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East Sacramento News

VOL 35 • ISSUE 2

Bringing You Community News For Over 30 Years

JANUARY 23, 2026

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Fans Flock to Refreshed Vic's



Kathy Townsend, left, and Gina D'Arcangelo, longtime friends and C.K. McClatchy High School classmates, are looking forward to their 50th class reunion in 2026. Courtesy Photo

By Stephen B. Clazie

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Trey Olson, 12, was first in line for Vic's reopening. He waited under gloomy skies and sporadic rain from 9 a.m. until the doors of Vic's Ice Cream opened at 11 a.m. on Saturday, Jan. 2.

Trey said he has been coming to Vic's since he was just a few months old. His father, Ted Olson, also has deep ties to the shop, having worked there as a teenage server. Ted Olson said he was hired at age



After a 13-month closure and a change in ownership, Vic's Ice Cream reopened at 11 a.m. Jan. 2, looking both familiar and refreshed, as the first patrons waited for nearly two hours in gloomy, rainy weather.

13 by original owner Ash Rutledge.

Founded in 1947 by World War II veterans Ash Rutledge and Vic Zito,

Vic's Ice Cream grew into one of Sacramento's most beloved culinary institutions. Zito died in 1966, but Rutledge continued

working at Vic's well into the 21st century, even after passing the business to his son, Craig.

Rutledge, who operated the shop for more than 40 years, was widely known throughout Land Park for his generosity and easy familiarity with customers, who often felt more like neighbors than patrons.

"Craig always made you feel seen," said his son, Matthew Rutledge. "He just appreciated everybody for who they were."

Craig Rutledge died in *Continued on Page 3*

Appellate Court Rejects Delta Tunnel Financing

Delta Counties Coalition News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - The Delta Counties Coalition (DCC) welcomes the opinion by the Third District Court of Appeal, which upheld the lower court's ruling that the State of California lacks legal authority to issue billions of dollars in bonds to finance the proposed Delta tunnel project without explicit legislative approval.

This decision affirms what Delta communities, counties and local agencies have raised for years: that a project of this scale, cost and consequence cannot be advanced through administrative maneuvering or broad interpretations of decades-old statutes.

The court made clear that the Department of Water Resources exceeded its authority by attempting to classify the Delta tunnel as a "modification" of the State Water Project, rather than what it plainly is: a massive new conveyance facility with far-reaching impacts.

For the counties and residents who live and work in the Delta, this ruling is an important step toward transparency, accountability and lawful decision-making. The proposed tunnel would fundamentally alter Delta land use, threaten local water supply reliability, place additional pressure on fragile ecosystems, and expose ratepayers and communities to escalating financial risk - all without clear authorization from the Legislature or any water supply benefits for affected regions.

The court's opinion underscores a basic principle: if the state wishes to pursue a project with an estimated - and questionable - price tag of \$20 billion and decades-long consequences, it must do so openly, with full legislative scrutiny and public accountability. Delta communities should not be asked to bear the environmental, economic and social costs of a project that has yet to demonstrate clear benefits or a lawful funding path.

While proponents have suggested the ruling does not end the project, it *Continued on Page 2*

Supervisors Elect Rodriguez Chair, Hume Vice Chair

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - The annual vote to elect a new chair and vice chair of the Board of Supervisors was held on Tuesday, Jan. 13. This year's elected chair is Supervisor Rosario Rodriguez of District 4, and Supervisor Pat Hume of District 5 was elected vice chair.

"It is an honor to serve as chair of the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors in 2026," said Supervisor Rodriguez.

"I step into this role with a clear focus on results, respect and responsibility. Many of our residents are struggling, and they deserve a county government that acts with urgency and delivers measurable outcomes. As chair, I will run disciplined, productive meetings and demand results, accountability and follow-through on every commitment we make," she added.



Pictured from left are Sacramento County Board of Supervisors Chair Rosario Rodriguez, District 4; and Vice Chair Pat Hume, District 5. Photo courtesy of Sacramento County



Rodriguez continued by stating, "Respect begins with listening to the people and the communities

we serve and ensuring their voices are reflected in our decisions." *Continued on Page 2*

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

Major reservoirs



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

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



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. Photo taken Oct. 30, 2025. Courtesy photos

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 cww.water.ca.gov. ★

Supervisors Elect Rodriguez Chair, Hume Vice Chair

Continued from page 1

Responsibility means turning those voices into action. Working with my fellow supervisors, county staff, and community partners, I will advance solutions that strengthen neighborhoods and ensure Sacramento County operates transparently, effectively and with real impact for the public."

Board chair responsibilities include the following: presides over the board meetings; the vice chair assumes the role in the chair's absence or inability to act. If the chair and vice chair are absent or unable to preside, the members present will select a member present to act as temporary

chairperson; acts on procedural matters or questions; recognizes a member of the board desiring to speak on an item; is entitled to vote on all matters before the board, participates in discussion relating to any matter, makes motions without relinquishing the chair, and seconds any motion without relinquishing the chair; sits on other boards/commissions as a representative of the County of Sacramento and is the point of contact for questions from the public regarding the meetings (i.e., coordination of resolutions/presentations and general questions not specific to a district, etc.). The chair and vice chair serve annual terms. ★

Appellate Court Rejects Delta Tunnel Financing



The Delta Counties Coalition includes Contra Costa County, Sacramento County, San Joaquin County, Solano County and Yolo Counties. Photo courtesy of the Delta Counties Coalition

Continued from page 1
undeniably raises serious questions about its viability. Just last year, the governor unsuccessfully attempted to tack legislation onto the state budget that would have bypassed many hurdles for the tunnel, and his representatives at that time confidently told the Legislature that they would prevail on this

matter in court.

This calls into question this project's other significant problems. At a minimum, this court decision requires the state to pause and reconsider whether continued pursuit of the tunnel is prudent, lawful or aligned with California's broader goals for sustainable water management, climate resilience

and regional equity.

The Delta Counties Coalition remains committed to collaborative, science-based water solutions that

protect the Delta, support local communities and provide reliable water supplies statewide, without sacrificing the rule of law or the voices of those most directly affected. ★

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Vic's Ice Cream Reopens to Big Crowds

Continued from page 1

March 2024 at age 73. The cause of death was cirrhosis of the liver. He had been hospitalized roughly two weeks before his death.

"It was actually really shocking," said his sister, Karen Tzikas. "Nobody really expected it."

Craig Rutledge began working at Vic's while attending Kennedy High School and never stopped serving generations of Sacramento residents. Born Dec. 26, 1950, to Ash Rutledge and homemaker Joyce Rutledge, he grew up not far from the ice cream shop. He attended John Cabrillo Elementary School and San Brannan Middle School.

"He always dropped everything to help his neighbors and family," Tzikas said.

The Land Park Community Association (LPCA) said it was shocked and saddened by Rutledge's passing. A longtime board member of the LPCA, Rutledge was credited with quietly strengthening the neighborhood.

"The community may not know everything he did to support our neighborhood, but because of Craig Rutledge's time and devotion, William Land Park is a better place to live," the association said in a statement.

Community events in Land Park and beyond often featured free Vic's ice cream.

"He was a soft-spoken guy who cared deeply about the community," said Mark Abrahams, a former president of the Land Park Community Association.

Former Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg also paid tribute to Rutledge.

"Vic's is a Sacramento institution that continues to create good times and memories for so many Sacramento families, including mine," Steinberg said. "The city and I will keep Craig and his family in our prayers."

Steinberg is not the first local politician to have a fondness for Vic's. The restaurant has long been a favorite dining spot of lifelong Land Park resident and 2006 Democratic California gubernatorial candidate Phil Angelides.

Vic's was also a favored destination of the late U.S. Rep. Robert Matsui and his wife, current U.S. Rep. Doris Matsui. Former U.S. Rep. John E. Moss Jr., who represented Sacramento's 3rd District, was also a longtime patron. He died Aug. 15, 2022.



