

LOCAL NEWS • News

## New juvenile justice center in San Bernardino aims to break cycle of recidivism



An 11,375-square-foot facility will serve 400 to 900 families per year as part of the Juvenile Justice Program in San Bernardino County after celebrating its grand opening Thursday, June 3, 2021, in San Bernardino, California. (Photo courtesy of San Bernardino County)

By **RYAN HAGEN** | rhagen@scng.com | The Sun

PUBLISHED: June 3, 2021 at 6:23 p.m. | UPDATED: June 3, 2021 at 6:24 p.m.

Families of 400 to 900 juveniles per year will soon get counseling and supportive services designed to break the cycle of recidivism in an 11,375-square-foot facility that celebrated its grand opening in San Bernardino Thursday, June 3.

Many times, multiple generations of the same family will run into trouble with the law, and the facility aims to give young people and their families the tools to stop that, said Curt Hagman, chairman of the county Board of Supervisors.

"The grandparents of these kids were seen by probation," Hagman said by phone. "So it's trying to get them straightened out and not lead to recidivism, not just for them but their immediate families. ... If we can help get people on the straight and narrow, it's less victims in our community and more productive residents."

Counseling is part of the comprehensive care that will be provided by the center when it opens to patients later this month, according to a news release.



The office, part of the Juvenile Justice Program run by San Bernardino County's Department of Behavioral Health, is on Gilbert Street. The location — near the San Bernardino Children's Assessment Center, Juvenile Court, Probation Office, and several schools — will help staff members conduct community outreach and serve those who need it, the news release states.

It's also in one of 57 Qualified Opportunity Zone tracts in the country, a designation meaning the area has been rated as among the most economically distressed.

The conditions in the area mean it has among the lowest opportunities for children, explaining their need for this type of intervention — and making the area itself eligible for extra help.

Under legislation sponsored by Sen. Tim Scott, R-South Carolina, and Sen. Corey Booker, D-New Jersey, businesses who invest in Qualified Opportunity Zones receive tax benefits — which in this case went to RevOZ Capital, which partnered with the county to build the facility.

That's an example of the success the zones can bring, said Scott, who attended and spoke at the event Thursday.

"Already millions of Americans have seen and benefited from the incredible potential of Opportunity Zones across the nation," Scott said in a news release. "I am amazed by the great work being done here at the San Bernardino Medical Center and look forward to hearing the success stories that come from their efforts."

The facility will serve families in and out of custody or who have a mental illness.

The project was highlighted as a national best practice in a May 2020 report by the White House Opportunity and Revitalization Council, which included several case studies of Opportunity Zone investments across the country.

San Bernardino County selected California-based developer Sudweeks Development and Investment Co. in 2018 to finance and build a new government office building and pre-leased the building for 15 years, a release states. But no one was willing to invest in the highly distressed community, county officials said.

That changed with the involvement of RezOZ Capital, which specializes in Opportunity Zones. RezOz made a 10-year investment to support the construction of the San Bernardino Medical Center.

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## Ryan Hagen | Reporter

Ryan Hagen covers San Bernardino County and politics for the Southern California News Group. Since he began covering Inland Empire governments in 2010, he's written about a city entering bankruptcy and exiting bankruptcy; politicians being elected, recalled and arrested; crime; a terrorist attack; fires; ICE; fights to end homelessness; fights over the location of speed bumps; and people's best and worst moments. A graduate of Pepperdine University, he teaches journalism classes at Cal State San Bernardino. His greatest accomplishment is breaking a coffee addiction. His greatest regret is any moment without coffee.

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## Officials celebrate opening of new behavioral health facility serving juveniles in S.B. County

Jun 3, 2021



A new 11,375-square-foot facility will serve the Juvenile Justice Program (JJP) within San Bernardino County's Department of Behavioral Health.

Top local, state, and national leaders gathered in San Bernardino on June 3 to celebrate the grand opening of a new 11,375-square-foot facility serving the Juvenile Justice Program (JJP) within San Bernardino County's Department of Behavioral Health.

The facility will serve an estimated 400 to 900 families per year, advancing the JJP's mission to provide a comprehensive and effective continuum of adolescent behavioral health care for justice-involved youth, in or out of custody, who have mental illness, the county said in a news release.

“The Juvenile Justice Program reduces recidivism, promotes wellness and recovery, and enhances the quality of life in our county,” said Board of Supervisors Chairman Curt Hagman. “Also, this project was developed in a Qualified Opportunity Zone, which benefits both the public and private sectors and creates vital community benefit. The value of bringing new investment to underserved communities underscores the importance of this program.”

“This new space will serve as a key resource for many deserving individuals and families in the region. It will be instrumental in giving youth and their families hope for a better future by promoting wellness and resiliency,” said Board of Supervisors Vice Chair Dawn Rowe.

The new office space will be located proximate to the San Bernardino Children’s Assessment Center, Juvenile Court, Probation Office, and several schools. This new location will help facilitate collaboration as JJP staff members conduct community outreach and serve justice involved youth and their families.

“The critical need for outpatient behavioral health services has never been greater, especially when we are addressing restorative justice for youth living in this community. This is a great day for our youth, for equity and for our San Bernardino County at large,” said Dr. Veronica Kelley, the director of the Department of Behavioral Health.

The facility is located in a Qualified Opportunity Zone (QOZ) census tract – one of 57 Opportunity Zone tracts in the County -- a designation created in 2017 via bipartisan legislation co-sponsored by U.S. Senator Tim Scott (R-SC) and U.S. Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ). Under the initiative, investors who make long-term investments in QOZ communities are eligible for a series of tax benefits.

The neighborhood is amongst the most distressed in the nation, scoring a 92.2 out of 100 on the Economic Innovation Group’s Distressed Communities Index. Further, its youngest residents are disconnected from vital services and are not well-positioned to reach their full potential. The Child Opportunity Index finds that neighborhood conditions scored very low for the census tract, suppressing the potential for local children and young adults to achieve upward mobility.

“Already millions of Americans have seen and benefited from the incredible potential of Opportunity Zones across the nation,” said Scott, who attended and spoke at the event. “I am amazed by the great work being done here at the San Bernardino Medical Center and look forward

to hearing the success stories that come from their efforts.”

The project was highlighted as a national best practice in a May 2020 report by the White House Opportunity and Revitalization Council, which included several case studies of Opportunity Zone investments across the country.

“Today is another sign of the growing promise of San Bernardino,” said San Bernardino Mayor John Valdivia. “First and foremost, this new facility will help us better meet the needs of youth and families in our community. More broadly, the 500+ jobs created by the project and millions in new private investment generated are proof positive that San Bernardino is open for business and poised for growth.”

County staff anticipate completing final preparatory activities in the coming days and open the facility to patients later this month. For more information on the DBH Juvenile Justice Program, visit [www.sbcounty.gov/dbh](http://www.sbcounty.gov/dbh).

[https://www.fontanaheraldnews.com/news/san-bernardino-county-officials-announce-new-outreach-campaign-to-encourage-vaccinations/article\\_4ad3269a-c4a6-11eb-804b-7731131977c3.html](https://www.fontanaheraldnews.com/news/san-bernardino-county-officials-announce-new-outreach-campaign-to-encourage-vaccinations/article_4ad3269a-c4a6-11eb-804b-7731131977c3.html)

## San Bernardino County officials announce new outreach campaign to encourage vaccinations

Jun 3, 2021



To encourage people to get vaccinated for COVID-19, San Bernardino County has introduced a new outreach campaign largely focusing on residents in traditionally underserved communities.

To encourage people to get vaccinated for COVID-19, San Bernardino County has introduced a new outreach campaign largely focusing on residents in traditionally underserved communities.

The campaign, dubbed “Operation Sneakers and Vaccine Speakers,” will highlight conveniently located, neighborhood-based vaccination sites within those communities while providing additional information about the county’s vaccination program.

The campaign will also help promote the state’s new \$116.5 million, multi-faceted vaccine-incentive effort to motivate Californians to get vaccinated before the state’s reopening on June 15.

“We want to make sure people understand that getting vaccinated is both easy and convenient,” said Board of Supervisors Chairman Curt Hagman. “Residents will learn that vaccination sites are now located literally just down the street, in their neighborhood. We’ll even provide transportation to those who need it. Plus, the shots are absolutely free and there is no requirement for insurance coverage.”

Each vaccination site will be staffed by public health professionals and others well-versed in the issues surrounding COVID-19 and the vaccines. Spanish-speaking representatives will be on hand to support communications with non-English speaking residents, and no reservation is required.

“This is a real ‘boots-on-the-ground’ campaign to remind people that getting protected against COVID-19 is an easy, straightforward process,” said Hagman. “Our goal is simply to inform people about the availability and accessibility of vaccines. We are doing everything we can to remove any obstacles that might discourage residents from getting vaccinated.”

The county has already begun printing a variety of informational materials (flyers, door hangers, posters, etc.) to support the campaign. Staff training, which will focus on customer service, safety, logistics and appropriate messaging, will begin June 4. The campaign itself will launch on June 7 and run for about 10 days.

----- ALL 14 of the county-operated vaccination sites, including the Jessie Turner Center at 15556 Summit Avenue in Fontana, operate Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. All sites are offering the Pfizer vaccine and both appointments and walk-ups are accepted.

Some of the county’s sites include:

- Bloomington, Ayala Park Community Center (18313 Valley Boulevard)
- Ontario, Ontario Convention Center (2000 E. Convention Center Way)
- Rancho Cucamonga, Inland Empire Health Plan (10801 6th Street)
- Rancho Cucamonga, Rancho Cucamonga Sports Complex (8303 Rochester Avenue)
- Rialto, Grace Vargas Senior Center (1411 S. Riverside Avenue)
- San Bernardino, National Orange Show Event Center (689 South E Street)
- San Bernardino, Arroyo Valley High School (1881 West Baseline Street)

People who walk-up to a vaccination site should be prepared to register in person, which will include answering health-screening questions. Appointments can be made for all sites at [sbccovid19.com/vaccine](https://sbccovid19.com/vaccine).

[https://www.fontanaheraldnews.com/news/covid-19-vaccinations-will-be-available-at-fontana-metrolink-station-june-8-12/article\\_020565be-c4a5-11eb-817c-c308614d86da.html](https://www.fontanaheraldnews.com/news/covid-19-vaccinations-will-be-available-at-fontana-metrolink-station-june-8-12/article_020565be-c4a5-11eb-817c-c308614d86da.html)

## COVID-19 vaccinations will be available at Fontana Metrolink Station June 8-12

Jun 3, 2021



COVID-19 vaccinations will be available at the Fontana Metrolink Station during the week of June 8-12.

Many San Bernardino County residents want to get vaccinated, but haven't done so yet because they can't make time in their busy schedules to find and visit a vaccination clinic, health officials said.

Metrolink is addressing that need by partnering with public health professionals to provide Pfizer COVID-19 vaccinations at Metrolink stations from Montclair through San Bernardino.



The first transit station vaccination sites will operate next week from Tuesday, June 8 through Saturday, June 12 from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the Fontana, Montclair, and Upland Metrolink sites.

“This is a great opportunity for busy commuters and anyone who lives near these stations to protect themselves and those they care about from COVID-19,” said Board of Supervisors Chairman Curt Hagman.

Two hundred doses of the Pfizer vaccine will be available at each site each day. The sites will operate again on June 29 through July 3 to administer.

The program will be extended to the Rialto, Downtown San Bernardino, and San Bernardino Santa Fe Depot stations from June 15 through June 19 and again from July 6 through July 10.

The Fontana station is located at 16777 Orange Way. The Montclair station is at 5091 Richton Street, and the Upland station is at 300 East A Street.

[https://www.redlandscommunitynews.com/news/public\\_safety/county-expected-to-reach-reopening-before-yellow-tier/article\\_144d26b8-c490-11eb-b9c2-d31eb66dd33c.html](https://www.redlandscommunitynews.com/news/public_safety/county-expected-to-reach-reopening-before-yellow-tier/article_144d26b8-c490-11eb-b9c2-d31eb66dd33c.html)

EDITOR'S PICK

## County expected to reach reopening before Yellow Tier

By DINA COLUNGA Reporter Redlands Community News  
Jun 3, 2021

With the June 15 reopening, California will clear all industry and business sectors listed in the current Blueprint Activities and Business Tiers Chart to return to usual operations with no capacity limits or physical distancing requirements, with limited exceptions for mega events.

“This is a big step toward returning life to normal after what was 15 months of state restrictions,” said Board of Supervisors Chairman Curt Hagman. “Our county’s businesses and residents deserve all of the credit for getting us here. Their sacrifices and the safety measures they took have brought us close to defeating COVID-19.”

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The state defines mega events as planned public or social occasions that include over 5,000 participants or spectators indoors and over 10,000 outdoors. Examples include conventions, shows, nightclubs, concerts, sporting events, theme parks, fairs, festivals, large races and parades. Verification of full vaccination or a negative test result is required for indoor mega events and recommended for outdoor mega events.

Verification can take the form of written or verbal self-attestation. A person making reservations or purchasing tickets for a large group can attest on behalf of the entire group. There are no restrictions on the capacity for mega events or social-distancing requirements. Current state guidance on masks will apply.

As of Tuesday, June 1, San Bernardino County recorded 298,289 total cases, up 601 from last week’s 297,688. The county recorded 292,777 recoveries, up 555 from last week’s 292,222. A total of 4,555 deaths have been recorded, up 10 from last week’s 4,545. The case fatality rate remains at 1.5%.

The county is meeting two of the three criteria to move into the Yellow Tier. As of June 1, the positivity rate is 1.3%, and the positivity rate in socioeconomically disadvantaged neighborhoods is 1.2%. The two categories are within the Yellow Tier’s threshold of below 2%. However, the county’s daily new case rate per 100,000 residents is still within the Orange Tier at 2.2 cases.

Last week it was 2.5 cases. The case rate needs to drop to below two cases for the county to move into the Yellow Tier. However, California is reopening its economy on June 15, which ends the tiered-color system.

The 67 hospital patients are down four from the previous week's 71. The patients are utilizing 2.6% of the beds, down slightly from the previous week's 3%. The county recorded 16 positive ICU patients, down three from the previous week. COVID-19 patients are occupying 3.6% of these beds. ICU availability dipped from 43.8% to 41%.

Redlands recorded 8,852 total cases, two more cases than the previous week's 8,850. Redlands' total death count rose from 217 to 218. During the week of May 9, the city had 14 new cases and a test positivity rate of 0.8%. The previous week, the city had two new cases and a test positivity rate of 0.7%.

During the week of May 9, Redlands Unified recorded 5.2 daily new cases per 100,000 residents within the district. The district remains in the Orange Tier.

According to John Hopkins University, San Bernardino County remains eighth in total COVID-19 cases out of the country's 3,143 counties.

Riverside County remains seventh with 300,701 cases. Los Angeles County has the most with over 1 million cases.

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James Folmer

editor

LOCAL NEWS • News

# San Bernardino County coronavirus hospitalizations drop below 60

By **DAVID DOWNEY** | [ddowney@scng.com](mailto:ddowney@scng.com) | The Press-Enterprise  
PUBLISHED: June 3, 2021 at 3:01 p.m. | UPDATED: June 3, 2021 at 3:02 p.m.

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For two days in a row, there were fewer than 60 people hospitalized with confirmed [coronavirus](#) cases in San Bernardino County.

