

## Amid strife over electronic dance festivals, county reviewing task force recommendations

By Shea Johnson

Staff Writer

Posted Aug 26, 2017 at 2:32 PM

Updated Aug 26, 2017 at 2:32 PM

One San Bernardino County supervisor wouldn't flinch if electronic dance music festivals were outright prohibited in the county. Another sought, at least, to shorten the end times for the popular shows.

SAN BERNARDINO — One San Bernardino County supervisor wouldn't flinch if electronic dance music festivals were outright prohibited in the county. Another sought, at least, to shorten the end times for the popular shows.

But neither options were on the table Tuesday when Supervisors were presented with **38 recommendations to mitigate local concerns over such festivals** hosted by Live Nation Worldwide, Inc. at the Glen Helen Amphitheater.

The recommendations were made by a task force created by the board last summer **after supervisors briefly considered terminating the county's agreement with the entertainment company** — the culmination of a wave of complaints about noise, traffic and safety from residents in the vicinity of the Devore facility.

The multi-agency task force's recommendations, which officials want addressed by mid-September, include completing an on-site event operation plan; creating educational materials for concert attendees and the public; supporting the development of a special event/mass gathering medical policy; and developing or revising traffic management plans.

The suggestions would apply to all concerts held on county property, although they were spurred specifically by resident strife over disruption to neighborhood tranquility and the threat to public safety, which continued Tuesday.

“The raves bring the drugs, which brings the attendees, which turns and creates profits for the county,” said Darcee Klapp. “How shameful. Again I say follow the money and the drugs.”

Since 2013, the county’s agreement with Live Nation has afforded up to four rave-style events annually at the venue, including the wildly popular Nocturnal Wonderland and Beyond Wonderland festivals.

James Ramos, supervisor of the 3rd District, expressed displeasure that not included in the recommendations were the core issues he believed galvanized conversations over the existence of raves here in the first place.

“Reading through those recommendations,” Ramos said, “no one has brought up, at least that I’m aware of, what would be the point to where the event would be cancelled or shut down based on some bodily harm that continues to circulate around these events?”

During the agreement’s first three years, there were at least two drug-related deaths, 99 transports to the emergency room and nearly 1,000 arrests, according to a presentation last summer by 2nd District Supervisor Janice Rutherford.

“If today, we were voting on banning these types of concerts in San Bernardino County,” Ramos added, “I would be in favor of it.”

Rutherford sought, but did not receive, formal support from colleagues to ensure that any negotiations beyond the agreement’s expiration in June 2018 would include a provision that all shows end at 11 p.m. and not 2 a.m. as currently allowed.

“In the absence of a complete ban, an 11 p.m. (end) time is more than reasonable,” she said. “It was the original promise made to this community by our predecessors when the county established this concert venue.”

Fourth District Supervisor Curt Hagman, the board's vice chairman, said he was concerned about tying the hands of potentially different supervisors at that time, concluding that instead officials would seek to incorporate as many remedies as possible into the plan until the contract expires.

Rutherford later asked that county staff examine the feasibility of adding portable toilets near locations where traffic tends to build up in order to avoid exposed concert-goers using the bathroom in outside, public places.

Josie Gonzales, supervisor of the 5th District, noted that the time between now and June 2018 was fitting for Live Nation to show it was serious about mitigating issues raised by residents.

During last summer's meeting on the topic, Matt Prieshoff, chief operating officer for the company in California, vowed that Live Nation took concerns "very, very seriously" and had already begun working on noise abatement.

Live Nation also held a community meeting July 26 at the venue to "update and hear concerns from the local residents regarding the Hard Music Festival that was held Aug. 5 and 6," according to a county staff report.

First District Supervisor Robert Lovingood, the board chairman, asked for a personal briefing before Labor Day on all points that were raised by the task force, including assurances that improvements were being undertaken.