Vic's server Lucy Moore, a junior at C.K. McClatchy High School, serves an ice cream cone to Darlene Posehn, who also happens to be her grandmother. Vic's truly is a place where families gather. Photos by Stephen B. Clazie

The Sacramento Bee reported that "the future of Vic's had been one of the most intensely followed sagas in Sacramento's food scene since owner Craig Rutledge passed away in March 2024. By August 2024, the property had been put up for sale."

That uncertain future changed when members of the Grifone family stepped forward, intent on preserving Vic's legacy. The new operating group consists of Carlo Grifone and his daughter, Samantha Grifone; Scott Matrevec; and Craig Rutledge's son, Matt Rutledge.

Carlo Grifone is an owner of the local pizza chain Giovanni's Old World New York Pizzeria, located at 5924 S. Land Park Drive in the South Hills Shopping Center. Samantha Grifone will oversee the day-to-day operations of the ice cream parlor.

Matrevec is an owner of Frog & Slim on 16th Street and an angel investor with Sacramento Angels, a group of experienced entrepreneurs and executives that has invested in more than 100 companies since its founding in 2000.

Vic's and Brew Bird share an entryway and a beer-and-wine license, connected inside while retaining separate exterior doors. Together, they represent a thoughtful blend of nostalgia and reinvention.

The adjoining space has reopened as Brew Bird Coffee & Creative, a modern café and pottery studio serving Camellia Coffee Roasters coffee, Bella Bru pastries,

and beer and wine, alongside a paint-your-own pottery experience fired in an on-site kiln. Brew Bird's pottery options range from \$35 mugs to \$45 planters, with materials and studio time included.

For co-owner Samantha Grifone, the pottery concept had long been a quiet ambition.

Craig Rutledge originally opened the coffee shop in 2013, about a year after Ford's Hamburgers, a landmark California burger joint, was forced to close following an ADA lawsuit. Ford's, located about a mile and a half from Vic's, was indeed out of ADA compliance, lacking sufficient wheelchair access to its restroom. Owner Hank Vereschagin said he could not afford the necessary renovations to the more than 60-year-old building.

A year later, Vic's faced a similar challenge. Rutledge purchased the beauty salon behind the ice cream parlor and cut a doorway between the two businesses to create an ADA-compliant restroom. He converted the former salon into a coffee shop.

Meanwhile, Sacramento attorney Scott Johnson, who had filed thousands of disability discrimination lawsuits, later pleaded guilty to filing a false tax return on income earned from those cases.

The reopening drew friends, neighbors and former employees, including Ted Olson. One notable absence was Vic's first female employee, though her family came during the first week.

Cynthia Borcich said her daughter Angela became Vic's first female server in 1992, starting at age 14. She worked there while attending C.K. McClatchy High School and Sacramento City College before choosing culinary school in San Francisco instead of a four-year university.

Jeff Cole, who is married to Angela's younger sister Jenny, said Angela got her start at Vic's.

"Angela has an extremely successful catering business in Hawaii for the rich and famous," Cole said with pride. "And she got her start making melted cheese hot dog sandwiches on rye bread at Vic's in 1992."

Cole also recalled always ordering a side of potato chips with his sandwich and said Vic's once had a secret menu that included a Hawaiian drink and an Elvis milkshake made with vanilla ice cream and a scoop of peanut butter.

"You can't beat Vic's famous hot dog sandwich," Cole said. "The dogs are split, served between slices of bread and griddled."

Mentioning Vic's tangy red sauce, made from ketchup, mustard and Worcestershire sauce, brought an even bigger smile.

"I loved dipping my chips and even my sandwich in it," he said, noting that the exact proportions remain a secret.

Vic's general manager Dave Gilson has been with the business for nearly 25 years, starting as a scooper before moving into management about 12 years ago.

"Families like Cynthia Borcich's come together here, and generations are going to keep doing that," Gilson said. "It's the experience when you walk through the door. It brings you back. A lot of your happiest memories happened here; after a game, a school play, just being together."

John Fowler said he first came to Vic's in 1948 and has been a patron ever since. A lifelong Sacramento resident, Fowler attended Holy Spirit, California Middle School, C.K. McClatchy High School, Sacramento City College and Sacramento State, graduating in 1971.

"I'm happy they reopened; no big changes, and they kept the menu," he said. The menu is still displayed on a black letter board with white lettering.

"It's the same recipe, same high-quality ingredients, same person making it," Gilson said, noting that mint chip is still expected to be the top-selling flavor. Gilson still makes the ice cream in-house.

Over its lifetime, the shop has won numerous awards for its ice cream, including seven consecutive gold medals at the California State Fair. ★

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Dishes To Choose From

FROZEN & FISH DEPT

<p>Abalone Style Shellfish 340 g REG. \$12.99/EA \$8.99 /ea</p>	<p>Masago Capelin Roe 170 g REG. \$7.99/EA \$4.99 /ea</p>
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WEEKLY MEAT SPECIALS

<p>Beef Rump/Bottom Round Roast-Bnls \$5.49 /lb</p>	<p>Beef T-Bone Steak \$5.49 /lb</p>	<p>Chicken Breast Bnls/Sknls \$1.89 /lb</p>
<p>Pork Neck Bones \$1.99 /lb</p>	<p>Pork Butt-Bone In \$2.59 /lb</p>	<p>Pork St Louis Ribs \$3.99 /lb</p>

WEEKLY HALAL SPECIALS

<p>Chicken Breast Bnls/Sknls \$1.99 /lb</p>	<p>New Zealand Lamb Shoulder Stew Bone-In \$5.99 /lb</p>	<p>Beef Rump/Bottom Round Roast-Bnls \$5.79 /lb</p>
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FRESH PRODUCE

<p>Whole White Mushroom 8 oz \$1.99 /ea</p>	<p>Mini Sweet Pepper 1 lb \$2.49 /pk</p>	<p>Mexican Squash 99¢ /lb</p>	<p>Lemon Cello 2 lb \$1.89 /bag</p>
<p>Yuca Root \$1.79 /lb</p>	<p>English Cucumber 99¢ /ea</p>	<p>Enoki Mushroom 150 g \$1.59 /ea</p>	<p>Russet Potato 10 lb \$1.99 /bag</p>

AMERICAN/HISPANIC GROCERY

<p>Swanson Chicken Broths 32 oz REG. \$3.99 \$2.69 /ea</p>	<p>El Mexicano Pinto Beans 29.6 oz REG. \$3.99 \$1.99 /ea</p>	<p>Rosarita Refried Beans 16 oz REG. \$2.49 \$1.49 /ea</p>	<p>Kellogg's Rice Krispies Treats 6.2 oz REG. \$3.99 \$3.49 /ea</p>
<p>Bonne Maman Blackberry & Blackcurrant Jelly 13 oz REG. \$7.49 \$3.99 /ea</p>			

ASIAN GROCERY

<p>Cu'u Long Vietnamese Rice Stick 2.2 lb REG. \$4.99 \$4.29 /ea</p>	<p>Saigon Quail Eggs in Brine 30 oz REG. \$5.99 \$4.99 /ea</p>	<p>Emperor Rice Cooking Wines 25.3, 20.1 oz REG. \$2.99 \$2.49 /ea</p>	<p>Hula Oriental Type Saimin Noodle 7 oz REG. \$4.39 \$3.99 /ea</p>
<p>Chin-Su Vietnamese Hot Sauce 3.5 oz REG. \$7.99 \$4.99 /ea</p>			

EUROPEAN GROCERY

<p>Zergut Roasted Sweet Red Peppers 57.8 oz REG. \$12.99 \$9.99 /ea</p>	<p>Big Sprats in Oil 240 gr REG. \$3.99 \$3.29 /ea</p>	<p>Veres Zucchini Spread 500 gr REG. \$4.99 \$3.99 /ea</p>	<p>Damla Assorted Soft Candy 850 gr REG. \$8.99 \$6.99 /ea</p>
<p>Nessi Chocolate Hazelnut Spread 750 gr REG. \$9.99 \$7.99 /ea</p>			

EUROPEAN DELI

<p>Columbus Cracked Pepper Turkey Breast REG. \$13.49/LB \$12.49 /lb</p>	<p>Columbus Black Forest Ham REG. \$10.19/LB \$9.19 /lb</p>	<p>Green Olives Stuffed with Almonds REG. \$7.39/LB \$6.39 /lb</p>
<p>Kalamata Olives with Garlic and Pepper REG. \$7.39/LB \$6.39 /lb</p>		

<h3 style="text-align: center;">FROZEN & FISH DEPT</h3> <p>REG. \$10.99/PK \$4.99 /pk</p> <p>Dover Sole Fillet Wild Alaska 2 lb</p>	<h3 style="text-align: center;">HOUSEWARE</h3> <p>REG. \$10.99 \$8.99 /ea</p> <p>ELECTRIC RICE COOKER (6 CUPS)</p> <p>REG. \$16.99 \$16.99 /ea</p> <p>ELECTRIC RICE COOKER (10 CUPS)</p> <p>ELECTRIC BBQ GRILL \$39.99 /ea</p>
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California Homeowners Could Qualify for Grants for New Roofs and Fire Safety

By Levi Sumagaysay
CALMatters.org

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Some homeowners in areas of California with high wildfire risk could eventually get money for new roofs or to build fire-resistant zones around their properties under a new state law that went into effect Jan. 1.