State data show 57 people with COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus, were being treated in area hospitals Wednesday, June 2, the most recent day for which statistics were available. That's the lowest total in more than 14 months.

Only on the first day of recordkeeping — March 29, 2020 — were there fewer hospital patients with confirmed COVID-19 cases. And on that day more than 120 other patients were suspected of having the virus.

By comparison, confirmed coronavirus hospitalizations in San Bernardino County peaked at 1,785 in early January, at the height of the holiday-season spike.



This week's encouraging trend comes as the number of [fully vaccinated San Bernardino County residents](#) approaches 700,000.

Here are the latest numbers as of Thursday, June 3, according to county and state public health officials.

## San Bernardino County

**Confirmed cases:** 298,599 total, up 54 from Tuesday, June 1, averaging 74 reported per day in the past week

**Deaths:** 4,560 total, no change from Tuesday, averaging one reported per day in the past week

**Hospital survey:** 57 confirmed and 15 suspected patients hospitalized Wednesday, including 17 confirmed and two suspected patients in the ICU, with 25 of 25 facilities reporting. The number of confirmed patients is down 15% from a week earlier.

**Tests:** 3,268,180 total, up 2,541 from Tuesday, averaging 5,064 reported per day in the past week

**Resolved cases (estimate):** 293,158 total, up 32 from Tuesday, averaging 78 per day in the past week

**Vaccinations:** San Bernardino County residents have received 1,512,679 doses, with 168,752 people partially vaccinated and another 694,490 fully vaccinated, as of Wednesday. The number of residents who have received at least one dose is up 20,140 in the past week.

**Reopening plan tier:** Orange (moderate risk level; some indoor business operations are open with modifications) based on these metrics as of Tuesday:

- New cases per day per 100,000 residents: 2.0
- Case rate adjusted for testing volume: 2.0
- Test positivity rate: 1.2% (1.1% in socioeconomically disadvantaged neighborhoods)
- What's next: To advance to the yellow tier where more businesses can open or expand capacity, the county would need an adjusted case rate below 2.0 and a positivity rate below 2.0% for the whole county and 2.2% in disadvantaged neighborhoods for two consecutive weeks, and to have been in the orange tier for three weeks. San Bernardino County moved to the orange tier April 6. If metrics get worse, the county could move back into the more restrictive red tier.



For information on cases, deaths and vaccinations by community in San Bernardino County, click [here](#).

Here is a look at how the county's numbers have changed each day:

*Staff writer Nikie Johnson contributed to this report.*

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## David Downey | Reporter

Dave is a general assignment reporter based in Riverside, writing about a wide variety of topics ranging from drones and El Nino to trains and wildfires. He has worked for five newspapers in four states: Wyoming, Colorado, Arizona and California. He earned a bachelor's degree in journalism from Colorado State University in 1981. Loves hiking, tennis, baseball, the beach, the Lakers and golden retrievers. He is from the Denver area.

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By the t.e.a.



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# L.A. County mass COVID-19 vaccination sites to be replaced by smaller ones this month



The mass vaccination site at the Forum in Inglewood will close this month amid a decline in demand for the COVID-19 vaccine. (Al Seib / Los Angeles Times)

By LEILA MILLER | STAFF WRITER

JUNE 3, 2021 8:16 PM PT



Amid a decline in demand for the COVID-19 vaccine, Los Angeles County will soon close four large-scale vaccination sites and replace them with smaller ones, officials said Thursday.

On Monday, the county will close the Cal State Northridge site. People who received their first dose there have appointments to get their second dose at the nearby Balboa Sports Complex.

The county will be offering free transportation services to residents who need a ride to the complex; to use the service, call the county Department of Public Health at (833) 540-0473.

The vaccination sites at the Forum in Inglewood, Pomona Fairplex and the L.A. County Office of Education will close after June 13.

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Starting June 15, officials said, residents can instead go to vaccination sites at Ted Watkins Memorial Park in South L.A., the Commerce Senior Citizens Center or the Norwalk Arts & Sports Complex.

State and local officials have recently begun [offering incentives](#) for people to receive vaccines.

Last week, state officials announced the opportunity for 10 residents who have received at least one dose to win \$1.5 million apiece, with the grand prize recipients chosen June 15. Those who have previously received their shots will be entered into the drawings automatically, and there is no need to register, according to state officials.

L.A. County officials have also announced incentives for those who are vaccinated at county-run sites and other sites participating in a sweepstakes program.

Starting Friday and until June 10, everyone 18 and older who receives their first vaccine or who brings a first-time vaccine recipient with them to their second dose appointment is eligible to win a pair of tickets to the L.A. Football Club soccer team or the L.A. Dodgers, health officials said.





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CALIFORNIA

# California moving toward workplaces without masks: What you need to know



Bill Mitchell, right, takes a selfie with friends Ron and Malta Taso on a visit to the Getty Center last month. (Genaro Molina / Los Angeles Times)

By LUKE MONEY, RONG-GONG LIN II

JUNE 4, 2021 8:54 AM PT



California took [a major step this week](#) to define what COVID-19 workplace safety rules will look like as the pandemic continues to fade.

A state safety board on Thursday recommended relaxing workplace safety rules for people vaccinated against COVID-19 — meaning that, on June 15, employees will probably be able to take off their masks in a room if everyone there is vaccinated.

Here are the details:

## What would change?

The [rules](#) proposed by the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health, or Cal/OSHA, would allow workers in a room to take off their masks if every person there does not have COVID-19 symptoms and is fully vaccinated, meaning they're at least two weeks removed from their last dose.

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Masks would still be required if anyone in the room is not fully vaccinated.

CALIFORNIA

## California panel recommends ending mask rules for workers if every person in the room is vaccinated

June 4, 2021

Workplaces would need to have workers' vaccine records on file to comply with Cal/OSHA regulations.

But workers in retail stores and restaurants, as well as others who interact with members of the public, will still need to mask up. Workers in some other settings, such as hospitals, will not be affected by the rule change.

The proposal also calls for ending the requirement that workers be physically distant from other people starting July 31. Until then, employees in indoor settings or outdoor events of 10,000 or more people will need to continue physical-distancing practices or be offered respirators — like N-95 masks — that filter out fine particles in the air.

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CALIFORNIA

**Freedom from masks is coming for the vaccinated. Will it push skeptics to get their shots?**

June 3, 2021

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## What are the details?

State officials issued the following guidance following Thursday's vote:

- **Masks:** As mentioned earlier, fully vaccinated and symptom-free workers do not need to wear face coverings in a room unless someone there is either symptomatic or not inoculated. Additionally, both fully vaccinated and unvaccinated workers without symptoms do not need to don masks outdoors except when staffing “outdoor mega events” — those where more than 10,000 attendees are present, such as at an events or theme parks. All workers, regardless of their inoculation status, will still need to wear face coverings indoors.
- **Distancing:** Under the revised standards, employers can scrap physical distancing requirements and partitions/barriers for employees working indoors and at outdoor mega events if they provide respirators, such as N-95s, to unvaccinated employees for voluntary use. After July 31, physical distancing and barriers will no longer be required, unless there's an outbreak, but employers will have to provide all unvaccinated employees with N-95s for voluntary use.
- **Exclusion:** Workers who are fully vaccinated and symptom-free no longer need to be excluded from the workplace after coming into contact with some with COVID-19.

- **Protections:** Special prevention measures no longer apply to employer-provided housing and transportation if all occupants or riders are fully vaccinated.

Employers will also still need to keep a written COVID-19 prevention program, though with some changes:

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- Employers must review California Department of Public Health [guidance](#) related to indoor ventilation, filtration and air quality.
- Training must now also include information on how COVID-19 vaccines are effective at preventing transmission, illness and death.

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CALIFORNIA

**L.A. County mass COVID-19 vaccination sites to be replaced by smaller ones this month**

June 3, 2021

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## What happens next?

The proposed new standards are still subject to review by the state Office of Administrative Law. Should that office sign off, the rules are expected to go into effect by June 15 — the same day California is set to [fully reopen its economy](#).

**BUSINESS** • News

# Mask or no mask at work? California regulators pass controversial COVID rules

More than 100 people call in to hours-long meeting

By **MARISA KENDALL** | |

PUBLISHED: June 3, 2021 at 5:04 p.m. | UPDATED: June 4, 2021 at 6:52 a.m.

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Californians will have to remain masked at work possibly through early next year — at least if they have unvaccinated colleagues, state regulators decided Thursday during a marathon meeting that elicited hours of heated debate.

The [new rules](#) require employees, even those who have been vaccinated, to continue wearing masks indoors if they are around other workers who have not received the COVID-19 vaccine. If everyone is vaccinated, the masks can come off. The mandate drew ire from employers worried about having to police their workers' vaccination status and from employees sick of wearing masks — even as other workers applauded the rules or said they don't go far enough to protect their safety.

The new rules add another layer of complexity to the state's pandemic recovery as COVID-19 cases decline, vaccination rates increase and society continues to reopen. They force employers to pry into who has gotten a shot and who has not, yet leave unclear how employers should verify their workers' vaccination status.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention last month declared it safe for fully vaccinated people to resume most activities, including eating indoors and gathering with friends, without wearing masks or social distancing. Gov. Gavin Newsom plans to fully reopen the state and [drop most mask mandates June 15](#). But the state's Division of Occupational Safety and Health, known as Cal/OSHA, isn't ready to follow suit.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on workers, causing death, serious illness and in many cases, long term chronic illness,” said Cal/OSHA deputy chief Eric Berg, adding that while the situation has improved thanks to vaccines, it's not yet safe to retire face masks, social distancing and other safety measures. “We cannot rely on vaccines alone to stop transmission of COVID-19 in the workplace,” he said.

The agency's standards board initially voted Thursday to reject the new rules, citing confusion and complaints about the proposal. But after deciding the imperfect new rules are better than the current ones — which require all employees to wear masks even if everyone is vaccinated — the board passed the proposed rules in a second vote.

The new rules will go into effect June 15 and last until early next year, though the agency has the option to revise or repeal them sooner. The board also created a subcommittee to continue working on COVID-19 workplace rules.

“This could be better and it needs to be better,” said board Chair David Thomas. “But in the meantime, this will help.”

Newsom's office weighed in on the board's decision late Thursday night.

“The Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board is independent,” a spokeswoman for the governor's office wrote in an emailed statement. “We appreciate the Board's actions to maintain worker safety and are hopeful the Board will further revise its guidance to reflect the latest science while continuing to protect workers and balancing realistic and enforceable requirements for employers.”

About 100 people called into the virtual meeting Thursday, arguing for and against the workplace mask mandate and other safety rules. Employer groups squared off against worker representatives, while some callers questioned the science behind face masks, called the mask mandate “tyrannical” and said the rules would further divide the state. Others worried the rules would single out unvaccinated workers and lead to workplace hostility and discrimination.

Many callers urged Cal/OSHA to clarify how employers are supposed to verify their workers' vaccination status. For example, what happens if an employee loses his or her vaccination card?

Starting this week, Santa Clara County requires all employers to record the vaccination status of their workers or pay fines of up to \$5,000 per violation per day. Employers don't have to report this data to the county, so officials could not say how many businesses have complied so far. People can report violations at [sccovidconcerns.org](https://www.sccovidconcerns.org), and the county will follow up, a county representative wrote in an email.



The board [first considered](#) the workplace rules last month but postponed its vote to give regulators time to consider the latest CDC guidelines.

Cal/OSHA made changes that “consider the latest scientific evidence,” Berg said. But workplaces present unique risk factors, as workers spend long periods of time together, potentially allowing for prolonged exposure to COVID-19, Berg said.

Gina Ma, who works in a biotech lab in San Diego, on Thursday urged Cal/OSHA to follow federal guidelines and toss the workplace mask rules.

“I am tired. I am tired of rebreathing my own CO2 for eight or more hours a day,” said Ma, who is vaccinated. “I am tired of hearing, ‘Wear a mask, save lives.’ I am tired of hearing about all of the great things I can do if I’m vaccinated but only if I don’t live in the great state of California.”

Katie Hansen, senior legislative director for the California Restaurant Association, pointed out the irony that restaurant workers would have to wear a mask all day at work but after their shift they could return to the same restaurant, maskless, and order dinner.

But vaccination rates vary widely across the state, as do employers’ willingness to keep their workers safe from COVID-19, said David Barber, deputy chief counsel at the California School Employees Association. That’s why it’s crucial to continue enforcing masking rules in the workplace, he said.

“The pandemic is not over, and a deadly, highly transmissible virus is still spreading in our communities,” Barber said.

Vaccinated workers will be allowed to take off their masks outside, while unvaccinated workers must keep them on if they can’t socially distance. And after July 31, employers are required to offer unvaccinated employees N95 masks or similar respirators.

“We’re in this niche right now where we feel really good about where we’re at, but we’re not done,” Thomas said. “And I don’t want to get overconfident. And I think this is a measured step in the right direction.”

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**Marisa Kendall**

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CORONAVIRUS

## Masks still needed? What new COVID workplace rules mean for California workers

BY JEONG PARK

JUNE 03, 2021 07:37 PM, UPDATED JUNE 03, 2021 07:53 PM



Almost two dozen gathered for a remembrance for workers who died from COVID-19 in 2020 during an event on Worker's Memorial Day, held on the old Kings County Courthouse steps Wednesday evening, April 28, 2021 in Hanford. BY [ERIC PAUL ZAMORA](#) ✉



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A California state board on Thursday narrowly rejected, then ultimately approved a plan that eases the requirement for employees to wear masks and practice social distancing.

The vote came as board members said they were uncomfortable with moving forward with a plan that would have still required workers to wear masks indoors unless everyone else around them is fully vaccinated.

Some members wanted the rule to be closer to federal and state guidance, which allows (or will soon allow) fully vaccinated people to be unmasked even indoors.

#### TOP ARTICLES

However, the board reversed its vote after an hour of discussion, after realizing that rejecting the updated rule would mean the current regulation, which [requires masks to be worn at all times indoors, as well as outdoors if less than six feet away from others](#), would have stayed in effect.

The new rule goes into effect June 15 pending administrative approval. The standards board of the state's Division of Occupational Safety and Health, commonly called Cal-OSHA, voted to convene a subcommittee to immediately revisit the new rule, to see if it can more closely adhere to the federal and state guidance.

Unless wearing respirators such as N95 masks, workers will need to stay physically distanced until July 31 if they work indoors or in outdoor events with over 10,000 participants or spectators, according to the rule.

Employers will need to provide respirators such as N95 masks to be used voluntarily by workers who are not vaccinated and working indoors or at large outdoor events. Employers will need to provide testing for those not vaccinated at no cost during paid time if they have symptoms of COVID-19.

Employers will be required to pay workers who self-isolate because of their exposure to COVID-19 at workplaces. Fully vaccinated workers or workers who had recovered from COVID-19 within 90 days don't have to self-isolate as long as they don't have symptoms.

The requirement to provide N95 respirators drew protests from those in the business community. Rob Moutrie, a policy advocate at the California Chamber of Commerce, told the board members that the requirement will put all the burden on employers rather than providing incentives for workers to be vaccinated.

The mask and social distancing requirement will also confuse businesses given the CDC and state guidances, said Sarah Wiltfong, a policy manager for the Los Angeles County Business Federation.

