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# Gold River Messenger

VOLUME 14 • ISSUE 1 *Serving Gold River and Sacramento County* JANUARY 2026

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## CalKIDS Expands Access to Education Resources

*CalKIDS News Release*

**SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG)** - CalKIDS, California's landmark scholarship program for college and career training, awarded laptops to eight families across Sacramento and California as part of a statewide initiative to expand access to essential learning tools and increase awareness of the CalKIDS Scholarship Accounts available.

The giveaways, conducted in partnership with Audacy radio stations, were designed to reach families where they already spend their time and to help bridge the digital divide that continues to impact students across the state.

Today, a reliable laptop is more than a convenience; students need one to complete basic school assignments, apply to colleges, explore career and technical education programs, and access the digital tools that support long-term academic success.

For many families, the impact has been immediate. One Sacramento parent shared that the new laptop will support all three of her sons, who are required to use a computer for school. Until now, the family relied solely on rented devices and had never been able to purchase one of their own. She said they were incredibly grateful to finally have a laptop at home, one that will ease the



A CalKIDS Laptop Giveaway winner smiles after receiving a new HP Chromebook, along with KRTH-101 gear from CalKIDS partner Audacy. Courtesy photo

stress of keeping up with schoolwork.

"The path to higher education starts with access, and when families learn about CalKIDS and receive tools like laptops, it becomes easier to take that first step," said Cassandra DiBenedetto, executive director, ScholarShare Investment Board.

"These efforts are about removing barriers, increasing awareness, and making

sure every family knows that California is investing in their children's futures."

As CalKIDS continues its statewide outreach, the program is working with trusted partners including schools, community-based organizations, and hospitals to remind families that millions of dollars in CalKIDS Scholarships are still available to claim.

Children born in California on or after

July 1, 2022, automatically receive up to \$175 in a CalKIDS Scholarship Account, and eligible public-school students in grades 2 through 12 can receive up to \$1,500 to help offset the cost of higher education.

Families are encouraged to learn more, check eligibility and claim their child's CalKIDS Scholarship by visiting CalKIDS.org. ★

## Hoover Named Legislator of the Year

*Assemblyman Josh Hoover News Release*

**SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG)** - Recently, Assemblyman Josh Hoover (R-Folsom) announced that The California Distillers Association named him as its 2025 Legislator of the Year in recognition of his leadership in authoring Assembly Bill 1246, which extended critical privileges for California's small craft distilleries — saving businesses and jobs across the state.

"Assemblymember Hoover's leadership came at a critical moment for California's craft spirits industry," said Cris Steller, a local craft distiller and Executive Director of the California Distillers Association. "His commitment to protecting small businesses and local jobs ensured that hundreds of family-owned distilleries across the state could keep our doors open, employees working, and products reaching consumers."

Assembly Bill 1246, authored by Assemblymember Hoover and sponsored by the California Distillers Association, allows licensed craft distillers to continue direct-to-consumer shipping of distilled spirits and doubles the amount distillers can sell to visitors in their tasting rooms. The bill also ensures compliance with federal commerce standards and expands storage flexibility for brandy aging in collaboration with winemakers.

"Small businesses are the backbone of our economy," said Assemblymember Hoover. "I'm honored to receive this recognition from the California Distillers Association, and proud to help sustain local jobs and entrepreneurship in communities across our state."

California is home to nearly 200 independent craft distilleries, which contribute to local economies through tourism, agriculture and manufacturing. Without Assembly Bill 1246's timely passage, the legal authority for direct-to-consumer shipping would have expired, dealing a devastating blow to these small producers who often lack access to traditional distribution channels. The legislation passed with overwhelming bipartisan support before being signed into law by Gov. Newsom in October.

Josh Hoover represents Assembly District 7, which includes the cities of Citrus Heights, Folsom, and Rancho Cordova and the unincorporated communities of Carmichael, Fair Oaks, Foothill Farms, Gold River, Mather, McClellan Park, North Highlands, Orangevale and Rosemont. ★

## Enhanced Aviation Program Coming to Sacramento City College

*Story and photos by Nathan Felix Valencia*

**SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG)** - Representative 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) progress toward becoming an enhanced Air Traffic-Collegiate Training Initiative (AT-CTI).

Pending the final approval by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Sacramento City College would be one of only two institutions in the nation to have dual certification for students to train



Sacramento City College Student Karyme Perez talking about new enhanced aviation programs at Sacramento City College.

for both tower and en route air traffic control.

This major milestone gives students a chance to complete the Federal Aviation Administration training in Sacramento instead of needing to travel to Oklahoma City

where the Federal Aviation Administration Academy is located, providing students with benefits while attending school and a chance to be hired upon graduation.

Adjunct Professor in the Air Traffic Department at Sacramento City College

Sean Tener said, "We are helping California advance their economic growth by providing education and training that continuously contributes to the work force."

Lower costs, local  
Continued on page 5

# New Year, New Laws

## California Highway Patrol News Release

**SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG)** - The California Highway Patrol (CHP) is committed to keeping the public informed so they can make the safest choices for themselves and their families. As part of this effort, the California Highway Patrol is highlighting new public safety laws passed during this year's legislative session and signed by Governor Gavin Newsom. Unless otherwise noted, these laws take effect Jan. 1, 2026.

**Crimes: Burglary Tools (AB 486, Lackey)**  
 Assembly Bill 486 makes it a misdemeanor to possess a key programming device, a key duplicating device, or a signal extender with the intent to commit burglary. The offense can result in up to six months in county jail, a fine of up to \$1,000, or both.

This bill expands existing law by adding those three tools to the list of tools illegal to possess with the intent to commit burglary.

**Electric Bicycles: Required Equipment (AB 544, Davies)**

Assembly Bill 544 mandates that electric bicycles must have a red reflector or a solid or flashing red light with a built-in reflector on the rear during all hours of operation, not just during darkness as the law previously required.

