

Free Museum Weekend 2026
 March 7 & 8
 Registration required; tickets open on March 2 at Sacmuseums.org

Area Museums Offer Free Admission
 March 7 to 8
 PAGE 7

Photography Month Sacramento Returns in April
 PAGE 3



East Sacramento News

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SEE INSIDE

'BLACK SOIL' EXHIBIT HIGHLIGHTS AG LEGACY



PAGE 2

SCHOOLS FACE RED INK DESPITE BOOSTS IN EDUCATION SPENDING



PAGE 5

BREAK THE LOSING STREAK



PAGE 5



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Rock Orchestra Moves on from Beatles

Student Players and Pros Tackle Pink Floyd's 'Wall' and 'Dark Side'



Teacher and band director Ben McClara, standing, waves during a 2025 Beatles Guitar Project rehearsal with professional musicians and students. Photo courtesy of Sacramento Preparatory Music Academy

By J.G. Wirt

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Over the last decade, Ben McClara has led a student rock orchestra in performing entire run-throughs of Beatles albums.

While a pack of local pros has aided in the effort, McClara shines all the light on his students.

"The Beatles have been the perfect band for the last 10 years," McClara said of his Sacramento Preparatory

Music Academy projects, "but we've done all of it."

He's right: The students have done "Abbey Road," "The White Album," "Rubber Soul," "Sgt. Pepper's" and so on. But there's one more: The Beatles Guitar Project will present "Early Beatles 1962-1965" on March 6 at the CLARA Auditorium in Sacramento.

And then comes Pink Floyd. McClara has scored "The Wall" and "Dark Side of the Moon," and

the students have been rehearsing for a March 20 show that will benefit student scholarships and the students' Guitar Project.

As always, the pros are thrilled to support the student players.

Learning and performing the great early rock 'n' roll by the Beatles has been a blessing, McClara said, but it's also a huge emotional lift for the pros who provide musical support.

"They say the chance to play with

Continued on page 2

Street Sweeping Begins Again

City of Sacramento News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - With spring fast approaching, residents should be aware of seasonal changes to some city services. Street sweeping service starts occurring monthly in February, after leaf season collections are finished, and continues through October each year.

Street sweeping is provided on public streets that have curbs and gutters. Private streets and areas without this service are not included.

City residents can find their sweeping dates on the collection calendar or by using the free SacRecycle app. Calendars are specific for each customer's address and will show all the days the street has been and will be swept in a calendar year. This includes residential and commercial properties.

For multi-family properties, the calendar is linked to the unit listed as the utility billing address.

To keep the street clear for sweeping, there is an optional reminder to be sent the day before sweeping service occurs so residents can move their vehicles. Neighborhoods with parking restrictions to allow for city services have signage for those restrictions posted on each block.

"We encourage customers to use the free SacRecycle app to set up an alert to move their car for the best results on their street," said Jesa David, spokesperson for the Recycling and Solid Waste Division. "Ideally, the street will be clear of vehicles during sweeping service."

If a sweeping route cannot be completed, a notice will be sent to impacted customers who have signed up for text and email reminders. A sweeping make-up day will be posted on the calendar, usually within the same week as the originally scheduled sweeping day.

Sweeping service is intended to prevent loose dirt and smaller debris from entering the city's storm drains. Sweepers cannot pick up large litter and debris. Residents should report illegally dumped debris and/or request a bulky waste pickup by contacting the city's Customer Service at 3-1-1. ★

Midtown Celebrates a Dozen Business Openings



Adults can enjoy a warm, community-centered wine experience at Joneck's Wine Lounge & Bottle Shop at 2231 J St., which opened in December 2025. Photo courtesy of Midtown Association

Midtown Association News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The Midtown Association is celebrating new and existing businesses in the eclectic and thriving 120-block district that is home to 1,200 properties including merchants, organizations, bars and restaurants. Whether a

business is brand new or has been operating for decades, each adds unique character, creativity and a community connection that helps to make Midtown Sacramento so unique.

"From delivering ongoing Clean and Safe services to programming large-scale, districtwide activations, the Midtown Association provides

support designed to uplift new and existing businesses and help position them for their greatest success possible," said Executive Director Emily Baime Michaels of the Midtown Association. "Each new business concept and every new idea helps to foster what makes our creative and ever-evolving district so very

Continued on Page 2

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'Black Soil' Exhibit Highlights Ag Legacy



The Sacramento History Museum and Sojourner Truth African Heritage Museum are presenting a new exhibition, "Black Soil: Our roots run deep," now on display in its Agriculture Gallery at 1011 St. Photo courtesy of Sacramento History Museum

Sacramento History Museum News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The Sacramento History Museum introduced a new exhibition in partnership with the Sojourner Truth African Heritage Museum titled "Black Soil, Our roots run deep" that is on display now at 1011 St.

With its debut coinciding with Black History Month and in celebration of the pivotal role people of African descent have played in Sacramento and California history, the Black farmer and art exhibit explores the history of African Americans in farming.

Rich in history, the vibrant exhibition

showcases the important discoveries by George Washington Carver in science plus the agricultural impact African Americans had on tobacco, cotton, rice, peanuts and even ice cream.

"This exhibition is a reminder that Black history is not just written in books; it's planted, tended and passed down through the land and into our hands," said Shonna McDaniels, artist, curator and founder of Sojourner Truth African Heritage Museum.

Collaborators from around the country have joined to create this unique experience. Talented artists provided artwork expressing their deep roots in agriculture and effects on farming in Sacramento

with insight from local growers. In addition, artists were asked to participate in creating a unique piece of art from a shovel, a symbol of the toil of their enslaved ancestors.

The "Black Soil, Our roots run deep" exhibit is on display in the Agriculture Gallery on the first floor of the Sacramento History Museum in Old Sacramento through March 29.

The Sacramento History Museum is managed by the Sacramento History Alliance, a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization. For more information about the Sacramento History Museum and Sacramento History Alliance, visit sachistorymuseum.org. ★

Midtown Celebrates a Dozen Business Openings

Continued from Page 1 special."

Below is information about a dozen new businesses that have opened over the last few months in Midtown.

Opened in November 2025 were Lotus Herb & Teas (924 24th St.), founded with a love for herbal wellness and the belief that self-care starts with nature, the owners have spent years studying herbs, hand-selecting teas and exploring natural oils; StyleForIt Sac (2015 J St., Suite 203), with a buy/sell business model, the plus size women's clothing/fashion online resale store offers plus sized, pre-loved clothing for those interested in updating their look with curvy chic styles; General Cellars (1050 20th St. #110), this woman-owned winery with a modern tasting room in Lavender Heights offers sustainably crafted wines in a comfortable, stylish setting. Adult guests can enjoy tastings, casual gatherings and special events; The Popcorn Store (2321 J St. #110), woman-owned and family operated for 16+ years, the store brings a playful snack experience with gourmet popcorn available in a broad range of flavors. Shoppers can choose sweet blends, savory options, creative specialty mixes and seasonal flavors.

Opened in December 2025 were Joneck's Wine Lounge & Bottle Shop (2231 J St.), adults can enjoy a warm, community-centered wine experience that pairs approachability with exceptional taste. The new location offers an extensive selection of wines by the glass, curated bottles, craft beer, mocktails and a delicious menu of small bites; Meza California (1415 16th St.), a popular Midtown Farmers Market vendor, this new eatery is rooted in both Arabic and Latin heritage and highlights seasonal California ingredients, handmade flatbreads and home-style dishes that celebrate cultural connection.

Opened in January were Concept Coffee (1912 P St.), designed as an inspiring shop to awaken the culinary senses, Concept offers specialty coffee, delicious



Pictured is the interior of East Village Bookshop, located at 2500 J St., which opened its doors to the Midtown community in January. Photos courtesy of Midtown Association

house-made pastries and gourmet menu items such as a Breakfast Sammich and Avocado Toast; De Caché (2321 K St.), tucked away behind Cantina Alley in The Victorian, De Caché is an exclusive escape, serving top-shelf tequila and thoughtfully curated cocktails in a space designed for conversation, atmosphere and discovery; East Village Bookshop (2500 J St.), a beloved AAPI-owned independent bookstore with a strong community presence, the shop highlights new releases, staff picks and thoughtfully curated titles that reflect Sacramento's diverse literary interests (four-footed friends are welcome, too); Gami Burger (2301 K St.), the ever-popular Gami Burger recently opened its second location in the heart of Midtown where they are now serving up

their famous smash burgers, sandwiches, fries and other classic favorites; Lou's Sushi (1050 20th St.), a Midtown staple is back and better than ever. ... Chef Lou Valente's beloved sushi rolls, hand rolls, sashimi and more can once again be found in Midtown (next to LowBrau) in the heart of Lavender Heights; The Yard Gym (2605 J St.), located just steps from Harlow's, shops, cafés and dining, this boutique strength and conditioning gym helps build power, endurance and skill with expert-led workouts for all levels.