"Employees and employers alike are looking forward to operating without burdensome and unnecessary regulations," Wiltfong said. "Cal-OSHA provided extra restrictions contrary to what the governor and the CDC are saying is not necessary, (bringing) confusion and causing businesses to be subject to the violations they were likely not made aware of."

But others, many from labor organizations, urged the board to adopt the rule as written. They said the rule is needed to provide protection for workers, especially with millions of Californians yet to be vaccinated.

"Workplaces are very fundamentally different place than somewhere you just go, a store you just go to," Mitch Steiger, a legislative advocate for the California Labor Federation, told the board. "When you are a worker, you have much less control over your own environment, that you're there for much longer during the day."

Eric Berg, deputy chief of Cal/OSHA, noted that [only 41% of Californians in the under-resourced neighborhoods are fully vaccinated](#), compared to 65% of residents in the neighborhoods with the most resources.

He also cited a recently published study from the University of North Carolina researchers that physical distancing and face masks [could prevent thousands of new infections](#).

Board members voting in favor of the rule said the pandemic is not yet over, with the state reporting hundreds of new cases a day. They also said the rule needed to be voted on soon so the current regulation, [which is much more restrictive](#), wouldn't be in place by June 15.

But those who opposed the rule said it needed to be better refined to prevent confusion for businesses.

"If there's great confusion, people will either not do anything, or they're going to do the wrong thing," said Chris Laszcz-Davis, a board member who represents employers.

Wendy Lazerson, a Bay Area-based lawyer co-chairing labor and employment practice at law firm Sidley Austin, said the rule can pose a number of complications

for workers and businesses alike.

“If there’s anyone unvaccinated in a room, everyone’s gotta wear a mask,” she said. “Everyone is impacted by someone who decided not to get a vaccine. That’s going to cause some unhappy people at work.”

Training people to properly wear N95 respirators could also be challenging, she said.

The board had first planned to vote on the rule on May 20. But it [postponed the decision to consider newly released federal and state guidance.](#)

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# Most California workers to stay masked under revised rules

By DON THOMPSON today





SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — California employees will soon be able to skip masks in the workplace, but only if every employee in the room is fully vaccinated against the coronavirus.

The revised rules adopted Thursday night by a sharply divided California Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board are expected to kick in June 15, the same day the state more broadly loosens masking and other requirements in social settings in keeping with recent federal recommendations.

Members made clear that the regulations are only a stopgap while they consider further easing pandemic rules in coming weeks or months.

The board initially rejected the revised masking rules for employees on a 4-to-3 vote. But members reconsidered when they realized that would leave workers with more restrictive current standards, which require masks for all employees, along with social distancing and partitions between employees in certain circumstances.

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They then unanimously adopted the revised rules to give a newly appointed three-member subcommittee time to consider more changes.

“We don’t want to leave the last one in place when this is better than that,” chairman David Thomas said.

The off-again, on-again decisions came after major business groups and dozens of individuals spent hours urging the board to further lift pandemic regulations.

“We have to create reasonable and enforceable standards,” said board member Nola Kennedy, an initial no vote. “I just don’t think this proposal is there yet.”

Kate Crawford also was initially opposed, saying the revision should more closely follow recent guidelines from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The guidance says fully vaccinated people can skip face coverings and distancing in nearly all situations. The state is set to follow that recommendation on June 15.

For some members who initially rejected the revision, the deal-killer was a requirement that employers stockpile N95 masks for workers who want them starting July 1.

They reflected criticism by numerous employer groups that said the requirement will be impractical, expensive and tie up millions of masks needed by health care workers.

“Logistically I’m just unclear how a business determines how many, how much,” said Chris Laszcz-Davis, a management representative on the board who initially voted to reject the revised regulations. “I’m not sure how much we’re buying by recommending N95s. Why not a surgical mask?”

But the initial rejection was not a clear split between labor and management representatives on the board, which also includes public members and safety experts.

The board plans to regroup at its June 17 meeting, but further revising the rules will be a lengthier process. The newly-appointed three-member subcommittee will try to craft acceptable revisions that then must be drafted by Cal/OSHA employees before a public review.

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Without a further revision, the revised rules could remain in place into early next year even though California coronavirus cases have fallen dramatically after a severe winter spike and as more people get vaccinated.

The workplace rules contrast with the state's plan to fully reopen in less than two weeks and do away with virtually all mask and distancing requirements for vaccinated people.

Some opponents suggested that Gov. Gavin Newsom could use his emergency powers to further lift restrictions in the meantime.

More than three-dozen agribusiness opponents said in a letter before the vote that the revised rules would put Newsom "in the awkward position of needing to issue an executive order to correct recent actions taken by a Newsom Administration state agency."

Other critics said lawsuits are certain to challenge the regulations.

Newsom, a Democrat, faces a likely recall election this fall largely driven by frustration over restrictions he ordered during the pandemic. He has made the state's general June 15 reopening a cornerstone of his response.

He was noncommittal before the vote but noted that Cal/OSHA must apply its rules to a wide variety of businesses, including places like meatpacking facilities that were hit especially hard by the virus.

The Cal/OSHA regulations apply in almost every workplace in the state, including workers in offices, factories and retail. Its pandemic rules apply to all employees except those working from home or where a single employee does not have contact with others.

"Cal/OSHA is out of step with the rest of the country," Andrew Sommer said on behalf of the California Employers COVID-19 Prevention Coalition before the vote.

The workplace rules set up "an inconsistent standard" between the public and employees of private and government workplaces, the California Chamber of Commerce and more than five dozen other business organizations said in a letter to the board.

For instance, servers will have to remain masked while working but could go unmasked if they dine at the same location during their off hours, said Katie Hansen, senior legislative director for the California Restaurant Association.

Safety board staff member Eric Berg said the revised rules recognize key differences between employees and the public at large, including that employees have "longer cumulative exposures" in the workplace than with casual social contact.

The revised rules were supported by worker advocates and unions including those representing teamsters, machinists, utility workers, engineers, nurses and other health care workers, and school employees.

"The workplace is not the same as deciding to go to a dinner party or the gym or go to a movie," said Maggie Robbins, occupational health specialist with Worksafe Inc., an Oakland-based worker advocacy group. "There's a lot of work to be done before we have a substantially immune population where we can relax more of the controls."

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Associated Press writer Olga R. Rodriguez contributed from San Francisco.

**BUSINESS** • Analysis, Explainer, News

## COVID-19 curbed foreign investment in Southern California in 2020



California suffered a significant loss of foreign-owned businesses and jobs last year amid the COVID-19 pandemic and state will need to boost its marketing efforts to get them back, according to a new report. (Stan Lim, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin/SCNG)

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By **KEVIN SMITH** | [kvsmith@scng.com](mailto:kvsmith@scng.com) | San Gabriel Valley Tribune

PUBLISHED: June 3, 2021 at 2:59 p.m. | UPDATED: June 3, 2021 at 4:25 p.m.

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California suffered a notable loss of foreign-owned businesses and jobs last year amid the COVID-19 pandemic, and the state will need to boost its marketing efforts to get them back, a new report says.





The study from [World Trade Center Los Angeles](#) and the [Los Angeles County Economic Development Corp.](#) shows California lost 267 foreign-owned enterprises in 2020, leaving the state with 18,451.

Those foreign-owned companies employed 703,187 workers last year, a decline of 27,461 from 2019 as a result of business closures and layoffs. That generated \$1.6 billion less in annual wages.

World Trade Center President Stephen Cheung attributes the downturn to two primary factors:

“Many of these businesses didn’t qualify for Paycheck Protection Program loans because their international headquarters aren’t here,” said Cheung, who is also the LAEDC’s chief operating officer. “They also needed to have their executives on hand to run the operations, but many couldn’t get the visas to be here.”



A total of 703,187 workers were employed by foreign-owned companies in California last year, a decline of 27,461 from 2019 as a result of business closures and layoffs. (Photo by Hans Gutknecht, Los Angeles Daily News/SCNG)

The report’s initial employment figures are based on Dun & Bradstreet data, which classify a foreign-direct investment as a 51% or greater stake in a U.S. business.

Additional data from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, which lowers the equity stake to 10%, show California is still outpacing Texas and New York, its closest competitors.

By that standard, the most current figures show California had 845,400 jobs related to foreign-owned businesses in 2018, compared with Texas, which had 666,100, and New York with 519,800.



## Southern California leads the state

The report breaks the Golden State into three regions — Southern California, the Bay Area and Greater California, which takes in the rest of the state.

Southern California led the way in 2020 with 11,154 foreign-owned firms employing 444,217 workers. The Bay Area ranked second with 5,873 businesses and 220,584 employees, followed by Greater California (1,424 firms and 38,386 employees).

Japan retained its position as the biggest source of foreign investment in Southern California last year, with 2,446 businesses that employed nearly 81,500 California residents while contributing more than \$7.4 billion in wages.

The United Kingdom, France, Canada and Germany rounded out the top five foreign-owned employers, collectively employing another 184,868 workers.

## The biggest industries

Southern California's largest share of foreign investment-related jobs in 2020 was found in manufacturing (146,069), followed by professional business services (63,512), wholesale trade (58,334), financial services (38,255) and the information industry (22,542), which includes computer programmers, web developers, systems analysts and IT technicians, among other jobs.

The construction industry ranked second to last with just 5,573 jobs.

With hundreds of thousands of people still unemployed in the region, job creation from foreign-owned businesses is one of the region's biggest tools for recovery, the report said, adding that wages for those jobs average 5% to 25% higher because the positions are often specialized.

But California's high cost of living and its climate of high taxes and strict environmental mandates have driven some big players out of state.

Cheung said Toyota's departure should be a warning. In 2014, the automaker announced it would be moving its U.S. marketing headquarters from Torrance to Plano, Texas. By the time that process was completed in 2017, it eliminated 3,000 local jobs that had been housed on a campus near the junction of the 405 and 110 freeways.

"They had been here for decades, and Southern California invested in Toyota — our talents, our road infrastructure and our educational system," he said. "For them to depart after all of those years ... it's a sore point."



The automaker tied the relocation to a corporate restructuring that would give the company better proximity and access to clients and manufacturing. Texas sweetened the move with \$40 million in tax incentives.

California needs to up its marketing campaign, Cheung said, but that won't necessarily be easy.

"Silicon Valley and Hollywood do a good job of telling their stories, but California as a whole has so many different industries," he said. "How do you get aerospace to partner with the clean-tech sector, for example? Our industries are so diverse, it's hard to corral them all together. We have a very strong message to get out there – we just haven't done it."

Cheung said the 2028 Summer Olympics, set to take place in Los Angeles, and Southern California's ongoing focus on sustainability will drive additional foreign investment in the coming years.

Japan, the UK and France are all interested in investing more in the region's sustainability industries, he said, as they see greater potential for energy and environment-related global demand.

"We've made headway in setting up environmental regulations, policies and infrastructure," he said. "There's pent-up demand for that."

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CAPITOL ALERT

## Capitol Alert

# Should essential workers get bonuses? Unions want Gavin Newsom to dole out \$8 billion

BY JEONG PARK

JUNE 03, 2021 11:38 AM, UPDATED JUNE 03, 2021 02:00 PM



A healthcare worker administers the COVID-19 vaccine to a San Luis Obispo County agriculture worker at a special clinic in Arroyo Grande on Friday, March 19, 2021. COURTESY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH



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02:43

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Major California unions are pushing Gov. Gavin Newsom and legislative leaders to give \$8 billion in bonuses to essential workers, calling on them to use some of the [\\$27 billion California is getting from the federal COVID relief](#) to support working people.

The money would be given to workers in places such as hospitals, fast food restaurants, grocery stores, janitorial services and public transit, according to the unions' proposal laid out in their letter to Newsom and legislative leaders sent Thursday.

More than 4 million workers making under about \$100,000 could be eligible for the money under the proposal, which means each would get around \$2,000 on average, according to the the unions and labor organizations. Its backers include the California Labor Federation, SEIU California, the United Food and Commercial Workers and the Teamsters.

#### TOP ARTICLES

Cities and counties across California have passed ordinances [giving temporary pay raises to essential workers](#), especially to those in grocery stores. Some states such as Pennsylvania and Vermont have each [used \\$50 million of the CARES Act to give bonuses to their essential workers](#). The unions' proposal is far more wide-reaching than any program seen in the nation.

“It’s the essential workers who’ve gotten us through this very dark time,” said Assemblyman Ash Kalra, D-San Jose, who supports the proposal. “That deserves recognition, and we need to recognize we need to retain those workers in their positions, especially our health care workers.”

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The proposal calls for California to create a one-time essential worker recognition and retention fund. Of the \$8 billion, \$2 billion would be dedicated specifically for non-executive health care workers.

Workers would get the money through their employers, who would apply for the fund through state agencies. Kalra said grocery workers who are getting hazard pay should be eligible for the bonus as well.

“I don’t think just because local jurisdictions have seen the wisdom of recognizing essential workers that those workers should be penalized,” he said.

To give \$8 billion in bonuses for essential workers, Kalra acknowledged the money has to be taken out from somewhere else.

Gov. Newsom is proposing to spend the \$27 billion from the federal COVID relief package on [expanding broadband access](#), [providing utility assistance](#), [training for more mental health workers and addressing homelessness](#), among others.

But Kalra said he believes it’s well worth spending a part of the COVID relief package for the state’s essential workers. The federal COVID relief package does explicitly [allow states to give “premium pay” to essential workers](#), both in the public and private sector, of up to \$13 per hour to the maximum of \$25,000.

“We’ve called our workers “heroes.” But those words fall flat if we don’t actually show appreciation through meaningful actions,” Kalra said. “So what I’m supportive is of putting our money where our heart is.”

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# 'Hero pay' bill for healthcare workers fizzles in California Legislature



Hospital workers attend a candlelight vigil outside Hollywood Presbyterian Medical Center for a nurse who died of the coronavirus. (Wally Skaliy / Los Angeles Times)

By MELODY GUTIERREZ | STAFF WRITER

JUNE 3, 2021 6:36 PM PT



**SACRAMENTO** — California Assembly members declined Thursday to vote on a bill that would have awarded “hero pay” to healthcare workers who helped steer the state through the pandemic, effectively killing the \$7-billion effort for the year.

Assembly Bill 650 by Assemblyman Al Muratsuchi (D-Rolling Hills Estates) would have required hospitals, clinics and skilled nursing facilities to pay medical professionals \$10,000, with smaller bonuses for those who work part time.

The payments would have been made in four installments over the course of 2022 in hopes the cash would entice healthcare workers to remain in their jobs, said the bill’s main proponent, the Service Employees International Union California, a labor union whose membership includes healthcare workers.

The bill was fiercely opposed by hospitals and other employers due to the estimated \$7-billion price tag.

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Muratsuchi said the bill was a way to honor the front-line healthcare workers who went to work despite the threat that COVID-19 posed to themselves and their families. But after counting the votes Thursday, Muratsuchi said it was clear the bill did not have enough to pass. He said AB 650 won't move forward this year, but that he would fight for hero pay in ongoing budget negotiations.

"Last year, everyone was talking about thanking our front-line healthcare workers, and we all recognized on a daily basis watching the news how they were risking their lives and their loved ones lives by going into combat day in and day out," Muratsuchi said. "So, I think there is wide recognition that our healthcare workers deserve hero pay."