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## County applauded at Breakfast with your Supervisor



San Bernardino County Supervisor Janice Rutherford announcing the return of funding for promoting tourism for the mountain communities at her Breakfast with your Supervisor event held on August 18 (Photo by Gail Fry)

Sunday, Aug 27, 2017

By Gail Fry

The audience erupted in applause when San Bernardino County Supervisor Janice Rutherford announced at the August 18 Breakfast with your Supervisor event, the approval of a chamber-county partnership program where a portion of transient occupancy taxes collected from people staying at hotels or shorter-term rentals will be allocated to promote tourism.

According to an August 9 press release, obtained by *The Alpenhorn News*, the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors at its August 8 meeting approved a Chamber-County Partnership Program allocating \$350,000 to the County Economic Development Agency for a "pilot program" where a portion of transient occupancy taxes collected from each community in unincorporated county areas will be used to "promote tourism."

The press release explained transient occupancy tax (TOT) first implemented in 1964 was created specifically to fund recreation and in 1980 the county began "sharing the tax proceeds with local chambers of commerce" to help "promote tourism."

After 2012, the program was "phased out" the press release explained, "when an audit determined some chambers were using the funds for day-to-day operations rather than tourism marketing." The revised program was re-structured to "avoid the issues" with chambers' misuse of funds by establishing a list of "qualifying expenses."

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"I was able to get my colleagues to support a program to allow the chambers once again to use portions of the occupancy tax to do outreach, publicity, marketing for tourism," Rutherford announced, adding, "So Chambers are going to start to see that money flow again."

Rutherford explained the program "allows you all to control the messages that are sent, what's advertised, where it's advertised" with the County "placing some controls and limits on that money" so chambers "don't get into trouble like what happened before."

"We are hopeful we will be able to work together to come up with a sustainable program," Rutherford voiced, explaining, "As the TOT grows and we attract more visitors there will be a bigger pot of money."

"Our main industries up here are tourism and real estate, so this goes right to the heart of our economy," Lake Arrowhead Communities Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Robin Bull voiced, explaining, "It's critical to reinvest to make it grow, and this is going to allow us to do even more than we are already doing now to promote tourism."

Rutherford talked about the new 24-hour short-term rental complaint hotline (888) 399-8591, explaining the county's new ordinance requires permits for short-term rentals, limits the number occupants and vehicles while requiring owner/manager to provide 24-hour contact to resolve and respond to complaints within one hour.

Regarding the Community of Crestline and improvements to Lake Gregory, Rutherford shared dredging of the lake is now complete, work was underway to construct stratifications to "capture that silt before it gets to the lake" while describing dam improvements as "a long complicated process."

Rutherford addressing the impact dam construction could have on Crestline's tourism assured, "The County is committed to do whatever it can to keep things moving good and do the publicity to continue to drive visitors up here even during the construction process."

Rutherford introduced special guest Crestline/Lake Gregory Chamber of Commerce President Louis Boehle as her keynote speaker.

"We're working really hard on re-branding Crestline so people will realize what Crestline is really about. We want people to realize it is a wholesome community, it's family-oriented," Boehle voiced, explaining, the chamber is re-branding and planning several new events. Boehle encouraged Crestline residents wanting change to "get involved" explaining, "voluntarism is a great way to give back to your community" and "helps you with your inner self." He advised everyone to visit their website [crestlinechamber.org](http://crestlinechamber.org) and Facebook page *Crestline/Lake Arrowhead Chamber of Commerce*.

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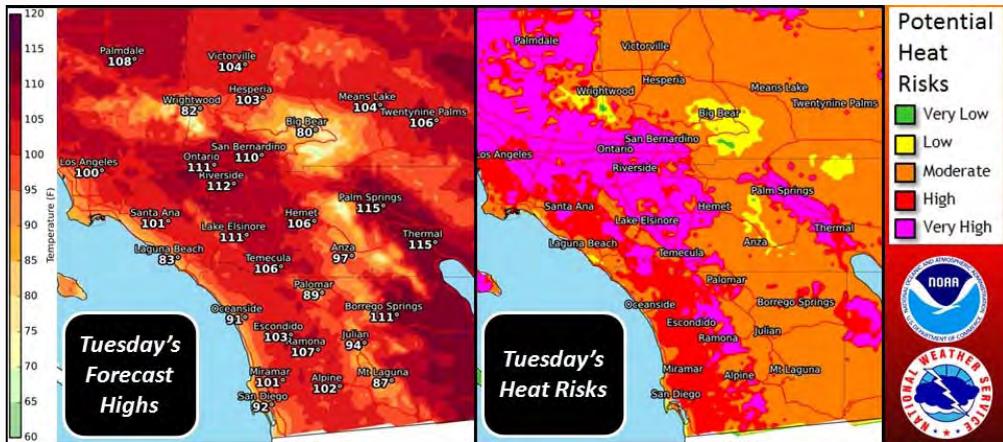
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LOCAL NEWS