For more information about new and longstanding businesses located throughout Midtown, a district map and a continually updated listing are available at exploremidtown.org/newbusinesses.

For more information about Midtown



Concept Coffee, at 1912 P St., opened in January and offers specialty coffee, delicious house-made pastries, and gourmet menu items such as a Breakfast Sammich and Avocado Toast.



Meza California at 1415 16th St. is a popular Midtown Farmers Market vendor that opened a new eatery in December 2025. It highlights Arabic and Latin heritage and serves handmade flatbreads and home-style dishes that celebrate cultural connection.



Opened in November 2025, The Popcorn Store (2321 J St. #110) is a woman-owned and family operated store that brings a playful snack experience with gourmet popcorn available in a broad range of flavors.

Sacramento in general, special events and activities, and the Midtown Association, visit exploremidtown.org or follow on social media via Facebook at facebook.com/exploremidtown/ and @ExploreMidtown on Instagram. ★

Rock Orchestra Moves on from Beatles



The Beatles Guitar Project performs "Beatles 1: 25th Anniversary Live in Concert" at the CLARA Auditorium in November 2025. Photo by Phil Kampel

Continued from Page 1

these student musicians is one of a kind," he said.

Before arranging the Pink Floyd shows, McClara made sure to get buy-in from the students' parents. The 1982 film "The Wall" was rated R, and some of the songs' topics and lyrics might require some explaining for kids.

But he found that the parents were all in, though McClara did need to modify

some iffy lyrics for his adaptation. He will sing the Roger Waters parts, while other pros will voice the David Gilmour and Headmaster/Judge parts.

The students will handle keyboards and guitar solos, while pros will support them on keyboards and drums.

And there will be strings, brass, woodwinds and six backup singers to fill out the production.

"The Wall" in its entirety will fill

the first set. After an intermission comes "Dark Side of the Moon." A surround-sound setup promises to enhance this student-forward presentation of two classics.

Original plans had various Floyd songs in the second set, but students nudged McClara to adapt the entire "Dark Side" album.

"The kids were really thrilled about that," he said. "For a lot of kids, the Pink

Floyd stuff is really easy for them." Plus, it has room for more keyboard players.

"It's really become its own live production," McClara said. "Students are really speaking up and saying, 'I'd like to do that part.'"

The Pink Floyd show is at 7 p.m. Friday, March 20 in the auditorium at the CLARA, 2240 N St. Tickets range from \$20 to \$50. Get tickets at sacprepmpic.com. ★



Sacramento Preparatory Music Academy students and instructor Ben McClara, right, were rehearsing for a "Guardians of the Galaxy" show in 2025 when ABC10's Mark S. Allen stopped to visit. Photo courtesy of Sacramento Preparatory Music Academy

Photography Month Sacramento Returns in April

Sacramento 365 News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Save the date for Photography Month Sacramento happening in April 2026. Led by Viewpoint Photographic Art Center, a nonprofit organization located in Midtown Sacramento, Photography Month Sacramento is a grassroots collaboration among many partner organizations, each creating their own photo-related events and activities.

Supporting community organizations include Inside Publications, Sacramento County Board of Supervisors Office of Phil Serna (District 1) and Visit Sacramento/Sacramento365.com.

First launched in 2018, the month-long event is highlighted by a variety of diverse and eclectic events that include exhibits, receptions, photo shoot meet-ups, workshops, lectures, field trips and more.

Photography Month Sacramento creates a shared platform for galleries, museums, educational institutions, libraries, retail establishments, hotels, photographers and patrons to celebrate and elevate the art of photography. Interested participants are encouraged to create and/or highlight their own activations to help showcase the art of photography.

Thus far, a number of museums, businesses, and educational institutions from throughout the region have already signed up to participate in 2026, including: California Museum, Crocker Art Museum, Casa



Pictured is the Twisted Track Reception from 2025 of Aniko Kiezel. Photo courtesy of Kyle Jaeger

de Espanol, Gold Country Photo Society, Leland Stanford Mansion State Historic Park, Nevada County Camera Club, Open Call Exhibit: Spring Light, Old Sugar Mill, Sierra College, Rocklin, Viewpoint Photographic Art Center and Yolo Arts' Gallery 625.

Involvement in Photography Month Sacramento for nonprofit and for-profit businesses,

museums and organizations is free and simple to do.

The regional showcase offers a turnkey way to highlight visually enticing photographic programming already in place (possibly by incorporating a fresh visual element or hosting a special artist reception), introduce a concept in the planning stages or create something unique to engage enthusiasts and

connect with new audiences throughout the region.

Photography Month Sacramento is open to everyone – professional and amateur photographers alike – and offers wonderful opportunities to launch and/or exhibit photographic work, or to create a grassroots collaborative exhibit with friends interested in the visual arts. Those interested are

encouraged to get creative and plan individual activations and/or contact favorite local coffee houses or restaurants to see if they might host an exhibit or reception in April 2026.

Once any photography-related concepts are confirmed by businesses, organizations, museums or individuals, Photography Month Sacramento participants are asked to post information details about

any upcoming events at photomonthsacramento.org/events, a community curated calendar that is connected to and supported by Sacramento365.com.

To explore available sponsorship opportunities or find out more detailed (and continually updated) information about Photography Month Sacramento 2026, visit photomonthsacramento.org.

KP International Market
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 Market 7 Days: 8am - 9pm
 Food Court 7 Days: 11am - 7:30pm
 Korean/Mex/Viet: 7:30pm last call
 Chinese/Japanese: 7:00pm last call

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 3Hours Karaoke + Pizza + Pitcher Soda + 2 Main Dishes (Small Rooms)
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 3Hours Karaoke + 2Pizza + Pitcher Soda + 4 Main Dishes (Medium Rooms)
- For 14 people \$230.00** + Gratuity
 3Hours Karaoke + 2Pizza + Pitcher Soda + 4 Main Dishes (Family Rooms)
- For 18 people 295.00** + Gratuity
 3Hours Karaoke + 3Pizza + Pitcher Soda + 6 Main Dishes (Large Rooms)
- For 28 people \$395.00** + Gratuity
 3Hours Karaoke + 3Pizza + Pitcher Soda + 6 Main Dishes (Party Rooms)

FROZEN & FISH DEPT

- Seasoned Capelin & Herring Roe 1 lb
REG. \$16.99/EA **\$10.99/ea**
- Brown Sugar Boba Ice Cream 16 oz
REG. \$8.99/EA **\$2.99/ea**

WEEKLY MEAT SPECIALS

- Beef London Broil / Top Round Roast-Bnls **\$5.79/lb**
- Beef T-Bone Steak **\$5.69/lb**
- Chicken Thigh Bnls/Sknl's **\$1.99/lb**
- Pork Neck Bone **\$1.99/lb**
- Pork Loin Chops-Bone-In **\$2.49/lb**
- Pork Baby Back Ribs **\$4.49/lb**

WEEKLY HALAL SPECIALS

- Chicken Thigh Bnls/Sknl's **\$1.99/lb**
- New Zealand Lamb Shoulder Chop **\$5.99/lb**
- Beef London Broil / Top Round Roast-Bnls **\$5.99/lb**

FRESH PRODUCE

- Rainbow Bellpepper 2 lb **\$3.49/bag**
- Russet Potato 10 lb **\$1.99/bag**
- Whole White Mushroom 8 oz **\$1.99/ea**
- Yellow Onion Jumbo 4 lb **\$1.00**
- White Onion 2 lb **\$1.00**
- Aloe Vera 79¢/lb
- Popeye Spinach 10 oz **\$1.99/ea**
- Enoki Mushroom 150 g **\$1.29/ea**

AMERICAN/HISPANIC GROCERY

- Ferrero Rocher Hazelnut Chocolate 5.3 oz **\$4.99/ea**
- Tide Ultra Oxi Boost Detergent 73 oz **\$17.99/ea +TAX**
- Faraona Aloe Vera Drink 1.5 liter **\$2.99/ea +CRV**
- Brownie Brittle Salted Caramel 5 oz **\$1.29/ea**
- Dux Sodas 28 oz **\$3.99/ea**