Opponents of the bill said the high cost would come as hospitals are digging out of the financial hole left by the pandemic.

"The bill was a massive, unfunded \$7-billion increase that would have impacted both healthcare consumers and the entire healthcare system at a time when many providers are struggling to keep their doors open due to the strain of the pandemic," said Molly Weedn, a spokeswoman for opponents, which included the California Medical Assn. and California Hospital Assn.

With the bill done for the year, Muratsuchi said the focus now turns to a separate effort to award bonuses to essential workers.

On Thursday, organized labor leaders called on the Legislature to dedicate \$8 billion in bonuses for healthcare workers and essential employees who work as grocery clerks, fast food servers, janitors and transportation workers.

Leaders of SEIU California, the California Labor Federation, California Teamsters Public Affairs Council and United Food & Commercial Workers Western States Council urged that the state pay for the bonuses with federal relief funds approved earlier this year by Congress and President Biden.

The Legislature is required to send a budget to Gov. Gavin Newsom by June 15.

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Tia Orr, government relations director for SEIU California, said the pandemic gave society a new look at how critical essential workers are and noted that there was no shortage of appreciation and thank yous during the height of the crisis.

“The question is not how much we talk about them, but how much we’re going to reward them for their extraordinary service and their sacrifice,” Orr said.

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### The perils of parenting through a pandemic

What’s going on with school? What do kids need? Get 8 to 3, a newsletter dedicated to the questions that keep California families up at night.

## CDC director urges parents to vaccinate teens, noting increased hospitalization rates

Hospitalizations for adolescents went up in March and April, even as they stabilized for those 65 and older, new study finds

By [Lena H. Sun](#)

June 4, 2021 at 8:03 a.m. PDT



### PLEASE NOTE

The Washington Post is providing this important information about the coronavirus for free. For more free coverage of the coronavirus pandemic, [sign up for our Coronavirus Updates newsletter](#) where all stories are free to read.

Citing increased hospitalization rates of teenagers with covid-19 in March and April, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Rochelle Walensky urged parents to vaccinate their teens to protect them from an illness that can be severe even among young people.

“I am deeply concerned by the numbers of hospitalized adolescents and saddened to see the numbers of adolescents who required treatment in intensive care units or mechanical ventilation,” Walensky said in a statement that was released Friday alongside a new [study](#) looking at trends in hospitalization among adolescents with the disease.

“Much of this suffering can be prevented,” Walensky added, urging “parents, relatives and close friends to join me and talk with teens” about the importance of prevention strategies and to encourage vaccination.

The study showed that nearly one-third of those teenagers hospitalized with covid-19 during a surge of cases early this year required intensive care, and 5 percent required mechanical ventilation.

While most [covid-19 hospitalizations](#) occur in older adults, severe disease that requires hospitalization has been shown to occur in all age groups. Covid-19 hospitalization rates among adolescents declined in January and February 2021, the report said, but increased during March and April, even as hospitalization rates stabilized for those 65 and older, likely because of their higher rates of vaccination.

Researchers suggest the increased hospitalization among adolescents in March and April may be related to several factors, including more transmissible and potentially more dangerous [virus variants](#), larger numbers of youths returning to school, and changes in physical distancing, [mask-wearing](#) and other prevention behaviors.

If those prevention measures had not been practiced at all, “the rates of covid-19-associated hospitalization might have been substantially higher,” the report said.

A coronavirus vaccine wasn’t recommended for use in 12- to 15-year-olds until last month.

Even though the study is of a small group of adolescents, CDC officials expressed concern about the potential for severe disease and stressed the importance not just of vaccination, but of continued mask-wearing and other preventive behaviors until they are fully vaccinated.

“Vaccination is our way out of this pandemic,” Walensky said. “I continue to see promising signs in CDC data that we are nearing the end of this pandemic in this country; however, we all have to do our part and get vaccinated to cross the finish line.”

The study looked at 204 youths ages 12 to 17 who were hospitalized between Jan. 1 and March 31; about 31 percent were admitted to an intensive care unit and 5 percent required invasive mechanical ventilation. None of the youths died.

About 70 percent of the adolescents in the study had at least one underlying medical condition, the most common being obesity. But nearly 30 percent had no reported underlying condition, the report said, “indicating that healthy adolescents are also at risk for severe covid-19-associated disease.”

Among the 204 teens, 52 percent were female, 31 percent were Latino and 36 percent were Black.

Researchers said the cumulative covid-19 hospitalization rates for the adolescents during Oct. 1, 2020, through April 24, 2021, were 2.5 to 3 times higher than seasonal influenza-associated hospitalization rates during three recent flu seasons.

Researchers said hospitalization rates may be underestimated since some clinicians may not have ordered tests for the virus, and adolescents hospitalized with the rare but serious inflammatory syndrome known as Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children might not be identified if testing took place more than 14 days after hospital admission.

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**SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY**

# It's a Bird, It's a Plane, It's a New Exhibit at the San Bernardino County Museum

The exhibit will have 300+ action figures, posters, games and more, related to superheroes, villains and monsters.

By **Maggie More** • Published June 3, 2021 • Updated on June 3, 2021 at 2:49 pm



The exhibit at the San Bernardino County Museum will feature over 300 action figures, posters, games and more.

Superhero, supervillain, monster and comic book lovers will soon be able to visit "SuperMonsterCity! America's Monsters, Superheroes, and Villains," an exhibit at the San Bernardino County Museum.

Starting June 10, a new exhibit at the museum will feature a collection from SuperMonsterCity!, containing "a magnificent collection of 300+ action figures, posters, games and more," according to a news release.

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Toys from the exhibit at the San Bernardino County Museum.

This particular collection features items "from the 1960s, 70s, 80s, 90s 2000s, and 2010s consisting of superheroes, monsters, and villains." There will be well-known DC and Marvel comic book heroes and villains on display, as well as Hollywood monsters from the 1960s.

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Peacocks Are Everywhere in Rancho Palos Verdes, and Some Residents Want Them to Stay

**32 MINS AGO**

Daughter of Firefighter Killed in Fire Station Shooting Wears His Jacket at High School Graduation

[SuperMonsterCity!](#) shares collectors' travelling exhibits, to display "America's iconic mythical figures from America's Golden Age of toys," according to their website. This collection was curated by co-founder Stephen Yogi Rueff and includes co-founder David Barnhill's collection of over 200,000 vintage toys and memorabilia.

Like other SuperMonsterCity! exhibits, toys in the San Bernardino County Museum display will be "presented alongside their original packaging, posters, and other advertising materials that give further insight into the historical contexts and the evolution of toy design."



More toys from the SuperMonsterCity! collection on display in the "America's Monsters, Superheroes and Villains" exhibit.

The exhibit will run at the museum until August 29. The [San Bernardino County Museum](#) is open Tuesdays through Sundays from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Parking is free, and tickets to the museum are \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors and active military members, \$7 for students with ID, \$5 for children ages 5 to 12, \$1 for visitors with EBT Card, and free for children under age 5 and museum members.

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CALIFORNIA

## He has celebrated deserts all his life. Now he's sounding the alarm



Desert ecologist Jim Cornett measures a Death Valley Joshua tree at Lee Flats to see how climate change is affecting desert plant life. (Gina Ferazzi / Los Angeles Times)

By STEVE LOPEZ | COLUMNIST

JUNE 4, 2021 5 AM PT



If you have any questions about how the plants and animals of Southern California's deserts are faring as the Earth gets hotter and drier, Jim Cornett is a good bet to have the answers. Roadrunners, palm trees, snakes, Joshua trees — Cornett has studied them all and written more than 40 books.

But the 72-year-old ecologist, who fell in love with the desert as a schoolboy and is still on his honeymoon 60 years later, was stumped one day in April near the southern entrance to Joshua Tree National Park.

It was just past noon when Cornett came upon a rat's nest built into the base of an ocotillo, a spindly, long-stemmed plant with Kelly green leaves and lipstick red flowers that bloom in spring. This ocotillo was brown and dry, thanks to the drought, and it was sporting a nest the size of a small tumbleweed, fashioned from the brittle twigs of creosote bushes and other plants.

"This is only the second time in my life that I've seen a wood rat's nest in a living ocotillo," said Cornett, who makes multiple visits each year to dozens of study sites to monitor the growth and health of ocotillo plants, Joshua trees and fan palms. "This was not here last year, and I'm shocked to see it."

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Cornett, a husky, white-haired gent with contagious curiosity, bent down and studied the makeshift habitat, wondering aloud whether the occupant was home, either dead or alive. Cornett, who reads the desert as if it were a book, straightened up and scanned the surrounding landscape of dried vegetation, including the crunchy remains of last year's wildflower bloom.



Hikers walk along the dirt and gravel road above the fan palm tree oasis in Indian Canyons in Palm Springs. (Gina Ferazzi / Los Angeles Times)

In the distance, I saw what looked like a similar nest. We walked over, and, indeed, another rat appeared to have built a home into the base of an ocotillo.

Cornett began threading a theory.

“Wood rats are 100% dependent on moist food,” he said, “but there are no spring annuals, and no green growth of any kind here. Zero. The cactus are all dead here now because of the changing climate.”

Wood rats used to build nests under the cactus at this location, Cornett said, because they rely on the shade to survive extreme heat and make do without plentiful rainfall. They tend to avoid ocotillos, he said, because a good breeze jostles the stems and that could bring down a nest. But with so many other plants as dry as death, perhaps ocotillos were the next best option.

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Cornett was fascinated by what appeared to be the rodent’s desperate survival strategy, but doubtful that it would help.

“He’s gonna fry this summer,” he said. “This is not going to work.”

Climate change takes a toll on Joshua trees



::

In late March, my wife and I were headed to the desert for a few days and wondered whether, with scant rainfall, there'd be any spring wildflowers to see. I checked the Desert Sun newspaper and saw a quote from Cornett:

“Let me put it this way,” he said. “This is a disastrous year for wildflowers. I haven’t seen it this bad in memory.”



This ocotillo on Jim Cornett's cottonwood fan ocotillo study site in Joshua Tree National Park has had its bark removed by thirsty antelope squirrels trying to reach the moist wood beneath. (Gina Ferazzi / Los Angeles Times)

He was right. On a five-mile hike near Lake Cahuilla in La Quinta, my wife and I saw bighorn sheep, but no wildflowers.

In the last year, I've written about the ways in which extreme heat, drought and diminishing fog have affected California's wine industry, redwood trees and marine habitats. I was curious about whether there were visible changes in the desert, so I called Cornett. And that's how I ended up staring at rat nests in ocotillos.

“Our desert areas in California are being rather dramatically changed in composition and appearance,” Cornett said, offering an assessment that casual visitors may have trouble grasping. The desert was dry before. It's still dry. So what is changing, and why should we care?

How about this: Joshua Tree National Park might one day not be the best place to see Joshua trees. Some will survive, Cornett predicts, but many will die.

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Cornett, in fact, is documenting this and other desert ecosystem transformations for a book, which has a working title of “The California Deserts: Then and Now.” The book will feature a collection of photographs Cornett has taken over time, demonstrating the decline of plant life by aiming his lens at the same locations over a decades-long span.



Towering fan palm trees overlook an oasis in Indian Canyons in Palm Springs. (Gina Ferazzi / Los Angeles Times)

The rat nests in the ocotillos are part of a much bigger saga, he said, in which the characters are insects, birds, rodents, lizards, snakes and other wildlife, along with plant species. Climate-related change has a cascading effect, Cornett said, using the ocotillo to illustrate his point.

“The ocotillo is a critically important nectar-producing plant that is vital for migrating hummingbirds that come up from Mexico,” Cornett said. “There may be some species of hummingbirds that will either cease migrating or become extinct because of the slow demise of the ocotillo.”

I asked Cornett whether such changes can be definitively tied to climate change. He paused for just a beat, sighed and said we’ve run out of other explanations.

::

Cornett’s Palm Springs condo butts up against a section of the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument, with rocky cliffs plunging into the ravine that cuts past his home. Over the years, the wildlife show has included a parade of bighorn sheep, bobcats, coyotes, mule deer, striped skunks, raccoons, hawks, snakes, a mountain lion and a variety of birds.

“That’s a hooded oriole, getting nectar from an aloe plant,” Cornett said when I asked him to ID an eye-popping, bright yellow bird with a contrasting fan of black neck and wing feathers. “It’s the first time I’ve seen him this year.”



Desert ecologist Jim Cornett is studying the effects of climate change on the majestic fan palm trees in the Thousand Palms Canyon Palm Preserve in Thousand Palms. (Gina Ferazzi / Los Angeles Times)

A gray-and-white-feathered northern mockingbird perched on a tree branch near the patio and stared down at Cornett as if waiting to be acknowledged. Cornett said he and the bird have gotten to know each other.

But while some routines in this backyard menagerie endure, others have become less constant. Cornett said that several years ago, he hired someone to trim the tall grasses at the edge of his property. Over two days, the gardener found 19 rattlesnakes, which Cornett — who in 1999 published “Rattlesnakes!: Answers to Frequently Asked Questions” — personally captured and removed to the nearby ravine.

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“I haven’t seen a rattlesnake in three years,” Cornett said.

He attributed their absence to a drier climate. When wildflowers were plentiful, they dropped seeds that were eaten by rodents, which were eaten by snakes. But ongoing drought has put pressure on that cycle.

Annual rainfall totals illustrate how the naturally harsh desert environment is becoming even more stressed. Cornett, who meticulously studies weather data compiled by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, said less than 1 inch of rain has fallen at the Palm Springs airport since Nov. 1, well below averages of roughly 4.5 inches for the period over the last half-century, which were down from a 5.5-inch average before that.



Fan palm trees are dying because of lack of water in the nearby creek in Indian Canyons in Palm Springs. (Gina Ferazzi / Los Angeles Times)

“We are getting about 20% less rain on average in the last two decades than we did prior to that,” said Cornett, who also noted that average desert temperatures have risen by just under 2 degrees since the middle of the last century.

That might sound like a modest change to some people, Cornett said. But for fragile natural environments like those in California’s deserts, he said, the combination of hotter weather and less rainfall can be catastrophic. And something we all took for granted — the occasional glorious explosion of spring wildflowers — could become more rare.

“The desert will always have years of super bloom and years when there’s nothing,” Cornet said. “The difference now is that drought is becoming more common, and the intervals between super blooms will be greater.”



CALIFORNIA

**Drought ravages California’s reservoirs ahead of hot summer**

In time, Cornett said, some plants and animals will adapt, but “we will see less of everything” as climate change puts new pressures on virtually all desert species.

For centuries, change was barely noticeable, Cornett said. Today, the transformation is accelerated, and we are “watching life on Earth struggle to adapt.”



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Cornett is not the only researcher to document the alarming transformation of the desert. In 2005, climate scientist Kenneth Cole predicted that in some areas, Joshua trees — iconic symbols of Southwestern desert landscapes — would soon be in trouble because of climate change.

In a 2011 study, Cole and colleagues projected “the future elimination” of the Joshua tree “throughout most of the southern portion of its current range.” The retired Northern Arizona University professor told me recently that he went from being somewhat skeptical about the perils of climate change in the 1980s to seeing the decline with his own eyes.

“I’ve been despondent about the future of the globe since about 1990,” he said. “If we made an all-out effort, we could nip it in the bud, but I don’t see that happening.... It’s crushing. It is really crushing.”