The Safe Homes grant program is designed to help low- and middle-income homeowners with fire mitigation. People who qualify could use grants to create 5-foot ember-resistant zones around properties, also known as

Zone Zero, as required by law in some areas. The program will also contribute toward costs for fire-safe roofs.

The state's Insurance Department, which is responsible for implementing the program, is working out the details around eligibility, the amount of and the distribution of grants.

It is now developing an application portal that it hopes to have ready by March, said Michael Soller, spokesperson for the department.

The insurance department will be handling all the details of the grants,

said Mike Dayton, chief of staff of Assemblymember Lisa Calderon, the Los Angeles-area Democrat and chair of the Assembly Insurance Committee who wrote the law, and has so far secured \$3 million in the state budget to get the program started.

Soller said homeowners who have policies with admitted insurance carriers or the last-resort FAIR Plan and who live in high-risk areas will have to meet income limits set by the state housing department to be eligible for the grants, whose amounts have not been determined. Communities, cities and



The Safe Homes grant program is designed to help low- and middle-income homeowners with fire mitigation. Photo by Marko Tomic via Pixabay

counties with mitigation projects could also apply for grants.

He also said the insurance department plans to advocate for additional and ongoing funding for the program.

Another source of funding could be the federal

government, including the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Soller said. But Gov. Gavin Newsom recently tried to meet with FEMA to talk about disaster aid related to the Los Angeles County fires and was unsuccessful. The California Board

of Forestry and Fire Protection recently extended the finalization of rules regarding Zone Zero buffers around properties to the first half of next year.

The rules are expected to take effect for existing homes in 2029. ★

Students in California Struggling Most with Math

Find a Super Tutor News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - While the Christmas break is upon us, many students will be studying at home over the festive period and may be wondering how to receive a little extra support for the subject they find the hardest.

With this in mind, education recruitment agency Find a Super Tutor investigated the subjects that students in the US are struggling with the most.

The research analyzed the total number of Google searches for 118 subjects, applying 13 different search combinations for each, such as "help with mathematics" and "chemistry tutoring". Then, the ranking was calculated based on the subjects with the most to least average Google searches per month across the nation and in each state.

Mathematics was revealed to be the subject that California was struggling with the most, with a monthly average of 18,256 Google searches inquiring about help with the subject. Ranking as the subject with second-highest number of inquiries was Programming, with an average of 7,473

searches per month.

Following in third was Spanish, with an average monthly search count of 7,228, whereas English Language followed in fourth with an average of 7,083 searches per month. Rounding out the top five was Calculus, with a monthly average of 1,995 searches.

Mathematics was revealed to be the subject that students were struggling with the most across the US, with a monthly average of 125,929 Google searches inquiring about help with the subject.

Other subjects that students struggled with were SAT Prep, with an average of 7,552 monthly searches, and Calculus, with an average of 6,857 monthly searches, whereas Japanese completed the top 10, averaging 6,718 monthly searches.

Commenting on the findings, Joshua James, director of Find a Super Tutor, said,

"There are strong patterns among the subjects that students are struggling with the most. Most of the subjects fall under either the STEM or languages category. Some of the hardest school subjects to learn include mathematics and other

scientific disciplines such as programming, information technology, chemistry and calculus. These subjects can be challenging for students because they involve abstract concepts, logical reasoning, and require learners to memorize large amounts of information.

"For instance, calculus requires a solid foundation in algebra and trigonometry, and without this, students can quickly fall behind. Similarly, programming and IT demand not only technical knowledge but also the ability to think algorithmically and troubleshoot complex problems. Students who struggle in STEM often benefit from interactive tools like coding simulators, virtual labs, and personalized tutoring platforms, which allow for a more hands-on and tailored learning experience.

"Language subjects also pose challenges, but of a different nature. English and foreign languages such as Spanish, Japanese, and American Sign Language require mastery of vocabulary, grammar, and cultural context, all of which can vary widely from a student's native language."

"Japanese, for example, has multiple writing systems and a syntax that

significantly differs from English, while ASL relies on spatial reasoning and visual cues that are not intuitive for everyone. Even English, often assumed to be straightforward for native speakers, contains complex grammar rules and idiomatic expressions that can confuse learners.

"Online support for language learning has become highly sophisticated, with resources like language exchange communities, immersive audio-visual content, and AI-powered apps such as Duolingo offering real-time feedback and personalized practice routines. These tools can significantly enhance engagement and retention, helping students overcome the hurdles these subjects often present.

"Regardless of what subject you or your child is struggling with, there is always support available. If you need help beyond what online resources may be able to offer, hiring a part-time tutor can be the perfect solution. Tutors are typically experts in their chosen area and can provide specialized, high-quality support to improve grades and understanding of the subject." ★

Girl Scouts of Northern California Kicks off Cookie Season

Welcomed Exploremores to Cookie Lineup, Bay Area's Adobe a National Sponsor

Girl Scouts of Northern California News Release

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA, CA (MPG) - Girl Scouts of Northern California kicked off their 2026 Girl Scout Cookie season on Jan. 12. Girl Scouts throughout all 19 counties from Gilroy to the Oregon Border will embark on the highly anticipated cookie season, exploring more possibilities through the largest girl-led entrepreneurial program in the world.

From Jan. 12, consumers can support their local girl entrepreneurs by ordering from the iconic cookie lineup online at ilovecookies.org. Local shoppers can also locate cookie booths starting Feb. 4 for in-person cookie sales. The 2026 Girl Scouts of Northern California cookie season runs through March 15, and all cookie flavors are \$7 a box (shipping fees additional).

"Exploremores", a rocky road ice cream-inspired sandwich cookie, will join the legendary lineup for the 2026 cookie season. Filled with delicious flavors of chocolate, marshmallow and toasted almond-flavored crème, Exploremores reflect the spirit of exploration at the heart of every Girl Scout.

The new flavor will be the 9th cookie flavor to join Northern California customer favorites such as Thin Mints, Caramel deLites, Peanut Butter Patties, and Trefoils. Exploremores will be available for purchase online and in-person during booth sales. Visit www.ilovecookies.org for more information.

"What better way to kick off the new year than with a new cookie for the 2026 cookie season," said Mary-Jane Strom, CEO of Girl Scouts of Northern California. "Behind every cookie sale is a Girl Scout learning essential life skills far beyond just selling cookies. Buying or donating cookies is a delicious and easy way to help cultivate



As this year's national sponsor of the cookie program, Bay Area-based Adobe will encourage girls to express their individuality and think creatively as they pursue their goals this cookie season. Photo courtesy of Girl Scouts of Northern California

future leaders, innovators, and change-makers. It is a win-win for all."

The Girl Scout Cookie Program provides invaluable entrepreneurial skills for Girl Scouts across the country and funds a variety of experiences. Each cookie season, Girl Scouts develop important life skills like goal-setting, decision-making, money management, people skills and business ethics through the Cookie Program.

