series, was created in response to the alarming rise in fentanyl overdoses and poisonings. Safer Sacramento wanted to cut through the noise using short-form video format to shed light on the fentanyl crisis, the heartbreak of loss and the strength of community.

The county's research shows that the raw, honest storytelling and deep connection in "The Ripple Effect" helped reduce fentanyl-related deaths in Sacramento County by 27 percent. That number isn't just a statistic; it

represents lives saved, families kept intact and futures realized.

Every installment carried a call to action: links to resources for treatment and recovery and people responded. "The Ripple Effect" has more than 19,000 clicks to the county's support services page and more than 41,000 visits to educational content.

But the numbers only tell part of the story. More than 101,000 people engaged, not just with likes and shares, but with their hearts. They shared personal stories in the comments: those of grief, survival and hope. Some were heartbreaking. Some were healing. And through

it all, Safer Sacramento connected them with services: bereavement support, trauma care or someone to say, "I understand and want to help."

"This has been an exciting, passionate and heartfelt project," said Lori Miller, the Behavioral Health Services' Substance Use Prevention and Treatment Division division manager.

"It was an honor to be part of this meaningful and impactful work and the success of this documentary. A huge thank you to all the community partners and the family members who have lost loved ones and bravely shared their stories in hopes of saving lives. Congratulations to

Sacramento County," Miller said.

This is just one of the many efforts Sacramento County is working on to combat the fentanyl crisis. To watch "The Ripple Effect" series or to learn more, visit the Safer Sacramento page online at safersacramento.com/the-ripple-effect. To get involved in the Safer Sacramento Project or share your story, email Miller at Millerlori@saccounty.gov.

One call connects you to mental health and substance use treatment support. Sacramento County's Behavior Health Services-SAC Call Center is available to connect you with the services you need at 916-875-1055. ★

Final Cadet Class of the Year Graduates

Ceremony Caps Year of Record Hiring and Rising Interest in Law Enforcement Careers

California Highway Patrol News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - As the end of 2025 nears, Gov. Gavin Newsom joins the California Highway Patrol (CHP) in celebrating the department's final graduating class of the year.

The 137 new officers who were sworn in during a Dec. 5 ceremony at the California Highway Patrol Academy will be placed throughout the state to protect and serve communities.

This marks a significant achievement for the California Highway Patrol, which graduated 780 cadets in 2025 alone. California Highway Patrol continues its efforts to recruit highly qualified individuals to protect the state's community safety.

"I'm proud to see the young women and men stepping up to keep our communities safe," said Governor Gavin Newsom. "As we close out the year, California continues to make real progress, strengthening protections across the state while staying focused on the needs of the people we serve."

California Highway Patrol Commissioner Sean Duryee said, "These cadets have been pushed to their limits and faced significant pressure but despite all the hardships, they never gave up."

"Their determination to keep going, even when facing challenges, demonstrates their dedication to helping others and serving the people of California," Duryee said.



Before family and loved ones, the cadets took their oath and received their badges, officially joining one of the nation's largest law enforcement agencies. Photos courtesy of California Highway Patrol

"The California Highway Patrol (CHP) proudly welcomes these new officers and looks forward to the remarkable achievements they will make throughout their decades of service."

During their 26 weeks in the California Highway Patrol Academy, cadets trained in vehicle code enforcement, crash and criminal investigations, emergency vehicle operations and officer safety.

The academy's curriculum also focuses on legal responsibilities, communication, ethics and cultural awareness in order to prepare cadets to serve California's diverse population.

Earlier last week, the cadets took part in a five-mile run as one of their training's last parts. The new officers



The new officers begin reporting to one of the California Highway Patrol's 102 Area offices throughout the state on Dec. 15.

begin reporting to one of the California Highway Patrol's 102 Area offices throughout the state on Dec. 15.

A Growing Force Protecting Californians California Highway Patrol's recruitment initiatives over the past few

years, including the launch of the 2022 statewide "Join the CHP 1000" campaign and the "Cadets" web series, which can be

watched on the California Highway Patrol YouTube page (www.youtube.com/watch?v=UiGuz08MkSM) continue to drive strong interest in law enforcement careers.

Including the Dec. 5 newly-sworn members, the California Highway Patrol has brought on more than 2,300 officers from January 2022 through this December.

From 2022 to 2024, applications increased by more than 52 percent.

California Highway Patrol is on track to receive more than 33,000 applications by the end of the year, continuing the upward trend.

Enhancing public safety remains a top priority for Gov. Gavin Newsom, and in November 2024, California successfully achieved its multi-year California Highway Patrol recruitment goal of 1,000 new officers.

California Highway Patrol continues to actively recruit dedicated individuals who are ready to make a difference in communities throughout California. A career with the California Highway Patrol offers comprehensive training, competitive benefits and opportunities for professional growth and advancement.

To learn more about joining the California Highway Patrol, visit CHPMadeForMore.com to take the first step toward a rewarding career in law enforcement.

The California Highway Patrol mission is to provide the highest level of Safety, Service and Security. ★

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Missing a Tooth?

Here Are Your Options

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.

If you're ready to explore your options, schedule a consultation to see what's best for you.

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Kings Korner

By V.G. Harris



The Sacramento Kings had a rough week. Whether it's at Golden One or on the road, the 2025-26 campaign has not been a pleasant experience.

Diehard fans will likely point to injuries, and you would have a point, but injuries alone cannot account for losing 20 games in the first 26 contests. There is more to the story.