Hikers walk through the maze inside the fan palm tree oasis in Indian Canyons in Palm Springs. (Gina Ferazzi / Los Angeles Times)

In 2011, professor Cameron Barrows, a researcher at UC Riverside's Center for Conservation Biology, studied the decline of trees in Joshua Tree National Park and was part of a follow-up study eight years later. That team of researchers predicted "an almost complete elimination of the species from the park by the end of the century."

The good news, Barrows told me, is that Joshua trees "are more resilient" at higher elevations of the national park. But at lower elevations, he said, there is little or no "recruitment," a term used to describe the growth of new trees seeded by mature trees.

A healthy Joshua tree looks like a creation cooked up by Mother Nature after a few cocktails with Dr. Seuss. They can stand 40 feet or taller, punching the sky with goofy, gnarled fists. As many as 3 million people visit the national park annually to see them and the rest of the exotic plant life in the park's distinctive, rocky landscape.



WORLD & NATION

**Climate change responsible for 37% of global heat deaths, study says**

One of 10 Joshua tree study sites Cornett has been monitoring since 1988 lies in an area at the center of Joshua Tree National Park called Queen Valley. In 1988, he tagged 40 trees at this location. Today, there are only four living trees. A fire about 20 years ago, ignited by a lightning strike, led to the eventual death of the others

And none of the four survivors look like they're going to make it.

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When we visited, dry limbs drooped. Some barrel-shaped, dead leaf clusters dangled while others had fallen onto ground as dry as death. In decades past, those clusters dropped seeds that sprouted after rains.

“There’s no recruitment” now, Cornett said, scanning an area without a single sprout.

A drier climate means more vulnerability to fires caused by lightning or vandalism. There’s no more devastating example than last year’s Dome fire at the Mojave National Preserve, an hour or so to the north. The fire, ignited by lightning, incinerated more than 1 million Joshua trees.



The Big Tree, far right, survived the wildfire of 2006 on Jim Cornett’s Queen Valley study site in Joshua Tree National Park. (Gina Ferazzi / Los Angeles Times)

At the Queen Valley site, Cornett examined the stems of the four surviving trees and discovered yet another assault on their health.

“This is the first time I’ve seen signs of rodents attacking stems on this site,” he said, pointing out some gnawed branches.

As with the ocotillo, the problem seemed to be that the plants usually found around the trees were dead or dying, leaving virtually no moisture for rodents. They appeared to have dug their teeth into Joshua trees in a last-ditch effort to survive.

At the base of one tree, whose age Cornett put at about well over 1`00, he noticed another threat: A patch of bark had been scraped away.

Cornett crouched, inspected, harrumphed. It looked like the work of a jack rabbit, he said, which must have been trying to get at the moisture in the stem.

“To chew through bark like that,” he said, “that is one desperate jack rabbit.”

Cornett studies Joshua trees for a couple of reasons. They're a keystone species, meaning they are crucial to a habitat that includes reptiles, insects, birds and other wildlife. And they are known and appreciated by the public, so evidence of their gradual demise might make us all more inclined to consider the planet's fragile state and do something about it.

We can all play a role, Cornett said, by whom we vote into office. We can convert to greener energy sources, make the switch to electric vehicles and build smaller rather than larger homes, with conservation-minded design. It doesn't help that in the sprawl of Palm Springs, air conditioners drone for months, and lush golf courses and farms pump water from dwindling sources and diminished aquifers.



The sun's rays burst through a healthy Joshua Tree in Death Valley. (Gina Ferazzi / Los Angeles Times)

As we toured the park, Cornett took note of visitors photographing ocotillo plants and Joshua trees that had seen better days. The thorny, hardy creosote bushes are doing fine, he said, but he couldn't imagine people would book hotels, dine at local restaurants and get out their cameras for a tour of Creosote Bush National Park. As

these changes shake up the natural world, the broader economy may feel some of the pain.

“I would argue right now that Joshua Tree National Park is not the best place to go to see Joshua trees,” Cornett said.

But he knows a place that might be, and he promised to take me there.

::

Jim Cornett moved around quite a bit as a child because his father, a city manager, took jobs in several cities, including Riverside. He and his siblings looked forward to the family's birthday tradition, in which each of them would take a trip with Dad.

“So he said, ‘Jimmy, where do you want to go?’ I thought Death Valley sounded so exciting. At 6, I had discovered something called dinosaurs, and I thought the closest thing to seeing a dinosaur would be desert reptiles.” On his 10th-birthday trip to the desert, Cornett caught a side-blotched lizard and a tarantula and took them home, “and it kind of snowballed from there.”



CLIMATE & ENVIRONMENT

**Forecast: 40% chance Earth to be hotter than Paris goal soon**

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Cornett majored in political science at UCLA, then became a teacher in Twentynine Palms and later Palm Springs. In his 20s, he pitched a newspaper column on natural science that ran for 40 years in the Desert Sun. As a fledgling journalist, he figured he'd have more credibility with formal training in the sciences, so he went back to school for a biology degree at UC Riverside and later a master's at Cal State San Bernardino.

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Cornett, a man with a busy calendar, has also led nature walks at the Living Desert Zoo and Gardens and ran his own desert ecology consulting business, even while writing columns and books. But for 30 years, his primary occupation was to run the natural science division of the Palm Springs Desert Museum, a job that took him to the great deserts of the world to better appreciate and understand California's Colorado, Sonoran and Mojave deserts. And he often took grateful colleagues along with him.

"He shared his passionate love for nature with all of us in such a personal way that it changed our lives forever," said Janice Lyle, who ran the Desert Museum while Cornett worked there. Lyle's daughter became a park ranger in part because of Cornett's inspiration.

His enthusiasm, unlike the desert habitats he studies, has not diminished.



Desert ecologist Jim Cornett measures a young Joshua tree to see how climate change has affected the desert plant life in Death Valley. (Gina Ferazzi / Los Angeles Times)

"I get as excited today as I was when I was 6," said Cornett, who tours the great deserts in a white Jeep with a "FANPALM" license plate. Yes, a Jeep, because he needs a four-wheel-drive vehicle for his research, Cornett said. But he wanted me to

know that he insisted on the six-cylinder engine, rather than the eight-cylinder gas burner the salesman pitched him.

At Indian Canyons on the Agua Caliente reservation near Palm Springs, Cornett pointed out a bush and said, "Now this is a mesquite." The author of "How Indians Used Desert Plants" told me the bean pods were a valuable source of protein for Cahuilla Indians.

In the desert, fan palm oases are often found along earthquake faults, where crushed sediment pushes groundwater toward the surface. The palms at the center of the Indian Canyon oasis were healthy, but Cornett pointed out several others a couple of hundred yards down Andreas Creek that were as dry as scarecrows.

For my last outing with Cornett, we met up in Lone Pine and then traveled east into Death Valley to Lee Flat, which sits at an elevation of 5,300 feet. Ahead of us, flocks of horned larks darted about, just above the ground, and Cornett said they were hunting for seeds from the wildflower blooms in years past.

For now, human traffic is relatively light at Lee Flat, which has its benefits. As Cornett put it, vehicle and foot traffic have had their own negative impact on desert life. But it's cooler at Lee Flat than in much of the desert, and though there's minimal rainfall, the water is less apt to evaporate.

The result is a spectacular forest of Joshua trees.

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Cornett trudged through the field in his dusty shin-high boots, revisiting marked trees he's been monitoring for three decades.



Desert ecologist Jim Cornett seems to embrace his scientific area where he studies the impact climate change has on Joshua trees in Lee Flat in Death Valley. (Gina Ferazzi / Los Angeles Times)

“They’re all healthy,” he pronounced with his easy smile, and all around the mature trees, youngsters were sprouting by the dozens.

This is already perhaps the best place in California to see Joshua trees, Cornett said, and that’s worth celebrating. But it’s also important to recognize why that’s true. Joshua trees are still able to thrive at higher elevations because the changing climate hasn’t caused as much disruption to the ecosystem there. Yet.

But climate change models make it clear that natural rhythms might one day be affected here too.

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### Column One

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“I was hoping that when I left the planet as a living and breathing human being, I would have left it in a better state than it was in when I was born,” Cornett said. “I can now say with certainty that upon my death, the Earth will be in more trouble than it was in when I was born.”

At Lee Flat, under a thin veil of silky white clouds, Cornett pulled out a telescopic tool and gave it a twist, shooting a measuring stick up through some limbs and all the way to the top of a Joshua tree.



“Thirty feet tall,” he said, relieved that by all available evidence, in this one corner of a changing planet, for now, the trees are OK.

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California native Steve Lopez has been a journalist for 45 years. His work has won numerous national awards for newspaper and magazine writing. He is the author of several books, including the best-selling “The Soloist,” a story that began on the pages of the Los Angeles Times, where he has been a columnist since 2001.

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## 45-day warehouse moratorium in San Bernardino fails by 1 vote



An exterior view of the new Amazon Air Regional Air Hub at San Bernardino International Airport in San Bernardino, California, on Wednesday, April 28, 2021. (Photo by Watchara Phomicinda, The Press-Enterprise/SCNG)

By **BRIAN WHITEHEAD** | [bwhitehead@scng.com](mailto:bwhitehead@scng.com) | The Sun  
PUBLISHED: June 3, 2021 at 3:19 p.m. | UPDATED: June 3, 2021 at 3:20 p.m.

San Bernardino was a single vote shy of establishing a 45-day moratorium on the construction of new warehouses Wednesday, June 2, effectively killing [the most ambitious plan](#) yet to examine the adverse impacts of such facilities in town.



The City Council needed six affirmative votes to implement the temporary ban, but only five favored the move late Wednesday: council members Theodore Sanchez, Sandra Ibarra, Ben Reynoso, Kimberly Calvin and Damon Alexander.

Councilmen Juan Figueroa and Fred Shorett opposed the proposal.

“It’s disappointing to see that a small minority of city leaders continue to place the interest of developers and large corporate companies over the health, safety and quality of life of our people here in San Bernardino,” Reynoso, the plan’s most vocal proponent, said in a text message Thursday, June 3. “Establishing a moratorium would have allowed us to reanalyze the way we have done business and will do business here.

“Instead,” Reynoso added, “we continue with the status quo, which is continuing to fail to hear (the) community’s calls for transparency, good jobs, and clean air.”

While Figueroa and Shorett did not explain why voted against the proposed ban Wednesday evening, Shorett [previously called](#) a citywide moratorium on new warehouses “the worst message to send to the development community.”

In lieu of instituting such a blanket prohibition, which could have been extended for up to two years, Shorett has said the council can simply [elevate the standards](#) against which its members evaluate and approve new warehouse projects moving forward.

“Developers are not bad people,” the longtime councilman said May 19. “They create jobs, they create environment. We can hold their feet to the fire and we can put high standards on them.”

San Bernardino has processed and approved 26 warehouse projects since 2015, covering 9.6 million square feet.

A majority of those facilities are occupied.

The construction and operation of warehouses moving forward must be carried out in a manner more compatible with the public health, safety and welfare of the community, city officials have said. As such, the city’s [updated General Plan and Development Code](#) are expected to include new standards for warehouse development.

But modernizing those documents is a multi-year task.

Since establishing its [own 45-day moratorium on warehouses](#) last month, Colton has identified a scope of work to address the impacts of warehouses, distribution centers and truck storage yards.



In a report provided to the City Council this week, Colton staffers noted that several land use, traffic and safety and environmental health issues need to be addressed to protect the community's well-being. In the same report, staffers outlined a plan to mitigate such impacts by amending its municipal code.

In two weeks, Colton leaders are expected to decide whether to extend the moratorium an additional 10 months and 15 days, affording staffers time to take certain measures to address the issues at-hand.

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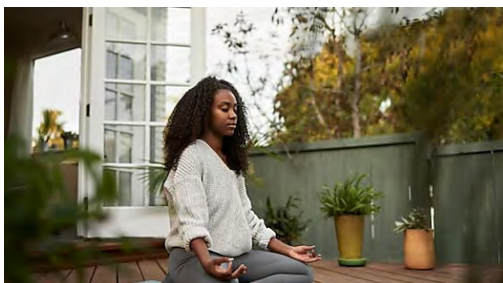
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## Brian Whitehead | Reporter

Brian Whitehead is a reporter for The San Bernardino Sun, covering Colton, Fontana, Grand Terrace, Rialto and San Bernardino. He previously covered prep sports and the cities of Buena Park, Fullerton and La Palma for The Orange County Register. A Grand Terrace native and Riverside Notre Dame alumnus, he earned his journalism degree from Cal State Fullerton in 2010. Since joining The Sun in late 2017, he has reported on development, education, homelessness, marijuana, political strife and the myriad issues facing San Bernardino post-bankruptcy.

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NEWS > HOUSING • Opinion Columnist

# San Bernardino 8th worst US city for families, survey says

Average California city ranked 20 spots higher than rest of US was 95

By **JONATHAN LANSNER** | [jlansner@scng.com](mailto:jlansner@scng.com) | Orange County Register

PUBLISHED: June 3, 2021 at 10:24 a.m. | UPDATED: June 4, 2021 at 9:06 a.m.

*"Survey says" looks at various rankings and scorecards of geographic locations, noting that these grades are best seen as a mix of art and data.*

**Buzz:** Irvine was ranked as the nation's third-best big city in which to raise a family while San Bernardino was ranked eighth-worst and the lowest-ranked of 29 California cities.

**Source:** WalletHub [analyzed 48 economic and demographic factors](#) to create relative scores for 182 cities in five key criteria — family fun, health and safety, education and child care, affordability and socio-economics.

## Details

Rankings like these are part science and part art, but if you take a bigger picture view, you see California did well in this study.

My trusty spreadsheet tells me the average overall ranking for 29 Golden State cities in this scorecard was 75th place — 20 spots higher than the No. 95 average for the other 153 cities in the rest of the nation. It broke down like this ...

**Family fun:** California's average rank was 51 spots higher — (No. 49 vs. 100). There are lots of things to do in this state.

**Health and safety:** California 54 spots higher — (No. 46 vs. 100). Less crime, good health facilities.

**Education and child care:** California 28 spots higher — (No. 68 vs. 96). Better than most.

**Affordability:** California 48 spots *lower* — (No. 132 vs. 84). Nobody should be surprised.

**Socio-economics:** California 32 spots higher — (No. 64 vs. 97). A surprising conclusion.

The question every family has to ask: "Is California worth the price?"

## Caveat

California did have 11 cities in the bottom half of the rankings — Anaheim, Riverside, Oxnard, Fontana, Fresno, Ontario, Moreno Valley, Santa Ana, Oakland, Stockton — plus San Bernardino.

## Bottom Line

Only Overland Park, a Kansas City suburb, and the Bay Area's Fremont scored higher than Irvine. Then came two more suburbs — Plano, outside of Dallas; Columbia, Md., located between Baltimore and Washington, DC.

At the bottom of the scorecard was Detroit then Cleveland, Memphis, Hialeah, Fla., and Newark, N.J.

You might conclude that families do best outside big cities — or at least the math looks better in the suburbs.

## Quotable

"Irvine has the fewest violent crimes (per 1,000 residents), 0.64, which is 30.7 times fewer than in Detroit, the city with the most at 19.65," WalletHub noted.



## Post Script

Here's how cities in the four counties covered by the Southern California News Group fared ...