# Southern California to be under the broiler this week; heat wave could set records



This week's heat wave is expected to peak Tuesday, Aug. 29, when highs could surpass 110 degrees in parts of the Inland Empire while staying in the 80s along the coasts and in the mountains. (Image via National Weather Service)

By **ALICIA ROBINSON** | [arobinson@scng.com](mailto:arobinson@scng.com) | The Press-Enterprise  
August 27, 2017 at 4:12 pm



As Southern Californians wrap up their summer vacations, the summer heat is making a return, with potential for some record-breaking temperatures in Southern California on Monday and Tuesday.

In the Inland Empire, Riverside's high on Monday could surpass the record of 108 that has stood since 1981, while Lake Elsinore could come close to its records of 110 on Monday and 111 on Tuesday, according to the National Weather Service. Temperatures near or over 110 degrees are in the forecast at least through Wednesday for the Inland valleys.

In the San Fernando and San Gabriel valleys, triple-digit highs are predicted starting Monday and possibly lasting until the weekend, while the Los Angeles County coast will be in the mid-80s to low 90s to start the week before settling into the 80s through the weekend.

The Orange County forecast calls for highs in the 80s at the beaches and the 90s inland, with Newport Beach possibly reaching 85 on Tuesday, which would match a record set in 1931.

All that heat can put a strain on both people's health and the power grid.

To minimize the possibility of outages, electric providers were urging people to limit their use of power by setting thermostats to 78, keeping blinds closed during the afternoons, hanging clothes to dry and unplugging appliances and devices that aren't in use.

"We're reminding customers that they need to conserve energy as they're able so as not to put a strain on the equipment and on the system," Southern California Edison spokeswoman Susan Cox said.

Riverside Public Utilities officials are expecting normal operations this week but still advise customers to save energy at peak times during the day, spokesman Robbie Silver wrote in an email.

Authorities advise people to stay indoors during the hottest part of the day; anyone who has to be outdoors should find shade when possible, take frequent breaks and stay hydrated.

Those without adequate air conditioning can visit public facilities such as libraries and community and senior centers, which often double as cooling centers during heat waves.

Locations and hours for Southern California cooling centers can be found at [www.cpuc.ca.gov/CoolingCenters/](http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/CoolingCenters/) and at [www.sce.com](http://www.sce.com) under "Rebates, incentives and savings tips" on the "Your home" page.

A map on the National Weather Service's website Sunday showed nearly all of Southern California was subject to either an [excessive heat warning](#) or, in the mountains and along the Orange and San Diego county coasts, the slightly less serious [heat advisory](#). Those are expected to stay in place at least through Wednesday.

Temperatures across Southern California will be similarly hot Monday and Tuesday, National Weather Service meteorologist Jimmy Taeger said. Humidity will mostly be low, except "If you're close to the coast it'll feel a little sticky" early in the week, he said.

"We have the possibility of some afternoon and evening thunderstorms in the mountains and even parts of the Inland Empire" on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, Taeger said, but there's no connection between the region's weather and Tropical Storm Harvey in southeast Texas.

The heat and low humidity will elevate fire danger to a little above normal levels and conditions remain dry in Southern California, but with no wind in the forecast and only moderately low humidity, the weather service has not issued a fire weather watch, meteorologist Brandt Maxwell said.

