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**Area Museums Offer Free Admission March 7 to 8**  
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# Land Park News

VOL 35 • ISSUE 4 *Bringing You Community News For Over 30 Years* FEBRUARY 27, 2026

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## Rock Orchestra Goes Big on Pink Floyd

*Student Players and Pros Share Talents on 'Wall' and 'Dark Side'*



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

**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 4*

## 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 pickup by contacting Customer Service at 3-1-1. ★

## Photography Month Sacramento Returns in April



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

**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,  
*Continued on Page 3*

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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](http://sachistorymuseum.org). ★

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# SCPH Joins CDPH in Urging Vaccination Against Measles

## Cases Rise Across Multiple Counties

### Sacramento County News Release

**SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG)** - Sacramento County Public Health (SCPH) joins the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) in urging residents to check their immunization status and get vaccinated against measles after local health departments have notified the state of multiple recent cases of measles.

“Even though we haven’t seen local cases, the rise in cases in other counties and recent exposures at large public venues remind us how easily this dangerous virus can spread,” said Dr. Olivia Kasirye, Sacramento County Public Health Officer. “I urge everyone to check their vaccination status, especially before traveling or attending crowded events. Your actions protect not only your loved ones but everyone around you.”

Recently, local health departments in Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, Riverside and Shasta counties reported multiple cases of measles. This includes an outbreak of eight related cases in Shasta County, the state’s first measles outbreak since 2020. All these individuals were either unvaccinated or had an unknown history of vaccination.

CDPH issued a Health Alert notifying health care providers to be on the lookout for measles in patients presenting with a fever, rash and other symptoms consistent with measles.

Public health officials are investigating additional suspect cases. With this news and measles spreading in other parts of the United States, as well as international destinations, CDPH is strongly urging Californians to ensure they are fully vaccinated against measles.



Measles is a highly contagious viral disease. Unvaccinated individuals, particularly young children and pregnant people, face the highest risk of severe illness and even death. Photo courtesy of Sacramento County

“As a pediatrician and parent, I encourage families to make sure everyone gets up to date on their MMR vaccine, if they haven’t already,” said Dr. Erica Pan, CDPH Director and State Public Health Officer. “CDPH continues to coordinate with, and support, local health departments in their responses to stop measles from spreading further in our communities. The United States is experiencing the highest numbers of measles cases, outbreaks, hospitalizations and deaths in more than 30 years, driven by populations with low vaccination rates. We all need to work together to share the medical evidence, benefits, and safety of vaccines to provide families the information they need to protect children and our communities.”

Two recent cases visited Disneyland on Jan. 22 and 28 while infectious. Local health officials are working with Disneyland Resort to notify potentially exposed employees, and members of the public that visited Disneyland on either date should contact their health care provider if they develop measles symptoms.

As of Feb. 9, a total of 17 measles cases have been reported statewide. Elsewhere in the United States, one of the largest outbreaks in over 30 years is happening in South Carolina with 920 associated cases.

California reported more than 95% measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) coverage among kindergarteners for the 2024-2025 school year – the level of immunity needed to reduce the risk of community spread. To continue achieving this level of protection from measles and other preventable diseases, CDPH and the West Coast Health Alliance (WCHA) recently endorsed the 2026 American Academy of Pediatrics Recommended Child and Adolescent Immunization Schedule, ensuring all Californians receive access to evidence-based guidance on life-saving vaccines. For more information on California’s immunization guidance, visit the CDPH Vaccines for All web page.

The MMR vaccine provides the best protection against disease and serious illness. It is important Californians check to see that they

and their family members are up to date as the number of measles cases has increased. In particular, it’s important that families are up to date on all vaccines before traveling, including international travel and travel to domestic areas where there are measles outbreaks. It is also important to be up to date before visiting places or events where there are many people from other countries or regions of the United States, such as large sporting events, theme parks or airports.

Before traveling internationally, everyone 12 months and older should receive two MMR doses, and babies 6 to 11 months are recommended to get one dose of MMR vaccine. Families with children traveling to regions in the United States with ongoing outbreaks should consult with a health care provider about following immunization recommendations for international travel.

Families can check their vaccination status with the California Digital Vaccine Record (DVR) and schedule a vaccine appointment by visiting MyTurn.ca.gov, or contacting their local pharmacy or health care provider. MMR

vaccines are covered for most people through their health insurance plans, including Medi-Cal and regular health care providers. People having difficulty obtaining vaccines can contact their health care provider or local health department for help finding a place to get immunized.

Measles is a highly contagious viral disease. Unvaccinated individuals, particularly young children and pregnant people, face the highest risk of severe illness and even death. Roughly 90% of those unvaccinated and exposed to measles will contract the disease. Symptoms include a fever that lasts a couple of days followed by a cough, runny nose, conjunctivitis (pink eye) and rash. Those infected can spread measles about four days before their rash starts to four days afterwards.

Measles remains common globally, including in Europe, Africa and Asia. There are also ongoing outbreaks in Canada and Mexico. Although the United States eliminated measles in 2000, cases have risen, with major outbreaks in Texas and South Carolina in 2025. California experienced a notable outbreak linked to Disneyland from December 2014 to April 2015, infecting 131 residents and others in six additional states, Mexico, and Canada. Due to California’s currently high levels of immunization, the state is less likely to see sustained transmissions as has been seen in other states in recent years. However, transmission of measles is still possible, particularly in communities with lower immunization coverage.