One hundred percent of the proceeds from the cookie program are used locally and provide critical funds for girls' access to affordable programming, the outdoors, camp and program centers, STEM, financial aid and volunteer support services. Girl Scouts and their troops depend on these funds to support their community service efforts.

This year, over 14,000 Girl Scouts in Northern California will



"Exploremores", a rocky road ice cream-inspired sandwich cookie, will join the legendary lineup for the 2026 cookie season. Photo courtesy of Girl Scouts of Northern California

participate in the cookie entrepreneurship program with the goal of selling over 3 million packages of cookies.

As this year's national sponsor of the cookie program, Bay Area-based Adobe will encourage girls to express their individuality and think creatively as they pursue their

goals this cookie season. Through a national educational video featured on the Digital Cookie platform, Adobe will equip Girl Scouts with essential skills in online communication and responsible digital design. By sharing these creative tools, Adobe is supporting Girl Scouts to become confident digital

creators and entrepreneurs.

Girl Scouts of Northern California serves over 46,000 youth and adult volunteers across 19 counties from Gilroy to the Oregon border. Girl Scouts bring their dreams to life and work together to build a better world. Through programs from coast to coast, Girl Scouts of all backgrounds and abilities can be unapologetically themselves as they discover their strengths and rise to meet new challenges — whether they want to climb the top of a tree or the top of their class, lace up their boots for a hike, advocate for climate justice, or make their first best friends.

Backed by trusted adult volunteers, mentors and millions of alumni, Girl Scouts lead the way as they find their voices and create change on the issues that matter most to them. To learn more about Girl Scouts of Northern California, visit www.gsnorcal.org. ★

Museum Executive Director Amanda Meeker Set to Retire

California Museum News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - California Museum Executive Director Amanda Meeker announced that she will retire in the summer of 2026, after more than a decade in the role and 28 years of service to the Museum. A respected cultural leader, Meeker has dedicated her career to advancing the Museum's mission to educate people about California's rich history, diversity and culture.

During her tenure, Meeker has played a central role in solidifying the California Museum's position as a trusted civic institution, expanding its reach, modernizing its exhibitions, strengthening its public-facing programs and deepening its commitment to inclusive, community-centered storytelling. Under her leadership, the Museum has become known for elevating underrepresented histories and tackling contemporary issues shaping California today.

"Amanda has been pivotal in establishing the Museum's identity as a center of storytelling representative of the diverse people and cultures that make up the Golden State," said Anne Marie Petrie, Chair of the California Museum Board of Trustees. "Her passion for public education and her steady leadership has advanced the Museum's ability to share knowledge, spark dialogue, and inspire civic engagement."

Meeker joined the then-Golden State Museum as its first official employee ahead of its opening in 1998, after having supported its development as a student intern. From the start, she helped shape the Museum's vision, developing exhibitions and programs that reflected California's complex social, political and cultural



California Museum Executive Director Amanda Meeker announced that she will retire in the summer of 2026. Photo courtesy of the California Museum

history. Since being appointed executive director in 2015, she has guided the Museum through a period of unprecedented growth and change, increasing its relevance to the communities it serves.

Throughout her career, Meeker has been known for her collaborative leadership style, fostering strong partnerships with educators, community organizations, artists, scholars and civic leaders across the state. Her work has reinforced the Museum's role as a place of historical storytelling and as a dynamic forum for public engagement.

"It has been a privilege to steward the California

Museum's mission over the years, working alongside dedicated staff, board members, educators and community partners who believe in the power of history to inform and inspire positive change," Meeker reflected. "The Museum's strength comes from the people whose stories it uplifts, and I'm confident it will continue to grow as a space where Californians see themselves reflected for generations to come."

The California Museum Board of Trustees has engaged executive search partner Isaacson Miller to help identify Meeker's successor, someone who will build on her

legacy while leading the institution into its next chapter.

"Amanda's retirement marks the close of a remarkable career. The Board expresses its deep appreciation for her vision and integrity that helped define who we are today," Petrie remarked. "Her legacy of leadership will continue to inspire those who follow her footsteps in maintaining the museum's mission. But most of all she will be missed for her kindness and incredible capacity to care for all of us here and her community."

As she prepares for retirement, Meeker looks forward to traveling and pursuing personal projects, while

remaining an advocate for museums and public history.

The California Museum - home of the California Hall of Fame—focuses on the state's rich history, its diversity and its unique influence on the world of ideas, innovation, art and culture. Through interactive experiences, the Museum inspires visitors to make a mark on history. Located at 1020 O Street in the March Fong Eu Secretary of State complex, the Museum is open Tuesday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. General admission is \$8-\$10. Plan a visit at californiamuseum.org ★

Deal Me In

Local Casino January Events Calendar

By MPG Staff, Compiled from Hard Rock Sacramento, Thunder Rock Casino Resort and Sky River Casino

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Fight fans, music lovers and nightlife enthusiasts have an action-packed lineup to look forward to as Hard Rock Live, Thunder Valley Casino Resort, and Sky River Casino present a series of must-see events featuring legendary athletes, chart-topping artists and unforgettable nightlife experiences.

HARD ROCK

On Saturday, Jan. 24 at 8 p.m., Xavi will take the Hard Rock Live Sacramento stage with his X-Tour featuring special guest Fabio Capri. Xavi is the leading voice of Música Mexicana's new generation, with over 4.8 billion career streams. Born in Phoenix and raised between the U.S. and Nogales, Sonora, the singer-songwriter blends traditional corridos with R&B, pop, and urban influences. He rose to global prominence in 2024 with "La Diabla," which topped Spotify's Global 200 and became the longest-running #1 Latin solo song in the chart's history.

Hard Rock Live inside Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Sacramento at Fire Mountain will host A1 Combat 33: Legends Collide on Friday, Jan. 30.

The event is headlined by a highly anticipated Combat Jiu-Jitsu Superfight between MMA legend Urijah Faber and Cisco Rivera, alongside 17 total bouts in the cage. Doors open at 4 p.m. with the main card taking place at 7 p.m.



Hard Rock Casino is starting the year strong with a lineup of concerts, UFC fights and more. Photo by Shamaya Sutton



Sky River Casino is located on 1 Sky River Pkwy, Elk Grove and has a full calendar of events. Photo by Idaly Valencia

Brad Paisley his the Thunder Valley stage Friday, Jan. 30 to celebrate over 25 years of chart-topping success. A Grand Ole Opry member since 2001, Paisley has written 21 of his 25 No. 1 hits and amassed nearly 5 billion career streams, with classics like "He Didn't Have to Be," "She's Everything," and "We Danced."

This is a show country fans won't want to miss.

Grammy Award-winning artist Gary Clark Jr. brings his genre-blending sound of blues, rock, soul, and hip-hop to The Venue, featuring hits such as "This Land," "Pearl Cadillac," and "Don't Owe You a Thang."

Joining him is the Marcus King Band, adding even more high-energy, soulful performances to the night.

Tickets for Thunder Valley Events are available on TicketMaster.

SKY RIVER

Ladies Night will take place Wednesday, Jan. 28 at 5 p.m. Grab your friends to enjoy cigar specials, a curated drink menu and entertainment

Come out Thursday, Jan. 29 for High Stakes, Slow Smoke. This event brings together the bold character of High West Whiskeys and the craftsmanship of My Father Cigars for a curated pairing experience designed for true connoisseurs. Admission is \$75. Reserve your tickets now on Open Table.

Party @ 32 Brews Street returns each Friday 10 p.m. to 1 a.m. Come alive at 32 Brews Street with DJs spinning the latest hits! Feel the beat and dance the night away with all your favorites playing. ★

The event will be broadcast live on YouTube and UFC FIGHT PASS. For the full

bout card, visit AICOMBAT.COM. All bouts subject to change or cancellation.

No refunds. **THUNDER VALLEY** A country music icon, ★

Kings Korner

By V.G. Harris



What a difference a week makes!

Losers of seven straight games and looking like cellar dwellers, the Kings went to a youth movement that saw the hometown boys win four consecutive games and nearly made it five straight as they fell to the Portland Trailblazers for the third time this season.

