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Early Support, Strong Readers

How The K-2 Reading Difficulties Screener Guides Student Success



During the screening process, students work with staff to identify letters, sounds, or words and may also read aloud or answer questions about what they hear. Photo courtesy of San Juan Unified

San Juan Unified School District News Release

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - Learning to read starts early, and so does the support at San Juan Unified School District.

This year, as part of a new state requirement, San Juan Unified introduced a reading difficulties screener for students in kindergarten through second grade.

Designed to identify early signs of reading difficulties, including risk factors for dyslexia, the screener helps teachers better understand how to support students' literacy. With

early support, students can build the foundational skills that help them work toward reading proficiency by third grade.

A Closer Look At The Reading Difficulties Screener

While the reading difficulties screener is not a test that will affect the student's grades, determine reclassification or provide placement for special education services, it is a tool to support students and provide insight that helps teachers respond to those needs early.

During the screening process, students work with staff to identify letters, sounds, or words and may also read

aloud or answer questions about what they hear.

Heather Brandt, a program specialist with San Juan Unified who supports staff across the district with the reading difficulties screener, said the results are used to guide teaching.

"It does not necessarily mean that a student has a learning disability or will have difficulty reading in the future," said Brandt. "The things that happen next are small group instruction or support in the classroom or maybe outside of the classroom, to teach those skills."

Once students complete the screener, teachers use the results to guide their

Continued on page 4

County Selects Inspector General

Sacramento County News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The Sacramento County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to approve a one-year agreement appointing Eric Kane as Inspector General, ensuring continuity of independent oversight of the Sheriff's Office while the County evaluates long-term options for the position. The contract begins May 1 and extends through April 30, 2027.

The Office of Inspector General operates independently from the Sheriff's Office and plays a critical role in providing impartial intake and review of community complaints.

The most recent Inspector General, Kevin Gardner, elected not to continue beyond the term of his contract, which ended March 31.

Kane brings more than 25 years of law enforcement experience, with a background in complex investigations, personnel management and program development. He is currently serving as Associate Director/Police Lieutenant for the University of the Pacific, where he oversees operations within the Department of Public Safety.

Prior to that role, Mr. Kane spent the majority of his career with the Stockton Police Department, where he began as a police officer in 1996 and rose through the ranks to retire as Deputy Chief in 2022. Throughout his tenure, he held several key assignments directly relevant to the responsibilities of the Inspector General, including: conducting internal affairs investigations into alleged misconduct, leading officer-involved critical incident investigations in coordination with external partners, overseeing all criminal investigations, including those involving department personnel, serving as liaison to a Community Advisory Board and participating in national initiatives focused on building community trust and justice. ★

From Classroom to Careers

Folsom Lake College, Sutter Health open hands-on healthcare training hub



Folsom Lake College, in partnership with Sutter Health, unveiled a new Instructional Healthcare Hub at its Rancho Cordova Center on April 29. Photo courtesy of Folsom Lake College

By Omella Rossi

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) - A ribbon stretched across a set of glass doors

Wednesday April 29, marked more than the opening of a new facility in Rancho Cordova, it signaled what local leaders

say is a direct response to a growing healthcare workforce shortage and a new pathway for residents to step into stable,

in-demand careers.

Folsom Lake College, in partnership with Sutter Health, unveiled a new

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From Classroom to Careers



College officials said the hub is designed to mirror real-world clinical environments and better prepare students for immediate employment. Photo courtesy of Folsom Lake College

Continued from page 1
 Instructional Healthcare Hub at its Rancho Cordova Center, backed by a \$2.5 million investment aimed at expanding hands-on training for students entering allied health fields.
 The upgraded facility, located at 10259 Folsom Blvd., features four modernized classrooms equipped with advanced medical technology, including simulators, X-ray machines and hospital beds. College officials said the hub is designed to mirror real-world clinical environments and better prepare students for immediate employment.

Programs supported at the site include certified nursing assistant, emergency medical technician, medical laboratory technician, radiology technician and advanced imaging technician training.
 “This really is a day of gratitude and appreciation, and most importantly, to talk about the transformation that happens in this building,” said Folsom Lake College President Dr. Art Pimentel. “We had a conversation about a need, and this is a real prime example of what we can do when education partners with industry.”