ASIAN GROCERY

- Three Ladies Vietnamese Rice Vermicelli Thick 1 lb **\$1.79/ea**
- Rozy Quail Eggs 15 oz **\$2.99/ea**
- Jans Mixed Roots Chips 2.8 oz **\$2.49/ea**
- Fruit Flavor Green Tea 15.39 1.0z **\$1.49/ea +CRV**
- Lee Kum Kee Pure Sesame Oil 1.65 liter **\$15.99/ea**

EUROPEAN GROCERY

- Habibi Dubai Chocolate Bar 100 gr **\$4.99/ea**
- Love Chocolate The Taste of Dubai 105 gr **\$10.99/ea**
- Ulker Tea Biscuit 400 gr **\$2.49/ea**
- Firma Biscuit 5 Flavors 330 gr **\$3.49/ea**
- Tradica Vkusa Green Peas 24 oz **\$2.99/ea**

EUROPEAN DELI

- Belmont German Ham **\$5.49/lb**
- Kretschmar Ham off the Bone **\$6.49/lb**
- Olives Stuffed with Garlic **\$5.69/lb**
- Pitted Kalamata Olives and Feta Cheese **\$6.69/lb**

FROZEN & FISH DEPT

- Boiled Sweet Corn 370 g **\$1.99/ea**

HOUSEWARE

- PAON SEVEN-EIGHT HAIR COLOR (KIT ONLY) **\$8.99/ea**
- ELECTRIC RICE COOKER (4-CUPS) **\$5.49**
- ELECTRIC RICE COOKER (10-CUPS) **\$5.99**
- ELECTRIC BBQ GRILL **\$39.99/ea**
- KAIZEN WOK PAN 30 CM **\$16.99/ea**

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Bill Strips Veterans of Choice, Delays Access to Earned Benefits

Assemblyman Jeff Gonzalez News Release

CALIFORNIA (MPG) - Feb. 10, Governor Gavin Newsom signed Senate Bill 694 (Archuleta), a measure promoted as “protecting Veterans,” but one that ultimately restricts their freedom to choose how they access earned disability benefits.



Newsom signed Senate Bill 694 (Archuleta), a measure promoted as “protecting Veterans,” but one that ultimately restricts their freedom to choose how they access earned disability benefits. Courtesy photo

Assembly was listed as a co-author when the measure was sent to the Governor’s desk, despite requesting in writing to be removed.

In the Legislature, four out of five Veteran lawmakers voted against SB 694. Supporters framed Veteran choice as exploitation, sidelined dissenting Veteran voices, and elevated institutional stakeholders while ignoring the lived experiences of disabled Veterans who rely on these services to survive.

“As the only veteran in the Assembly, Jeff knows firsthand the needs of veterans and to take away their resources like this is unacceptable to those who served our country,” said Assembly Republican Leader Heath Flora.

“Veterans know what delay costs,” said Assemblyman Jeff Gonzalez (R-Indio). “When benefits are held up, it’s not abstract. It means missed rent, postponed medical care, untreated PTSD, and families left without stability. As a Veteran, I find it deeply troubling that the state would take away options Veterans chose because the system was not working for them.”

Industry data shows that prolonged benefit delays can cost Veterans an average of

more than \$18,000 in lost income. Surveys indicate that 95 percent of Veterans believe they should have the right to choose who helps them navigate the claims process. SB 694 ignores that reality.

Lawmakers were presented with an alternative. Assemblyman Gonzalez worked on a bipartisan proposal that would have preserved Veteran choice, established real consumer protections, cracked down on bad actors, and provided additional funding for County Veteran Service Offices. That balanced approach was rejected in favor of a blanket prohibition that limits access rather than improving outcomes.

Other states have chosen reform over restriction. California instead chose prohibition. This decision will eliminate jobs, drive legitimate Veteran serving businesses out of state, and reduce transparency for Veterans seeking help.

“This bill does not protect Veterans. It protects a broken status quo,” Gonzalez added. “If we are serious about having Veterans’ backs, we should be expanding access and accountability, not taking options away from the people who earned these benefits through their service.” ★

California Doubles Down on Commitment to Transit

Caltrans News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Caltrans recently announced major steps in strengthening its commitment to public transportation by establishing a new Deputy Director for Transit and Rail Programs and restoring the Division of Mass Transportation to create a dedicated team focused on providing faster, more reliable and connected transit services statewide.

The department is also releasing its first holistic Director’s Policy on Transit to support more coordinated and efficient transit and rail services along the State Highway System and ultimately improving connections for millions of California riders.

“Caltrans is taking great strides in making our transportation network safer and more efficient by prioritizing transit to improve mobility for Californians of all ages and abilities,” said Caltrans Director Dina El-Tawansy. “These critical steps will help California achieve its progressive climate, health, equity, and environmental goals while fostering socially and economically vibrant, thriving and resilient communities.”

The Director’s Policy outlines the department’s vision of delivering transit priority projects on state highways and enhancing Caltrans’ role in developing transit statewide. It focuses on transit priority facilities such as dedicated bus lanes, signal priority and other infrastructure to make road-based transit service faster and more reliable on the State Highway System.

These changes will help reduce travel times, improve safety and make transit a more attractive option for Californians. The policy aims at improving air quality by reducing the number of cars on our roadways and lowering greenhouse gas emissions and prioritizes transit as a core consideration in Caltrans’ decision-making

processes to ensure all communities enjoy equitable and improved access to transit.

To drive this transformation, Caltrans is aligning resources and expertise and reinforcing its commitment to public transit by establishing the Deputy Director for Transit and Rail Programs. This executive role is dedicated to overseeing transit and rail programs and accelerating the delivery of projects that make public transportation more efficient and accessible.



The Division of Mass Transportation, in partnership with the Division of Rail, will work closely with partners to integrate transit into California’s transportation system and support initiatives that make public transportation more convenient and more sustainable. It will do so in partnership with the new California Transit Advisory Committee (CALTAC), which will advise Caltrans on transit-related matters.

California Transit Advisory Committee will consist of 20 member agencies and organizations from a diverse group of transit stakeholders, such as transit agencies, state universities, disadvantaged communities and transit experts.

California Transit Advisory Committee will meet regularly to ensure that policy stays current and reflects the most innovative state of the practice. As such, California Transit Advisory Committee will position Caltrans to develop a world-class, equitable transit system.

The new executive leadership, organizational structure and coordinated transit policy will work hand-in-glove to achieve a world-class transit and rail network and cultivate a thriving and connected California.

Learn more about the Director’s Policy on Transit at: <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/transportation-planning/division-of-transportation-planning/office-of-transit-planning/directors-policy-on-transit>. ★



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Kings Korner

By V.G. Harris



Break the Losing Streak

As previously stated, the Sacramento Kings are setting records, albeit not the ones they want to.

Entering Monday night's game against the Grizzlies on the road, the Kings will try to call a halt to a 16-game losing streak and give the Sacramento fan base a reason for optimism.

Injuries, bad coaching and a front office that still needs to find their way have all contributed to the worst record in the NBA, and few pundits or fans expected to find this team in the NBA cellar.

Allowing Sabonis and Lavine to surgically repair their injuries ending the season for both, makes loads of sense as there remains no possibility of making the playoffs, and having both critical players healthy entering next season will be a welcome relief as the Kings look for a 180-degree turn.

Looking for bright spots is a little like looking for a needle in a haystack, but without question seeing Keegan Murry finally healthy and making a contribution nightly, is a more than welcome sight.

In the most recent game against the Spurs, Keegan led the Kings in scoring 20 points along with DeMar DeRozan, and although not the all-star that the Kings initially thought he might be, Keegan is making noises like he's going to someone to count on as the team continues to shuffle the deck.

What will the upcoming draft bring the cellar dwellers? Anyone's guess, but you can rest assured that GM Scott Perry has his sights set on coming up with a game changer.

We've seen franchises do it before, and you need look no further than the Oklahoma City Thunder or the Detroit Pistons to see the results. Yes, it can happen, and the only caveat is the past experiences in the draft that have been abysmal.

No more Willie Cauly-Stein's or Marvin Bagley's! What the Kings need is a can't miss, blue chipper that will impact this team in a positive way right out of the gate!

Can it be done? Yes, it absolutely can, if Scott Perry and staff are permitted to do their job without interference from the

ownership group. Let the people you've hired do their job and stand on the decisions they make.