**No. 3 Irvine:** No. 17 for fun; No. 1 for safety; No. 3 for care; No. 57 for affordability; and No. 9 for socioeconomics.

**No. 12 Huntington Beach:** No. 64 for fun; No. 10 for safety; No. 4 for care; No. 96 for affordability; and No. 12 for socioeconomics.

**No. 31 Santa Clarita:** No. 85 for fun; No. 4 for safety; No. 16 for care; No. 114 for affordability; and No. 76 for socioeconomics.

**No. 32 Rancho Cucamonga:** No. 68 for fun; No. 48 for safety; No. 32 for care; No. 102 for affordability; and No. 10 for socioeconomics.

**No. 53 Garden Grove:** No. 38 for fun; No. 15 for safety; No. 15 for care; No. 173 for affordability; and No. 38 for socioeconomics.

**No. 66 Glendale:** No. 45 for fun; No. 11 for safety; No. 18 for care; No. 171 for affordability; and No. 73 for socioeconomics.

**No. 83 Los Angeles:** No. 1 for fun; No. 41 for safety; No. 63 for care; No. 176 for affordability; and No. 120 for socioeconomics.

**No. 88 Long Beach:** No. 16 for fun; No. 20 for safety; No. 17 for care; No. 178 for affordability; and No. 124 for socioeconomics.

**No. 92 Anaheim:** No. 34 for fun; No. 14 for safety; No. 73 for care; No. 174 for affordability; and No. 54 for socioeconomics.

**No. 110 Riverside:** No. 71 for fun; No. 55 for safety; No. 125 for care; No. 156 for affordability; and No. 47 for socioeconomics.

**No. 116 Fontana:** No. 32 for fun; No. 67 for safety; No. 158 for care; No. 165 for affordability; and No. 34 for socioeconomics.

**No. 128 Ontario:** No. 46 for fun; No. 72 for safety; No. 128 for care; No. 170 for affordability; and No. 68 for socioeconomics.

**No. 131 Moreno Valley:** No. 40 for fun; No. 53 for safety; No. 176 for care; No. 166 for affordability; and No. 74 for socioeconomics.

**No. 133 Santa Ana:** No. 91 for fun; No. 18 for safety; No. 69 for care; No. 180 for affordability; and No. 49 for socioeconomics.

**No. 175 San Bernardino:** No. 15 for fun; No. 157 for safety; No. 174 for care; No. 177 for affordability; and No. 154 for socioeconomics.

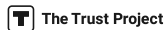
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## Jonathan Lansner | Business columnist

Jonathan Lansner has been the Orange County Register's business columnist since 1997 and has been part of the newspaper's coverage of the local business scene since 1986. He is a past national president of the Society for Advancing Business Editing and Writing and a 1979 graduate of the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School.

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## City leaders are looking forward to the opening of downtown restaurant

By RUSSELL INGOLD

Jun 4, 2021



A sign outside the Fontana Woman's Club says that the Spaggi's restaurant is coming soon.

The restaurant that will occupy the Fontana Woman's Club building in the downtown area is scheduled to open later this year, thanks in part to some financial assistance from the city.

Spaggi's, an Italian restaurant, will open "in the next couple of months," according to Phil Burum, the deputy city manager, who gave a presentation during a City Council meeting last month.

The restaurant, when opened, will play a significant part in enhancing economic development in the downtown area, the city said in a staff report.



Officials are hoping the eatery will be as successful as the original Spaggi's, which is located in Upland. Executive chef Henry Gonzalez is aiming to open a high-quality, upscale restaurant while at the same time preserving the historical character of the building, which was built in 1925.

The Fontana Woman's Club, a nonprofit group, owns the clubhouse at 16880 Seville Avenue. However, because of the building's age, it has needed many improvements, and over the past two years, the City Council approved a total of \$600,000 in grant funding to assist in the rehabilitation of the interior.

Then on May 25, the City Council authorized a second amendment to loan an additional \$125,000 to pay for additional expenses. The money is to be paid back in the amount of \$175,000 over the next 10 years, the city said in a staff report.

The vote in favor of the loan was 3-1, with Councilmember Jesse Sandoval opposing the amendment. City Councilmember Phillip Cothran recused himself because he owns property near the clubhouse.

Sandoval asked Burum what guarantee the city would have that the loan would be repaid.

"The security is the lease. It's vastly dependent on the success of the restaurant operator that is there," said Burum.

He said the members of the Woman's Club could not raise the dues enough to complete the improvements themselves.

"Now they have a building that is in 90 percent better occupancy shape than it was two years ago, so the likelihood of ongoing revenue is substantially greater than it was before -- but there are no guarantees," Burum said.

The staff report said that the city has determined that the owner's operation of the business will result in substantial benefits to the city, including the creation of new employment opportunities, property tax revenues, and sales tax revenues.

"The tangible benefit is the tax revenue; I think that is far secondary than the image benefit for downtown," Burum said.





Councilmember John Roberts said that preserving the clubhouse is a very worthwhile objective.

"The Fontana Woman's Club building is probably one of the most significant historical buildings in Fontana," said Roberts, adding that helping preserve it "helps preserve Fontana."

Mayor Acquanetta Warren said the opening of Spaggi's will be the "catalyst for getting our downtown started."

"This community deserves this type of restaurant," said Warren, who has been told by residents that they are excited about the prospect of having their wedding or birthday celebration there.



# DAILY PRESS

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## NEWS

# Providence, Kaiser Permanente announce new Victorville hospital that will replace St. Mary Medical Center

**Rene Ray De La Cruz** Victorville Daily Press

Published 12:04 p.m. PT Jun. 3, 2021 | Updated 3:13 p.m. PT Jun. 3, 2021

Kaiser Permanente and Providence Southern California are partnering to bring a new hospital to the High Desert — with an anticipated 2026 opening — in a venture that will also mean the closure of the nearly 65-year-old Providence St. Mary Medical Center in Apple Valley.

In a statement released Thursday, Providence officials say the new hospital, which is pending regulatory review and approval, will be located in Victorville and include about 260 beds.

The health care providers plan to construct the new hospital on property originally purchased in 2007 for what was then a new St. Mary Medical Center campus, Providence officials said.

Erik G. Wexler, president of Operations and Strategy for Providence — South, told the Daily Press the 98-acre location is situated west of Interstate 15 on Amargosa Road, between Bear Valley Road in Victorville and Main Street in Hesperia.

Regarding the partnership, Wexler said Providence is impressed by Kaiser's integrated model of high-quality care and views the affiliation as an opportunity to advance care for High Desert residents.

“Health care delivery has become very complex, and Providence has found that affiliations truly benefit the communities we serve, particularly areas with significant rates of serious health risks,” Wexler said.

While the design and development of the new hospital, including whether it will offer a trauma center, have yet to be finalized, Wexler said it will be a full-service, acute care facility.

He said the property will likely include the hospital, a medical office building and possibly other ambulatory services, adding that the hospital may expand some of the "more high- end

acuity level types of care" due to the partnership with Kaiser.

'We expect to see more patients than we do now in Apple Valley," said Wexler, who noted that St. Mary continues to serve Kaiser members on an emergency basis.

The estimated price tag of the new Providence-operated hospital is \$750 million, according to Wexler, who said the cost "still needs to be perfected through the design and development process."

Victorville Mayor Debra Jones on Thursday told the Daily Press she welcomes the new hospital and the level of care it is expected to bring to the Victor Valley.

"Providence and Kaiser Permanente are industry-leading healthcare providers and their partnership no doubt will expand options for medical care that is certain to improve the quality of life in our region," Jones said. "We can't help but be excited by their investment in the well-being of our High Desert residents."

## **The future in Apple Valley**

Hospitals across the state are bracing for new California earthquake laws that are likely to require tens of billions of dollars worth of new construction, according to the Sacramento Business Journal.

In part, the new regulations state that hospitals must be able to remain in operation after a major earthquake by 2030.

Statewide, making hospitals compliant with the new rules could cost between \$34 billion and \$142 billion for retrofits or construction of new facilities, the SBJ reported.

Providence officials said St. Mary Medical Center will close because it does not meet the more stringent seismic requirements that will take effect in 2030, adding that bringing the facility into compliance would be financially and operationally infeasible.

Wexler said retrofitting St. Mary would cost about the same amount needed to build a new hospital.

"If we were to retrofit the Apple Valley site, it would not likely meet the innovative needs of health care for decades to come," Wexler said. 'It would protect us from an earthquake, but it wouldn't be the best way to continue to deliver care for the future."

Once the Victorville hospital is built, Providence will continue to own the Apple Valley site, according to officials who said the not-for-profit organization may sell the property or invite other medical providers to use the building.

Providence officials said they will work with the community to determine the future of St. Mary, which was dedicated in November 1956 as St. Mary Desert Valley Hospital, then a 29-bed acute and maternity care facility.

Today, St. Mary has a bed count of 213 — 47 fewer than those expected at the new hospital in Victorville. Bryan Kawasaki, spokesperson for St. Mary, said each bed in the new hospital will be in private rooms.

California, meanwhile, has required new hospitals to meet earthquake standards since 1974, following a magnitude-6.5 earthquake in the San Fernando Valley in 1971 that killed 64 people and collapsed buildings at the Olive View Medical Center and a veterans hospital, the Associated Press reported.

In 1994, after the magnitude-6.7 Northridge earthquake near Los Angeles damaged 11 hospitals and forced eight others to evacuate, California lawmakers required hospitals to either upgrade their existing buildings to withstand an earthquake or replace them. The original deadline was 2008, but that was extended to 2020 with some exceptions.

In 2019, all but 160 of the more than 3,000 hospital buildings in California had met the 2020 standards, according to the Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development.

At that time, the California Hospital Association said just 23 hospitals had met the 2030 standards, while 395 had not.

“If we follow through with this standard, we will likely close hospitals,” Carmela Coyle, president of the California Hospital Association, told the AP.

## **The Providence-Kaiser partnership**

Dr. Gregory Kelman, the regional medical director of operations for Southern California Permanente Medical Group, said the Providence-Kaiser partnership will combine the resources and care networks of both organizations in the High Desert.

Amid the collaboration, Providence and Kaiser will continue to respect each other’s philosophy of health care practices, Providence officials said.

The new hospital, for example, will retain Providence's Catholic identity and continue to follow the "Ethical and Religious Directives" for Catholic health care, while Kaiser will continue to arrange for the provision of all health services for its patients, according to Providence.

In addition, Providence St. Mary Chief Executive Randy Castillo will maintain his leadership position and Providence will continue to have primary responsibility for operational oversight, with input from Kaiser officials.

"The COVID-19 pandemic, which has hit our community so hard, highlighted the need for a new hospital that will meet our area's growing health care needs," Castillo said in a statement. "We sought a partner that shares our goals and our vision to increase access to care, especially in under-served communities."

Victorville, the largest city in the High Desert, has a poverty rate of 22.8%, which Providence officials said is high compared to state and national averages. The city also includes vulnerable populations that experience health disparities, the organization said.

"The High Desert community is growing, and we must advance how we deliver health care to meet the changing needs of our community," Bill Caswell, senior vice president and chief operating officer of Kaiser Permanente Southern California said in a statement.

Founded in 1945, Kaiser has been established in the High Desert for years, serving over 110,000 members here.

Last year, Kaiser opened a 54,000-square-foot, three-story medical office on the corner of Escondido Avenue and Kaiser Permanente Way in Hesperia. The office offers high-tech exam rooms and telemedicine capabilities, among other amenities, the Daily Press reported.

Other Kaiser medical facilities in the Victor Valley include the High Desert Medical Offices on Park Avenue in Victorville and the Mental Health Medical Office on Main Street in Hesperia.

Additionally, the Target store on Bear Valley Road in Apple Valley includes a Kaiser-staffed clinic.

*This story is developing and will be updated.*

**Daily Press reporter Rene Ray De La Cruz may be reached at 760-951-6227 or RDeLaCruz@VVDailyPress.com. Follow him on Twitter @DP\_ReneDeLaCruz.**

# DAILY PRESS

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## POLITICS

# Artist Weiming Chen to unveil sculpture in Yermo blaming China for COVID-19 as origin debate intensifies

**Charlie McGee** Victorville Daily Press

Published 6:09 p.m. PT Jun. 3, 2021 | Updated 6:14 p.m. PT Jun. 3, 2021

Weiming Chen — a sculptor who has chiseled statues for U.S. political leaders, a knight of the British Empire and the Dalai Lama since leaving China three decades ago — is about to unveil his newest work in the High Desert: A memorial hall for “Victims of Communism,” and a “CCP (Chinese Communist Party) Virus Sculpture,” in memory of those killed by the coronavirus.

On Friday evening, Chen and a group of China regime-change activists are scheduled to host back-to-back unveilings in Yermo at Liberty Sculpture Park, which is home to several other pieces created by Chen.

The dual rollout of Chen’s newest pieces — set to start at 5 p.m. and last three hours — is being framed by the organizers as an “observance of the 32nd year since the Tiananmen Square Massacre and memorial for victims of the CoVid19 pandemic,” according to a press release from Liberty Sculpture Park spokesperson Lise King.

The pieces take a pro-Western stance on ongoing geopolitical conflicts, as U.S.-China tensions continue a yearslong escalation and debate revitalizes over the origin of the COVID-19 pandemic.

That fits the theme of Liberty Sculpture Park, which sits on a 36-acre stretch of desert that the Chinese dissidents purchased in 2016. Since then, Chen’s works on the Yermo landscape have come to include, among others, a 16-foot statue of Chinese dissident Li Wangyang — who faced 21 years in prison after the Tiananmen Square protests and later died by still-disputed causes — and a military tank replica faced down by a man shaped from 1,300 pounds of concrete, which stands as a commemoration of the still-unidentified “Tank Man” photographed in front of a Chinese tank during the 1989 crackdown.

## A dual rollout

Attending Friday's events will be U.S. Rep. Chris Smith, a Republican from New Jersey, who is set to speak during the first unveiling. Smith currently co-chairs Congress's Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, which the House of Representatives unanimously established in 2008 for what it describes as "promoting, defending and advocating for international human rights."

Massachusetts Rep. James McGovern is the Democratic Party's counterpart to Smith at the head of the bipartisan commission, which says it "undertakes public education activities, provides expert human rights advice," collaborates with all branches of government and "continually engages with national and international civil society organizations."

The commission's namesake is former California Rep. Tom Lantos, who died in 2008 after representing much of San Mateo County for decades.

The first event, as spokesperson King described it, is a "groundbreaking for the Memorial Hall of the Victims of Communism." Few details are available on the yet-to-be-unveiled piece, but the name connects thematically to the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, which was unanimously established by Congress and signed into law by President Bill Clinton in 1993.

That Clinton-era law authorized the construction of a "Victims of Communism Memorial" in Washington, D.C., which President George W. Bush officially introduced in 2007. The foundation's work takes aim at human-rights violations in nations such as Russia and China, but has been accused by some left-wing and anti-war groups of targeting U.S. adversaries with exaggerated claims.

The second unveiling will inaugurate a memorial for the unverified claim that the Chinese government created the coronavirus. "The CCP Virus Sculpture is a collaboration piece, designed by Weiming Chen and sculptors were Weiming Chen and Lide Su with assistants Yongkui Zhao and Jonas Yuan," King told the Daily Press. "Work on it began November 2020."