The region's weather could remain hot longer-term as well. The weather service's Climate Prediction Center forecast about a 50 percent to 70 percent chance of hotter-than-normal temperatures across Southern California for the next two weeks.

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## Alicia Robinson

Alicia Robinson has been at The Press-Enterprise since 2007 and has covered Riverside and local government for most of that time, but she has also written about Norco, Corona, homeless issues, Alzheimer's disease, streetcars, butterflies, horses and chickens.

She grew up in the Midwest but earned Southern California native status during many hours spent in traffic. Two big questions Alicia tries to answer with stories about government are: how is it supposed to work, and how is it working?

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# Family Seeks the Public's Help in Search for Couple Missing in Joshua Tree National Park

**Posted: Saturday, August 26, 2017 9:07 am**

JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK, Twentynine Palms, California – Over four weeks have passed since searchers began looking for Rachel Nguyen and Joseph Orbeso, a couple who disappeared in Joshua Tree National Park. With thousands of hours of search time by hundreds of searchers resulting in few leads, the National Park Service (NPS) and the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department have entered into what is known as a limited continuous search mode. During this phase of the search, agencies will continue to methodically search areas of high probability within the park whenever sufficient resources are available. They lack the staff and resources to carry on the search with the same intensity as during the initial phase.

Both Nguyen and Orbeso entered the park at approximately 6:45am on Thursday, July 27 and have not been seen or heard from since. An extensive search has continued in the park since July 28. This search has included resources from the NPS, San Bernardino County Sheriff's Dept., Joshua Tree National Park Search and Rescue (JOSAR), San Bernardino County Search and Rescue, the Bureau of Land Management, Orange County Sheriff's Dept., San Diego County Sheriff's Dept., California Highway Patrol, Riverside County Sheriff's Dept., U.S. Border Patrol and the California Rescue Dog Association. The NPS called in a special regional overhead team made up of investigators from Yosemite National Park and Sequoia/Kings Canyon National Park to review the ongoing search. They were joined by an NPS drone specialist from Grand Canyon National Park. Canine teams from JOSAR are also continuing the search when temperatures allow. Family members and friends of the missing hikers also participated in the search.

The families of the missing pair have asked the public to engage in helping their recovery. They are offering a reward of \$10,000 for any information that leads to the successful and safe return of Nguyen and Orbeso. It is their hope that the missing party may have left on their own accord and are alive somewhere outside the park. The couple's vehicle was found at the trailhead of a popular hiking trail known as the Maze Loop.

Anyone who might have been hiking or stopping in the area who recalls seeing a couple in their early twenties, or having other pertinent information about the two are asked to contact the San Bernardino Dispatch at 909- 383-5652, and request the detective division.

For more information see, [www.nps.gov/jotr](http://www.nps.gov/jotr), or follow us on Twitter @JoshuaTreeNPS, and on Facebook at Joshua Tree NPS

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## Probe ongoing into crash involving Apple Valley top official's sedan

By Matthew Cabe  
Staff Writer

By Shea Johnson  
Staff Writer

Posted Aug 25, 2017 at 7:02 PM

Updated Aug 25, 2017 at 7:02 PM

The California Highway Patrol said Friday it has identified the driver of a Cadillac, owned by Apple Valley Town Asst. Manager Marc Puckett, believed to be involved in a hit-and-run crash on Interstate 15. Yet the agency declined to provide the name.

RANCHO CUCAMONGA — The California Highway Patrol said Friday it has identified the driver of a Cadillac, owned by Apple Valley Asst. Town Manager Marc Puckett, believed to be involved in a hit-and-run crash on Interstate 15. Yet the agency declined to provide the name.

Including the Cadillac driver's account into its investigation will be a critical aspect of creating a comprehensive picture of what occurred July 20. CHP officials have been careful about divulging information as to not compromise the ongoing probe.

"We're not in any means trying to protect anybody of anything," CHP spokesman Jesus Garcia explained, "we just want you guys to understand the wheels turn a little bit slow, and we've just got to have enough time to do everything right."