Another DeAaron Fox or Tyrese Haliburton may be just around the corner, and goodness knows the Kings are overdue for something positive to happen.

Another key will be how they evaluate the talent that already exists. Will the Kings value Domantas Sabonis and realize what a true diamond in the rough they have? At this point no one knows and we can only wait and see what happens.

What everyone agrees on is bringing a 16-game losing streak to a halt and stemming a conversation of challenging the all-time futility record set by the Detroit Pistons. Although 16 is a fall cry from the 28-game losing streak set by the Pistons, it's just better to put that conversation to bed.

1st round draft choices need to be vetted carefully, and the Kings have yet to fully see what Devin Carter brings to the table. Everyone knows he can jump out of the gym, and at times his defense is all-star caliber, but can this 1st round draft choice get enough court time to prove his worth. We'll see, but I take nothing for granted.

Enter Killian Hayes, a 6'4" guard just signed to a 10-day contract. I wasn't aware the Kings needed another guard but here he is, nonetheless. What is interesting about Killian is that he was drafted #7 overall in the 2020 draft by the Detroit Pistons and is still only 24 years of age. Raised in France can he make a splash?

At the same time the Kings signed Patrick Baldwin Jr. to a 2-way contract and at 6'10" Patrick brings some much needed girth to the front line. Baldwin was signed by the Golden State Warriors 28th in the overall 2022 draft so Kings fans have renewed reason to show up for the March 3 contest at Golden One against the Phoenix Suns.

Yes, Scott Perry is trying, and that's better than giving up. Are these guys longshot? They are, and we need to turn out and give them the best we have.

Stay tuned Kings fans and don't lose heart.

All the best!

★

California School Systems Face Red Ink Despite Boosts in Education Spending



By Dan Walters, CALMatters.org

Educating California's nearly 6 million public school students is the state budget's second largest expenditure, and one that has increased sharply during Gavin Newsom's governorship.

The 2026-27 budget that Newsom proposed last month would spend \$88.7 billion on students, ranging from transitional kindergartners to high school seniors. When local property taxes and federal aid are included, the total would be nearly \$150 billion, an average of \$27,418 per pupil.

That's a 61% increase from the \$17,014 they were getting when Newsom became governor, but adjusting for 29% inflation during that period would cut the real gain in half.

Comparing California's school support to that of other states is difficult because there's always a lag in data collection. However, the Public Policy Institute of California, using data that are a few years old, reports that the state is no longer in the lower ranks in per pupil spending but is somewhere in the middle, perhaps a few thousand dollars above average.

Education officials constantly press for more state spending, which is governed by complicated formulas in a 1988 ballot measure,

Proposition 98. Newsom's budget calculates that the minimum Prop. 98 guarantee in state and local funds would be \$125.5 billion, but he wants to delay \$5.6 billion in payments to reduce the budget's deficit – essentially a loan from the schools to the state, one of many maneuvers he and the Legislature have used to close the gap between revenue and spending.

"This delay shifts costs to the future when the state must 'settle up' and meet this obligation," the Legislature's fiscal analyst, Gabe Petek, says in his overview of the schools budget, adding, "For the state budget, the settle-up proposal is similar to other forms of borrowing and spending delays – it provides temporary savings in the current year but increases costs in the future."

Calculating what the state is legally obligated to spend on schools, deciding what it will spend, massaging the numbers and framing the political optics is a time-dishonored feature of the annual budget process because it's such a big piece of the puzzle.

Meanwhile, however, school districts throughout the state are having remarkable difficulty in balancing their own budgets this year. They face declining enrollments due to demographic factors such as falling birth rates, lower immigration, population losses to other states, local resistance to school closures and pressure from unions for salary increases for teachers and support staff, to cope with their own inflationary pressures.

The fiscal angst is most obvious in urban school

districts, where enrollment declines are most severe and where unions are the strongest, often spending heavily to elect friendly school board members.

San Francisco's school system just underwent a teacher strike that was settled with an agreement that will raise costs by an estimated \$180 million-plus, leaving great uncertainty over how it will find the money.

Sacramento's schools have been teetering on the edge of insolvency for years due to outlays that are markedly greater than income. It could be compelled to accept a fiscal overseer if it needs a state bailout.

Los Angeles Unified, the nation's second largest school system, is facing a \$191 million deficit, the latest in a string of budget gaps.

Educators and their unions say their problems could be solved if only they had more state aid. But raising per pupil spending by \$1,000 would cost nearly \$6 billion a year, and increasing it to \$30,000-plus to match the top tier of states, such as New York, would cost at least \$30 billion.

With the state budget already plagued by chronic deficits in the \$20 billion range, just giving schools their constitutional level of financing will fall \$5.6 billion short under Newsom's budget.

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

My Friend is 65; Shouldn't She Be Exempt from Medicare Payroll Taxes?



By Russell Gloor, AMAC Certified Social Security Advisor

Dear Rusty: My girlfriend is 65 and she just enrolled in Medicare. She is still working full time as a nurse, but they are still deducting Medicare taxes from her paycheck. I thought as soon as you started Medicare, that they would no longer take any Medicare taxes from her paychecks. Is that not correct? **Signed: Concerned Friend**

Dear Concerned Friend: Your understanding about Medicare payroll tax is, indeed, not correct. Medicare taxes are levied on everyone who works and earns, regardless of whether or not they are currently enrolled in the Medicare program. That is how Medicare has worked since it was first enacted in the mid-1960s and how it still works today.

FYI, everyone who works for an employer must pay "FICA" (Federal

Insurance Contributions Act) payroll tax of 7.65%. Most (6.2%) of that payroll tax goes to support Social Security, but 1.45% goes to support Medicare Part A. Self-employed individuals must also pay this tax under the Self-Employed Contributions Act (SECA) which is equivalent to FICA, except the self-employed individual must also pay the employer portion of the payroll tax. The Social Security portion of the FICA/SECA tax has an earnings cap (\$184,500 in 2026), but there is no cap on earnings for the Medicare portion of the FICA/SECA payroll tax. FYI, employers pay an equivalent amount of Social Security and Medicare taxes, and the Medicare portion of the payroll tax is paid on all earnings (there is no cap on earnings from which the Medicare payroll tax is withheld).

To ensure understanding, Medicare Part A provides healthcare coverage for inpatient hospitalization services, and Medicare Part B provides coverage for outpatient medical services (doctors, medical tests, etc.). That 1.45% of the FICA (and SECA) tax of the self-employed) is paid by those who work to help fund the

Medicare Part A program, which is premium-free for most Americans after age 65. For Medicare Part B, there is a separate premium which helps pay for Medicare outpatient healthcare services. The standard Medicare Part B premium for 2026 is \$202.90 per month, compared to Medicare Part A which is free to all who are eligible for Social Security benefits. But the 1.45% payroll tax which is being withheld from your girlfriend's paycheck is paid by everyone who has work earnings, even if they are enrolled in Medicare.

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The Greatest Sports Story Ever Told

tremely demanding style forged a group of college kids into a historic team. (The Olympics back then were for amateurs, although the Soviets were professional in all but name.)

Brooks was obsessed with Soviet hockey and wanted to turn its insights against it. His team would be physically tough, but would be able to skate and pass too, and be better conditioned than anyone else, giving it better legs in the third period.

The U.S. team compiled an impressive record during the exhibition season. But the Soviets were giants. They'd won the gold at every single Olympics since 1964. During this run, their combined Olympic record was 27-1-1, and they had outscored the opposition 175-44.

The U.S. played an exhibition game against the Soviets at Madison Square Garden right before the Games and got crushed 10-3.

At the Olympics, the U.S. managed a last-minute tie against Sweden and then manhandled a good Czech team, 7-3. As they racked up more wins, they caught the nation's attention, but the Soviets awaited in the medal round.

No one gave the U.S. a chance. Al Michaels says he was just hoping it'd still be close, say, the Soviets up 3-1, in the middle of the game.

Brooks delivered a famous pre-game St. Crispin's Day speech to his team: "This moment is yours." The coach's

grown children show the documentarians the card that he wrote his notes on -- surely one of the most precious relics in the history of U.S. sports.

The U.S. emerged tied with the Soviets 2-2 after one period, and survived an onslaught in the second, getting outshot 12-2 but trailing only 3-2. Then, magic happened in the third. Team captain Mike Eruzione scored his iconic goal to put the U.S. up 4-3.

Ten minutes of Al Michaels-narrated agony ensued as the U.S. had to protect the lead against an explosive Soviet team. The U.S. still had to beat the Finns for the gold. True to form, Brooks ran his team through punishing drills to prepare, even after they'd become national heroes.