The upgraded facility, located at 10259 Folsom Blvd., features four modernized classrooms equipped with advanced medical technology, including simulators, X-ray machines and hospital beds. Photo by Ornella Rossi

That need is substantial. According to regional labor data cited at the event, the Greater Sacramento area sees roughly 7,560 annual job openings in healthcare, while education programs produce about 460 completions each year, leaving a gap of more than 7,100 workers.
 College and community leaders said the new hub is intended to help close that gap while creating accessible career pathways for local residents.
 “This is such an

exciting example of the power of partnership,” said Los Rios Community College District Chancellor Dr. Brian King. “When we get a wonderful business partner like Sutter, a city that embraces the importance of education like Rancho Cordova, a school district committed to preparing students to excel in college, the result is what you see today.”
 King highlighted the long-standing collaboration between the college district, Sutter Health and the city of



For Sutter Health, the investment is part of a larger effort to address workforce shortages while strengthening community health systems. Photo courtesy of Folsom Lake College

Rancho Cordova, calling the investment the largest single donation of its kind for the district.
 Los Rios Board of Trustees President Deborah Ortiz emphasized the broader regional impact, particularly in building a pipeline of skilled workers.
 “This represents what is possible in our region when education and industry come together with a shared commitment,” Ortiz said. “Programs like these allow us to better prepare students for high-wage, in-demand careers and ensure access and availability in a field that is going to be more vital than ever.”

For Sutter Health, the investment is part of a larger effort to address workforce shortages while strengthening community health systems.
 “This is really more than just a ribbon cutting,” said Rachel McKinney, president of Sutter Health’s Greater Sacramento Division. “It is a literal opening of doors for the many talented students that will train here.”
 McKinney said the facility will allow students to train in environments that reflect the realities of modern healthcare.
 “Healthcare is complex. It’s fast-paced and to be able to provide training in an environment that simulates the real world is really what every trained student will need,” McKinney said.
 Rancho Cordova Mayor

Garrett Gatewood framed the project as a direct investment in the city’s future.
 “Today is not just a ribbon cutting,” Gatewood said. “We are opening the doors to opportunities, careers and a stronger Rancho Cordova. Not everyone follows the same path, but this hub creates a real stable location for well-paying jobs and careers.”
 Folsom Cordova Unified School District Superintendent Erik Swanson said the facility also strengthens connections between K-12 education and career opportunities.
 “This is more than a new facility. It’s about what becomes possible because of it,” Swanson said. “This healthcare hub today opens that up for a lot more of our graduates to have a plan to a living-wage job here in the city of Rancho Cordova.”
 Swanson noted the hub will support a seamless transition for students from local high schools into college programs and ultimately into the workforce.
 Officials across agencies repeatedly pointed to collaboration as the driving force behind the project and as a model for future efforts.
 “The students who will walk through these doors will take a moment to reflect on how their future was set by all the individuals here today,” said Gatewood. ★

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Dementia Support Group | Second Tuesday of Each Month 5:30 - 6:30 p.m.
Our monthly group brings together individuals, caregivers and families to share experiences and support one another through the journey.

Your Guide to Retirement Success: Educational Seminar | Thursday, June 25 at 4:30 p.m.
Learn practical tips on finances, estate planning and real estate from local experts.

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Mermaids Make a Splash

California Mermaid Convention Returns May 15-17

By Omella Rossi

RANCHO CORDOVA, CA (MPG) - A splash of color, sequins and shimmering tails will soon ripple through Rancho Cordova as hundreds of “merfolk” from around the world gather for a weekend that blends fantasy with community and a message that runs deeper than the surface.

The California Mermaid Convention returns May 15-17 for its seventh annual event, transforming the Hagan Community Center and Cordova Community Pool into a three-day celebration of performance, creativity and hands-on experiences.

Organizers say the convention, held in partnership with Visit Rancho Cordova, is expected to draw more than 400 attendees, including professional performers, hobbyists and first-time participants traveling from across the United States and as far as Hawaii, Germany and Japan.