The bill also allows the California Highway Patrol-developed online electric bicycle safety and training program to fulfill the safety course requirement for minors who receive a helmet violation involving electric bicycles.

**Off-highway Electric Motorcycles (SB 586, Jones)**

Senate Bill 586 defines an "off-highway electric motorcycle" or "eMoto" as a vehicle that: is designed primarily for

off-highway use; is powered by an electric motor that does not require a motor number; has handlebars for steering, a manufacturer-provided straddle seat, and two wheels; and is not equipped with manufacturer-provided pedals.

This bill also classifies an off-highway electric motorcycle as an off-highway motor vehicle (OHV), subject to the same rules and regulations. This includes a requirement that a person operating an off-highway motor vehicle wear a safety helmet and that every off-highway motor vehicle not registered under the Vehicle Code display an identification plate or device issued by the Department of Motor Vehicles.

**Pedestrian Safety: School Zones: Speed Limits (AB 382, Berman)**

Assembly Bill 382 allows local authorities to lower the school zone speed limit from 25 to 20 miles per hour by ordinance or resolution through Jan. 1, 2031. After this date, the speed limit will automatically decrease from 25 to 20 miles per hour in school zones when proper signage is posted.

**State Highway Work Zone Speed Safety Program (AB 289, Haney)**

Assembly Bill 289 authorizes the Department of Transportation to establish a work zone speed safety system

pilot program. The program will utilize a fixed or mobile radar or laser systems to detect speeding violations and capture a clear photograph of a vehicle's license plate. Citations will be issued to the vehicle's

the stopped vehicle or slow down to a safe speed if changing lanes is not possible.

**Traffic Safety: Speed Limits (AB 1014, Rogers)**

Assembly Bill 1014 authorizes the Department of Transportation to reduce a speed limit by five miles per hour on a highway, and mandates warning citations during the initial 30 days after a speed limit is lowered.

**Vehicle Removal (AB 875, Muratsuchi)**

Assembly Bill 875 authorizes a peace officer to impound a vehicle for at least 48 hours if the vehicle has fewer than four wheels but does not meet the definition of an electric bicycle, is powered by an electric motor capable of exclusively propelling the vehicle over 20 MPH on a highway and the operator is not licensed to operate the vehicle or is a class 3 electric bicycle being operated by a person under 16. A safety course may be required as a condition of release if the impoundment involves a child under 16 years old operating a class 3 electric bike as described in Section 312.5 of the Vehicle Code.

The following public safety laws were passed during the 2024 legislative session and will go into effect in 2026.

**Electric Bicycles, Powered Mobility Devices and Storage Batteries (SB 1271, Min)**

Beginning Jan. 1, 2026, Senate Bill 1271 focuses on improving the safety standards for electric bicycles, powered mobility devices, and related lithium-ion batteries. It requires these devices and their components, such as batteries and charging systems, to be tested by accredited laboratories to meet specific safety standards.

The bill also mandates labeling these products to show compliance with safety regulations, ensuring consumers are informed. Furthermore, it prohibits distributing, selling, or leasing e-bikes and related equipment unless they meet these standards, aiming to reduce risks like fire hazards and electrical malfunctions.

Beginning Jan. 1, 2028, the bill would prohibit a person from renting or offering for rental an electric bicycle, powered mobility device, charging system, or storage battery unless it has been tested to the specified safety standard.

**Autonomous Vehicles (AB 1777, Ting)**

Upon the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) adoption of necessary regulations, AB 1777 creates new authority for a law enforcement officer to issue a "notice of autonomous vehicle (AV) noncompliance" to an autonomous vehicle manufacturer for an alleged traffic violation committed by one of their vehicles.

Beginning July 1, 2026, AB 1777 establishes additional requirements for how AVs that operate without a human operator in the vehicle interact with first responders, including a requirement for manufacturers to provide a two-way device in the vehicles to communicate with first responders.

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



registered owner with specified requirements and procedures for program implementation, citation issuance, review and appeal.

**Vehicles: Highway Safety (AB 390, Wilson)**

Assembly Bill 390 expands the "slow down and move over" law to include any highway maintenance vehicle or stationary vehicle using flashing hazard lights or warning devices such as cones and road flares. Drivers approaching such a vehicle must move into a lane that is not next to

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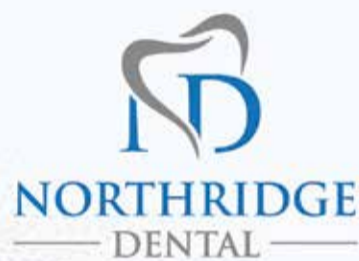
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# Soroptimists Give Holiday Joy to Veterans

**Soroptimist International of Rancho Cordova and Gold River News Release**

**SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG)** - Soroptimist International of Rancho Cordova & Gold River recently completed their annual "mission" to fill and deliver holiday stockings to 150 female veterans receiving treatment at the VA Northern California Healthcare System (NCHCS).

Private businesses such as Same Day Healthcare Pharmacy (in the new SF Market), Tara Dietel's State Farm office, TruEarth Laundry Sheets, and Crumbl Cookie, as well as organizations including the City of Rancho Cordova, Visit Rancho Cordova, Sacramento County 2-1-1, Explore Rancho Cordova, Soroptimist Sierra Nevada Region and our Soroptimist club contributed items for the stockings.

The stockings included ChapStick; a squeeze ball; granola package; a pair of comfy socks; mini bottle of hand sanitizer; travel lint roller; sunglasses, medication container and mini tote bag; Crumbl cookie voucher; a package of 32 dissolving laundry sheets; hand lotion; tissue pocket pack; veteran post-it notes; gold veteran pin; aromatherapy candle; nail clippers and Emory board; stocking hat, and a beautiful holiday card wishing happy holidays and a thank you for their service. The stockings were stuffed on Nov. 20 and delivered the next day for distribution starting in December at the VA Northern California Healthcare System.