Ordinary sports creates an ersatz nationalism, with fans feeling a deep connection to their own team, to its history, colors and past heroes. When this sports patriotism was combined with the real thing in 1980 -- especially when arrayed against an aggressive, malign rival power -- the effect was explosive.

The documentary shows the U.S. players walking down the street in Lake Placid. Forty-five years later, people still stop them and yell out their thanks. They showed that miracles happen, and did it for the red, white and blue.

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



WE SUPPORT FIRST RESPONDERS



Homebuilder Association Installs 2026 Officers and Directors

Honors Six for Service



Pictured are all of this year's officers and directors. Photo courtesy of Tia Gemmill, Riverview Media Photography

By **Tim Murphy**,
North State Building
Industry Association

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG)

The North State Building Industry Association (BIA), representing the homebuilding industry in the greater Sacramento region, recently installed its officers and directors for 2026 and recognized six individuals for outstanding service promoting homeownership at an event attended by nearly 500 industry leaders at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in downtown Sacramento.

Sworn in as the BIA's Chair was Tina Cruce, the chief financial officer for Tim Lewis Communities. In her acceptance speech, Cruce said advocacy with local governments will be a top priority.

"As a CFO, I'm a numbers person, and the math is simple: the cost of building a home is shaped by far more than labor and material. Rising land costs, escalating fees, permits, extended approval timelines and infrastructure constraints all add up," she said.

"When projects don't pencil, they don't move forward,

housing supply stalls and affordability worsens. At the same time, buyers are facing higher interest rates, insurance costs and taxes, pushing many to the sidelines. The average age of a first-time homebuyer is now 40, up from 33 just 10 years ago.

"These challenges affect real people, real businesses, and real communities every single day. That's why advocacy is not optional – it's essential."

Joining Cruce as officers are Vice Chair/Treasurer Luke Wissmann, division president for Beazer Homes; Secretary Michelle Velky, division president for Lennar; and Immediate Past Chair Clifton Taylor, president of Taylor Builders.

Board Members for the year are George Carpenter, Winn Communities; Deana Ellis, Cresleigh Homes; Karina Guerrieri, Tri Pointe Homes; Ryan Hatheway, Taylor Morrison; Samantha Higbee, Risewell Homes; Heather Hoffman, Sekisui; Thad Johnson, Pappas Investments; Cameron Kjome, Emerald Site Services; Laura Lewis, SMUD; Dudley Mallinson, Landscape Development; Patrick McGuirk,

USA Properties Fund; Joe Pitzner, BSB Design; Craig Rickabaugh, MRS Roofing & Solar; Philip Roberts, Wood Rodgers; Aaron Ross-Swain, Fieldstone Communities; Aaron Stubblefield, Pulte Group; and Justin Walters, Somers West.

The BIA recognized four individuals for their service to the industry.

The Friend of Housing Award, presented each year to individuals and groups that have provided distinguished service in support of housing issues, was given to Sacramento County Deputy CEO Dave Defanti and the staff of the county's Department of Community Development. Defanti and county staff engaged in numerous reforms that move housing projects through the approval process more expeditiously, making the dream of homeownership a reality for thousands of families.

The Meritorious Award, recognizing a BIA member who has demonstrated exceptional commitment to the homebuilding industry over many years, was given to John Orr, who served for 40 years in BIA leadership roles. He became the

BIA's president and CEO in 1985 and later served in key roles with the Association's two nonprofit affiliates, the Building Careers Foundation and HomeAid Sacramento – all with a spirit of service, integrity and commitment.

Jim Ray, who served as president of engineering firm MacKay & Stomps until his recent retirement, received the President's Award for his work with the Sacramento Regional Water Forum. The forum consists of representatives from business, water providers, environmental organizations, local governments, and community groups who worked for years to find ways to manage the lower American River and shape the region's water future.

Finally, the Chair's Award was presented to Bonnie Chiu, vice president of forward planning for D.R. Horton. Chiu served for eight years on the BIA's board of directors, including 18 months as chair during a time of transition. She also has been a leader in developing the next generation of BIA leaders and supporting women in the industry.

The BIA's two affiliated

nonprofits also honored volunteers.

The Building Careers Foundation, which works to develop a pipeline of trained workers for the industry, presented its Legacy Award to Jeff Panasiti. The retired executive with Lennar was recognized for creating a high school internship program that provided construction training for more than 40 young people a year.

And HomeAid Sacramento, which helps people experiencing or at risk of homelessness build new lives through construction, community engagement and education, presented its Impact Award to John Caulfield, the owner of Landmark Builders. Caulfield serves on the nonprofit's board of directors and has personally led several construction projects to provide transitional housing.

The event was sponsored by Tim Lewis Communities, Banner Bank, InterWest Insurance Services, Big Valley Mortgage, Wells Fargo Bank, CliftonLarsonAllen, Columbia Bank, Landscape Development, Leader One Financial and Metropolitan Floors. ★

Bonta Finalizes Cardroom Regulations Banning Lawful Games



Rob Bonta

California Gaming
Association
News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG)

The California Gaming Association recently condemned new regulations by Attorney General Rob Bonta and the Bureau of Gambling Control (Bureau) that prohibit long-approved blackjack-style and player-dealer games, slashing licensed cardroom revenues by more than half.

The Bureau's most optimistic economic analysis projects that the regulations will cause the loss of roughly 50 percent of cardroom jobs, putting tens of thousands of working families at risk and threatening severe budget deficits for

cities that rely on cardroom taxes to fund police, fire protection, parks and other essential services.

The Bureau advanced the regulations without any showing of legal necessity, or any public harm or safety risk caused by these popular games, which have been approved by Attorney General Bonta's predecessors and offered in cardrooms for decades. More still, the Bureau failed to provide proper notice of the regulatory changes or meaningfully engage with the public as required by law.

Kyle Kirkland, president of the California Gaming Association, issued the following statement:

"Attorney General Bonta and the Bureau have unilaterally implemented extreme regulatory changes that will harm thousands of working families and the dozens of California communities that depend on cardroom taxes. By the Bureau's own simplistic economic assessment, these unnecessary regulations will eliminate over half of all cardroom jobs and force many communities to cut police, fire, parks, senior and food programs when the long-standing tax base disappears."

With other stakeholders,

we documented serious legal and economic concerns in these flawed regulations, yet Attorney General Bonta refused to identify a single threat to public safety, refused to engage with the communities, working families and long-standing businesses that the regulations would devastate and advanced the regulations without good faith discussion or lawful disclosure.

Given the Bureau's failure to follow the laws they are bound to follow, our industry intends to pursue legal remedies to preserve our lawful, legitimate businesses and defend the livelihood of the working families and the communities who depend on us but have been dismissed as politically irrelevant by Attorney General Bonta."

Multiple California cities, elected officials, employees and other stakeholders have warned state officials about the economic and legal consequences of the regulations. The Attorney General's actions risk significant local fiscal harm while undermining regulatory transparency and due process.

For more information or copies of submitted letters, contact jfernandez@actumllc.com. ★

CDFW Announces Meghan Hertel as New Director



Meghan Hertel, left, has officially been sworn in as Director of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Photo courtesy of California Department of Fish and Wildlife

California Department of Fish
and Wildlife News Release

CALIFORNIA (MPG) - California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) is thrilled to announce that Meghan Hertel has officially been sworn in as Director of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Hertel is a dynamic leader with a deep commitment to science-based conservation and wildlife stewardship. Her vision and experience will be instrumental as CDFW continues advancing the department's mission to manage California's extraordinary biodiversity and natural resources.

As Director, Hertel will lead the Department's work managing fish and wildlife populations, restoring habitat, supporting sustainable hunting and fishing opportunities and partnering with rural communities, Tribes, landowners and outdoor recreationists across California.

Hertel joined the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) in February 2024 as Deputy Secretary of Biodiversity and Habitat. In that role, she led the

agency's efforts to conserve biodiversity and improve habitat across the state through implementation of California's 30x30 strategy, conserving 30 percent of California's lands and coastal waters by 2030 ensuring thriving habitats and opportunities for outdoor recreation. She was also instrumental in helping to enact the Cutting Green Tape initiative, which accelerate the pace and scale of habitat restoration.

Prior to her time at the California Natural Resources Agency, Hertel served as North American Director for Land Life, a technology-driven nature restoration company and spent more than a decade with Audubon California including leading innovative statewide conservation programs focused on inland water systems and working lands — building durable partnerships and delivering meaningful, on-the-ground results.