Recognized as the longest-running mermaid convention on the West Coast, the event has grown from a small costume parade into a large-scale production that combines entertainment with education and environmental awareness.

“The California Mermaid Convention in Rancho Cordova is quintessentially quirky, refreshingly inclusive, and daringly bold,” said Kristen Achziger, director of marketing and communications for Visit Rancho Cordova. “They push the boundaries of the unexpected and novel while still providing a relaxed and welcoming experience for all visitors.”

The weekend’s programming ranges from public spectacles to interactive workshops, including swim sessions, costuming classes, educational panels and live performances. Environmental stewardship is woven throughout, with an emphasis on ocean and waterway conservation.

Festivities begin Friday, May 15, with the Promenade of Mermaids from 5 to 7:30 p.m. along the Embarcadero Waterfront in Old Sacramento, a free, all-ages event that has become a regional tradition. The evening continues with a 21-and-over launch party from 8:30 to 11:30 p.m. at Dive Bar, 1016 K St., Sacramento.



The Bubble Ball, one of the convention’s most anticipated events, will feature a jazz band, aerial performances and the crowning of the event’s “Pearl.” Photo by Rick Sloan



The weekend’s programming ranges from public spectacles to interactive workshops, including swim sessions, costuming classes, educational panels and live performances. Photo by Rick Sloan

Main convention programming takes place Saturday, May 16, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Hagan Park Community Pool, featuring hands-on activities and performances for attendees of all ages. That night, the Bubble Ball runs from 7:30 to 11:30 p.m. at the Hagan Community Center, offering a ticketed, all-ages costume event with live entertainment and immersive visuals.

The Bubble Ball, one of the



The California Mermaid Convention returns May 15-17 for its seventh annual event, transforming the Hagan Community Center and Cordova Community Pool into a three-day celebration. Photo by Rick Sloan

convention’s most anticipated events, will feature a jazz band, aerial performances and the crowning of the event’s “Pearl,” recognizing a standout participant within the community.

Activities resume Sunday, May 17, with the main convention continuing from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the community pool. The weekend concludes with the Grotto Swim from 6 to 10 p.m. at a private location, a 16-and-over finale featuring a themed pool

experience and professional photography.

“The California Mermaid Convention is truly a celebration of community, magic and joy,” said Rachel Smith, one of the event organizers. “We are a safe place to be yourself, level up your underwater skills and find new best friends.”

Smith said the event also reflects a broader purpose beyond entertainment, including community engagement and environmental efforts such as river cleanups and conservation initiatives.

“We are proud to give back to the greater Rancho Cordova and Sacramento community through ongoing river cleanups, donations and water stewardship,” she said. The world feels scary these days, and building this magical underwater realm has brought a lot of joy to so many people. We are grateful to do it for another year.”

Local tourism officials say the convention continues to bring both cultural and economic benefits to Rancho Cordova, drawing visitors who support area hotels, restaurants and businesses.

For more information on upcoming events, including river cleanups and future conventions, visit californiamermaidcon.com. ★

Soroptimists Honor Five Local Superheroes



Soroptimist International of Rancho Cordova & Gold River awarded \$3,500 in Live Your Dream: Education and Training Awards for Women to five local women to support their pursuit of higher education and improve their economic situation. Photo courtesy of Soroptimist International of Rancho Cordova & Gold River

Soroptimist International of Rancho Cordova & Gold River News Release

RANCHO CORDOVA, CA (MPG) - Soroptimist International of Rancho Cordova & Gold River is a global volunteer nonprofit that provides women and girls with access to education and training to achieve economic empowerment. The organization awarded \$3,500 in Live Your Dream: Education and Training Awards for Women to five local women to support their pursuit of higher education and improve their economic situation.

The awards ceremony was held at Cattlemen’s Restaurant on March 28. We are confident that all our winners will achieve their goals and dreams!

First-place winner Natalia is a mother of four children aged 1 to 12 and has a husband who recently started his own business. She’s working on an associate’s degree in nutrition at Sac City College and will graduate in May 2027. Her goal is to earn a bachelor’s degree in nutrition or health science, become a certified nutritionist and open a café that serves healthy, homemade food.