The mini winning streak had a cold water in the face effect for many pundits and fans, as the Kings easily handled the Rockets, Lakers, Knicks and the Washington Wizards.

Even more surprising was the way the Kings put away the competition, as they won by double digits in each of the 4 wins.

A shot in the arm? You bet it was, and it should give the organization a moment of pause as they reassess what they have regarding talent that resides on this team.

Right in the middle of this euphoric 4-game run was none other than 6'11" big man Dylan Cardwell, that has come out of nowhere to become a fan favorite. Just 24 years old, the Kings have stumbled onto a diamond in the rough, and no one on this team plays with greater enthusiasm than Cardwell. Comparisons are being made of Dennis Rodman, as Cardwell bounces down the court with arms uplifted, energizing the crowd and getting fans on their feet.

Not known for his scoring, Cardwell went undrafted a year ago, and the Kings signed him to a 2-way contract for this season. Smart move and one that's already paying off.

Cardwell might not get 20 points per game, but his affection for blocking shots and playing ferocious defense is just what the Kings needed to get them back.

The question will be as the trade deadline approaches, will the Kings realize what they have in Cardwell and value him to the point of not including him in a trade. Don't do it! And by the same token, do not trade Precious Achiuwa!

For the first time in many years the Kings can put a big lineup on the floor and it's showing results.

As the center piece of the Kings Domantas Sabonis was sidelined with a knee injury, coach Christie had no choice but to use both Achiuwa and Cardwell side

by side, and the results were astounding.

Not to be forgotten is rookie Maxime Raynaud who although not as impressive, is coming along, and I'm hopeful the Kings hang onto Raynaud as well.

The idea of blowing up this team in my opinion was never a good one, and I am in favor of the Kings either finding a trade that will add a topflight scorer, or worst case scenario, hold down the fort, work with the existing squad, and make your move in the next draft.

OKC and others have proven that the draft can be your friend. If the Kings can begin to assess talent, there is a real possibility that the upcoming draft, that is predicted to be a talent laden one, can produce another player of DeAaron Fox quality.

Every reason to start getting excited Kings fans.

Domantas Sabonis is back, and will Christie have the wherewithal to play Cardwell and Sabonis at the same time. Is it just a pipe dream to have Achiuwa, Cardwell, and Sabonis all playing on the court at the same time? Wow, what a rebounding trio, and with scorers like Murray, DeRozan, and Lavine to compliment the big men, what might this team look like.

Say your prayers for coach Christie that the talent fairy will tap him on the shoulder and give him good common sense to see what he has right before him.

As I have said many times before, look no further than your bench to find talent, and stop sending quality players away where they make teams better.

The Sacramento Kings really are better than their 12-31 record reports, and the second half of the season really does matter.

Scott Perry, don't make hasty decisions, and let this team continue to gel while giving the youth of the team a chance to show what they're made of.

If you haven't gotten out to a game there is no better time than right now. These guys will get you on your feet over and over again!

Go Kings and let's tweak things and by all means not blow it up!

All the best!

★

Homelessness Crisis Remains One of Newsom's Biggest Political Liabilities



By Dan Walters, CALMatters.org

While delivering his final State of the State address and proposing his final state budget last week, Gov. Gavin Newsom clearly sought to neutralize an issue that has haunted his political career for more than two decades and could torpedo his hopes of becoming president: homelessness.

First, a bit of history.

Just months after being elected mayor of San Francisco in 2004, Newsom unveiled a plan he said would clear city streets of homeless people in 10 years. Fourteen years later, while running for governor, Newsom declared that homelessness in San Francisco had "never been worse."

He said eradicating homelessness would be a high priority and promised to appoint a homeless "czar" who could cut through red tape and intergovernmental friction to get the job done. Later, when pressed by reporters over the czar pledge, he snapped, "You want to know who's the homeless czar? I'm the homeless czar in the state of California."

Despite that self-appointment and devoting almost all of his 2020 State of the State address to homelessness, the number of unhoused Californians continued to rise to record levels. As it did, Newsom began blaming local governments for not spending

state homelessness grants effectively and threatened to withhold annual funding.

However, in 2024 State Auditor Grant Parks excoriated Newsom's own California Interagency Council on Homelessness for failing to effectively monitor and coordinate homelessness programs — even though the state had spent more than \$20 billion during Newsom's governorship.

He later reorganized the council and last year it issued a glossy "Action Plan for Preventing and Ending Homelessness." Newsom hailed it as "not just a report of our investments, but a directive for continued accountability and action towards specific quantifiable goals."

It listed multiple things that should be done to alleviate the homelessness crisis, but never mentioned how its lofty goals should be achieved nor said anything about how the state's deficit-ridden budget would pay for them.

In last week's State of the State address, Newsom sang the political version of the World War II tune, "Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive," cataloguing his accomplishments during the last seven years, including progress toward eliminating homelessness.

"When I began as governor, there was no homeless plan, no mental health plan and certainly no housing plan," Newsom told legislators. "There was no accountability and little investment. The responsibility fell to cities and counties, with little interest from Sacramento."

Newsom ticked off the efforts he had made and bragged that, "Early data, just compiled, shows that the number of unsheltered

homeless people in California dropped 9% in 2025," while "the nation saw an 18.1% overall increase in homelessness. Our investments are paying off."

He could not, however, resist another jab at local officials, saying he is "providing counties what they've been asking for: the predictable funding for housing and substance abuse treatment. No more excuses — it's time to bring people off the streets, out of encampments, into housing, into treatment. Counties need to do their job."

County officials took umbrage. The California State Association of Counties, in a statement, complained that Newsom's budget shifts the financial burden for several health and welfare programs to county governments and fails to protect them from federal reductions.

The organization also cited the new budget's omission of an annual bloc grant for homeless programs, and the administration's stalling the delivery of cash from a past allocation, "which was approved by the Legislature 18 months ago."

While Newsom cites a 9% drop in homelessness, if true it would be from a base of nearly 200,000 Californians without homes. There are still plenty of squalid encampments to be videotaped and featured on ads attacking a potential presidential candidate named Newsom two years hence.

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

I'm Divorced; Can I Get Benefits from my Ex-husband?



By Russell Gloor, AMAC Certified Social Security Advisor

Dear Rusty: After 16 years of marriage, we were divorced. I have never remarried, but he has. When he starts collecting Social Security (he is 64 now and still working), is it true that I can claim ex-spousal benefits or does that go to the current wife? How would I find this info? **Signed: A Divorced Spouse**

Dear Divorced Spouse: The fact that your ex-husband has remarried has no influence on your ability to collect benefits based on his record. If you are eligible for ex-spouse benefits (because you did not remarry), you can get those benefits regardless of whether his current wife collects benefits on his record. In other words, both you and his current wife can both collect spousal benefits from your ex-husband's earnings record.

Your eligibility for an ex-spouse benefit is determined by comparing your own SS retirement benefit amount at full retirement age (FRA) to his — if your

own SS benefit at your FRA is less than 50% of your ex's FRA benefit entitlement, and you were married to your ex for more than 10 years, are not currently married and are at least 62 years old, then you can get a "spousal boost" (an amount added to your own Social Security retirement amount). In fact, if you have been divorced for over two years, you can get an ex-spouse benefit even though he is not yet receiving his own SS retirement benefit.

Be aware, however, if you claim any Social Security benefit (both your own SS retirement amount and your ex-spouse "spousal boost") before you reach your full retirement age, the monthly amount you get will be reduced according to how much before your full retirement age you claim. Spouse and ex-spouse benefits reach maximum at your full retirement age but are reduced if claimed earlier than your full retirement age. Claiming your benefits as an ex-spouse will also result in you receiving your own SS retirement benefit (reduced if you haven't yet reached FRA).

I suggest you contact Social Security at 1.800.772.1213 to make a telephone appointment to evaluate whether you are entitled benefits as an ex-spouse. If your own SS retirement benefit at your FRA is less

than half of your ex's FRA entitlement, you will be. To apply for those benefits you will need a copy of your divorce decree (and perhaps your marriage certificate), and your ex-husband's Social Security number (if you do not have his SSN, you can provide his date and place of birth and his parents' names, and SSA will likely be able to locate your ex's SS record).