The Kings as they are currently assembled do not match up with bigger teams. Does that mean that the Kings need to build a team that resembles the Oklahoma City Thunder? Well, it wouldn't be a bad idea, but easier said than done, it's important to note that there are a host of players under 6 feet, 6 inches that are difference makers in this league.

Well, I don't pretend to be able to read the mind of Scott Perry, but if you listen to him, he will tell you that he has autonomy and will be the architect of what is apparently going to be a rebuilding season. Perry has alluded to this experience likely taking three to five years, which no one wants to hear.

For me, I can condense the process to five players that I would keep at all costs.

Domantas Sabonis has had little time on the hardwood this season due to injury, but make no mistake about it, he is a difference maker. Any player that can lead the league in double-doubles, year over year, while also leading the league in rebounding three years running, is someone you need to covet. Sabonis also led the league in triple-doubles two years ago, so there you have an anchor on your team that simply needs to stay.

The Kings are guard heavy, but their young guards have yet to see their potential. Players like Nique Clifford and even Devin Carter have not had sufficient time for fans to see what could be an incredible upside. Keep these youngsters and remember why you made them number one draft choices.

Keegan Murray had a rookie season three years ago that was eye popping because he was living up to his hype. The NCAA scoring champ out of Iowa set a Sacramento franchise record of 11 consecutive threes, and a total of twelve three-pointers in one game.

Keegan's experience in Sacramento has been up and down, but this year could be a breakout year for the young baller that has not just the shooting ability, but a knack for defense as well. Keep him!

Maxime Reynaud is getting game time due to Domantas being sidelined and he is giving Kings fans a glimpse of what this seven-footer can do. He is my fifth pick to stay.

As our Sactown ballers lost three games last week by a total of 56 combined points, I glanced around the league to see who might be a player that could bring a steadiness to this lineup. One player, although a guard, was Austin Reeves, who managed to drop 51 points on the Kings earlier this season when both LeBron James and Luca Doncic were sidelined with injuries. The same Austin Reeves that just 4 years ago went undrafted by all 30 NBA teams and would eventually be signed to a two-way contract as a walk-on by the LA Lakers.

In high school, Reeves scored 73 points in one game and won back-to-back state titles. Reeves went on to play for Oklahoma averaging 32 points per game as a senior while making the NCAA tournament. How does the entire league miss on a talent that is having the time of his life playing in the NBA?

As I've said before, the Kings need to find someone that can assess talent and hit home runs. It needs to happen sooner rather than later, so right now would be just fine.

Are you listening, Doug Christie? You have a player sitting on your bench by the name of Doug McDermott that can shoot threes like everyone else shoots free throws, and he needs to find a place in your rotation. With six wins to show for the season, what are you waiting for?

Just as Austin Reeves was a welcome surprise, maybe McDermott could bring some much-needed energy to this team.

Stay tuned Kings fans because we're only 25 percent of the way into the season!

All the best and a very Merry Christmas!

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

Trump Sides with Agriculture Again in California's Never-Ending Water Wars



By Dan Walters, CALMatters.org

From the onset of his foray into presidential politics a decade ago, Donald Trump has been obsessed with managing California's water, often interjecting himself into decades-long conflicts over how the precious commodity should be divvied up.

During his first stint as president, Trump was heavily influenced by the Westlands Water District, a huge agricultural water agency in the San Joaquin Valley that sought more irrigation water for itself and other farm interests.

That relationship led to an extremely controversial contract that guaranteed Westlands as much as 1 million acre-feet of water each year from the federal Central Valley Project, solidifying the district's supply situation. Lacking water rights, Westlands had historically depended on temporary contracts to meet members' demands.

The new contract angered environmental groups because it threatened to reduce flows through the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta for wildlife habitat. The groups sued and won rulings against the contract in trial and appellate courts.

After Trump moved back into the White House in January, he immediately picked up where he left off, issuing an order to federal water officials to maximize deliveries in California.

He also complained that

a shortage of water deliveries to Southern California was a factor in the rapid spread of deadly wildfires in Los Angeles County, claiming that the state's efforts to protect "an essentially worthless fish called a smelt" was at fault.

"Governor Gavin Newsom refused to sign the water restoration declaration put before him that would have allowed millions of gallons of water, from excess rain and snow melt from the North, to flow daily into many parts of California, including the areas that are currently burning in a virtually apocalyptic way," Trump wrote on his social media site, Truth Social.

Newsom's office rebuked the claim, saying, "There is no such document as the water restoration declaration — that is pure fiction."

Meanwhile, Trump's executive order pushed the Bureau of Reclamation to modify how it operates the Central Valley Project, a complex of reservoirs — including Lake Shasta — and canals that captures runoff from Northern California mountains and supplies water agencies in the Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys.

Last week, the bureau announced an operational modification that would increase annual water deliveries by 130,000 to 180,000 acre-feet from the Central Valley Project and another 120,000 to 220,000 from the State Water Project, the latter chiefly generated from the Oroville Dam on the Feather River. The two projects share management of the Sacramento River and its tributaries.

"This updated operations plan reflects our commitment to using the best available science to increase water deliveries while safeguarding the environment and honoring the legacy of the Central Valley Project's

90 years of service," Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum said in a statement.

The announcement sparked reactions, both pro and con, that reflect the state's long-running water allocation battles — praise from Westlands and other agricultural water agencies that are facing supply reductions from regulation of groundwater use and condemnation from state officials and environmental groups.