A new CHP incident report reviewed Friday by the Daily Press also does not name the driver. It's a more thorough report than a previous one obtained by this newspaper, yet still offers no steadfast conclusion **on the felony hit-and-**

**run investigation that has ensnared the top Apple Valley official.**

The 2011 black Cadillac CTS sedan is registered to Puckett, who has adamantly denied rear-ending a Toyota Prius and then fleeing the scene. He acknowledged descending into a flood control channel off I-15 near Foothill Boulevard after “something ran out in front of me,” but insisted no other vehicles were involved.

With his cellphone dead, he said he used someone’s phone and called his son, who picked him up. Ultimately, he rejected as “absolute crap” the narrative provided by the Prius’ driver to CHP officials.

With the statement offered by the driver of the Prius, Lola Espinoza, and by a CHP officer’s observations at the scene, a preliminary summary was constructed by the CHP: The Cadillac was traveling at an unsafe speed, faster than 60 mph, when it collided into the back of the Prius.

Out of control, the Cadillac traveled down the embankment, according to the CHP report reviewed by this newspaper. The Prius, now disabled, came to rest in the No. 4 lane and right shoulder of the freeway.

The Cadillac, upright at the bottom of a right-shoulder dirt embankment, had sustained moderate front-end damage, including a broken front bumper, crushed grille and crumpled hood.

The Prius, on the right shoulder, sustained what CHP officials described as “major damage”: a crushed and scraped rear bumper, scraped rear fenders, buckled and dented rear deck lid, and shattered rear windshield.

Upon arriving at the scene at 11:55 p.m., or 13 minutes after the call, a CHP officer determined the crash to be a hit-and-run incident, with minor injuries. The Cadillac’s driver was not around and Espinoza was treated at an Ontario hospital after complaining of pain to her left side, left wrist, neck and back.

Interviewed by authorities four days after the crash, she could not provide details about the other vehicle or driver “due to the darkness at the time of the collision,” according to the report.

At the time the report was reviewed by a senior officer, Aug. 2, officials had not identified who was behind the wheel of the Cadillac. A letter of involvement was sent to Puckett's address in southern Orange County "in an attempt to establish the identity of" the driver.

Felony hit-and-run charges could be recommended, but it's not imminent, according to CHP officials.

— *Staff Writer Paola Baker contributed to this report.*

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## **Valley Voices: How to fight violent crime without raising taxes**

**By Joseph W. Brady**

Posted Aug 27, 2017 at 12:01 AM

Updated Aug 27, 2017 at 9:14 PM

Having laid out the case against a sales tax increase earmarked for public safety in my most recent Valley Voices column I am writing to offer some alternatives for addressing violent crime without raising taxes:

Cities and the county should file a claim with the Commission on State Mandates to recover the costs of Propositions 47 and 57 and AB 953, the Racial and Identity Profiling Act. Although both Proposition 47 (which downgraded crimes such as shoplifting, forgery and drug possession to misdemeanors and allowed those convicted to renegotiate their punishments) and 57 (which increased parole chances for convicted felons while increasing prisoners' credit for good behavior) were craftily written to avoid triggering provisions of California law that require the state to reimburse local governments for unfunded mandates, these measures have clearly imposed costs upon our communities.

Similarly, the reporting requirements of AB 953 are so onerous that they have actually taken cops off the street to file state-mandated reports. Our cities and the county should submit a claim to the Commission on State Mandates, which is empowered to hear and act on claims that the state has imposed a reimbursable mandate on local agencies.

Propose a state initiative or legislation requiring that prisoners released from federal, state or county prisons and jails be returned to their communities of origin. Correctional facilities should not be allowed to dump released convicts into vulnerable High Desert cities as was revealed in a recent Daily Press article. State law should require released prisoners to be returned to the communities in which they resided at the time of their conviction.

Adopt local ordinances requiring correctional facilities to notify the city in advance with the dates, time, location and identities of prisoners to be released into their cities. It is absurd that vans (sometimes unmarked) can simply drop off groups of released prisoners into our communities without at least notifying local officials of their impending arrival. On behalf of my colleagues in the local business community I strongly urge City Councils to take immediate action to stop this practice.