"Our Soroptimist club cares deeply for our brave veterans and the staff who serve them. We donated cases of snacks and vitamin water to the VA Northern California Healthcare System when the pandemic started, donated baby shower



Soroptimist International of Rancho Cordova & Gold River recently completed their annual "mission" to fill and deliver holiday stockings to 150 female veterans. Photo courtesy of Soroptimist International of Rancho Cordova & Gold River

items to pregnant veterans receiving care there, donated warm socks numerous times to the VA Northern California Healthcare System for veterans receiving chemotherapy and dialysis treatments, and now holiday stockings to bring

veterans some cheer during the holidays," said club vice president Sheryl Longworth. "We love our veterans and those who provide care to them."

Both last year and this year's veteran stocking "missions" were led by club secretary

and Air Force veteran, Stacy Delaney.

"Stacy did an amazing job coordinating all the donations and leading this committee," said club president Ingrid Rosten.

Club vice president

Longworth added, "Normally, our club members do not have direct contact with those we help. We generally drop off donations, materials, etc. to another organization who distributes our contribution to the actual beneficiaries."

After the 2023 holiday stocking mission, a woman dropped off some e-waste for the club's e-waste recycling fundraiser. The woman realized that the organization that provided her with a holiday stocking at VA Northern California Healthcare System earlier that day was the same organization that she was giving her e-waste to.

The veteran was so grateful to receive her holiday stocking. She shared that she was having some health challenges that affected her employment, and she was feeling down. The stocking she received brightened her day and outlook a lot.

"Knowing that a holiday gift from our heart that makes a difference in the life of a veteran, was the best feeling in the world and that's what the holidays are all about...spreading love to everyone. Our club now commits to a holiday stocking "mission" every year," Longworth said.

*Soroptimist is an international 501(c)3 non-profit organization who seeks to improve the lives of women and girls through programs leading to social and economic empowerment. The name, Soroptimist, means "best for women," and that is what the organization strives to achieve. Soroptimists are people at their best, working to help other women to be their best. Please email [siranchocordova@soroptimist.net](mailto:siranchocordova@soroptimist.net) to receive more information about Soroptimist International of Rancho Cordova & Gold River, how to become a member, or just learn how you can volunteer with our club members, or visit <http://www.soroptimistranchocordova.org/>.★*



## Same-day care for same-day needs.

When life moves fast, your health care should keep up. Dignity Health offers convenient same-day care throughout Greater Sacramento—including Express Primary Care in Elk Grove and Roseville, and Urgent Care in Midtown Sacramento and Woodland. Whether you need relief from minor illness, a routine checkup, symptom management, or a flu shot, our providers are here to help you feel better, faster.



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Go to Urgent Care

Get in, get seen, and get on with your busy day.

Visit [dignityhealth.org/get-care-today](http://dignityhealth.org/get-care-today) to schedule an appointment. Same-day care facilities are a service of Dignity Health Medical Foundation.

# Free Car Seat Program Protects Children

## Sacramento County News Release

**SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG)** - The California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS), has awarded Sacramento County Public Health a \$137,039 grant to continue and expand the reach of the car seat safety program in partnership with Dignity Health, Mercy San Juan Medical Center. The grant program runs through Sept. 30, 2026. This is the fifth consecutive year Sacramento County Public Health has received grant funding for its car seat safety program.

“Car seat safety saves lives but only when families have the knowledge and resources to use them correctly,” said Dr. Kasirye, Sacramento County public health officer. “With funding from the Office of Traffic Safety and our partnership with Dignity Health, Mercy San Juan Medical Center, we’re doing our part to make sure every child can travel safely.”

Car crashes are one of the leading causes of deaths and injuries for children and many of these injuries are easily prevented using child safety seats and seat belts. Using a properly fitted child safety seat can reduce the risk of car crash deaths by 71 percent for infants and 54 percent for toddlers ages 1-4, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

The goal of the car seat program is to give every child in Sacramento County access to the safest possible travel environment. The program provides child safety seat inspection and education classes; child passenger safety technician and recertification courses; no-cost child safety seats for families in need and community outreach efforts in underserved communities.

In 2025, the car seat safety program distributed more than 400 car seats to families in need. Over 1,300 parents, grandparents and caregivers learned about correct car seat use and installation through online workshops, in-person classes, community health fairs and school resource fairs, among other events.

“The value and importance of car seats cannot be overstated, as they are directly tied to the safety



“Car seat safety saves lives but only when families have the knowledge and resources to use them correctly,” said Dr. Kasirye, Sacramento County public health officer. Photo courtesy Freepik

and lives of children. Many of our clients come from countries such as Afghanistan and various Arab nations, where car seats are not commonly used, and where their importance is not fully recognized,” said Zalmi Ahadi, a caseworker at Al-Misbaah – a faith-based nonprofit that partners with Dignity health to distribute car seats and educate parents.

“The collaboration and educational programs offered by Mercy San Juan Car Seat Program have a vital and life-saving impact for immigrant families.”

The program hosts workshops specifically targeting underserved and refugee communities, offering resources in multiple languages to make certain families, regardless of background or ability to afford a car seat, are equipped to protect their children on the roads.

According to Loran Abassi, program manager with the Refugee Enrichment & Development Association (REDA), one client arrived in

Sacramento in April 2025 with his five-month-old twins and was struggling to navigate life in a new country while learning how to be a first-time father. Unfamiliar with U.S. car seat laws and without the financial means to purchase car seats, he faced a critical safety gap for his children.

The Dignity Health Mercy San Juan Car Seat Program provided him with hands-on education about car seat safety and two car seats for his twins. He walked away with knowledge and tools to transport his children safely as he began a new chapter for his family in Sacramento County.