This is a proud and pivotal moment for the Department. With Hertel at the helm, CDFW is energized, optimistic and ready to continue advancing the organizations mission to protect California's fish, wildlife and habitats for generations to come. ★

Area Museums Offer Free Admission March 7 to 8

Sacramento Area Museums News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Save the date ... it's almost time for Free Museum Weekend 2026! Twenty museums from around the Sacramento region are collaborating to welcome the community for this popular annual event happening on March 7 to 8.

While tickets are free, advance registration is required to participate in the 2026 Free Museum Weekend. Ticket registration opens on March 2 at 9 a.m. via sacmuseums.org/free-museum-weekend

and are available on a first-come, first-served basis and will continue until all tickets have been secured.

This is the 28th consecutive year the local museum community has presented a free museum experience. More than 30,000 tickets will be available for the 2026 Free Museum Weekend across all participating destinations but will fluctuate by museum and/or by day.

Stay tuned as the complete list of participating museums will be announced at a later date. Most museums are open for admissions from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., but there



are exceptions. All hours will be posted on the ticket page for each museum. Free tickets are available only for regular admission during March 7 to 8.

To make Free Museum Weekend even more

accessible, SacRT is offering complimentary transit for participants.

When community members sign up for Free Museum Weekend, they will receive a free ride flyer valid from 9 a.m. to

6 p.m. Saturday, March 7, or Sunday, March 8. Free Museum Weekend attendees simply present the flyer to bus operators or light rail fare inspectors on the day of the visit to enjoy free rides throughout the SacRT system.

For more details about the upcoming 2026 Free Museum Weekend (including the SacRT flyer), visit sacmuseums.org/free-museum-weekend.

For more information about Sacramento Area Museums, follow on Facebook at Facebook.com/SacMuseums, Instagram and X @SacMuseums or visit

SacMuseums.org.

Comprising approximately 25 greater Sacramento area museums, Sacramento Area Museums' mission is to raise awareness of local museums by giving the community the opportunity to discover the region's fine art, history, science and wildlife treasures.

Sacramento Area Museums achieves its mission by implementing cooperative promotions, developing strategic marketing alliances and encouraging the sharing of knowledge and resources among its partner institutions. ★

ABOUT TOWN

Area Museum Experiences

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

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 Dia de los Muertos, through April 5. The

exhibit will be highlighted by public programs that document and celebrate the 50-year history of the Dia de los Muertos observance in Sacramento.

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

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

SMUD Museum of Science and Curiosity – Laser Concert Series is an

immersive music experience, paired with spectacular full-dome lasers. Rage Against the Machine, 6 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. April 3-4. Details at visitmosac.org.

Elks Lodge 6 Calendar of Events

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.

Greenhaven Pocket Farmers Market reopens Sunday, April 12.

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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Museums Offer Activations for Homeschoolers

Sacramento Area Museums News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Sacramento area museums are proud to amplify learning by offering education-related activations and opportunities all year long. Plus, at various times throughout the year, many museums offer special Homeschool Days with dedicated programming designed to support local students and families.

A sampling of Homeschool Days and related offerings at local museums in 2026 includes the following:

Crocker Art Museum – Special Homeschool Days are planned for March 19, April 16 and May 21, from noon to 2 p.m. each day. The drop-in program allows groups to structure their own experience – at their own pace, in the order they choose – while in community with other homeschoolers. Students follow a customized map that highlights gallery and studio spaces where docents, educators and teaching artists are ready with a discussion or activity centered around that day’s theme then are welcome to stay after the program to explore more of the museum.

Maidu Museum & Historic Site – Recommended for students K-6, a Homeschool Open House is scheduled for May 19 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Homeschool students can explore and connect with the Indigenous history of this region plus enjoy hands-on crafts and activities (like spear throwing and acorn pounding), take a short tour, and enjoy Indigenous stories throughout the event. Additional details and a complete schedule are available via roseville.ca.us/government/departments/library/



Sacramento Area Museums are proud to amplify learning by offering education-related activations and opportunities all year long, especially for homeschooled students and their families. Photo courtesy of the Maidu Museum & Historic Site

maidu_museum_historic_site/events_ exhibits. Advance registration is required at bit.ly/30sXCUr (case sensitive).

SMUD Museum of Science & Curiosity – A Robotics Homeschool Day is coming up on March 11 where homeschool students can try their hand at basic robotics activities, talk with community robotics experts about their work, and experience a planetarium program (one program included with admission for all ages

while supplies last to the first 400 guests). More information and advance registration are available at visitmosac.org/learn/homeschool-programs/.

For more information about Sacramento Area Museums, follow on Facebook at [Facebook.com/SacMuseums](https://www.facebook.com/SacMuseums), Instagram and X @SacMuseums or visit SacMuseums.org.

Comprising approximately 25 greater Sacramento area museums, Sacramento

Area Museums’ mission is to raise awareness of local museums by giving the community the opportunity to discover the region’s fine art, history, science and wild-life treasures. Sacramento Area Museums achieves its mission by implementing cooperative promotions, developing strategic marketing alliances and encouraging the sharing of knowledge and resources among its partner institutions. For more information, visit SacMuseums.org. ★

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SMUD Boosts Rebates for Heat Pumps

Program helps Sacramento customers save energy, improve comfort and cut carbon

SMUD News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - SMUD announced new, increased rebate levels for residential heat pump installations beginning in February. These enhanced rebates represent an increase in existing programs. They're designed to help customers transition to clean, efficient electric heating and cooling technology while offsetting the recent expiration of federal tax credits and state incentive programs.

These rebates include up to \$4,000 for gas-to-electric heat pump water heater conversions, up to \$3,000 for gas-to-electric heat pump HVAC system conversions and \$1,000 for electric-to-electric heat pump water heater and heat pump HVAC upgrades.

"These rebates demonstrate our commitment to making clean energy affordable and accessible for every Sacramento family," said Lora Anquay, Chief Zero Carbon Officer. "Heat pumps are a reliable technology that reduce carbon emissions, boost energy efficiency and deliver about



SMUD's heat pump programs are a cornerstone of our 2030 Zero Carbon Plan and goal to electrify 154,000 homes by 2030. Photo courtesy of Freepik

\$500 a year in real savings. By increasing our rebates, we're removing cost barriers and helping our community take part in our shared clean energy future."

SMUD's heat pump programs are a cornerstone of our 2030 Zero Carbon Plan and goal to electrify 154,000 homes by

2030. Heat pumps are highly efficient compared to traditional gas systems, providing heating and cooling while cutting energy bills, improving indoor comfort and reducing household carbon footprints. Through SMUD's Advanced Home Solutions program, more than 23,000

gas-fired space and water heating systems have already been replaced with high-efficiency electric heat pumps.

The increased rebates come at a critical time, as recent federal tax credits expired on Dec. 31, 2025, and state incentive programs have run out of funding.

For more information about SMUD's heat pump rebates and to apply, visit smud.org/GoElectric.

About SMUD

As the nation's sixth-largest, community-owned, not-for-profit electric service provider, SMUD has been providing low-cost, reliable electricity to Sacramento County for more than 75 years. SMUD is a recognized industry leader for its innovative energy efficiency programs, renewable power technologies and for its sustainable solutions for a healthier environment. In 2024, SMUD's power supply was about 62% carbon free, which is largely influenced by the weather and amount of hydroelectricity produced. SMUD's goal is to completely eliminate carbon in its electricity production by 2030 while maintaining reliability and keeping rates among the lowest in California — on average, 50% lower than its neighboring, investor-owned utility. For more information on SMUD's Zero Carbon Plan and its customer programs, visit smud.org ★

The Problem with California's Proposed Mileage Tax



Josh Hoover

By Assemblyman Josh Hoover

I was disappointed last month when the Assembly passed AB 1421 (Wilson) over strong bipartisan objections. This legislation sets the stage for a new per-mile tax on drivers across our state—a move I opposed for its potential burden on everyday Californians without adequate safeguards.

Advocates for AB 1421 downplay the risks, insisting it's merely a directive to "study" the contours of a mileage-based fee or road user charge. Indeed, the bill's language focuses on preparing

research and recommendations for such a system. But let's be candid: In Sacramento, we don't commission studies on policies we have no intention of pursuing. This "study" is a thinly veiled precursor to implementation, and it demands scrutiny.