Heather, another awardee, is a single mom with two children aged 11 and 18 living in Rancho Cordova. She’s working on a bachelor’s degree in business administration at CSUS and will graduate in

2028. Her goal is to become the kind of leader who inspires others to reach their potential, who advocates for growth and who builds a work environment where everyone feels valued.

Another winner was Anna. She is the caregiver to her parents and lives in Rancho Cordova. Anna’s working on an associate’s degree in pre-health at Folsom Lake College and will graduate in 2028. Her goal is to transfer to a 4-year college to earn her BSN and then become an RN.

Olena, is a single mom of two children ages 6 and 7 who escaped the bombings in Ukraine and lives in the Lincoln Village neighborhood. She’s working on an associate’s degree in accounting from Folsom Lake College and will graduate in 2029. She looks forward to becoming a professional in the U.S.

The final winner, Aaliyah, is a single mom of 2 young children aged 1 and 2 who lives in Rancho Cordova. She’s working on an associate’s degree in human services from the American River College and will graduate in 2027. Her goal is to become a social worker, advocating for those without a voice and supporting individuals who are often overlooked.

Rancho Cordova City Councilman, Joe Little, donated \$1000 on behalf of the City of Rancho Cordova and Golden State Water donated \$500 towards our Live Your Dream program. ★

Early Support, Strong Readers



Designed to identify early signs of reading difficulties, including risk factors for dyslexia, the screener helps teachers better understand how to support students’ literacy. Photo courtesy of San Juan Unified

Continued from page 1

lessons and decide if a student may need additional support.

Families are also an important part of the process. After the screener, a letter is sent home in their home language with a summary of the results and suggestions to help their child with reading.

Supporting Multilingual Students

The screener is also available in Spanish for students who speak Spanish as their first language. As students complete the Spanish version of the reading difficulties screener, they also must complete the English version.

The results of both screeners help teachers understand whether a student’s reading challenges are related to learning English or may be a sign of a reading difficulty.

For newcomer students who have been enrolled in a school in the United States for less than a year, the district uses a different approach to ensure they are supported appropriately.

“It consists of contacting families and conducting a family interview that asks about early language development,” shared Amanda Sandberg, a multilingual program specialist in San Juan Unified. “These students would then take the

screener either later that year or the following year.”

Questions asked in the interview may include family history of reading challenges or concerns about speech and language, along with identifying the age at which their child started speaking their primary language

Similar to the English and Spanish screener, the family interview will not determine if a student will be reclassified, assigned a grade or be identified for special education.

Working Together For Early Learners

Beyond elevating student support, the screener has also strengthened collaboration among staff.

“It’s been something that has created a lot of opportunity for collaborative conversations between teachers and grade levels,” said Sandberg. “It allows teams and practitioners to come together to have really productive and engaging conversations around instruction and how they can support their students.”

By identifying needs early and working together with educators and families alike, the district aims to ensure every student has the opportunity to become a confident reader. ★



Office Tours and Election Observation Available

Ballot Drop Box and Vote Center Locations Posted



Observation is an important part of elections. The VRE invites Sacramento County residents to observe these processes anytime they are running. Photo Designed by Magnific

Sacramento County Voter Registration and Elections Office News Release

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - The Department of Voter Registration and Elections is preparing for the June 2, 2026, Primary Election. For more information, visit: elections.saccounty.gov/#gsc.tab=0.

For those interested in learning more about how the complex processes of elections work, tours and opportunities to observe are offered by the Voter Registration and Elections office.

Tours are available Tuesdays and Thursdays at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. Q&A Session are offered those same days at 4 p.m. No appointment is required for the Q&A.

Schedule your tour at: <https://app.acuity-scheduling.com/schedule/3ed1683e/>

Observation is an important part of

elections. The VRE invites Sacramento County residents to observe these processes anytime they are running. You do not need to schedule an appointment for observation.

Those interested are encouraged to review the Election Observer Guidelines Handbook to learn what processes might be of interest to you and to learn of your rights and responsibilities as an election observer.