The program’s success hinges on community involvement. Certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians (CPSTs) are an integral part of the program and offer hands-on assistance at car seat inspection events. They’ve helped install over 600 car seats properly for families to make sure their children are safe.

“It has been a great privilege to do my part in ensuring that underserved and low-income

families in our community have access to appropriate child safety seats, regardless of their socioeconomic status,” said Allison Boltz, a community injury prevention educator at Mercy San Juan Medical Center. “Caregivers often share their gratitude and the sense of relief that comes with knowing that they are really doing their best to keep their children safe in their car.”

Iris Austin, the First Lady at Higher Heights Community Church, shared the story of a mother who attended one of the workshops with her mother-in-law, who recalled that her own son had been in a serious car crash as a child and still carries the scar today. During the training, the grandmother became emotional, reliving the fear and trauma of that experience.

A technician with the Dignity Health, Mercy San Juan Car Seat Program took time to walk with her to her vehicle and check the car seat installation, which was found to be incorrect. When it was gently corrected, the grandmother expressed

overwhelming gratitude, saying she never wanted her grandson to go through what her son had endured.

The Child Passenger Safety Program is designed to meet families where they are, whether that’s a workshop at their church or local health center, so they can receive a free car seat or learn about the importance of safe travel for their children.

Interested participants are encouraged to make a car seat safety check appointment at Methodist Hospital or Mercy San Juan Medical Center, and can call the Car Seat Hotline at (916) 864-5779 with any questions.

For more information about the program, visit Sacramento County Childhood Illness and Injury Prevention or contact Riley Stoltenburg at (916) 875-6094 or StoltenburgR@sac-county.gov.

Funding for this program was provided by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). ★

## First Flu-Related Death of the Season Confirmed

### Sacramento County News Release

**SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG)** - Sacramento County Department of Health Services, Public Health Division (SCPH) is reporting the first influenza-related death of the 2025-26 flu season.

The individual, who was a child, had no underlying medical conditions and died of complications of influenza (also known as the flu). At this time, vaccination status is unknown.

Some people are at high risk of developing serious influenza-related complications. This includes people 65 years and older, people of any age with certain chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), pregnant women, and young children under 5 years old.

Influenza is a contagious respiratory illness caused by flu viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The flu is different from a cold. The flu comes on suddenly. People who have the flu often feel some or all of these symptoms: fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches, fatigue



Influenza is a contagious respiratory illness caused by flu viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. Photo courtesy Freepik

(tiredness), or vomiting and diarrhea.

Most people who get the flu recover in a few days to less than two weeks, but some people will develop complications (such as pneumonia) as a result of the flu, some of which can be life-threatening and result in death.

According to the California Department of Public Health, everyone over 6 months of age should receive the flu vaccine each year.

In addition to vaccination, the public is encouraged to take the following steps to protect themselves and others against flu, COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses: wash hands thoroughly and frequently,

cover coughs and sneezes, stay home from work or school when sick, consider indoor masking in crowded places, improve ventilation by opening windows or moving events outdoors, and disinfect frequently used surfaces.

For those at higher risk who do get sick, get tested and talk with your healthcare provider about treatment options.

Flu vaccines can be accessed at your healthcare provider’s office and many local pharmacies.

For more information, visit Sacramento County Department of Health Services, Public Health Division’s list of flu and covid vaccination locations at [www.sac-county.gov](http://www.sac-county.gov). ★

## Volunteers Needed to Help Understand and Address Homelessness



This community effort will not only help to determine the number of people experiencing homelessness in the Sacramento region but will also help us to: understand why people in our community become homeless; create better policies, programs and services; track progress in reducing homelessness. Photo courtesy Freepik

### Sacramento County News Release

**SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG)** - Want to help Sacramento better understand and address homelessness? You’re invited to volunteer for the 2026 Point-in-Time (PIT) Count.

This community effort will not only help to determine the number of people experiencing homelessness in the Sacramento region but will also help us to: understand why people in our community become homeless; create better policies, programs and services; track progress in reducing homelessness and secure federal funding which supports local shelters and services.

The Point-in-Time (PIT) count will be held 5–11 p.m. on Jan. 26 and 27. Registration is required by Jan. 15.

“While it captures only a snapshot in time, the Point-in-Time (PIT) Count offers valuable, community-wide participation and insight. It helps us better understand homelessness in our region and ensures our community can continue accessing funding that directly supports our neighbors who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness,” said Dr. Trenton Simmons, chief program officer of Sacramento Steps Forward. ★

No experience is required for volunteers, with mini training video segments and other materials provided ahead of the nights of the count to help volunteers know what to expect. Volunteers will meet at one central location before heading out to predetermined routes across the County.

Volunteers will use a mobile phone app to record the number of people they encounter who said they would be sleeping outdoors or in vehicles. They also will conduct a brief survey with those willing to participate to better understand who is experiencing homelessness in Sacramento, for how long and what kinds of services could best assist them.

While volunteers focus on people living unsheltered outdoors, the overall Point-in-Time (PIT) Count includes those staying in respite centers and shelters.

To canvass, a volunteer must be at least 18 years old, be willing to travel by foot and car to predetermined locations and be willing to use their personal smartphone and flashlight.

Ready to be part of resolving homelessness in our community? Register now at [www.sacramentostepsforward.org/data-and-analytics/2026-sacramento-point-in-time-count/](http://www.sacramentostepsforward.org/data-and-analytics/2026-sacramento-point-in-time-count/). ★



# Picks For '26

So what do the planets project for 2026? Are they aligned for the good, the bad and perhaps even the ugly? We need to check in with one in the know about those heavenly bodies to give us a look at what's to come. And that should be **Mercury**, Astrologer/Mystic, who has looked up at the sky for decades, and can give us a preview of what is happening and a look at what's going to happen and why. **Mercury** shares his planetary insights on my POPPTALK Radio Show regularly so we can be prepared for what's to come. Here goes.