"These operational refinements reflect a thoughtful, data-informed approach that strengthens water supply availability for growers while maintaining California's commitment to environmental stewardship," Westlands said in a statement.

Newsom spokesperson, Tara Gallegos, had another take: "The Trump administration is putting politics over people — catering to big donors instead of doing what's right for Californians. As per usual, the emperor is left with no clothes, pushing for an outcome that disregards science and undermines our ability to protect the water supply for people, farms, and the environment."

For their part, state water officials say they have no intention of matching the Bureau of Reclamation's new operational rules.

So here we go again, another chapter in the war over water that began when California became a state 175 years ago. It's probably headed to the courts and will probably outlast not only Newsom's governorship but Trump's presidency.

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 About Remarrying and Benefits from an Ex-spouse



By Russell Gloor, AMAC Certified Social Security Advisor

Dear Rusty: I am almost 57, divorced after a 14-year marriage. My former spouse is 15 years older than I and made significantly more money than me. I am required to retire from my job at age 60 but expect to keep working in some capacity.

I have a girlfriend of a similar age to me. She did not earn as much as her former husband as she mainly raised their children. She is also divorced from an older spouse who made more money than she did. I am trying to figure out if we will be penalized if we marry, or if it matters if we wait until after we reach 60 years of age. Can I claim my own benefits when I become eligible at 62, then claim survivor benefits later, whenever my former spouse passes? Is that affected if, or when, I remarry? I do not want to give up my potential survivor benefits from my ex-spouse. Are those affected if I remarry?

If I understand correctly, if I remarry even after 60, we would both forfeit divorced spousal benefits, is that right? Given that my girlfriend's former spouse

probably made more money than I, would she be forfeiting her former spousal benefits if we were to marry, even after age 60?

Lastly, I am considering retiring abroad as an expat. Any suggestions about how that would affect our Social Security benefits? **Signed: Starting Over**

Dear Starting Over: With certain exceptions, benefits from a living ex-spouse cannot be collected if you remarry (regardless of your age when you remarry). So, from what you've shared, whenever you remarry both you and your new wife will forfeit eligibility for benefits from your respective ex-spouses while they are living (FYI, there are exceptions for those who are disabled).

However, the rules are different for a surviving ex-spouse: if you remarry before age 60, you will forfeit your surviving ex-spouse benefit. But if you remarry after age 60, you retain eligibility to collect survivor benefits from a deceased former spouse. So, if you and your girlfriend remarry after you are both age 60, you will both still be able to claim survivor benefits based on your former spouses' records.

And, yes, it is possible for you to initially claim your own SS retirement benefit at 62 and claim your surviving ex-spouse benefit later (after your former spouse dies). Provided you remarry after age 60 you do not lose that option, but if you were to claim a surviving ex-spouse benefit before reaching your full retirement age (FRA), the monthly payment amount would be reduced (all SS benefits taken before FRA are reduced).

Note too, that if you plan

to continue working after you are first eligible for SS benefits, Social Security has an "earnings test" which limits how much you can earn from working while collecting early benefits. The limit changes yearly (for 2025 it is \$23,400) and if exceeded, SS will take back \$1 in benefits for every \$2 you are over the limit. And as you likely know, claiming at age 62 will also mean a benefit payment of about 30% less than available at your FRA of 67. So, if you plan to work after age 62 and plan to claim early SS, you should take the "earnings test" into consideration. FYI, the earning test no longer applies after you reach your full retirement age.

Now, regarding retiring overseas, be aware that Social Security has limits on where you can collect U.S. Social Security benefits. I suggest you use Social Security's Payments Abroad Screening Tool to find out if benefits are payable wherever you plan to retire abroad. That SSA tool can be found here:

www.ssa.gov/international/payments_outsideUS.html

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Europe Has Made Itself An Afterthought

of the U.S., "decline is a choice."

This isn't quite right with regard to Europe, whose great powers were kneecapped by the cataclysms of the early 20th century. France bore the brunt of World War I, suffering 1.4 million dead and 4.3 million wounded and a ruinous economic cost.

As for Britain, stretched to the max, it got steadily eclipsed in power and influence by the United States as World War II progressed. The less said about Germany's role in all this, of course, the better. And then the European colonial empires inevitably dissolved. So, Europe was going to be diminished compared to its glory days. Its current fecklessness, though, has indeed been a choice, borne of strategic fantasy and economic incompetence.

Strong militaries were deemed as a thing of the past, or something unnecessary as long as Uncle Sam was around. The Brits, for instance, are hard-pressed to maintain a 73,000-strong army, and the size of their once-storied surface fleet is at a historic low.

Europe imagined itself "a diplomatic superpower," but has learned to regret that "soft power" not backed up by hard power is of limited utility. Both the Nobel Committee and Amnesty International have considerable soft power, too, but no one pays attention to them regarding high-level geopolitical questions.

Economically, the EU "regulatory superpower"

has hobbled growth -- over the last 30 years, Western European labor productivity declined from 95% of the U.S. level to 80% -- while Europe's commitment to "net zero" greenhouse emissions has driven insane energy priorities. Years into the Ukraine war, Europe is still dependent on gas imports from Russia.