SSA will be able to tell you what your total monthly benefit as an ex-spouse will be when you meet with them, at which point you can decide whether to claim your benefits early or wait until your FRA to achieve your maximum amount as an ex-spouse.

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Yes, We Need a \$1.5 Trillion Defense Budget

ly match the total annual spending of all non-U.S. NATO countries. The percentage increase would be the highest since the Korean War and double the biggest annual increases of the Reagan years.

"We still talk about the Reagan buildup," Secretary of War Pete Hegseth said in a speech last month, "and my kids and yours will someday talk about the Trump buildup."

The Trump proposal would not just be a down payment on that promise, but a big step toward fulfilling it.

If our military is highly proficient -- as demonstrated in the Venezuela raid -- it also doesn't have the materiel to wage a protracted major war.

Defense analyst Mackenzie Eaglin of the American Enterprise Institute has long been ringing the alarm. She recently noted that during the short Israel-Iran war, we fired 150, or one-quarter, of our THAAD missiles, exceeding our annual purchase rate by three times. In the Red Sea, the Navy fired more Tomahawks in January 2024 than it bought in all of 2023.

These shortfalls, as Eaglin points out, are especially disturbing when compared to the building capacity of our adversaries. Whereas the Russians make more than 300,000 artillery shells a month, we make only 40,000 155mm shells. "Beijing builds six naval combatant ships," she writes, "for every 1.8 ships the U.S. builds."

Even The New York Times -- not known for

beating the drums for more defense spending -- devoted a splashy editorial last month to the sorry state of our military-industrial base.

In his new book, "War and Power," scholar Phillips Payson O'Brien relates how wars between great powers are usually not won by brilliant battle plans, or by the commitment or proficiency of the troops. Rather, it is productive capacity -- and the ability to degrade that of the enemy while maintaining or increasing your own -- that makes the difference.

The Nazis weren't going to win the Battle of Britain when the Brits were producing twice as many aircraft as Hitler.

On top of this, a nation needs to make shrewd choices about what it is building (the Nazis also had the wrong planes for the Battle of Britain -- bombers with payloads that were too small and fighters with limited range).

The U.S. needs to make sure that it is not overinvesting in the weapons systems of the past, although a defense budget on the scale that Trump is discussing would relieve some pressure from these choices. We could very well have our traditional subs and jet fighters, and our cutting-edge drones, too.

Trump's taste for gilding everything can be over the top. It'd be a national service, though, if he manages to make the U.S. defense budget golden.

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

City Launches AI-Powered Website Search to Help Residents Find Information Faster

City of Sacramento News Release



SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The City of Sacramento has launched a new artificial intelligence feature on its public website designed to help residents find information more quickly and easily.

The city's website search page now includes an AI-generated summary at the top of search results. The tool provides

clear, concise answers by summarizing information from multiple city sources, reducing time spent searching and improving transparency

and usability. Users can ask full, plain-language questions and receive easy-to-understand responses before clicking through individual pages.

"This new feature is about making city information easier to access and easier to understand," said Darin Arcolino, chief information officer for the City of Sacramento. "By summarizing content from across the city website, we are helping residents

get the answers they need faster while supporting the City Council's Streamline Sacramento effort."

The feature builds on lessons learned from the city's internal SacGPT proof of concept and reflects ongoing collaboration between the Information Technology Department and other city departments.

City staff who have tested the tool say it is already improving how

information is found with the public.

"As someone who works closely with residents and the development community, I have seen how helpful this tool can be," said Matt Hertel, assistant director of the Community Development Department. "The AI search summaries make complex information easier to find and understand, which saves time and improves the overall customer experience."

City officials say the AI search enhancement supports broader efforts to modernize services and streamline how the public interacts with local government.

The city expects the feature to be among the first of its kind launched by a local government agency, reinforcing Sacramento's role as a leader in responsible, practical uses of artificial intelligence for public service. ★

ABOUT TOWN

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," extended to Feb. 15. This national traveling exhibit brings the full story of the World War I Flying Ace to life. Featuring original comic strips, vintage toys and rare memorabilia, it's a fun, family-friendly look at one of Peanuts' most iconic storylines.

The exhibit will delight fans who grew up with Snoopy the Flying Ace

and introduce new audiences to Snoopy's adventures in the sky. Details at aerospaceca.org.

California Automobile Museum – Sunday Drives. The third Sunday of every month, enjoy a free ride (with paid museum admission) in one of the museum's many beautiful cars from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Details at calautomuseum.org.

California Museum – "Kokoro: The Story of Sacramento's Lost Japantown," through March 29.

Featuring rare family photographs drawn from the personal collections

of community members, the exhibit documents the memories at the heart of a once-thriving downtown community devastated first by forced removal during World War II and again by redevelopment in the 1950s. Details at californiamuseum.org.

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

museum.

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

Elks Lodge 6 Calendar of Events

Community Blood Drive with Vitalant, 9 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. Sunday, Feb. 1. Appointments: Vitalant.org; enter blood drive code 100562219.

Valentine's Day Dinner and Dance with the Leaping Blennies, 4:30 to 10 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 14.

Beef bourguignon dinner \$30; \$15 for dance only. Tickets weekdays 9-3 at Elks Lodge 6, 6446 Riverside Blvd. or call (916) 442-6666.

Irish Tea Party, 1 to 4 p.m. Sunday, March 1. St. Patrick's Day themed. Irish music band, food and fun for adults and kids. Adults \$35; kids \$20. Tickets weekdays 9-3 at Elks Lodge 6, 6446 Riverside Blvd. or call (916) 442-6666.

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

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

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Submissions should be mailed to *East Sacramento News*, 2508 Garfield Ave., Suite A, Carmichael, CA 95608.

The *East Sacramento News* is published twice a month
Call (916) 773-1111 for more information.

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Publisher, Paul V. Scholl

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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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Small Business Comment on Optimism Index

Improved National Outlook Runs Up Against Golden State Realities

National Federation of Independent Business News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG)

- A recent release of the latest National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) Small Business Optimism Index shows a rise of 0.5 points in December to 99.5, remaining above its 52-year average of 98. An increase in those expecting better business conditions primarily drove the rise in the Optimism Index. The Uncertainty Index fell seven points from November to 84, the lowest reading since June 2024.

“Nice to see small business owners across the nation registering a slightly improved outlook even though it’s doubtful that sentiment is shared by many Main Street entrepreneurs here,” said John Kabateck, state director for the National Federation of Independent Business in California.

“For instance, the day before the release of the National Federation of Independent Business’s latest Optimism Index, the U.S. Department of Labor announced in the Federal Register that California has had outstanding advances on its unemployment insurance loans for five consecutive years and as a result, employers here will be paying more in Unemployment Insurance (UI) taxes this year. To cope with the pandemic-caused strain on their unemployment trust funds, 22 states needed to borrow from the federal government in order to keep their Unemployment Insurance trust funds solvent and



An increase in those expecting better business conditions primarily drove the rise in the Optimism Index. Photo courtesy of Freepik

unemployment benefits going to those in need of them. All but one state, guess which one, has paid Uncle Sam back. Only a territory, the U.S. Virgin Islands, has a worse record. Wow. What economic company.”

Said National Federation of Independent Business chief economist Bill Dunkelberg, “2025 ended with a further increase in small business optimism. While Main Street business owners remain concerned about taxes, they anticipate favorable economic conditions in 2026 due to waning cost pressures, easing labor challenges, and an increase in capital investments.”

According to the recent Optimism Index, the net

percentage of owners expecting better business conditions rose nine points from November to a net 24 percent (seasonally adjusted), contributing the most to the rise in the Optimism Index. This was the first increase since July.

When asked to evaluate the overall health of their business, 9 percent rated it excellent (down 2 points), 54 percent rated it good (up 1 point), 34 percent rated it fair (up 4 points), and 3 percent rated it poor (down 2 points).

Twenty percent of small business owners reported taxes as their single most important problem, up 6 points from November and ranking as the top problem. This is the highest reading since May 2021.