The handbook is available at: elections.saccounty.gov/content/dam/vre/documents/ELECTION%20OBSERVER%20GUIDELINES%20HANDBOOK.pdf

For more information, contact the Voter Registration and Elections (VRE) office at 916-875-6451, email voterinfo@saccounty.gov or use the toll-free voter assistance hotline at 800-762-8019. The hotline has the ability to connect voters with disabilities with TTY (Text Telephone). ★

Sacramento County Voter Registration and Elections Office News Release

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG)

- Voter Registration and Elections (VRE) has posted the list of Ballot Drop Box and Vote Center locations for the June 2, 2026, Primary Election on the VRE website at elections.saccounty.gov.

Vote by Mail ballots will be mailed to voters beginning May 4. Ballot Drop Boxes will begin opening Monday, May 4, and Vote Centers will begin opening Saturday, May 23. A complete list of Ballot Drop Box and Vote Center locations and days and hours of operation can be found at: <https://elections.saccounty.gov/votecenters/pages/locations.aspx>

Voter registration for the June 2, 2026

Primary Election will close on Monday, May 18. Voter registration forms must be postmarked by this date or delivered to the VRE Office at 7000 65th St., Suite A, Sacramento 95823 by 5:00 p.m.

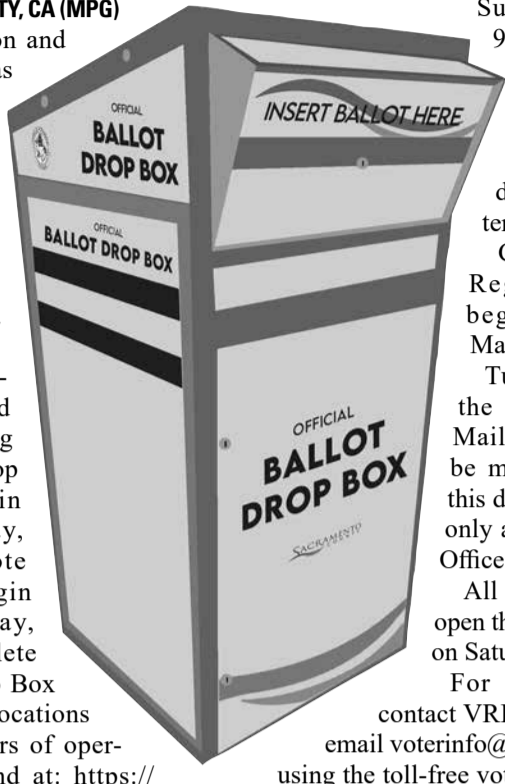
Online voter registration must be completed before midnight on this date at <https://registertovote.ca.gov/>.

Conditional Voter Registration (CVR) begins on Tuesday, May 19.

Tuesday, May 26 is the last day a Vote by Mail (VBM) ballot can be mailed to you. After this date, VBM ballots are only available at the VRE Office or a Vote Center.

All Vote Centers will be open throughout the County on Saturday, May 30.

For more information, contact VRE at (916) 875-6451, email voterinfo@saccounty.gov, or by using the toll-free voter assistance hotline at (800) 762-8019. The hotline has the ability to connect voters with disabilities with TTY (Text Telephone). ★



Accessing My Voter Portal (MVP)

Sacramento County Voter Registration and Elections Office News Release

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - My Voter Portal (MVP) is a dynamic online tool that allows voters to access their voter registration history, view ballot status and voting participation history. MVP also allows voters to view their County Voter Information Guide, access accessible election materials, find Vote Center and Official Ballot Drop Box locations nearby, and much more during an election! Voters can access the MVP site on any device that is able to connect to the internet.

Check it out at: <https://myvoterportal.saccounty.gov/LookupVoter>.