## The man-made hypothesis

Debate over the still-unconfirmed origin of COVID-19 is gaining new life in the U.S.'s political and media spheres.

Soon after the pandemic reached a global scale in early 2020, social-media bans and conspiracy-theory denouncements met many academics, journalists and everyday internet-scrollers who suggested that the coronavirus may have developed through man-made experiments.

Mainstream consensus quickly became a hypothesis of “zoonotic spillover,” a natural animal-to-human transmission, wherein a bat passed COVID-19 to people via the wild-animal wet market of Wuhan, China.

More than a year later, that consensus is becoming less dismissive of the so-called “lab-leak” hypothesis. On May 5, former New York Times science correspondent Nicholas Wade wrote in the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* that the widely accepted animal-to-human idea was “broken” early in the pandemic after “Chinese researchers found earlier cases in Wuhan with no link to the wet market.”

What needed investigation, he wrote, was a connection between COVID-19 and the Wuhan Institute of Virology, one of the world’s leading coronavirus-research centers.

At the heart of this hypothesis is the Wuhan institute’s “gain-of-function” research: A recent-decades practice in which scientists genetically modify viruses, making them deadlier and more virulent to anticipate potential future pandemics.

“It’s documented that researchers at the Wuhan Institute of Virology were doing gain-of-function experiments designed to make coronaviruses infect human cells and humanized mice,” Wade wrote. “This is exactly the kind of experiment from which a SARS2-like virus could have emerged. The researchers were not vaccinated against the viruses under study, and they were working in the minimal safety conditions of a BSL2 laboratory. So escape of a virus would not be at all surprising.”

Soon after Wade’s article, 18 prominent scientists published a letter in *Science* magazine declaring that “theories of accidental release from a lab and zoonotic spillover both remain viable.”

The letter’s authors — including Ralph Baric, a renowned coronavirus researcher who has worked at the Wuhan institute — criticized a May 2020 investigation by the World Health Organization, saying it hadn’t fairly considered evidence for a lab accident or shown sufficient evidence for its conclusion that an animal-origin was “likely to very likely.”

Multiple reports have added flames to the fire since. On May 23, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that three researchers at the Wuhan institute went to the hospital after becoming



“sick in autumn 2019, before the first identified case of the outbreak, with symptoms consistent with both Covid-19 and seasonal illnesses,” according to a previously undisclosed U.S. intelligence report.

Earlier this week, BuzzFeed News obtained and published thousands of emails to and from Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. Included in the heavily-redacted trove of documents is a partially disclosed email from Feb. 21, 2020, where a Weill Cornell Medical College dermatologist said he and other medical professors “think that there is a possibility that the virus was released from a lab in wuhan, the biotech area of china.”

Fauci forwarded the email to a colleague with a message: “Please handle,” according to BuzzFeed News.

The newfound attention is leading many to re-shape their stance on the pandemic. In line with Chen’s new work, some U.S. officials have pivoted to a focus on the Chinese Communist Party as the potential perpetrator of a cover-up.

If COVID-19 truly is the product of a Wuhan lab-leak, it would raise serious questions about the Chinese government’s conduct. Yet, China would not be the only nation with a stake in such a scandal.

Starting in 2014, the U.S. National Institutes of Health gave at least \$600,000 to U.S.-based nonprofit EcoHealth Alliance that was then paid to the Wuhan institute to study the risk of bat coronaviruses to humans, an issue Fauci and Sen. Rand Paul sparred over in a recent hearing, according to the Daily Mail.

Proponents of the man-made hypothesis also point to Peter Daszak, EcoHealth Alliance’s president. According to investigative research group U.S. Right to Know, Daszak’s nonprofit secretly organized a now-criticized letter signed by prominent scientists last year that condemned “conspiracy theories suggesting that COVID-19 does not have a natural origin.”

Liberty Sculpture Park is located at 37570 Yermo Road, Yermo.

***Charlie McGee covers the city of Barstow and its surrounding communities for the Daily Press. He is also a Report for America corps member with the GroundTruth Project, an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit news organization dedicated to supporting the next generation of journalists in the U.S. and around the world. McGee may be reached at 760-955-5341 or [cmcgee@gannett.com](mailto:cmcgee@gannett.com). Follow him on Twitter @bycharliemcgee.***

# DAILY PRESS

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## NEWS

# Authorities searching for missing autistic man from Victorville

**Martin Estacio** Victorville Daily Press

Published 3:22 p.m. PT Jun. 3, 2021

Authorities are asking for the public's help in finding an autistic man from Victorville who has been missing since Wednesday night.

Randy Bryant Douglas, 24, didn't return after he left his home on Ninth Avenue in Victorville and walked to the Circle K convenience store at the corner of Nisqualli and Balsam Roads, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department said.

He is described as being 6 foot, 2 inches tall and weighing 188 pounds, with black hair and brown eyes.

Douglas was last seen wearing a black shirt, black shorts with a multi-color letter "C" on them and burgundy shoes.

Family members said he does not own a cell phone and has the mental capacity of a 9-year-old child.

Anyone with information is asked by the sheriff's department to call the Victorville Sheriff's Station at 760-241-2911 or email Detective C. Grigsby at [cgrigsby@sbcisd.org](mailto:cgrigsby@sbcisd.org) or Detective J. Necochea at [jnecochea@sbcisd.org](mailto:jnecochea@sbcisd.org).

Callers wishing to remain anonymous can call the We-Tip Hotline at 1-800-78CRIME (27463) or leave information at [www.wetip.com](http://www.wetip.com).

***Daily Press reporter Martin Estacio may be reached at 760-955-5358 or [MEstacio@VVDailyPress.com](mailto:MEstacio@VVDailyPress.com). Follow him on Twitter @DP\_mestacio.***

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LOCAL NEWS

# Man arrested after driving around San Bernardino grocery store parking lot waving rifle: Police



by: [KTLA Digital Staff](#), with additional reporting by Alyssa Kelly

Posted: Jun 2, 2021 / 09:34 PM PDT / Updated: Jun 2, 2021 / 10:19 PM PDT

A man was arrested after waving a rifle in a San Bernardino grocery store parking lot Wednesday officials said.

Officers responded to Cardenas Market at 2045 E Highland Ave. around 5:45 p.m., after receiving multiple phone calls about a man in the parking lot waving a rifle out his car window, Sgt. Gerald Beall of the San Bernardino Police Department said.

Police arrived at the scene and pulled the man over.

The man was arrested, and officers recovered a shotgun and a stolen handgun from the vehicle, according to Beall.

He has not been identified.

“It’s been crazy,” said a woman outside the store, who did not want to be identified, adding that the man was pointing a gun at the store. “I guess we’re all shocked and scared right now because we didn’t know what was going on.”

No further details were immediately available.

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# DAILY PRESS

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## CRIME

# Victorville deputies arrest 2 men after pursuit, later find catalytic converters and meth

**Martin Estacio** Victorville Daily Press

Published 4:41 p.m. PT Jun. 3, 2021

Authorities arrested two men after a pursuit in Victorville earlier this week and said they later found catalytic converters, stolen social security cards and drugs in the suspects' hotel room.

The chase occurred Saturday after deputies received calls that morning of thefts of catalytic converters at parking lots in the area of Bear Valley and Amargosa roads, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department said.

The callers were able to give the license plate for a vehicle and "provided a description of a Gray Acura sedan," sheriff's officials said.

Later that afternoon shortly before 1 p.m., a deputy spotted the Acura in a hotel parking lot at the corner of Oakwood Avenue and Sequoia Street in Hesperia.

Officials said that when the officer attempted to pull the vehicle over, the driver, 28-year-old Scott Catalano of Norwalk, fled.

Catalano reportedly ran a stop sign and drove on the wrong side of the road before losing control of the car.

He and another man, 42-year-old Aaron Ford, then ran away on foot before being taken into custody.

Deputies obtained a search warrant for the vehicle and the hotel room the two men had been staying in.

"During the search, deputies located two catalytic converters, a Sawzall, multiple Sawzall blades, 30 grams of suspected methamphetamine, stolen credit cards, stolen social security

cards, and over \$5,600 in cash,” the sheriff’s department said.

Authorities said they also discovered that the license plate on the Acura did not belong to the vehicle.

Catalano was booked on suspicion of transportation of a controlled substance, conspiracy to commit a crime, grand theft, receiving stolen property, evading a peace officer with disregard to safety and vehicle registration fraud.

Booking records show he has several warrants from both Los Angeles and Orange counties, as well. Catalano was released Thursday but it was not immediately clear whether his release was to another law enforcement agency.

Ford was booked on suspicion of conspiracy to commit a crime, grand theft, receiving stolen property and vehicle registration fraud. He was released Sunday.

## **Thefts of converters on the rise**

Catalytic converters are essential, anti-pollution devices that are prized by thieves due to their value and relative ease of stealing.

The converters contain precious metals and can fetch about \$300 in scrap metal, the Daily Press previously reported.

Thefts of the devices have more than quadrupled from 3,389 reported in 2019 to 14,433 reported in 2020, according to the National Insurance Crime Bureau.

The agency said that with the increasing value of the metals platinum, palladium and rhodium, thefts had also increased.

In March, sheriff’s detectives found about 400 suspected stolen converters — valued at about \$400,000 — at a residence in San Bernardino while serving a search warrant.

Locally, almost 100 stolen catalytic converters were reported in Victorville, Apple Valley and Hesperia as of November last year, with Victorville topping the list at 56 reports received.

According to a sheriff’s deputy, a catalytic converter can be stolen in less than two minutes with readily available tools such as a battery-powered saw.

The NICB recommended installing a catalytic converter anti-theft device and parking a vehicle in a garage if possible.



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# Column: Why is it still so hard for former prisoners to become firefighters in California?



A helicopter prepares to drop water on a vegetation fire last week in Riverside County's Jurupa Valley. (Wally Skalij / Los Angeles Times)

By ERIKA D. SMITH | COLUMNIST

JUNE 4, 2021 5 AM PT



For the second time in two months, Da'Ton Harris showed up for court this week in San Bernardino County, hoping that a judge would have mercy and expunge his criminal record.

He came carrying paperwork — proof that he had battled wildfires while in prison and proof that, in the years since his release, he has become a certified emergency medical responder and works for Cal Fire.

His petition to the judge rested on a new law designed to help formerly incarcerated people become firefighters and, in the process, help replenish California's depleted



firefighting ranks just as we head into another potentially disastrous wildfire season.

But in April, the judge delayed the proceedings to research the law, which he'd never heard of. This week, the judge sent Harris away because the state had yet to confirm his eligibility to take advantage of it.

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“They pretty much tried to deny me from jump,” he told me, exasperated.

Indeed, [in a state ravaged by drought](#), I find it mind-boggling that it's still so difficult for people who gained experience battling wildfires while incarcerated to become fully certified firefighters. It seems like a win-win proposition that every judge should recognize: Men and women coming out of prison find meaningful jobs that put their skills to work, and California gains desperately needed trained firefighters.

Let's hope this is just temporary. It is the first year in which thousands of Californians have been able to petition to have their felony records expunged under Assembly Bill 2147, written by Assemblywoman Eloise Reyes (D-Grand Terrace).



Assemblywoman Eloise Reyes (D-Grand Terrace), second from left, listens to the discussion at the Capitol in Sacramento. She sponsored Assembly Bill 2147 to help formerly incarcerated people become career firefighters. (Rich Pedroncelli / Associated Press)

When Gov. Gavin Newsom signed the bill into law last year, many saw it as a solution to the long-running injustice of letting prisoners — most of them Black and Latino — do grunt work for slave wages in state fire camps, and then denying them firefighting jobs with proper pay and benefits upon their release.

Months later, it's clear that AB 2147 is a solution. It's just not a particularly quick or straightforward one.

Harris is just one example. For months, the Victorville resident has been working with Giovanni Pesce, an attorney with the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, in hopes of getting a judge to expunge his record, including the drug charge that led him to stints at multiple prison fire camps.

Without Pesce, Harris is convinced his case would've already been thrown out. The Judicial Council of California hasn't even provided judges yet with the proper forms for AB 2147 expungements.

In the meantime, Harris is waiting on the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to confirm to the judge that he successfully completed fire camp. He is used to waiting, though — and not giving up.



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Commentary on people, politics and the quest for a more equitable California.

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It took him years, long stretches of which were spent away from his wife and children, and a lot of workarounds to build a resume impressive enough to land a job with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. And he did it, despite the fact that he lacks an emergency medical technician license, which he can't qualify for unless his record is expunged.

“I was going to every fire station, telling them my story, showing them my qualifications,” Harris told me. “And they laughed at me. They laughed, and they told me I wasn't gonna never be a fireman.”

Today, he's also on staff with the [Forestry and Fire Recruitment Program](#), a nonprofit based in Pasadena that provides training and support for former prisoners who want to become career firefighters. That's how Harris found Pesce.



Participants in the Forestry and Fire Recruitment Program line up for a run around the Rose Bowl. (Claire Hannah Collins / Los Angeles Times)

That's also how Chris Tracy found Pesce after he was released from prison in August. He got out early, as part of the state's safety precautions for COVID-19. While normally that would be welcome news, particularly for Tracy who has a young son back home in Escondido, the timing meant he missed joining an elite program designed for formerly incarcerated fighters in Ventura County.

Instead, Tracy has resorted to looking for work with private companies that hire firefighters to protect their property during wildfires. The pay is decent, but he'd rather work as a public servant.

He's preparing to go for a judge with a petition for expungement, but he's worried that the way AB 2147 is written, it won't allow the court to do away with his previous felonies for auto theft, leaving him unable to earn the EMT license necessary to be a fully certified firefighter with the state, and numerous counties and cities.

“It’s a good bill,” Tracy said. “It’s meant well, but I think it’s written poorly because it’s not expansive enough for [all of] us to be able to get an EMT cert, which a lot of these fire stations are asking for. It kind of defeats the purpose.”

Others have had more luck.

Rudy Amaya, who spent years in prison on a variety of drug charges, was released in 2011 but only recently was able to find work as a firefighter with the U.S. Forest Service. He thinks that helped him win over the judge last month and get his record expunged.

“The judge was even hyped about doing it because he said he had never seen anybody expunge their record to do what I done,” he told me. “He’s done it for people to go to other countries, but not for wildland firefighting. So he really commended me on what I’m doing.”

It’s unclear just how many people have tried to expunge their records so far under AB 2147, and even less clear how many petitions have been approved or denied or are still tied up in the process.



Rudy Amaya, a former inmate firefighter, takes an exam in Pasadena. (Claire Hannah Collins / Los Angeles Times)

Reyes said her office is starting to collect that information as part of a broader assessment of what cleanup legislation she'll need to introduce in the coming years. She sees AB 2147, which emerged as a compromise with the firefighters' union, as an "initial phase."

"Clearly, it's not going to be perfect in its implementation because the judges and the attorneys and even the advocates are just learning about it," she said. "I think it's important that we give grace in that regard."

But in the meantime, heading into wildfire season, there's a [shortage of firefighters](#) and, after multiple emergency declarations from Newsom, the state is [effectively in a drought](#). A group of state lawmakers has introduced a package of bills called the Blueprint for a Fire Safe California that's designed to help, but it won't come soon enough.