The year 2026 brings profound planetary shifts that will shape global trends, collective moods, and individual self-awareness. Extreme weather events—such as unprecedented earthquakes and floods—are likely to continue. We are living in a world where the climate itself is actively transforming.

Neptune's transition into Aries on January 27, 2026—for the first time since the 19th century—ushers in an era of spiritual awakening, creative revolution, and idealistic social movements, while simultaneously blurring the line between reality and fantasy. Water signs, in particular, are poised to embark on a deeply creative and imaginative period that begins in 2026 and lasts for several years.

On February 14, 2026, Saturn enters Aries, where it will remain until April 2028. Aries is fueled by swift action and impulsivity, while Saturn demands caution, planning, and structure. This transit calls us to balance ambition with discipline and to heed our inner guidance. For fire signs, 2026 marks a year of deep transformation, often arriving in surprising ways.

Pluto's ongoing journey through Aquarius continues to emphasize themes of technological revolution, collective empowerment, and shifting power structures. Questions surrounding scientific innovation, global cooperation, and political ethics will come to the forefront. Air signs will need to adapt to these ongoing changes, finding new avenues for growth and self-illumination.

The astrology of 2026 signals a time of bold innovation, spiritual exploration, and major shifts in both political and technological landscapes. These changes invite humanity to reflect more deeply on personal and collective values. Earth signs, in particular, will be called to make adjustments in pursuit of growth, with discipline proving essential for achieving their goals this year.

Transformation is on the horizon for everyone. Karma is not about punishment or reward—it is the natural result of your actions, shaping the quality of your life. Choose wisely and trust your inner guidance; you will not be led astray. Life is both a gift and a mystery—embrace them both, for they are one and the same.

So there's the star preview for the New Year. Decide what's best for you to be who you want to be and wish to accomplish. If you want more information, go to [www.MichaelMercury.com](http://www.MichaelMercury.com) or [www.MercuryMinute.com](http://www.MercuryMinute.com) with more detail on how it all comes together. And let's get together on POPPTALK every Sat morning and Sunday evening on FM-104.5 & AM-950KAHI or 24/7 at [www.kahi.com](http://www.kahi.com). Just click on Listen, then audio on demand and we'll ring in the NEW YEAR together! ★

# Enhanced Aviation Program Coming to Sacramento City College

*Continued from page 1*  
training and the opportunity to use financial aid towards their careers are some of the benefits students enrolled in Sacramento City College's enhanced aviation program receive.

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.

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

Bera 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 or the Bay



Adjunct Professor Sean Tener in an interview with CBS at the Dec. 8 event recognizing Sacramento City College's progress toward becoming an enhanced Air Traffic-Collegiate Training Initiative (AT-CTI).

before being transported to Sacramento.

Karyme Perez, who is in the Air Traffic Control Program at Sacramento City College, said, "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 Federal Aviation Administration, the opportunity to pursue a career in aviation is going to be more accessible than ever before. ★

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# Taxpayers Deserve the Real Story on Capitol Annex Costs



By Assemblyman  
Josh Hoover

This month the Joint Legislative Rules Committee released a document entitled the "State Capitol Annex Project Construction Update," touting it as a step toward transparency in a taxpayer-funded endeavor that has long been cloaked in secrecy. Yet this marks the first formal public update since 2021 -- a glaring indication of just how opaque the process has remained.

As a state representative and longtime resident in Sacramento County, I have consistently voiced concerns about key decisions regarding the Capitol Annex Project and the persistent lack of openness from its inception. In a recent KCRA 3 interview, state lawmakers in charge of the project even defended the use of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) to keep information about the project a secret. This level of secrecy prompts serious questions: What exactly is being concealed from the public, and why?

Last year, I highlighted the troubling choice to outsource granite cutting to Italy, sidestepping

California's rigorous labor standards. The latest project update defends this move as "the most budget-conscious and affordable option." While fiscal prudence is commendable, it serves as a stark acknowledgment of the burdensome business climate in our state. Moreover, it appears at odds with California's broader policy objectives, including supporting domestic jobs and sustainable practices.

Since being elected to the Assembly three years ago, I have repeatedly sought detailed financial data and revised project costs, only to be met with silence. Frustrated by this stonewalling, Assemblyman Joe Patterson and I sent a letter to Governor Gavin Newsom last month urging decisive action to inject overdue transparency into the project. The governor's office merely redirected us back to the Joint Rules Committee -- the very entity that has ignored our inquiries.

Regrettably, the most recent project update falls far short of addressing these issues. It recycles familiar details, attributes delays to litigation stemming from the Legislature's own flawed decisions and offers a litany of justifications for anticipated cost escalations. Most alarmingly, it appears to resurrect plans for a Visitor Center that would require the demolition of the historic West Steps, despite recent assurances that this element would be

scrapped. We must prioritize preserving the West Steps and ensuring every taxpayer dollar is spent wisely.

For almost four years, the Joint Legislative Rules Committee has withheld updated cost projections for the sprawling 525,000-square-foot Capitol office building and parking garage. This report is no exception, offering vague allusions to expenses without substantive details. It concedes overruns but provides scant clarity on their impact to California taxpayers. No fresh cost estimates have emerged since the 2021 figure of \$1.1 billion, though the update dangles a promise of a "robust fiscal outlook" in 2026. Color me skeptical.

Californians deserve better than excuses and evasion. True transparency demands full disclosure now -- not nebulous pledges for the future. As lawmakers, we owe it to our constituents to lift the veil on this project and hold ourselves accountable for every decision made with public funds.