None of this means that the U.S. should go out of its way to give Europe the back of its hand. Whatever its other failings, Europe has collectively given Ukraine more aid than the United States, and was justifiably furious at the initial 28-point Ukraine proposal. That plan had the embattled country handing over to Moscow strategically important territory that is still in Ukrainian hands; agreeing to a limit on the size of its military; and the U.S. taking currently frozen Russian assets in Europe to rebuild Ukraine (getting 50% of any profits) and to pursue joint investment projects with Russia.

Negotiations with the Ukrainians have reportedly produced a more reasonable version, but it is Washington and Moscow that matter most here.

The analyst Robert Kagan famously wrote years ago that, in their divergent approaches to the world, "Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus." Having long outsourced power politics to Mars, it turns out that Venus has limited influence even in her own backyard.

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

Planning Academy Shows How to Shape City's Future

City of Sacramento News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Applications are now open for the city's 2026 Planning Academy, a program designed to educate and engage Sacramento residents, business owners and community leaders in the city's planning process.

The free, 11-week course, beginning March 2, 2026, provides participants with a background in the fundamentals of city planning and covers a broad spectrum of relevant planning and community development-related topics and issues.

"Planning Academy equips Sacramentans to become strong advocates for a well-planned community," said Laura Tuller, associate planner and one of the leads for the program. "Some of our graduates have gone on to serve on city commissions and even city council."

Topics covered during the course include housing, transportation planning, historic preservation, climate action planning and more.

More than 500 Sacramento residents, business owners and community leaders have graduated from the Planning Academy since its inception in 2002.

Classes will take place on Monday evenings and be a mix of in-person and virtual sessions, plus two Saturday field trips. The class concludes with a ceremonial graduation and a special presentation at a city council meeting.

Applications are due online by 5 p.m. Friday, Jan. 23, 2026. For a link to the application and more information about the academy, please visit the Planning Academy webpage at cityofsacramento.gov.

If you have questions about the City of Sacramento Planning Academy, email planningacademy@cityofsacramento.org. ★



Planning Academy classes will take place on Monday evenings and be a mix of in-person and virtual sessions, plus two Saturday field trips. Photo courtesy of City of Sacramento

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 aerospacemuseum.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 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 Miclán: 50th Anniversary of Dia 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 Dia de los Muertos (DDL) 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. Bad Bunny laser show, Feb. 6, 2026. Details at visitmosac.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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Water Forum Receives \$333,000 for Salmon Habitat

Water Forum News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - The Water Forum has received a \$333,000 grant from the Wildlife Conservation Board to plan the next generation of rearing habitat improvements for young salmon and steelhead on the lower American River.

The funding will help the Water Forum, in partnership with the Bureau of Reclamation and Sacramento County Regional Parks, identify and design up to 10 new habitat sites covering about 30 acres within the American River Parkway.

These future projects will focus on creating side channels and seasonally inundated shaded areas where juvenile salmonids can rest, feed and grow before migrating to the ocean. These sites are essential for helping Chinook salmon and Central Valley steelhead

survive increasingly-challenging river conditions.

"This investment from the Wildlife Conservation Board strengthens our region's long-standing commitment to science-based river stewardship," said Water Forum Executive Director Ashlee Casey. "By supporting our efforts to combine best-available science with a collaborative stakeholder process, Wildlife Conservation Board is an integral partner as we work to improve conditions for our native salmon and steelhead."

Water Forum Habitat and Science Program Manager Erica Bishop explained the importance of this work.

"Young salmon need places away from the faster, main river channel to grow before they begin their journey to the ocean. This grant, paired with other funding, lets us take a careful look at the river and recent data, and design

the best possible projects so when funding becomes available, we're ready to build."

The Water Forum's award is part of a larger funding package approved by the Wildlife Conservation Board on Nov. 20. In total, the Wildlife Conservation Board awarded \$87.1 million for 16 projects in 14 counties, supporting habitat restoration, salmon recovery and the return of culturally significant lands to Tribal stewardship. Several of these initiatives advance the state's Salmon Strategy, which focuses on improving river health and climate resilience throughout California.

The Water Forum includes a diverse group of water providers, environmentalists, business groups and local governments working to balance water supply needs with protection of the lower American River. Learn more at waterforum.org. ★

Stomper Spreads Holiday Cheer

Athletics News Release

WEST SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - With the holidays right around the corner, the Green & Gold stayed busy spreading cheer throughout the Sacramento community. Here's a look at November's highlights.

In partnership with ABC10, the Athletics proudly supported this year's Stand Against Hunger fundraiser with a \$50,000 donation. Stand Against Hunger is a holiday-season campaign dedicated to raising funds and awareness for local food banks, helping fight food insecurity across the Greater Sacramento region.

West Sacramento Día de los Muertos Celebration

Stomper brought joy and energy to the West Sacramento Día de los Muertos Celebration, joining families and community members honoring



Stomper participated in ABC10's Stand Against Hunger fundraiser, donating \$50,000 to the cause. Photo courtesy of the Athletics

loved ones. The celebration offered a special moment for the community to come together and share stories, culture and connection.

West Sacramento Veterans Day Parade

Stomper marched alongside veterans, families and local organizations

at the West Sacramento Veteran's Day Parade. The parade honored the bravery and service of those who have served in the armed forces. It was a privilege to celebrate the service and dedication of our veterans alongside the West Sacramento community. ★

California Comment on Latest Jobs Report

Continued from page 1

chief economist at the National Federation of Independent Business.

Highlights from the Latest NFIB Jobs Report

A seasonally adjusted net 19 percent of owners plan to create new jobs in the next three months, up four points from October and the highest reading of the year. The last time that hiring plans reached this level was in December 2024.