In conjunction with the December report, the National Federation of Independent Business also released a new episode of the “Small Business by the Numbers” podcast. This is the National Federation of Independent Business Research Center’s new podcast where Holly Wade, the executive director of the National Federation of Independent Business Research Center, and Peter Hansen, director of research and policy analysis, discuss the data, stories, and economic conditions affecting small businesses nationwide.

National Federation of Independent Business’s monthly Small Business Optimism Index is the gold standard measurement of America’s small

business economy. Used by the Federal Reserve, Congressional leaders, administration officials, and state legislatures across the nation, it’s regarded as the bellwether on the health and welfare of the Main Street enterprises that employ half of all workers, generate more net new jobs than large corporations, and gave most of us the first start in our working life. The Optimism Index (aka Small Business Economic Trends report) is a national snapshot of National Federation of Independent Business-member, small-business owners not broken down by state. National Federation of Independent Business members span the complete spectrum of small and independent businesses -- from sole proprietorships to firms with hundreds of employees -- across all industries and sectors.

Keep up with the latest California small-business news at www.nfib.com or follow them on X @NFIB_CA and on Facebook @NFIB.CA.

For over 80 years, National Federation of Independent Business has been advocating on behalf of America’s small and independent business owners, both in Washington, D.C., and in all 50 state capitals. National Federation of Independent Business is a nonprofit, non-partisan, and member-driven association. Since our founding in 1943, National Federation of Independent Business has been exclusively dedicated to small and independent businesses and remains so today. For more information, visit nfib.com. ★

California’s Budget Underscores Agriculture’s Role

California Farm Bureau News Release

CALIFORNIA (MPG)

- Gov. Gavin Newsom’s proposed budget highlights California’s continued focus on wildfire response, climate resilience and water infrastructure but leaves gaps in direct support and regulatory alignment for agriculture and rural communities, according to California Farm Bureau President Shannon Douglass. She said:

“The budget invests heavily in wildfire response, but funding for proactive strategies on working lands remains limited. California farmers and ranchers are part of the solution. Grazing, vegetation management and stewardship reduce fuel loads and protect rural communities. Expanding



California farmers and ranchers are part of the solution. Grazing, vegetation management and stewardship reduce fuel loads and protect rural communities. Photo courtesy of Freepik

these strategies statewide would strengthen long-term resilience.

“Water reliability is foundational to agriculture. Investments in

flood protection, groundwater recharge and drought resilience are critical, but infrastructure alone is not enough. Projects must be paired with regulatory efficiency so they

can move forward and deliver real, on-the-ground benefits for farms and ranches.

“Agriculture is increasingly relied upon for wildfire mitigation, water resilience

and climate solutions, yet it is not recognized as critical infrastructure. Aligning investments, regulations and expectations will enable farmers and ranchers to continue producing food, protecting the environment and supporting rural communities.

“Farmers and ranchers stand ready to partner with the state. With the right funding and regulatory support, we can continue producing food, safeguard the environment and strengthen California’s rural economy.”

California Farm Bureau works to protect family farms and ranches as part of a nationwide network representing more than 5 million Farm Bureau members. Learn more at www.cfbf.com or follow @cafarmbureau on Instagram, LinkedIn, X or Facebook. ★

North State Building Industry Association News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG)

- New home sales in the greater Sacramento region returned to pre-pandemic levels in 2025, signaling that the pandemic-era housing boom has ended, the North State Building Industry Association reported today.

Building Industry Association members reported selling 5,747 homes in the eight-county region during the year, down 18 percent from 2024 but still 8 percent higher than 2019. Sales surged during the pandemic era as remote work expanded, migration into the region increased and mortgage interest rates fell to historic lows, at times dipping to below 3 percent.

Building Industry Association President and CEO Tim Murphy said despite generous builder incentives, many prospective buyers have been holding off until mortgage rates dip below 6 percent.

“Interest rates have been trending downward and fell to an average of 6.19 percent in early January. As financing costs continue to decline, we expect more households to reenter the housing market in 2026,” Murphy said.



Despite generous builder incentives, many prospective buyers have been holding off until mortgage rates dip below 6 percent. Photo courtesy of Freepik

Association of Home Builders shows that a 25-basis-point reduction from 6.25 percent to 6 percent could bring approximately 1.1 million additional households back into the buyer pool nationwide, so downward-trending rates are encouraging.”

In 2025, Roseville saw the most new home sales with 447, followed by Rancho Cordova (386), Elk Grove (280), Sacramento (262), Plumas Lake (159) and Lincoln (150).

As typical in the region, December sales dropped to a low point, with 338

sales reported by members. That’s down 17 percent from November and 15 percent lower than December 2024. For the month, Rancho Cordova was the sales leader with 74, followed by Roseville (59), Sacramento (41), Elk Grove (34) and Plumas Lake (28).

Murphy noted that housing experts at the Building Industry Association’s recent housing forecast event predicted the worst of the slump was behind us and that sales will gradually pick up during the next three years.

He added that new homes remain a great option for buyers because of incentives existing homeowners can’t offer, and because the supply of existing homes is still well below normal as homeowners with low mortgage rates remain reluctant to sell.

“In addition, buying a new home gives buyers the opportunity to customize many features to meet their family’s needs and provides peace of mind since problems are much less likely and any that occur are covered by warranties,” Murphy said.

“We are also continuing to improve affordability by working with local governments to streamline procedures and reduce fees that currently average \$109,000 per new home.”

Building Industry Association statistics covered 191 new home communities in Amador, El Dorado, Nevada, Placer, Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo and Yuba counties.

(Note: The annual sales total has been trued up by including figures from Building Industry Association members who do not report on a monthly basis. Thus, the annual figure is larger than the sum of annual sales by county and by submarket.)

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

Home Sales Return to Pre-Pandemic Levels

Republic FC Acquires Forward Mayele Malango from Monterey Bay FC

Sacramento Republic FC News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Sacramento Republic FC announced Jan. 8 that the Club has acquired forward Mayele Malango (MY-el Muh-LAWN-go) from Monterey Bay FC via transfer. Malango has also signed a new contract with Republic FC. Per club policy, the terms of the transfer and contract will not be disclosed. Malango will be available pending league and federation approval and is expected to wear No. 7 for Republic FC.

“Mayele is a dynamic attacker with a diverse and impressive journey through multiple levels of U.S. soccer,” said Republic FC Head Coach Neill Collins. “His pace, strength and finishing ability give us more options in the final third, and we’re excited to integrate him into our system.”

Malango, 28, featured



Malango will be available pending league and federation approval and is expected to wear No. 7 for Republic FC. Photo courtesy of Sacramento Republic FC

prominently for Monterey Bay FC during the 2025 USL Championship season, making 29 appearances across league and USL Cup play with five goals and two assists. His contributions included scoring the club’s first goal of the

season and earning a USL Championship Team of the Week honor early in the campaign for a stand-out performance against Oakland Roots SC.

“I would like to thank God for this opportunity, and also thanks to all the coaching staff and front

office members for believing in me, and for making this transfer to happen. I’m super excited to join the team and can’t wait to contribute to the team’s success on and off the field,” said Malango. “I can’t wait to meet all the fans and play in front of you all. I will give everything I have for the team. Let’s make memories together as we fight for another championship.”

Prior to joining Monterey Bay FC, Malango built a varied and productive professional career in the United States. He began his pro journey with New England Revolution II in 2020, where he appeared in 14 matches. In 2021, he signed with New

Amsterdam FC of the National Independent Soccer Association, scoring an impressive nine goals in 14 appearances to earn an All-League First Team selection. In 2022, he continued his development with Albion San Diego in NISA, finding the net three times in 20 matches, helping the team reach the NISA Championship Final. From 2023 to 2024, Malango starred for Chattanooga Red Wolves SC in USL League One, where he recorded 12 goals and five assists in 68 total appearances.