Assemblyman Josh Hoover represents the 7th Assembly District in Sacramento County, which includes the cities of Citrus Heights, Folsom, and Rancho Cordova and the unincorporated communities of Carmichael, Fair Oaks, Foothill Farms, Gold River, Mather, McClellan Park, North Highlands, Orangevale and Rosemont. You can follow him on X @joshua\_hoover or contact his office at Assemblymember.Hoover@assembly.ca.gov. ★

# Sacramento Region Community Foundation Offers More Than 40 Scholarships Nearly \$1 Million in Scholarships are Awarded Annually



Benny Goodman Foundation Scholarship recipient Abigail Canafe at UC Berkeley graduation. Photo courtesy of Abigail Canafe

## Sacramento Region Community Foundation News Release

**SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG)** - The Sacramento Region Community Foundation invites interested students from throughout the region to consider applying for one or more of the 40-plus open scholarships available through the organization.

Ranging from \$1,000 to \$10,000, many of the open scholarships are based on financial need while some are focused on academic status or earmarked for a specific cause or area of study. Criteria are diverse and determined based on the specific wishes of local individuals who donated to establish the scholarships.

Opportunities exist to support former foster youth, English language learners, students living with chronic illness, those interested in veterinary medicine or sustainable agriculture and more. The deadline to apply for the majority of the open scholarships is by March 13, 2026.

As one example, Abigail Canafe was a student at UC Berkeley in 2021 and received the Benny Goodman Foundation Scholarship which supports students studying jazz or classical music. The impact of this funding affected her so profoundly that she now volunteers as a scholarship evaluator with the foundation.

Canafe said, "As a past scholarship recipient, I want to give back to the Sacramento

Region Community Foundation and continue helping future students fund their education."

"Investing in young people -- or lifelong learners -- is one of the most powerful ways we can strengthen our region's future," said Kerry Wood, CEO of the Sacramento Region Community Foundation. "Scholarships reduce financial barriers and, just as importantly, they tell students that their community believes in them. We strongly encourage students from throughout the region who are interested in furthering their educational goals to review and apply for the variety of open scholarships that the foundation is proud to offer."

In 2024, more than \$1 million in scholarships were awarded by the foundation, which supported 400 students as they worked to achieve their educational goals. Since its founding in 1983, the foundation has distributed more than \$275 million in scholarships and community grants, demonstrating its long-term commitment to regional opportunity.

For descriptions and eligibility requirements, students interested in exploring and/or applying for open scholarships, or community members considering making a tax-friendly gift of any amount to support future scholarship awards, should visit [www.sacregecf.org/students](http://www.sacregecf.org/students).

Information about the Sacramento Region Community Foundation and charitable giving can be found at [www.sacregecf.org](http://www.sacregecf.org). ★

# Social Security Matters My Wife Believes She Can Get a Spouse Benefit While I'm Still Alive; Can She?



By Russell Gloor,  
AMAC Certified Social  
Security Advisor

**Dear Rusty:** A friend of my wife told her, and she believes, she could receive a Social Security benefit based on my SS benefit that I'm currently receiving while I'm still alive. I told her she could only receive spouse survivor benefits. Is there any truth to what she now believes? Would you settle this issue for us please? Thank you.  
**Signed: Uncertain Husband**

**Dear Uncertain Husband:** Well, surely don't want to get in the middle of your marital discussion, but I'll be happy to explain Social Security's rules about your wife's eligibility for spousal benefits while you are both still living. And just for awareness for both of you, the rules about spousal benefits are one of the most confusing areas of Social Security.

Per Social Security's rules, a spouse (e.g., your wife) can receive a "spousal boost" from you -- while you are still living -- if the SS retirement

benefit she is personally entitled to at her full retirement age (FRA) is less than 50% of the SS retirement benefit you are (were) entitled to at your FRA (full retirement age amounts are used to calculate living spouse benefits, regardless of when each of you actually claimed your Social Security).

So, if your FRA entitlement benefit amount is more than twice your wife's FRA entitlement benefit amount, she can, indeed, get a "spousal boost" from your record while you are both still living. The spousal boost is added to her own SS retirement amount and will be based on the difference between her FRA entitlement and half of your FRA entitlement. Thus, in this discussion, your wife may be correct - she may be able to get a spousal boost from you while both of you are living, depending on how your personal FRA retirement amounts compare. The best way for your wife to find out is to contact Social Security on 1.800.772.1213 to inquire, and if she's eligible, also make an appointment to apply for her spousal benefit.

And to clarify your wife's options as your possible widow, a surviving spouse can also get a survivor benefit if their marital partner passes away, but only if the deceased spouse's current benefit (at death) was more than the surviving spouse is already

receiving. The surviving spouse receives the higher amount, instead of their own smaller Social Security retirement benefit.

But here is an important thing to know: Whenever any Social Security benefit (including a spousal or surviving spouse benefit) is claimed before the recipient's full retirement age, the payment amount is permanently reduced (both spousal and survivor benefits do not reach maximum until the recipient's full retirement age). And just to complete the picture for survivor benefits, a surviving spouse is also entitled to a one-time, lump-sum death benefit of \$255 if their marital partner dies, in addition to any other benefit they are entitled to.

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# No, the USS Liberty Incident Wasn't Israeli Treachery

For elements of the anti-Israel right, it's a time when everything old is becoming new again. So, a half-century-old theory that the Jewish state deliberately attacked the USS Liberty during the Six-Day War has renewed currency.

Conspiratorial-minded influencers hostile to Israel, like Tucker Carlson and Candace Owens, have promoted the notion, and it was a topic of discussion at the recent TPUSA conference. One speaker said that the official explanation "doesn't feel like it's good enough," and floated his own wild speculation (involving the complicity of LBJ).

The fact is that the devastating Israeli attack on the Liberty, killing 34 and wounding 171, was a woeful case of mistaken identification. The series of faulty judgments that led to the incident is so grievous that, taken altogether, it is, indeed, nearly incomprehensible. Yet, when operating with incomplete information in a shooting war, such accidents happen all the time. The Israelis apologized immediately upon realizing their ghastly mistake and offered restitution.