In November, 21 percent of small business owners cited labor quality as their single most important problem, down six points, erasing most of October's sudden increase.

Labor costs, reported as the single most important problem by small business owners, remained at 8 percent.

Seasonally adjusted, a net 26 percent of small business owners reported raising compensation in November, unchanged from October. A net 24-percent (seasonally adjusted) plan to raise compensation in the next three months, up five points from October. The last time plans to raise compensation were at this level was in December 2024.

Keep up with the latest California small business news at www.nfib.com. Follow the National Federation of Independent Business on X @NFIB_CA and on Facebook @NFIB.CA. ★

Continued from page 1

united in jazz/rockabilly fusion.

"I discovered a deep love for country music," Anya said. "Todd and I were friends and my idea was to bring his and my styles together. The show highlighted our diversity and let us both uplift the human spirit. We completely sold out our show at the Spiritual Life Center Church (in Arden Arcade)."

Anya will bring her all-pro Good News Experience Band to the theater housed in the La Sierra Community Center. Players include pianist Jimmy Malone, David Lichman (bass) Jim Caselli (drums) and Russell Brown on guitar.

"We're a diverse group. We'll present a diverse repertoire," she promised.

The singer has huge affection for the venue.

"I've acted in great shows at

Chautauqua; I've also helped with production and costuming," Anya said. "I love the connection this playhouse has with community. It gives children and adults a rare creative outlet. I sure wish I'd had encouragement like this when I was growing up."

"For an arts non-profit to maintain this energy for 50 years is phenomenal," Anya added. "I'm excited to help their fundraising. It's an intimate venue (95 seats), and a cozy ambiance is perfect for chilly January. We hope to sell out every seat."

"Leather and Lace" kicks off at 7 p.m. Jan. 11. Tickets are \$20. Parking is free. The Chautauqua Playhouse receives 60 percent of ticket proceeds.

The theater is located at 5325 Engle Road, Carmichael. Reserve online at cplayhouse.org/box-office-info.html or call 916-489-7529. ★

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Fees to Build New Homes Average \$109,000

BIA Calls on Local Governments to Lower Fees, Improve Affordability

North State Building Industry Association News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG)

- Fees builders must pay to local governments in order to build a new home in the Sacramento region now average \$109,000 per home – and a new analysis shows that fees have hit the point where many proposed new home projects may not be built.

The study, conducted by Economic & Planning Systems (EPS) for the North State Building Industry Association, found that the fees charged for homes on standard-sized lots have risen by 25 percent since 2020.

Fees on homes on smaller lots – generally homes that can be profitably sold at lower prices – have risen by 15 percent since 2020 to an average of \$90,000. These rising fees are an important factor in reduced housing affordability, said Tim Murphy, the Building Industry Association's president and CEO.

"High fees mean that only higher-priced homes can be profitably built, which adds to the region's growing housing affordability crisis," Murphy said. "But the study shows that rising fee burdens have reached the point where some projects may not be feasible."

"Housing production in our region is already far below levels needed to meet the need for new housing. Rather than adding to the cost to build, our partners in local



"High fees mean that only higher-priced homes can be profitably built, which adds to the region's growing housing affordability crisis," Murphy said. "But the study shows that rising fee burdens have reached the point where some projects may not be feasible." Photo courtesy Freepik

governments need to carefully evaluate their fees and keep them as low as possible."

The study analyzed a comprehensive set of projects underway in Sacramento, Placer, El Dorado and Yolo counties. The Economic & Planning Systems study found that fees totaling between 15 percent and 20 percent of a home's sale price poses potential feasibility problems, while fees exceeding 20 percent may cause challenges. Fee ranges for six of the 16 higher density projects studied were at or above 20 percent, while two others were reaching that level.

"Homebuilders recognize that

they must pay their fair share for infrastructure needed to accommodate growth," said Clifton Taylor, president of Taylor Builders and the Building Industry Association's 2025 President.

"But the fees many jurisdictions are charging have gotten to the point where many projects simply won't pencil out," Taylor said.

"For our members to continue building the new homes the region needs, this study shows that jurisdictions need to be thoughtful and careful about how they set their fees, and that the total fee burden needs to be evaluated both in

terms of absolute dollar amounts and as a percentage of the finished home value."

Fees for new homes on standard-sized lots average \$125,000 in El Dorado County jurisdictions (up 30 percent from five years ago); \$114,000 in Yolo County communities (up 15 percent), \$109,000 in Sacramento County jurisdictions (up 24 percent); and \$95,000 in Placer County communities (up 17 percent).

Murphy noted that many local jurisdictions do work hard to keep their fees justified and affordable, and some have reduced fees

when studies show their levels were excessive.

"Builders and local officials all recognize that the region is in the middle of a worsening housing crisis that can only be resolved by finding ways to reduce costs and speed the development process to bring the supply of housing more into line with the demand," Murphy said.

Jamie Gomes, managing director at Economic & Planning Systems (EPS), and the lead analyst on the report, said while impact fees are an important tool for local jurisdictions to help fund expanded infrastructure and utilities, the impacts of the fees need to be considered as well.

"Higher than average impact fee burdens are usually only sustainable in higher-income developments or communities, where home prices may be unattainable for many buyers," he said. "High costs and fee burdens eliminate the ability to hit lower home prices that are attainable to broader household income ranges. That's why fees should be carefully evaluated."