Reyes is the first to admit that becoming a firefighter should be much easier for people who spent months and, in some cases, years doing the back-breaking work of clearing brush and digging fire lines. Thousands of mostly Black and Latino men have served their time but are essentially still being punished for their crimes.



CALIFORNIA

**Column: California could soon end its dumb policy on inmate firefighters. What took so long?**

Aug. 31, 2020

Harris is proud that he has been able to find ways to work as a firefighter despite a system that has kept so many hardworking aspiring firefighters out. He already works with Cal Fire, but he wants more: to work for a fire department closer to home in Victorville so he can be near his family, be a better public servant with the proper certifications and “get that real money.”

He just needs a judge to cooperate. He’s due back in court in July.

“Everything in life takes time,” Harris texted me.

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FIRES



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# California city declares itself a 2nd Amendment Freedom City



Dawn Vogelgesang, a San Clemente resident for 22 years, congratulates Councilman Gene James after an ordinance he introduced to make San Clemente O.C.'s first and the state's second 2nd Amendment Sanctuary City passed, June 1, 2021. (Photo by Steven Georges, Contributing Photographer)

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By **ERIKA I. RITCHIE** | Southern California News Group

PUBLISHED: June 3, 2021 at 5:27 a.m. | UPDATED: June 3, 2021 at 5:29 a.m.

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San Clemente City Council members declared the city's support for people's right to bear arms, but stopped short of labeling the town a "sanctuary city" for the Second Amendment.





For a fourth time in two months, City Councilman Gene James brought a resolution up for the council's consideration to make San Clemente a Second Amendment sanctuary city, joining the city of Needles which was the first in California to do so early last year. He delayed previous votes for various reasons.

This time on Tuesday, June 1, dozens packed the overflow area outside City Hall and nearly 40 people spoke for and against the idea – many becoming emotional.

After more than two hours of discussion, the City Council, in a 3-2 vote, passed a resolution supporting gun owners' Constitutional rights to bear arms, but dropped the term sanctuary city.

Councilwoman Laura Ferguson joined Councilman Gene James, who wrote the resolution, and Councilman Steve Knoblock, who supported James' effort, in passing the non-binding resolution, which means it is a symbolic gesture and doesn't change local laws.

"I'm a big supporter of the Second Amendment," Ferguson said.

But in voicing her support, she said, "I have an issue with the word sanctuary, it created a lot of panic in the community."

Knoblock also voiced concern about the "sanctuary" label.

"The phrase has been hijacked in the last few years," he said, proposing using the words "Freedom City" instead.

He also asserted that there are threats to the Second Amendment.

"Anyone who says the Second Amendment is not under attack are deceiving themselves," he said. "Totalitarian nations first disarm their populace."

James changed the wording to: "The city of San Clemente is hereby declared a Second Amendment Freedom City and opposes any effort to eliminate or diminish the Second Amendment."

In addition, the resolution is supportive of background checks and encourages all firearm owners to complete safety training and ensure guns are safely stored. It also calls for gun owners to teach their children firearm safety. The resolution will now be sent to the California State legislature and to the governor.

Public comments were split nearly equally with 19 people speaking against the resolution and 18 in support.



Those in opposition called the resolution divisive and said it would make the city a sanctuary for gun owners and not for families as the town's founder, Ole Hanson, intended.

"This will not help businesses. Many have told me they will not come to San Clemente and will take their business elsewhere," one long-time resident said, saying this wasn't a local issue. "I'm saddened this is up for discussion. It's an embarrassment. Let San Clemente be known for the city it is, our seaside charm and small-town values."

Some in opposition wore orange to support National Gun Violence Awareness Day and Weekend to honor lives taken or forever changed by gun violence.

But others, including military veterans and non-military residents who identified themselves as gun owners, called for a need to show the Second Amendment support.

"I've watched California change and it isn't for the better," said a woman who identified herself as a 63-year resident and native Californian. "I wonder why these people are so afraid of guns. The criminal, the lawbreakers will not worry that we have strict gun laws and will use their guns freely.

"If someone opens fire, I'm praying to God there will be someone there with their God-given rights that will take the criminal down," she said. "I hope we have the guts to show California that we appreciate our Constitution."

James said he sees "our rights being eroded."

"This is about the right to bear arms, which should not be infringed. The rule of law is being ignored," he said.

James added that he was sorry about how divisive the topic had become, but added, "Sometimes by hitting arguments head-on, we come out on the other side understanding each other's points."

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NEWS

## Census data shows CA voter participation up across the board

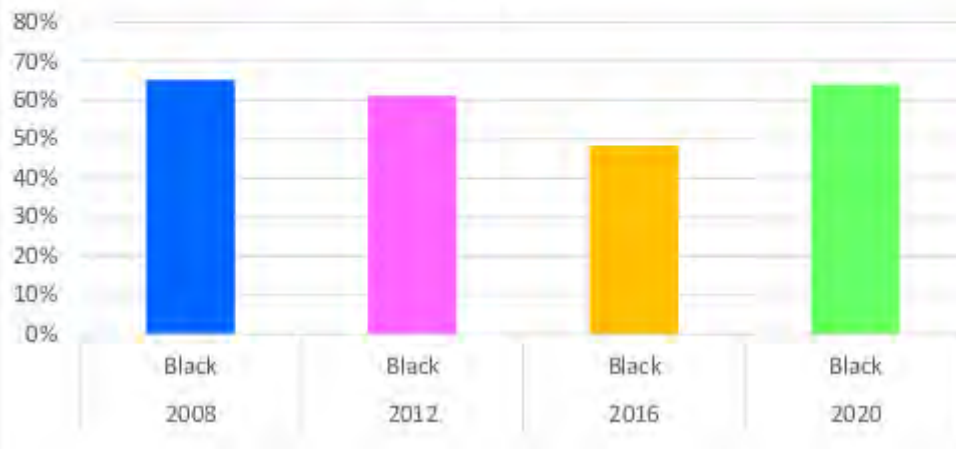


BY **SCOTT SORIANO** POSTED 06.02.2021

The U.S. Census Bureau's voter survey of the [November 2020 election](https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/voting-and-registration/p20-585.html) (<https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/voting-and-registration/p20-585.html>) shows that, once again, California saw increased participation in general and across nearly all demographics.

A startling finding in the recently released data: In 2020, African American participation hit 64%, very close to 2008's record 65.2%, when Barack Obama ran for president for the first time.

## Percentage Voted, Eligible Voters, Black



Of California's 25.9 million eligible voters, 65.1% hit the polls, up from 2016's 57.9%. California's 2020 participation also topped 2008's presidential election, when 63.4% of eligible voters turned out to vote for Barack Obama or John McCain.

Like 2008, the 2020 presidential election featured a very strong personality.

“What we saw all across the nation was a galvanized electorate: People galvanized for Donald Trump and people galvanized against him,” says Thad Kousser, chair of US San Diego's political science department. “That's the standard explanation of why this election brought out the highest number of adults ever.”

As with the 2018 midterm election, 2020's increased participation was driven by demographic groups that typically post lower than average turnouts. Asian American participation among eligible voter jumped from 2016's 51.9% to 59.9%. Latino voter participation went from 47.2% in 2016 to 54.6%.

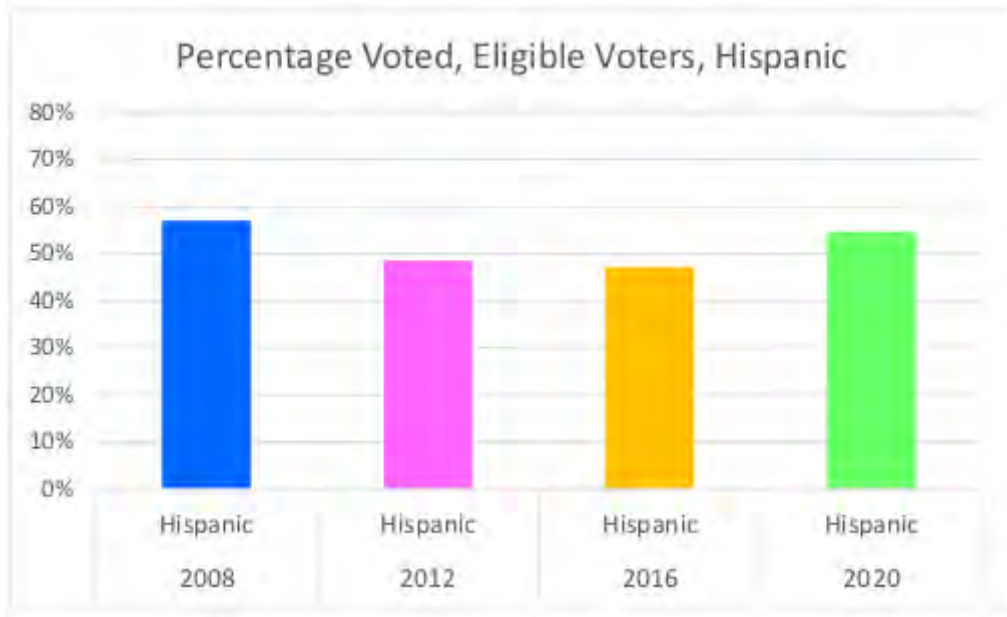
## Percentage Voted, Eligible Voters, Asian



In 2016, only 48.2% of voting-eligible African Americans made it to the polls, down from 2012's 61.1%. But last year, African American participation rose by 12 percentage points

Young voter participation, once again, saw large gains. In 2016, 42.7% of eligible voters 18 to 24 and 54.9% of voters 25 to 34 turned out. In 2020, those percentages jumped to 53.6% (18 to 24) and 60% (25

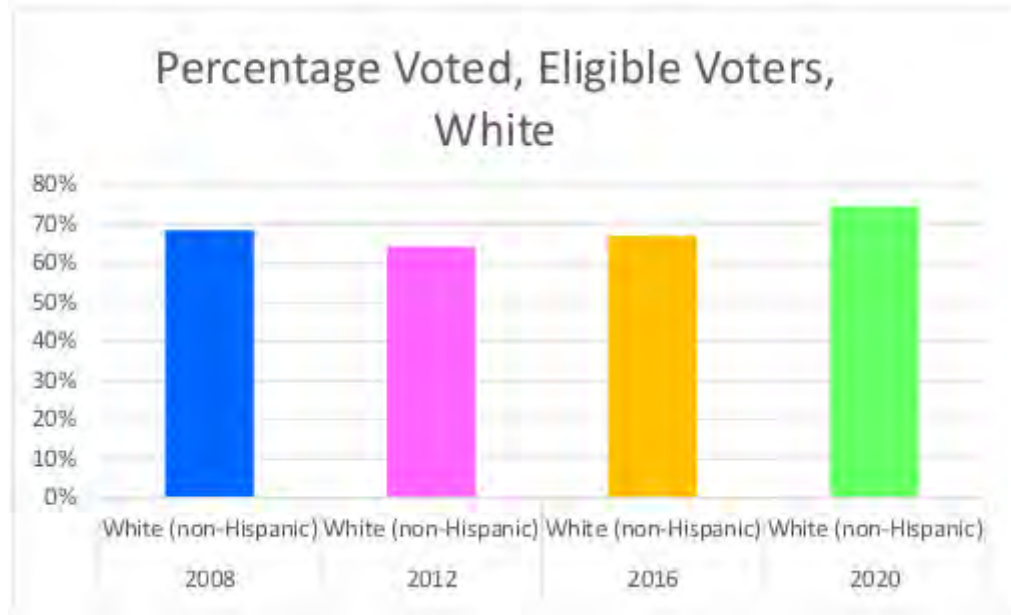
to 34).



The question many are asking is, “Can the trend of increased participation be sustained?” Kousser noted.

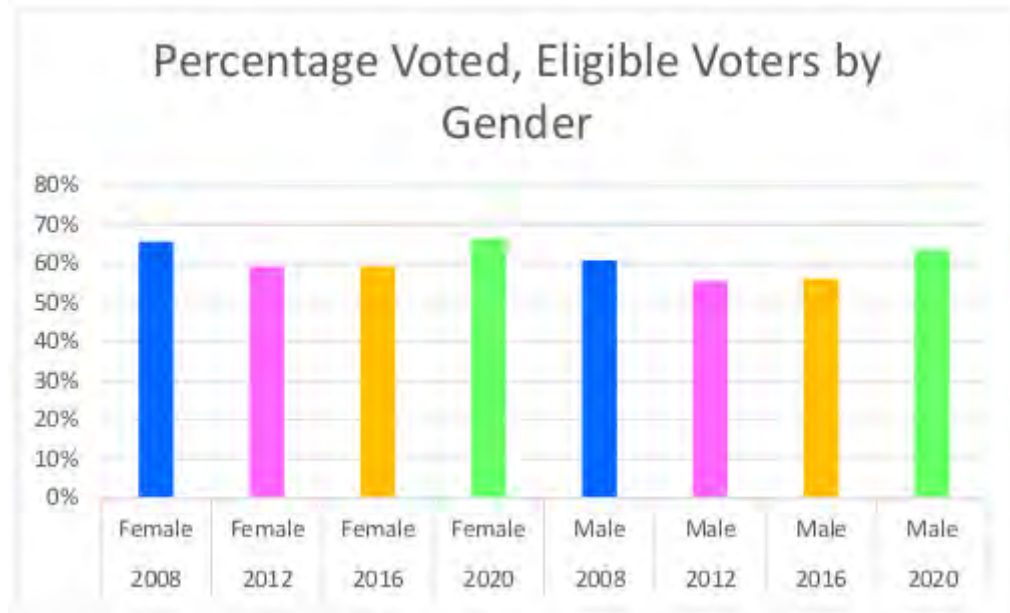
“As the stakes of politics may seem a little bit lower as we move, as many people are expecting, to more ‘normal’ political times does that lead to a decline in turnout overall,” he said, “which always brings especially deep declines in parts of the population that are only intermittently engaged.”

A lot of what happens with participation hinges on voter registrations. Census numbers show that when people are registered to vote, there is a greater chance that they will actually go to the polls, especially when the stakes in an election seem high.



In 2016, 89.6% of California’s registered voters voted. In 2020, that percentage jumped to a record 93.8%. Nationally, those percentages were 87.3% (2016) and 91.9% (2020).

“Being registered is almost all of the ballgame,” said Kousser. “When we were hitting the depths of low turnout in 2014, to find an election with a smaller raw number of voters you have to go back to the 1960s. What you are seeing now is that candidates matter.”



However, Kousser says voter suppression and voter registration purges can affect the ultimate results. “We’ve seen very quickly a set of laws passed in conservative and especially swing states that, with redistricting, can set up a set of logistical hurdles to turnout that are more important than who is on the ballot.”

Currently, Californians do not have to deal with voter suppression laws. Its voting rolls are also not subject to the arbitrary purges that happen in some other states. Thus, voter participation hinges on the candidates and issues in a particular election, as well as how important voters feel a particular election is.

When asked if 2020’s record participation foreshadows what turnout might be in a 2021 gubernatorial recall election, Kousser replied that off-year elections typically see turnouts “much lower” than midterms, which typically see 50% to 60% turnout of registered voters.

“A galvanizing candidate like Arnold Schwarzenegger or Donald Trump can help spur higher-than-typical turnout, but without such a candidate emerging, I think it will take tremendous mobilization efforts to push more than 60% of registered voters to participate in a recall held in the summer or early fall of 2021,” he said.

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