What concerns me most is the rush to explore this without ironclad protections for taxpayers. That's why I joined my colleagues in pushing ACA 12 (Wallis). This proposed constitutional amendment would mandate a two-thirds vote threshold for any state or local mileage tax, ensuring broad consensus. It would also ban "double taxation" by exempting drivers who already contribute through the gas tax. Regrettably, the supermajority in Sacramento rejected it on the floor, sidelining these essential guardrails.

To gauge public sentiment, I recently surveyed hundreds of constituents in my district. The results were unequivocal: A staggering 96% opposed any per-mile tax

lacking protections against double taxation. Even if the gas tax were entirely eliminated, more than 67% would still reject a mileage-based system. However, support shifted modestly when the tax was framed as applying solely to zero-emission vehicles (ZEVs), which currently evade the gas tax: 49% favored it, while about 40% opposed.

This nuance reveals a core inequity. Drivers of traditional gas-powered vehicles bear a disproportionate share of funding our roads through fuel taxes, whereas ZEV owners pay only a marginally higher registration fee. As electric vehicles proliferate—encouraged by state incentives—this imbalance will only worsen, eroding the revenue base for infrastructure maintenance.

Yet AB 1421 fails to confine the tax to ZEVs. Instead, it opens the door to a blanket levy that ignores the realities faced by low-income and rural residents. Many in these communities commute

longer distances to work, school, or essential services, meaning they'd shoulder a heavier load under a miles-traveled model. Compounding this, serious privacy issues loom: Accurately tracking every mile driven could invite intrusive surveillance, eroding personal freedoms without clear data protections.

Make no mistake, our roads desperately need investment. California ranks a dismal 46th nationally in road quality, despite imposing the highest gas taxes in the country. As a member of the Assembly Transportation Committee, I've consistently fought against diverting these revenues to non-transportation uses. We must prioritize fixing potholes, streets, and highways with existing funds before inventing new taxes.

Imposing a mileage tax without robust taxpayer safeguards isn't progress, it's a regressive hit on those least able to afford it. In a state already grappling with

sky-high living costs, from housing to groceries, this would further strain hardworking families, commuters, and small businesses. As lawmakers, we owe Californians better: a transparent, equitable solution that rebuilds our infrastructure without punishing drivers. Let's demand accountability and reject half-measures like AB 1421. Our roads and our residents deserve no less.

Assemblyman Josh Hoover is a member of the Assembly Transportation Committee and 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. ★

County Launches Improved 311 Connect Website

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - Sacramento County has launched an improved 311 Connect online portal designed to make it easier for residents to manage service requests and access County services in one convenient location.

Residents can access the upgraded 311 Connect portal using a single Sacramento Countywide user profile — the same account many already use for services such as My Utilities and Revenue Recovery.

The portal offers a more seamless, secure, and user-friendly experience, with new features that include simplified access through a single, easy-to-use website to manage 311 Connect services. It also provides service request management, allowing users to view, update, and submit new service requests. In addition, the portal supports multi-account management, enabling users to manage multiple accounts from one centralized location.

Introducing Cami, Sacramento County 311's new digital assistant! Cami is here to help answer questions and make your experience even smoother. Learn more and explore new features to get the most of the new portal

by watching our video [Introducing Cami - 311 Digital Assistant](#).

What Residents Can Expect

As part of the transition, existing usernames will remain the same. Residents will receive an email with a password reset link to activate their new Countywide profile. The link will expire seven days after it is sent. If the link expires, users can simply select "Forgot Password" on the login page to reset it.

All existing profile information and service request history will automatically transfer to the new portal, allowing residents to pick up right where they left off.

How to Prepare

To ensure a smooth transition, residents are encouraged to log into their current Sacramento County 311 Connect account and verify that their email address and phone number are up to date.

Once users receive the emailed link, they will need to click the password reset link in their email, enter their existing username and update their new Sacramento County profile with any missing contact details.

Residents should watch their inbox for the password reset email and prepare to explore the new 311 Connect portal. ★

SCOE Seeks Community Input on County Superintendent Search

Sacramento County Office of Education News Release

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - The search for the next Sacramento County Superintendent is underway, and community members are invited to play an important role in the process.

Superintendent David W. Gordon has announced he plans to retire on June 30, 2027, and the Sacramento County Board of Education has initiated the recruitment and selection process for a new superintendent. To guide this work, the Board has partnered with Leadership Associates, an executive search firm, to assist with this important effort.

The Board is emphasizing transparency, collaboration and community voice. Families, students, educators, district partners and residents across Sacramento County will have several opportunities to share what they believe the next superintendent should bring to the role.

The public can share their feedback in

multiple ways: by completing online surveys, attending community forums, and/or joining virtual sessions. Small in-person group discussions are being scheduled with SCOE employees and key educational partners by invitation.

To ensure a collaborative and inclusive process, the Board is requesting public input through an anonymous online survey available now through March 2. The purpose of the survey is to gather feedback from stakeholders on the qualities and characteristics they believe are most important for the next superintendent to possess.

The survey also seeks community perspectives on Sacramento County Office of Education strengths, challenges and the broader education community.

To learn more and complete the survey visit <https://www.scoe.net/superintendentsearch/>.

Feedback will help shape the leadership profile used to guide the Board's recruitment and selection process. ★



Improved Information Access With 2026 Website Debut

Sacramento County Office of Education News Release

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - The Sacramento County Office of Education (SCOE) has unveiled a redesigned website, providing a new navigation structure that offers visitors more direct access to information by highlighting key programs and services

through an extensive drop-down navigation menu, reducing the need for multiple clicks to access resources.

"This redesign improves access to information for our stakeholders and puts additional security measures in place," said Executive Director Xanthi Soriano. "All the hard work that's gone into planning and building the new site will make it easier to navigate and

more visually engaging, giving SCOE programs an even stronger online presence and reinforcing our efforts to make information accessible to all site visitors."

Planning for the redesign started in 2022 with development work beginning in 2024. SCOE's Communications Office collaborated with Catapult CMS, a Roseville-based company

specializing in content management solutions for K-12 school websites. The semi-custom design, which leverages shared code to efficiently ensure compliance with browser updates and technology changes, is meant to present information in a visually appealing but accessible way.

The Catapult CMS templates are designed specifically for K-12 schools

and offer an inclusive online experience, ensuring accessibility by meeting ADA guidelines and WCAG Level AA standards. The website is now being hosted through Amazon Web Services.

Visitors are encouraged to explore the new website and to check back for additions as the site is fine-tuned. Archives and expanded information will be added in the coming months. ★

Baudouin's Clutch Play Nets Athletics Sign Right Hand Big Sky Weekly Honors Pitchers Barlow/Civale



The award is Baudouin's second in her career and marks the second time this season that a Hornet has been honored. Photo courtesy of Sacramento State Athletics

Sacramento State Athletics News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - Sacramento State redshirt junior Lou Baudouin came up clutch for the Hornets' women's tennis team in a split of its duals last week, finishing 3-1 overall against both Washington State and No. 11 Stanford to pick up Big Sky Conference Player of the Week laurels.

The award is Baudouin's second in her career and marks the second time this season that a Hornet has been honored after teammate Irene Riva picked up her fourth career honor back on Jan. 28.

Splitting time between the No. 2 and No. 3 spots in the lineup in doubles last week alongside partner Emilija Pranyte, Boudouin came up with a 6-1 win over the Cougars' pairing of Ava-Monet Sycamore and Martina Puvill before falling against the Cardinal's No. 2 tandem.

In singles play, Baudouin played a pair at the No. 3 spot to perfection, winning a pair of three-set marathons to bring her team back from early deficits and tie each dual at 3-3.

She began the week with a 6-2, 1-6, 7-5, win over Washington State's Yura Nakagawa to set the stage for a 4-3 team victory over the Cougars. Three days later, she rebounded from a second-set shutout to defeat the Cardinal's Tianmei Wang, 6-4, 0-6, 6-2, drawing the Hornets closer to a near-upset of Stanford before falling 4-3.



In the first meeting with the Cardinal since 2017, the three points were the most in nine all-time meetings and Sacramento State's first point against Stanford since 2009.

Baudouin's two singles victories kept her unbeaten on the year at 5-0 and extended her regular season singles winning streak to seven dating back to last year. Improving to 24-6 in her career at that spot in the lineup, her win total puts her in sole possession of second on the school's all-time list, 11 back of Roberta Fessenko (2002-05) for the top spot.