Economic & Planning Systems is a land economics consulting firm that provides municipalities, developers and builders with realistic assessments of the feasibility of projects and works with local governments throughout the West in preparing development impact fee nexus studies and impact fee comparisons. ★

Probation Chiefs Elect President and Executive Officers

Chief Probation Officers of California News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - The Chief Probation Officers of California (CPOC) has selected its executive leadership team for 2026, naming Chief Esa Ehmen-Krause of Contra Costa County as President, Chief Izen Locatelli of Mendocino County as Vice President, and Chief Tamika Nelson of San Diego County as Secretary/Treasurer.

"California's probation departments are built on a balance of accountability and opportunity, helping those ready for change while protecting the communities we serve," Chief Ehmen-Krause said.

"It is a privilege to serve alongside the dedicated leaders of this association. I look forward to strengthening partnerships, advancing effective practices and supporting the incredible work happening in counties across the state."

Chief Ehmen-Krause, who has served as Chief Probation Officer in Contra Costa County for the last five years, will



Pictured from left are 2026 CPOC Slate of Officers Chief Tamika Nelson (San Diego), Chief Esa Ehmen-Krause (Contra Costa) and Chief Izen Locatelli (Mendocino). Courtesy photo

guide the association during a period of continued evolution in California's public safety landscape. She brings more than two decades of experience in youth services, community-based interventions and system reform.

Her leadership background includes advancing major reform initiatives as Assistant Chief Probation Officer in Alameda County, as well as earlier

roles within the Indiana Department of Corrections' Division of Youth Services. In Indiana, she earned recognition for implementing the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Performance-based Standards model and developing strategies to safely reduce youth facility populations.

"Chief Ehmen-Krause is a collaborative, thoughtful, and forward-thinking

leader," said 2025 Chief Probation Officers of California President and San Joaquin County Probation Chief Steve Jackson. "She brings people together to support better outcomes for our communities, an approach that will serve both the association and communities across the state."

The Chief Probation Officers of California (CPOC) is an association of all 58 counties with a shared identity as law enforcement leaders. Chief Probation Officers of California is committed to a research-based approach to public safety that promotes positive behavior change.

Their leadership guides policy and practice in prevention, community-based corrections, secure detention for youth, and direct human services. Chief Probation Officers of California aims to prevent crime and delinquency, reduce recidivism, restore victims, and promote healthy families and communities.

For more information about The Chief Probation Officers of California, go to www.cpoc.org. ★

Sierra Health and United Way Launch Match for Meals

Match For Meals News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - As local food banks' resources are stretched thin to serve record numbers of people experiencing food insecurity, Sierra Health Foundation and United Way California Capital Region are launching the Match for Meals campaign.

All donations made through Match for Meals until Jan. 31, 2026, will be matched up to \$300,000 by the two organizations to benefit Sacramento Food Bank and Family Services, Interfaith Food Bank of Amador County, El Dorado County Food Bank, Feeding the Foothills in Placer County and Yolo Food Bank. To donate, visit www.MatchForMeals.org or text Match4Meals to 41444.

Sierra Health Foundation will match donations up to \$200,000, and the local United Way will match donations up to \$100,000.

The announcement was made recently at a press conference at Sacramento Food Bank and Family Services, which supports more than 110 local agencies, including food pantries, community meal sites, senior centers, schools and nonprofits.

On average, nearly 320,000 people rely on Sacramento Food Bank's 200 distribution sites each month. In October, the food bank broke a 49-year record, serving more than 372,000 people.

Across the state in 2024, food banks distributed more than 950 million pounds of food and served more than 6 million people per month, according to the California

Association of Food Banks. Currently one in five Californians – almost 9 million – experience food insecurity.

"When one in five Californians is struggling to put food on the table, we are reminded that hunger isn't just a statistic, it's a reality for our neighbors, our friends and our families," said Dr. Dawnté Early, president and CEO, United Way California Capital Region.

Sierra Health Foundation is a private philanthropy investing in and serving as a catalyst for ideas, partnerships and programs that improve health and quality of life in Northern California and the San Joaquin Valley. Learn more: www.sierrahealth.org.

United Way California Capital Region has been a driving force across the region for more than 100 years, listening, responding and taking comprehensive action to meet local needs. From advancing youth opportunities to strengthening local communities and investing in families' financial security and health, United Way mobilizes communities to build a future where everyone can reach their full potential.

Working across Amador, El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento and Yolo counties, the local United Way provides books and literacy tutoring, addresses housing and food security, leads the region's largest tax preparation initiative, works with foster youth across school districts, launched the region's first guaranteed income program and leads the Community Schools initiative in West Sacramento. Learn more: www.YourLocalUnitedWay.org. ★

CAL FIRE Transitions to New National Emergency Reporting System

CAL FIRE News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) announced recently that fire departments across the state are beginning the transition to the National Emergency Response Information System (NERIS)—a secure, cloud-based platform built to modernize how emergency incidents are reported and analyzed.

Departments across the country are onboarding to NERIS as part of a phased national rollout led by the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), the Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Directorate (DHS S&T), and the Fire Safety Research Institute (FSRI), part of Underwriters Laboratory (UL) Research Institutes. NERIS is replacing the 40-year-old National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS), and will provide local agencies with timely data tools, location-based analytics, and flexible options for incident reporting at no cost to departments.