A native of Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Malango and his family spent 10 years in Malawi as

refugees before coming to the U.S. and settling in Massachusetts. He made a name for himself on the local soccer scene before moving on to the collegiate level. He began at Salem State University, where he scored 17 goals in 19 appearances and earned both MASCAC Player of the Year and Rookie of the Year honors on the way to a conference title. He then transferred to UMass Lowell, competing at the Division I level before turning professional.

Mayele earned his first call up to the Malawi National Team for World Cup Qualifiers in September 2025 and recorded an assist in his debut. He later joined The Flames for two international friendlies in November, scoring his first goal against Lesotho on Nov. 18.

Republic FC’s 2026 season officially kicks off on March 7 when the club hosts FC Tulsa at Heart Health Park. Season ticket memberships are on sale now, offering a range of benefits including discounts on merchandise and access to exclusive fan experiences, as well as priority seat selection in the new Republic Stadium at The Railyards. For more information, or to purchase a membership today, visit SacRepublicFC.com/Memberships. ★

Open Call for River Cats National Anthem Auditions

Demos for Potential Performers Must
be Submitted Prior to Jan. 30

Sacramento River Cats News Release

WEST SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)

If you have ever dreamed of getting a baseball game underway by singing the National Anthem, now is your chance as the Sacramento River Cats have announced their National Anthem auditions for the 2026 baseball season will take place at Sutter Health Park on the evening of Feb. 17.

Auditions are open to all soloists and instrumentalists, and those interested in performing prior to a River Cats game must submit an audition demo by Friday, Jan. 30. Demos received past this date will not be considered.

All demos submitted must be an A cappella version or original performance of the Star-Spangled Banner, sung in full with clear, consistent and correct lyrics. The full performance must not exceed 90 seconds.

To submit a demo, email a mp3 or

YouTube link to marketing@rivercats.com.

The subject line should read “2026 National Anthem Demo” and include a name, phone number and email address

in the body of the email.

Submissions that do not meet this requirement will be automatically rejected.

The River Cats will invite the top demos submitted to Sutter Health Park for a live audition on Feb. 17.

Due to the volume of applicants, performers will only be contacted if they are selected to audition in person. Selected performers will be contacted the week of Feb. 9 with further instructions.

Sutter Health Park is the West Sacramento home of the three-time Triple-A Champion Sacramento River Cats, proud affiliate of the three-time World Series Champion San Francisco Giants. Memberships, mini-plans, and suites and hospitality spaces for the 2026 season may be purchased now by calling the River Cats Ticket Office at (916) 371-HITS (4487), emailing tickets@rivercats.com, or visiting www.rivercats.com. For information on other events at Sutter Health Park, visit www.sutterhealthpark.com. ★



Softball Sets Schedule



The Aggies will host 28 games in Davis, while hitting the road for their other 25 games. Photo courtesy of UC Davis Athletics

UC Davis Athletics News Release

DAVIS, CA (MPG) - UC Davis softball has set in place its 2026 schedule, with the season opener set for Feb. 5 at home against Sacramento State and the Big West Conference opener against Hawai’I scheduled at La Rue Field over the weekend of March 6-7.

The Aggies will host 28 games in Davis, while hitting the road for their other 25 games. UC Davis will take part in four tournaments, performing hosting duties for two, while playing in five games at neutral sites along the with host schools at two other tournaments.

2026 begins with the NorCal Kickoff where UC Davis will open against Sacramento State on Feb. 5 before playing San Diego, Colorado State and Saint Mary’s in the yearly tournament that runs from Feb. 5-8.

UC Davis then plays its first of seven midweek games, traveling to Pacific on Feb. 11. The Aggies will also make midweek trips to Santa Clara (Feb. 17), Sacramento State (Mar. 24) and Saint Mary’s (Apr. 14). Pacific will make the return trip on Mar. 3, joining Utah Valley (Mar. 9) and Stanford (Apr. 7) in making midweek trips to La Rue Field.

UNLV hosts the next tournament the Aggies visit, and running from Feb. 13-15 the Aggies will face Seattle, Quinnipiac and hosting UNLV. UC Davis will twice see Seattle and UNLV during the Las Vegas, Nev., tournament. Over Feb. 20-21 the Aggies will also head to St. George, Utah where they will face Weber State and Utah Tech in back-to-back days for a total of four games over the 48 hours spent in the high desert.

As the calendar rolls into March, the Ags host their final tournament of the season when over the stretch of Feb. 27-Mar. 1 UC Davis will see Nevada (twice), Santa Clara, Sacred

Heart and San Jose State.

The Aggies open Big West play by hosting Hawai’I over the weekend of Mar. 6-7. The Ags will go on to host CSU Bakersfield (Mar. 21-22), Cal State Fullerton (Mar. 28-29), CSUN (Apr. 11-12) and UC Santa Barbara (Apr. 25-26). On the road in conference, the Aggies will visit UC San Diego (Mar. 13-14), Long Beach State (Apr. 3-4), UC Riverside (Apr. 18-19) and Cal Poly (May 1-2). The Big West Championships are set to get going at Cal State Fullerton from May 6-9.

UC Davis returns All-Big West honorees Ashley Sawai, Alyssa Dethlefsen, Caroline Grimes and Sydney Polli. Last season Sawai finished top 10 in the Big West in innings pitched (eighth), batters struck out (ninth), wins (ninth) and saves (second). The Aggie right-hander also tossed a career-high 15 complete games, placing her fourth in the conference and 38th in the nation.

Dethlefsen also found her name inside the top 10 of a pair of Big West statistical categories. She led the conference in triples (five), and her 19 stolen bases placed her fourth in the league. During the season, Dethlefsen was not caught once and along with Grand Canyon’s Savannah Groshong-Kirk she is one of two student-athletes in the country to have not been caught stealing this season with at least 19 stolen bases.

UC Davis, the No. 2 ranked public university by the Wall Street Journal, is home to 40,000 undergraduate students and 12,000 employees. Ranked #1 in Agriculture and Forestry as well as #1 in Veterinary Medicine, UC Davis is located in a true California college town nestled between world-class destinations such as the San Francisco Bay Area, Napa Valley and Lake Tahoe. Over 650 Aggie student-athletes compete in 25 Division I varsity sports, with 16 sports transitioning to the Mountain West Conference beginning in 2026-27. ★

Former Hornet Abigail Lopez Makes Pro Debut with Club Puebla

Sacramento State Athletics News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)

Former Sacramento State women’s soccer standout Abigail Lopez has joined the professional ranks, signing with Club Puebla in Mexico’s top women’s division and making her debut on Jan. 4 against the Rayados de Monterrey in the LIGA BBVA MX Femenil closing tournament.

Lopez joined the club back in December of 2025, just in time to make her debut in early January. She played all 90 minutes of her club’s 4-0 loss to Monterrey in the opening match for both clubs.

A four-time All-Big Sky Conference honoree during her career with the Hornets, Lopez earned first-team all-league laurels in each of her final two collegiate campaigns and was named to the second team as a freshman and sophomore. She is one of only



Lopez joined the club back in December of 2025, just in time to make her debut in early January. Photo courtesy of Sacramento State Athletics

four former Sacramento State players to win four All-Big Sky honors in a career, joining Katie McCoy (first-team honors in 2005-07 and a second-team award in 2004), Kara Taylor (first-team honors in 2005, 2007-08 and an honorable mention award in 2006), and Aubrey Goodwill (first-team honors in 2021-22, a second-team award in 2020, and an honorable mention selection in 2019).

Lopez is also one of only 11 Hornets to earn multiple All-Big Sky first-team awards.

Starting all 21 matches for Sacramento State as a senior in 2024, she led the team in scoring with four goals, three assists, and 11 points on the year, helping the Hornets capture the Big Sky Tournament title and a berth in the NCAA Tournament against USC.

She finished her career ranked tied for eighth in all-time points with 37 and tied for seventh in career goals with 15. Her 134 shot attempts are seventh on the school’s all-time list.

Lopez scored at least four goals in three of her four seasons with the Hornets, while her 11 points as a senior were a career high, surpassing the 10 she accounted for as a freshman in 2021. Overall, she appeared in 72 matches for Sacramento State, making the starting lineup in 63 of those — including 38 consecutive starts to close out her career. ★