On June 8, 1967, the 6th Fleet was keeping its distance from the hostilities in the Six-Day War, fought between Israel and Egypt, Syria and Jordan. The USS Liberty, a spy ship, had come within 13 nautical miles of the Sinai coast, though. It requested a de-

stroyer escort, which was denied, and orders to the Liberty to withdraw about 100 miles from the front were delayed in a communications tangle.

That morning, an ammunition dump ignited in the coastal city of El-Arish in the Sinai, and the Israelis (wrongly) believed the location had been shelled by Egyptian ships. The Israeli navy spotted the Liberty heading toward Egypt and (wrongly) concluded it had been one of the attackers. Two Israel Mirage jets saw no identifying markings on the Liberty (a later U.S. inquiry speculated that the flag might not have been visible for lack of wind) and strafed the ship. More Israeli jets napalmed the Liberty.

The absence of return fire puzzled the Israelis, who paused to ensure they weren't hitting an Israeli vessel. Assured it wasn't one of their own, they renewed the assault.

Still uneasy, they looked for identifying markers again. They saw no flag, but made out Latin, not Arabic, letters on the hull. That strongly suggested the vessel wasn't Egyptian.

Yet, a squadron of Israeli torpedo boats determined that the Liberty's silhouette matched an Egyptian supply ship. A request for identification from the Liberty received no affirmative reply.

The Liberty's captain ordered his men not to shoot at the torpedo boats, but one gunner briefly fired and there were further discharges from exploding ammunition. Believing

they were taking incoming from an Egyptian ship, the torpedo boats requested permission to fire and got reluctant assent. A torpedo slammed into the Liberty, blowing a hole 24 feet tall by 39 feet wide and killing more than two dozen sailors.

Eventually, an Israeli torpedo boat picked up a raft from the Liberty with U.S. naval markings and the Israelis realized their tragic error. They apologized instantly to U.S. naval attaché Ernest Carl Castle, and an Israeli helicopter attempted to take him out to the Liberty (the effort was foiled by darkness). The Israeli torpedo boats offered assistance to the Liberty, which was rebuffed.

As Michael Oren points out in his history of the Six-Day War, none of the common conspiracy theories makes sense. There was no way that Israel -- desperate for U.S. support and wary of Soviet enmity -- was going to make an act of war against a friendly superpower. Nor did Israel need, as is sometimes posited, to hide its gains in the Sinai from the U.S., or its plans to hit Syria. It hadn't executed Egyptian POWs, so that didn't justify a murderous cover-up, either.

Both official Israeli and U.S. investigations determined that the attack was a friendly fire incident, but for Israel and the Jews in the current environment, the truth is no defense.

*Rich Lowry is editor of The National Review. (c) 2026 by King Features Synd., Inc. ★*

# Late December Storms Deliver Much-Needed Water Supply

**California Department of Water Resources News Release**

**SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG)** - The Department of Water Resources (DWR) recently conducted the first snow survey of the season at Phillips Station. The manual survey recorded 24 inches of snow depth and a snow water equivalent of 5 inches, which is 50 percent of average for this location.

The snow water equivalent measures the amount of water contained in the snowpack and is a key component of the Department of Water Resource's water supply forecast. Statewide, the snowpack is 71 percent of average for this date.

Today's results are welcome news for water managers who rely on the statewide snow surveys to make water supply decisions for the year ahead. California's statewide snowpack had been lacking in early December with above-average temperatures and very little storm activity. Recent storms have turned that around and provided a significant boost to the snowpack and the state's water supply.

"The dry conditions and warmer temperatures in early December delayed our snow-building season, but the return of storm activity, especially in the last week, helped to build a solid base for this year's snowpack," said Angelique Fabbiani-Leon, State Hydrometeorologist for the Department of Water Resources.

"Thankfully, the recent storms that reached the state were cold enough to provide necessary benefits for the snowpack and our water supply. While California is in a better position now, it is still early in the season and our state's water supply for this year will ultimately depend on a continued cadence of storms throughout winter and early spring."

The Department of Water Resource's electronic readings from 130 stations placed throughout the Sierra Nevada indicate that the statewide snowpack's snow



An aerial view in the morning of fog partially covering the San Joaquin River and Webb Tract Island (Left) in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, located in San Joaquin County, California. Photo taken Oct. 30, 2025. Courtesy photo

water equivalent is 6.5 inches, or 71 percent of average for this date, compared to 115 percent on this date last year.

On average, the largest snow-producing months in the Sierra Nevada are January, February and March. Drought and flood always marked the California climate, but extreme whiplash between wet and dry is becoming more pronounced, not just year to year but often within the same season or month.

"It's great to see so much fresh snow in the Sierra following a relatively dry December," said Department of Water Resources director Karla Nemeth.

"More than any other factor, the rain and snow that falls in these critical winter months dictates how much water can be delivered to Californians and farmland statewide. We make the most of



Department of Water Resources staff check snow levels at the January 2020 snow survey. Courtesy photo

what Mother Nature delivers with advance planning that enables Forecast Informed Reservoir Operations and groundwater recharge."

Major reservoirs statewide are

currently 123 percent of average thanks to recent precipitation on top of three consecutive years of above-average snowpack conditions.

On average, the Sierra

snowpack supplies about 30 percent of California's water needs. Its natural ability to store water is why the Sierra snowpack is often referred to as California's "frozen reservoir." Data from these snow surveys and forecasts produced by the Department of Water Resource's Snow Surveys and Water Supply Forecasting Unit are key factors in determining how the Department of Water Resources manages the state's water resources.

The Department of Water Resources conducts four media-oriented snow surveys at Phillips Station each winter near the first of each month, January through April and, if necessary, May. The next survey is tentatively scheduled for Feb. 3.