"Modernizing emergency data collection is a critical step toward strengthening public safety," said Chief Daniel Berlant, California State Fire Marshal. "By utilizing NERIS, we are giving our departments better tools to protect our communities, manage resources effectively, and make informed decisions backed by current data."

The National Emergency Response Information System (NERIS) offers several key features designed to support public fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) agencies. The platform provides zero-cost access

for all public fire and EMS departments, ensuring that every agency can take advantage of its capabilities without financial barriers.

NERIS also prioritizes local data ownership, allowing departments to maintain full control over their records and information. Its GIS-based reporting tools deliver location-specific insights that support better planning and decision-making.

In addition, the system includes actionable dashboards that enhance operational awareness and performance tracking. To make adoption easier, NERIS offers streamlined onboarding, complete with help desk support and training tools.

Departments can begin the onboarding process today by visiting the NERIS website. The process includes account setup, administrator access, and records management system (RMS) integration, if applicable. "NERIS is purpose-built for today's fire service," said Steve Kerber, Executive Director of FSRI. "It's based on research and feedback from the field, and it delivers actionable information that improves emergency response and supports long-term planning and resourcing at the local, state, and national levels."

CAL FIRE – OSFM encourages all departments to complete onboarding as soon as possible to ensure a smooth transition. The current national data platform, NFIRS, will be formally decommissioned on January 1, 2026. For additional questions or technical support, departments can contact the NERIS Help Desk or the CAL FIRE – Office of the State Fire Marshal directly. ★

Pinnick and Cofield Named FCS Football Central Freshman All-Americans



UC Davis Football Freshman Caden Pinnick finished the season ranked among the best quarterbacks in the nation and was named Big Sky All-Conference. Photo courtesy of UC Davis Athletics



Defensive back Drew Cofield was one of two freshmen to be named FCS Football Central Freshman All-Americans. Photo courtesy of UC Davis Football

UC Davis Athletics News Release

DAVIS, CA (MPG) - Following impressive freshmen campaigns by Caden Pinnick and Drew Cofield, the pair of UC Davis football freshmen have earned FCS Football Central Freshman All-American honors as announced today.

Pinnick (redshirt freshman), who became only the second Aggie quarterback to throw for five touchdowns in an

NCAA playoff game, finished the season ranked among the best quarterbacks in the nation and was named Big Sky All-Conference.

While Cofield is one of two true freshmen in the nation to make every start at cornerback, stepping in and making an immediate impact in the UC Davis secondary. Entering the game, Pinnick ranked nationally third in passing efficiency, fifth in total passing touchdowns

and yards per pass attempt, eighth in total touchdowns, ninth in completion percentage and 10th in passing yards per game.

With 11 starts under his belt, Pinnick has racked up 2,804 passing yards, 29 passing touchdowns and with a line of 211-for-304 the Aggie quarterback is completing his passes at 69.4 percent.

And on the ground, Pinnick has added rushed for 411 yards and added three touchdowns on the ground. Cofield has

made every start this season, playing nearly every snap all season at one of the toughest positions in sports.

With 12 games in his pocket, Cofield has collected 32 total tackles, 2.0 tackles for loss and he's broken up a team-high nine passes. The Aggie freshman has made 28 solo stops, and he's snagged two interceptions along the way making his presence known to every offense faced this season. ★

Eric Kubota Wins Tony Gwynn Lifetime Achievement Award

Athletics News Release

WEST SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - A's Director of Scouting Eric Kubota has been named the winner of the Tony Gwynn Award, a lifetime achievement award presented annually by Baseball America for the greatest contributions to the game.

Kubota, who is entering his 41st season with the A's, has served as Director of Scouting for the past 24 seasons. During his tenure, the A's have drafted and signed 114 players who have reached the majors.

Among those players, 18 have been named All-Stars, three have been named American League Rookie of the Year, four have won Gold Glove Awards, and three have won Silver Slugger Awards. Hitters drafted under

Kubota have combined to record 14,896 hits and 2,190 home runs, while pitchers have collected 425 wins, 521 saves, and 6,143 strikeouts.

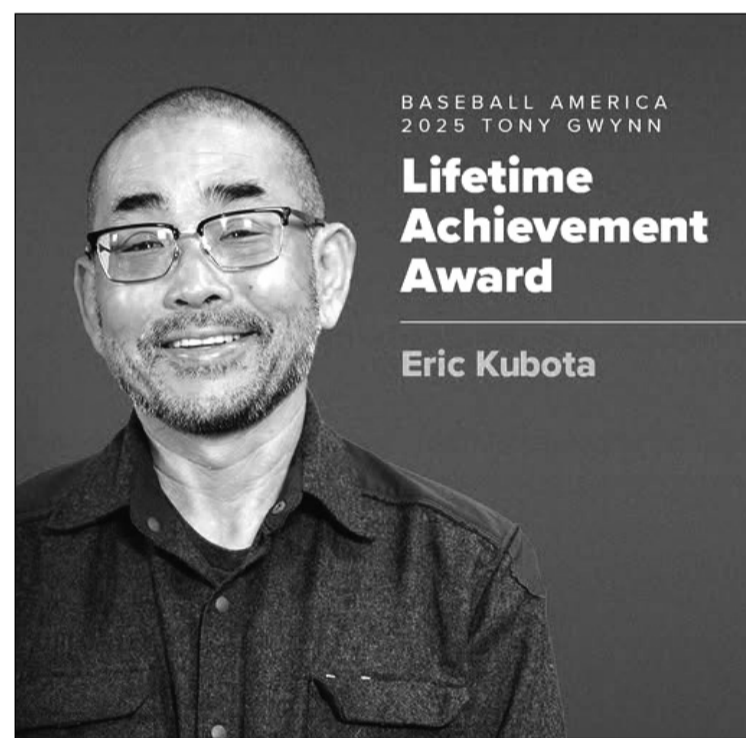
Kubota began his baseball career in June of 1984, while he was an undergraduate at the University of California, Berkeley, spending the better part of six seasons working in the A's media relations department. In November of 1989, he joined the baseball operations staff as an assistant director of scouting, and he was elevated to Pacific Rim coordinator in November of 1996, where he acted as a liaison between the A's and Asian baseball teams in addition to his scouting duties in Northern California and Hawaii.