If you have questions or need help, contact VRE at (916) 875-6451, email voterinfo@saccounty.gov, or use the toll-free voter assistance hotline at (800) 762-8019. The hotline has the ability to connect voters with disabilities with TTY (Text Telephone). ★




June 2, 2026, Statewide Direct Primary Election

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• Ballots will begin to arrive the week of May 4

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You can find a full list of Official Ballot Drop Box and Vote Center locations in your County Voter Information Guide or online at www.elections.saccounty.gov



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Take Back Control of Your Money

What if I told you that everyday habits can drain your wealth? We worry about big financial mistakes, but maybe it's the little things that really hit home. We are always on the lookout for how we spend our hard-earned money. So I am always on the lookout for experts for some sage advice. **Monique Gagne** is one of those folks I had on my POPPTALK Radio Show. She is the founder of Love Money Academy and best-selling author of "Who Took My Money" and "Alex's Dream with Money." Her journey has been anything but ordinary. She has worked alongside world renowned leaders like Tony Robbins. Today, she is on a mission to transform how people relate to money, especially the next generation, by teaching that true wealth starts with clarity, purpose, and a healthy relationship with money. She wants to empower individuals to move from stress and confusion to freedom and fulfillment. She has developed the successful class... "The Power of Financial Happiness."

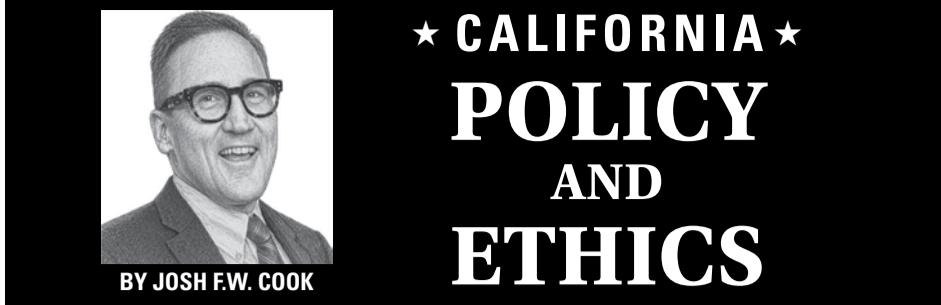
Monique has a core message. "You don't have to be bad to lose it. You just have to stop paying attention. Money doesn't vanish. It leaks through unnoticed habits and emotional patterns. Once you see the leaks, you can plug them, redirect your money toward your dreams, and grow wealthy with love."

But what about all that emotional drive to spend. She had some advice for that too. "Money is never just about math. It's about meaning." We were all taught emotional lessons about money growing up like fear, guilt, or scarcity. These beliefs shape our

adult choices. When you replace fear with Love Money, that's spending with purpose, saving with joy, and sharing with gratitude, you take back control. Here are her **7 Habits that Quietly Steal Your Wealth and How to Stop Them.**

- 1. EMOTIONAL SPENDING.** Buying to feel better instead of to live better. **Monique** told me that even though we know better, we still think we feel better.
- 2. SUBSCRIPTION CREEP.** The \$9.99 trap that quietly drains thousands. She told me we tend to forget about these subscriptions and not keep up with those few dollars that go out every month.
- 3. LIFESTYLE INFLATION.** Upgrading everything except your peace of mind. Prices going up and we need balance.
- 4. DISORGANIZED FINANCES.** What you don't track, you can't improve. We need to keep receipts.
- 5. DEBT "AS NORMAL."** Interest is the true cost of procrastination. **Monique** says debt taxes your future. Those minimum payments do add up if we don't pay attention.
- 6. NO CLEAR PLAN.** Without a purpose, money wanders away. Gotta' keep track of where those bucks are going, and a plan can give you a target.
- 7. NEGLECTING FUTURE YOU.** How many times have you put off looking to the future. I think we all have at one time or another.

Final thought from Monique Gagne. "Once you heal your relationship with money, your wealth begins to grow naturally, and not just in your bank, but in your heart, your health, and your time." ★



Commentary on Today's Political News

14 years later, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger is back. Just as he said he would be.

He was famous for his movie quote, "I'll be back."

Well, he's back. Former Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger & Lt. Gov Abel Maldonado played a central role in advancing California Proposition 14 in 2010. As governor at the time, he strongly supported the shift to a "top-two" open primary system as part of his broader push for political reform in California.