Her 38 all-time singles wins are the most among active Hornets — two ahead of teammate Irene Riva — and are just four shy of a spot in the top 15 overall in school history. ★



The Athletics have signed right-handed pitcher Scott Barlow. The pitcher was 6-3 with a 4.21 Earned Run Average (ERA) in 75 games with Cincinnati last season before electing free agency following the season. Photo courtesy MLB



The Athletics have signed right-handed pitcher Aaron Civale. Civale was 4-9 with a 4.85 Earned Run Average (ERA) in 23 games, 18 starts, with three teams last season. Photo courtesy MLB

Athletics News Release

LAS VEGAS, NV (MPG) - The Athletics have signed right-handed pitchers Scott Barlow and Aaron Civale to one-year deals, the club announced recently. To clear spots on the 40-man roster, the A's designated right-handed pitchers Grant Holman and Mitch Spence for assignment.

Barlow was 6-3 with a 4.21 Earned Run Average (ERA) in 75 games with Cincinnati last season before electing free agency following the season. He struck out 75 batters and walked 45 in 68.1 innings. Across eight Major League seasons with Kansas City (2018-23), San Diego (2023), Cleveland (2024) and Cincinnati (2025), the 33-year-old is 29-24 with a 3.60 ERA in 440 outings, 439 in relief.

Civale was 4-9 with a 4.85 Earned Run Average (ERA) in 23 games, 18 starts, with three teams last season. He began the season with Milwaukee, where he went 1-2 with a 4.91 ERA in 5 starts before being traded to Chicago-AL for Andrew Vaughn on June 13. The 30-year-old went 2-7 with a 5.37 ERA in 13 starts with the White Sox before being claimed off waivers by Chicago-NL on Aug. 31. He pitched in

five games with the Cubs, going 1-0 with a 2.08 ERA in the first relief appearances of his career. Overall, Civale is 43-44 with a 4.14 ERA in 140 career games across parts of seven Major League seasons with Cleveland (2019-23), Tampa Bay (2023-24), Milwaukee (2024-25), Chicago-AL (2025), and Chicago-NL (2025). He has struck out 665 batters and walked 203 for a career 3.28 strikeout-to-walk ratio.

Holman began the season at Triple-A Las Vegas but appeared in 22 games for the A's last season, going 4-2 with a 5.09 ERA before being placed on the injured list with a rotator cuff injury. Overall, he was 5-3 with a 4.66 ERA in 40 appearances across two seasons with the A's.

Spence spent the majority of last season with the A's, where he was 3-6 with a save, a 5.10 ERA and a .816 opponents OPS in 32 games, including eight starts. He also had a two-month stay in Las Vegas, where he went 0-1 with a 6.21 ERA in eight games, including seven starts. A 2023 Rule-5 Draft selection, Spence made his Major League debut with the A's in 2024 and went 11-16 with a 4.77 ERA in 67 games, 32 starts, in two seasons. ★

River Cats Unveil 'Festival of Baseball'

Sacramento River Cats News Release

WEST SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The Sacramento River Cats recently announced the launch of the River Cats Festival of Baseball at Sutter Health Park, a season-long marketing campaign that transforms each homestand into a uniquely curated music-festival-style experience, celebrating the spirit, culture and community that defines Sacramento.

From Farm-to-Fork to Aftershock, Country in the Park to neighborhood markets and cultural celebrations, this city thrives on shared experiences. The River Cats Festival of Baseball builds on that legacy, reframing a traditional 75-game home schedule into 13 distinct homestands, each with its own theme, personality and vibe. Each week's experience is anchored by a Saturday night theme event, with elements woven throughout the entire homestand, including giveaways, food and beverages, in-game entertainment and fan engagement.

"Sacramento is a festival city at heart," said Sacramento River Cats President/COO Chip Maxson. "The Festival of Baseball reflects who we are as a community and how our fans live, connect and celebrate together. It's about music, food, culture and community staged around the game of baseball. Every homestand has its own energy, and we're inviting fans to experience Sutter Health Park not just as a ballpark, but as the ultimate summer festival destination."

The River Cats Festival of Baseball officially opens its gates March 27 with Opening Night. Each weekly lineup also features recurring promotions including:

Toyota Two-For-Tuesdays: Value-seekers can enjoy two-for-one concessions menu items, \$2 hot dogs and novelty ice cream, plus select two-for-one ticket offers.

Bogle Wine Wednesdays: Fans looking to mix it up



The Sacramento River Cats recently announced the launch of the River Cats Festival of Baseball at Sutter Health Park, a season-long marketing campaign that transforms each homestand into a uniquely curated music-festival-style experience, celebrating the spirit, culture and community that defines Sacramento. Photo by Nicolas Brown

midweek can enjoy a toast to local wine country featuring \$2 off all Bogle Wines throughout the stadium and a rotating Froze Flavor of the Month at the Bogle Family Vineyard Cart, served in a special souvenir cup.

Taps and Trivia Thursdays: Built for beer lovers, Taps and Trivia Tuesdays feature interactive in-game trivia and special pricing including \$9.16 rotating 16-ounce local taps at the Beer Garden, Sky River Casino Solon Club and Jackson Rancheria Legacy Club, and \$5 16-ounce domestic draft selections at all main concession stands.

SMUD Orange Fridays: Orange Fridays celebrate the River Cats affiliation with the San Francisco Giants as the team takes the field in signature orange Sactown uniforms. Fans can enjoy an all-new happy hour and live music in the Beer Garden, from gates to first pitch, with \$3 off select pours including beer, wine, cocktails and mocktails. Also new in 2026, giveaways will be available for the first 2,500 fans every Friday, including: Dinger Building Blocks Set

(March 28), Kirk Rueter T-Shirt (April 10), River Cats Crewneck (April 24), Dinger Lafufu (May 8), Bryce Eldridge Bobblecard Presented by Toyota (May 22), River Cats Visor (June 5), Will Clark T-Shirt (June 26), Bryce Eldridge T-Shirt (July 10),



Carson Whisenhunt Bobblehead (July 24), River Cats Camo T-Shirt (Aug. 7), River Cats Lunch Box (Aug. 21), River Cats Hawaiian Shirt (Sept. 4), Victory Dinger Bobblehead (Sept. 18).

Sutter Health Fireworks Saturdays: Saturday is the main stage anchor of every homestand, perfect for all fans. The signature night features a unique theme night with elements reflected across the games' activations. Each Saturday offers a Family

Fun Pack with an exclusive River Cats theme night item, a Chef's Item of the Game served at Bridges Grille, and postgame fireworks presented by Sutter Health, set to a soundtrack that amplifies the night's theme.

Kids Rule Sundays: Designed for the next generation of fans, Sundays include Dinger's Kids Club lawn tickets, kids-focused promotions, pregame player autographs, postgame run-the bases and a Five-For-Three Kids Value Menu featuring five value priced kids items for just \$3 each at all main concession stands, or bundle them all with the \$15 Kids Box where available.

Homestand Themes: For the first time ever, the River Cats season will be framed by thirteen unique homestand themes. Each homestand presented as a "set" leaning into the main stage Saturday night theme with elements incorporated throughout the entire homestand. Themes include Dinger's House Party to kick off the season Mar 27-29, followed by Play it Again April 7-12, bringing back Giants Legend Kirk Rueter for a fan meet & greet.

Additional homestands include

Pals & Confidants highlighted by Pride Night, Golden Girls Night and Dinger's Birthday, and Wild West Aug. 4-9, featuring a country revival week with a camo t-shirt giveaway and the return of Wild West Night. The finale concludes with That's All Folks Sept. 15-20 for a week-long high-energy, cartoon-style celebration of all things River Cats and Sacramento. View the full lineup of all thirteen at rivercats.com/festivalofbaseball.

Theme Nights: Individual theme nights are back and bigger than ever, blending returning fan favorites with an exciting slate of brand-new experiences. Beloved staples include four Dorados de Sacramento games, highlighted by Hispanic Heritage Night as part of Minor League Baseball's Copa de la Diversión™, along with Asian American and Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Night, Pride Night, Star Wars Night, Christmas in July, Wild West Night and Harry Potter Night. New to the lineup this season are Peanuts Night, Toy Story Jersey Night, Love Sacramento Night, Princess Night, DC Comics Night, Golden Girls Night, Summerween (Halloween in the summer), Margaritaville Night and Looney Tunes Night, giving fans of all ages even more reasons to celebrate at the ballpark.

For tickets, promotional schedules and more information on the River Cats Festival of Baseball, visit rivercats.com.

About the Sacramento River Cats

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, hospitality rentals and single game tickets for the 2026 season may be purchased now by calling the River Cats sales 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. ★