Prior to assuming his current position, Kubota served as

the club's supervisor of international scouting for three seasons, overseeing the scouting staff and player evaluations in the Dominican Republic and Venezuela. In January 2014, he was honored as Scout of the Year by the Santa Clara County Hot Stove Committee and in 2022 he was named the Scout of the Year by the Scout of the Year Foundation.

Kubota graduated from the University of California, Berkeley in 1986 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science. He and his wife, Karen, have two children. ★

Kubota, who is entering his 41st season with the A's, has served as Director of Scouting for the past 24 seasons. Courtesy photo



Sacramento State Announces Change

Sacramento State News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Brennan Marion announced Dec. 5 that he will resign as the head football coach at Sacramento State to become the offensive coordinator at Colorado.

"I want to thank Coach Marion for his leadership during this past season," Director of Athletics Mark Orr said. "We look forward to continuing the success of Sacramento State football and will begin a national search for our next head coach immediately."

Marion was hired as the 13th head football coach in school history on Dec. 21. During his time with the Hornets, he secured the top-ranked recruiting class in the Football Championship Subdivision twice. This past season, the team finished



Brennan Marion announced Dec. 5 that he will resign as the head football coach at Sacramento State. Photo courtesy of Sacramento State

with a 7-5 overall record and was 5-3 in Big Sky Conference games for sole possession of fourth place. Sacramento State ended the regular season ranked third in the Football Championship Subdivision with 262.6 rushing yards per game and averaged 33.8 points per game. "I love Luke Wood and

Mark Orr," Marion said. "They gave me the opportunity to live my dream as a college head football coach and they provided me with every resource to succeed. I'm grateful to the Sacramento community and University for embracing my family. Lastly to my team, I love our players and staff. They restored the pride in Sac State football through a lot of adversity and our relationships will last a lifetime. Thank you Sacramento State!"

Sacramento State is one of just 12 Football Championship Subdivision programs to win at least seven games in five of the last six seasons. During that time, the team made four National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Football Championship Subdivision Playoff appearances and was ranked in the top 25 for 50 weeks. ★

A's Select Ryan Watson in Major League Rule 5 Draft

A's select three pitchers in minor league portion

Athletics News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The Athletics selected right-handed pitcher Ryan Watson from San Francisco in the Major League portion of the Rule 5 Draft, the club announced Dec. 10. In addition, the Athletics' selected right-handed pitchers Abel Mercedes, Darlin Pinales and Jorge Marcheco in the minor league portion of the Rule 5 Draft.

Watson, 28, was signed to a minor league contract by Baltimore in 2020 and was traded to the Giants on Aug. 9, 2024, for cash considerations. He is 24-17 with a 4.14 earned run average (ERA) in 157 games, including 34 starts, across five minor league seasons.

Mercedes, 23, posted a 2-0 record with a 4.35 ERA across 30 relief appearances for Single-A Fayetteville during the 2025 season to go along with 66 strikeouts and 48 walks in 41.1 innings pitched. Overall, Mercedes is 6-12 with a 5.60 ERA across five minor league seasons.

Pinales, 23, was 1-3 with a 5.90 ERA across 35 relief outings for Single-A Visalia during the 2025 season with 56 strikeouts, 32 walks and a .217 opponents batting average. Overall, he is 10-11 with a 5.64 ERA, adding 229 strikeouts and 186.2 innings pitched over five minor league seasons. ★

Marcheco, 23, went a combined 5-7 with a 4.36 ERA between High-A Tri City and Double-A Rocket City during the 2025 season. He totaled 84 strikeouts, 23 walks and a 1.13 walks and hits per inning pitched (WHIP) across 27 games (12 starts). Overall, he is 23-23 with a 3.99 ERA spanning five minor league seasons.

Additionally, catcher Daniel Susac was selected from the A's organization by Minnesota in the first round of the Major League Phase of the Rule 5 Draft. In the minor league portion, catcher Abraham Gutierrez was selected by New York-AL (second round).

Susac was drafted by the A's in the first round (19th overall) in the 2022 First-Year Player Draft. He hit .275 with 19 doubles, 18 home runs and 68 runs batted in (RBI) for Triple-A Las Vegas during the 2025 season. Across four minor league seasons, the 24-year-old right-handed hitter has recorded 65 doubles, 39 home runs and 195 RBI.

Gutierrez, 26, was signed by the A's to a minor league contract on Dec. 4, after he was released by the Pittsburgh Pirates organization on Aug. 5. Across parts of eight minor league seasons, he batted .261 with a .346 on-base percentage, including batting .250 with a .333 OBP in 28 games with Triple-A Indianapolis this season. ★