Schwarzenegger argued that allowing all voters to participate in a single primary would reduce partisan gridlock, empower independent voters, and encourage more moderate candidates. Since 2010, all candidates, regardless of party affiliation, can move on to the November General Election ballot if they make the "top two", and voters may vote for any candidate without party restrictions.

Pre-2010, each Party got its top dog into the final fight, and only party members could vote in their Primary Election. It was meant to weaken the political parties, and it has.

Last week, the two leading Republicans, Steve Hilton and Sheriff Chad Bianco, and four Democrats, U.S. Rep. Katie Porter, billionaire Tom Steyer, San Jose

Mayor Matt Mahan, and former Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra, did the traditional televised candidate debate. What the six candidates had to say on issues was not really the topic that got the most attention.

What dominated the messaging of the day was the fact that if all of the Democratic candidates stay in the race (they only let the top four on stage) and split up the vote, there's a 50/50 chance that the two Republican candidates would garner the top two spots, creating a situation in which the incredibly democratic state of California would end up electing a Republican governor in 2026.

If the two Republicans split the 30% of CA Republicans expected to vote 15 and 15, they could well get there. This is not some sort of political fantasy; it is a real possibility.

The Chairman of the Democratic Party, Rusty Hicks, holds a weekly press conference, releasing polling results, explaining the problem, and trying to get the candidates to understand that if some of them don't drop out, none of them will get a chance to move forward.

So far, only one, former State Controller Betty Yee, has done the "right thing" for the party. So maybe, like the time-traveling half robot Schwarzenegger played in the movies, he will finally "blow up all the boxes" 14 years after the fact, which was his most famous quote outside of his time in Hollywood. ★

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Instead of Raising Taxes, California Leaders Should Address Rampant Waste and Fraud



Josh Hoover
By Assemblyman Josh Hoover

I recently joined a number of my colleagues in calling for a special legislative session dedicated to addressing the rampant waste, fraud and abuse of taxpayer resources that has become all too common in our state government. California families are struggling with the

nation's highest cost of living, crushing housing prices and exorbitant taxes. They deserve to know that their hard-earned dollars are being spent responsibly and effectively. Unfortunately, too often that is not the case.

The examples of mismanagement are staggering. Our state has spent \$37 billion on homelessness programs, yet the homeless population has increased by 36,000 individuals statewide since the spending began in 2019. During the pandemic, \$32 billion in unemployment insurance benefits were lost to fraud, including checks sent directly to inmates in California prisons. Taxpayers have shelled out \$1.1 billion

for a new building for politicians, the Capitol Annex Project, even as project leaders sign non-disclosure agreements and refuse to share basic cost data with the public. And \$450 million has been poured into a "Next Generation" 911 system that state bureaucrats now admit may never even turn on.

Rather than addressing these failures, the legislative Supermajority has moved in the opposite direction by reducing transparency and accountability. Bills like AB 1608 would halt the release of documents related to California's troubled High-Speed Rail project. AB 1821 would make it more expensive for citizens to file Public Records Act requests.

Finally, AB 2624 would effectively criminalize investigative journalism by imposing fines on independent reporters who expose certain types of government fraud.

To make matters worse, after auditors uncovered \$267 million in Medi-Cal fraud involving fake hospice facilities billing the state, the Supermajority's response has been to propose yet another tax increase on corporations to cover rising health-care costs. This approach is tone deaf. The issue isn't a lack of revenue, it's a lack of willingness to respect taxpayers and root out waste, fraud, and abuse. Instead, they would rather increase costs on businesses that will ultimately be paid by consumers and California

families.

We must demand better. A special session focused on waste, fraud, and abuse would allow for thorough investigations, public hearings, and concrete reforms. Californians have a right to transparency in how their money is spent. We should be strengthening public records laws, not weakening them. We should be protecting whistleblowers and journalists who expose wrongdoing, not punishing them.

The people of California work hard and already pay some of the highest taxes in the nation. It is our duty as leaders to ensure every dollar is accounted for and deliver results. Until we address the systemic

waste and fraud plaguing state government, we have no business asking taxpayers for more. Instead, Sacramento politicians should get serious about getting their own house in order.

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



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