For California's current hydrological conditions, visit <https://cww.water.ca.gov>.

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<p><b>Pork Spare Ribs</b> REG. \$4.99/lb <b>\$3.49/lb</b></p>	<p><b>Pork Loin Chops Bone-In</b> REG. \$3.99/lb <b>\$2.29/lb</b></p>	<p><b>Pork Cushion Meat Boneless</b> REG. \$3.99/lb <b>\$2.99/lb</b></p>

## WEEKLY HALAL SPECIALS

<p><b>Chicken Drumsticks</b> REG. \$1.99/lb <b>89¢/lb</b></p>	<p><b>New Zealand Lamb Stew Meat Bone-In</b> REG. \$5.99/lb <b>\$5.99/lb</b></p>	<p><b>Beef Cross/Rib Shoulder Roast-Bnls</b> REG. \$5.99/lb <b>\$5.49/lb</b></p>
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## FRESH PRODUCE

<p><b>Mini Sweet Pepper 1 lb</b> REG. \$3.49/bag <b>\$2.49/bag</b></p>	<p><b>Avocado 2 lb Bag</b> REG. \$3.99/bag <b>\$2.99/bag</b></p>	<p><b>Lemon 2 lb Bag</b> REG. \$2.99/bag <b>\$1.99/bag</b></p>	<p><b>Wild Wonders Tomato 10.5 oz</b> REG. \$3.99/ea <b>\$3.49/ea</b></p>
<p><b>Fuji Apple</b> REG. \$1.19/lb <b>69¢/lb</b></p>	<p><b>Spinach 2.5 lb</b> REG. \$6.99/bag <b>\$5.99/bag</b></p>	<p><b>Kabocha</b> REG. \$1.19/lb <b>79¢/lb</b></p>	<p><b>Russet Potato 10 lb Bag</b> REG. \$1.99/bag <b>\$1.99/bag</b></p>

## AMERICAN/HISPANIC GROCERY

<p><b>Pedalyte Sport Electrolyte Solutions 33.8 f.oz</b> REG. \$10.99 <b>\$6.49/ea +CRV</b></p>	<p><b>Bigelow Harvest Tea 4 Kinds 1.23-1.56 oz</b> REG. \$3.99 <b>\$2.99/ea</b></p>	<p><b>El Mexicano White Hominy 3.01 kg</b> REG. \$6.99 <b>\$4.99/ea</b></p>	<p><b>1.2.3 Vegetable Oil 33.8 f.oz</b> REG. \$4.99 <b>\$3.99/ea</b></p>
<p><b>Cimato Tomato Cocktails 64 f.oz</b> REG. \$6.99 <b>\$5.99/ea +CRV</b></p>			

## ASIAN GROCERY

<p><b>Three Ladies Rice Vermicelli 2 lb</b> REG. \$5.99 <b>\$5.29/ea</b></p>	<p><b>Pho Story Instant Pho Soup 67 g</b> REG. \$1.99 <b>\$1.49/ea</b></p>	<p><b>SPAM w/ Tocino Seasoning 12 oz</b> REG. \$6.99 <b>\$4.99/ea</b></p>	<p><b>Daily Farmer Condensed Creamer 13.4 oz</b> REG. \$2.09 <b>\$0.99/ea</b></p>
<p><b>T.A.S Coconut Water 16.9 f.oz</b> REG. \$1.99/ea, \$39.99/case <b>\$1.49/ea, \$34.99/case +CRV</b></p>			

## EUROPEAN GROCERY

<p><b>Sadaf Grapeseed Oil 2 liters</b> REG. \$17.99 <b>\$14.99/ea</b></p>	<p><b>Tamek Nectar Juice 4 Flavors 1 liter</b> REG. \$2.99 <b>\$1.99/ea</b></p>	<p><b>Polinka Milk Cream Fudge 1 kg</b> REG. \$14.99 <b>\$12.99/ea</b></p>	<p><b>Garden Fresh Pure Honey 340 gr</b> REG. \$4.99 <b>\$3.49/ea</b></p>
<p><b>Polinka Sweet &amp; Sour Pickled Polish Cucumbers 29.8 oz</b> REG. \$4.29 <b>\$3.29/ea</b></p>			

## EUROPEAN DELI

<p><b>Smoked Applewood Ham</b> REG. \$10.19/lb <b>\$9.19/lb</b></p>	<p><b>Kretschmar Ham off the Bone</b> REG. \$7.49/lb <b>\$6.49/lb</b></p>	<p><b>Green Olives Stuffed with Feta</b> REG. \$9.09/lb <b>\$8.09/lb</b></p>	<p><b>Green Olives Stuffed with Garlic</b> REG. \$6.69/lb <b>\$5.69/lb</b></p>
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<h3 style="text-align: center;">FROZEN &amp; FISH DEPT</h3> <p><b>Dried Cod Fish 500 g</b> REG. \$16.99/EA <b>\$12.99/ea</b></p>	<h3 style="text-align: center;">HOUSEWARE</h3> <p><b>KAIZEN WOK PAN 30 CM</b> REG. \$19.99 <b>\$16.99/ea</b></p> <p><b>ELECTRIC RICE COOKER (4.5 QT)</b> REG. \$10.99 <b>\$8.99/ea</b></p> <p><b>ELECTRIC RICE COOKER (10 QT)</b> REG. \$10.99 <b>\$8.99/ea</b></p> <p><b>ELECTRIC BBQ GRILL</b> REG. \$499.99 <b>\$399.99/ea</b></p>
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Advertised items good at KP International Market - Rancho Cordova location ONLY. We reserve the right to LIMIT QUANTITIES. Not responsible for TYPOGRAPHICAL OR PICTORIAL ERRORS. All advertised items are SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY. Sorry NO RAINCHECKS. PRICES EFFECTIVE JANUARY 07 - JANUARY 13, 2026.

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