For updated measles activity in California, visit the CDPH Measles web page. CDPH’s Measles Toolkit also provides resources in multiple languages. ★

## Photography Month Sacramento Returns in April

Continued from page 1

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 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 sponsorship opportunities or find out more about Photography Month Sacramento 2025, visit photomonthsacramento.org. ★

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Located just across from William Land Park, this stunning Brick Normandy Tudor offers a blend of classic elegance and modern amenities. The decorative front wrought iron gate leads into a beautifully manicured formal garden with large fountain which sets the tone for the home’s graceful charm. Formal entry leads to a spacious living room with cozy fireplace and French doors opening to a bright solarium room. The dining room has beamed ceiling and is perfect for formal entertaining. A smaller music room/den sits just off the dining room. The spacious remodeled kitchen boasts granite countertops, stainless steel appliances, an island with a sink, a wine refrigerator, and a breakfast bar for casual dining. The solarium room, accessible from both the kitchen and living room, features an artistically painted concrete floor and two sets of French doors that lead to the yard. The ground floor also features a half bath and access to a quarter

basement. Upstairs, you’ll find three spacious bedrooms and two bathrooms. The primary bathroom is equipped with dual sinks, jetted tub, tiled floors and an over-sized two-person shower with a steam feature. The hall bathroom offers a large glass stall shower with Italian finishes. Custom French doors in all three bedrooms open to charming railings. The backyard is designed for relaxation and entertainment, complete with a built-in pool and spa, patio areas, an outdoor kitchen with BBQ, wine refrigerator, bar and a gas fireplace with a French flair. A custom electric driveway gate leads to a Carriage House garage with space for three cars, a workshop, and a full bathroom, which can be accessed from both the garage and pool area. The main home also includes two additional garage spaces. This exceptional property showcases exquisite details and offers a luxurious lifestyle in a prime location. 1716 Sutterville Road \$1,599,000



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# Midtown Celebrates a Dozen Business Openings

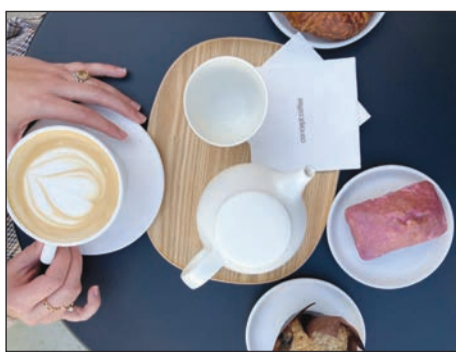
## Midtown Association News Release

**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 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; Teneral 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



**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.**

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 (2321 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 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



**Adults can enjoy a warm, community-centered wine experience at Joneck’s Wine Lounge & Bottle Shop at 2321 J St., which opened in December 2025. Photo courtesy of Midtown Association**



**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.**



**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.**

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](http://exploremidtown.org/newbusinesses).

For more information about Midtown Sacramento in general, special events and activities, and the Midtown Association, visit [exploremidtown.org](http://exploremidtown.org) or follow on social media via Facebook at [facebook.com/exploremidtown/](https://www.facebook.com/exploremidtown/) and @ExploreMidtown on Instagram. ★

# Rock Orchestra Goes Big on Pink Floyd



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



**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**

*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 [sacprepmusic.com](http://sacprepmusic.com). ★



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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 for 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. ★

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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](http://sacmuseums.org) or [free-museum-weekend](http://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](http://sacmuseums.org) or [free-museum-weekend](http://free-museum-weekend).

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](http://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](http://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](http://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.com](http://californiarailroad.com).

**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](http://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](http://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](http://elks6.net) for weekly menu. ★

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Subscriptions should be mailed to *Land Park News*, 2508 Garfield Ave., Suite A, Carmichael, CA 95608.

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

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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/](http://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](http://maidu_museum_historic_site/events_exhibits). Advance registration is required at [bit.ly/3OsXCUr](http://bit.ly/3OsXCUr) (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/](http://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](http://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](http://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 Anaguay, 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](https://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](https://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](mailto: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 Big Sky Weekly Honors

# Athletics Sign Right Hand 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.



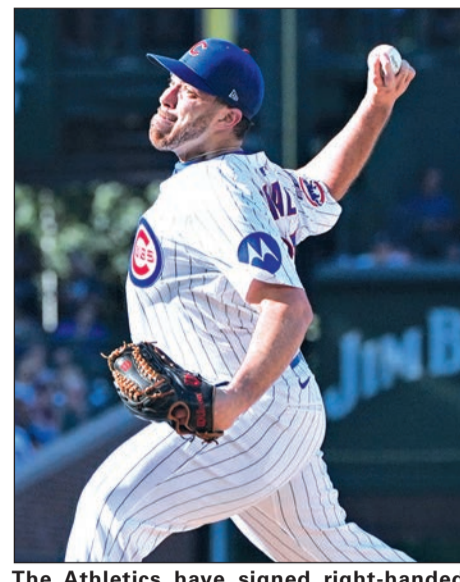
In the first meeting with the Cardinal since 2017, the three points were the most in nine all-time meetings and Sacramento State's first point against Stanford since 2009.

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 home-stand 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](http://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](http://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](mailto:tickets@rivercats.com), or visiting [www.rivercats.com](http://www.rivercats.com). For information on other events at Sutter Health Park, visit [www.sutterhealthpark.com](http://www.sutterhealthpark.com). ★