Increase private security patrols. With the annual cost of a sheriff's deputy or local beat cop exceeding \$100,000 and sometimes \$200,000 including overtime and benefits, shopping centers, downtown business and homeowner's associations should consider hiring private security officers to patrol areas vulnerable to violent crime.

Expand Neighborhood Watch programs and patrols. Every neighborhood on the High Desert needs an active watch program that includes not only reporting suspicious activities to law enforcement authorities but also volunteer patrols to help keep our neighborhoods safe. Under the forceful leadership of its former president, Becky Otwell, the High Desert Association of Realtors has been on record in support of Neighborhood Watch since 2015.

Hire and mentor more young people. Organizations should redouble their efforts to hire young workers into paying jobs, reducing their vulnerability to recruitment into lives of crime. Older High Desert residents who have had successful careers should consider mentoring at-risk young people to show them how to become productive citizens.

The alternatives I've outlined focus mainly on enforcement because I believe that it offers the best chance of immediate results. Others can surely contribute ideas centered on prevention and treatment that may offer longer term benefits. My interest in this issue stems, in part, from the challenges that I and other commercial real estate brokers have encountered recruiting businesses to the area in light of its reputation for high crime. This is a matter of utmost importance that demands serious and widespread public discussion.

Finally, regarding that dialogue, the Daily Press, in response to my call for a public forum to discuss violent crime in the High Desert, has agreed to host a Facebook Live discussion at its offices on Oct. 2 in which numerous local leaders

have already agreed to participate. Residents will be invited to participate in the forum by submitting their questions and comments via Facebook.

*Joseph W. Brady is president of the Bradco Companies and a Victor Valley Community College District trustee.*

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## **Adelanto's State of the City program planned Sept. 21**

**By Shea Johnson  
Staff Writer**

Posted Aug 26, 2017 at 1:13 PM

Updated Aug 26, 2017 at 1:39 PM

City officials say this year's State of the City event, scheduled for the evening of Sept. 21, will stray from past formalities and instead be a festive affair, where residents will be able to enjoy free food and entertainment.

ADELANTO — City officials say this year's State of the City event, scheduled for the evening of Sept. 21, will stray from past formalities and instead be a festive affair, where residents will be able to enjoy free food and entertainment.

"We decided that the typical program conducted in conjunction with a Chamber of Commerce function, inviting business leaders, was missing our key audience — our constituents," Mayor Rich Kerr said in a statement.

"Business leaders are most likely already engaged and are aware of what's happening in the city," he added. "We wanted to make sure that our residents along with the business community and civic leaders receive the same information at the same time about our status and our future."

Kerr and Mayor Pro Tem Jermaine Wright said as much, although Wright was far more fiery, during Wednesday's City Council meeting.

The program is planned for 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Adelanto Stadium, and will be free of charge to the public, officials said.

In what thus far has been a banner year for the city, it's likely that financial solvency and commercial cannabis projections will be core rallying points, as well as newly minted activities at the stadium including independent baseball and

football leagues.

But Kerr said attendees will also “be surprised to learn about the efforts involving manufacturing, industrial and residential plans for the city” away from commercial marijuana.

Reservations for State of the City are recommended. Interested parties should visit <http://tiny.cc/Adelanto> to RSVP.

For more information, contact event coordinator Cindy Herrera at 760-246-2300, ext. 11122.

*Shea Johnson can be reached at 760-955-5368 or [SJohnson@VVDailyPress.com](mailto:SJohnson@VVDailyPress.com). Follow him on Twitter at [@DP\\_Shea](https://twitter.com/DP_Shea).*

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## Hwy 18 Pavement Rehabilitation in Big Bear Continues Monday August, 28

in [Community News](#), [For Your Information](#), [Informational](#), [Mountain Region](#), [News](#), [Subject](#), [Ticker](#), [Traffic](#) /  
by [Michael P. Neufeld](#) / on August 27, 2017 at 5:01 am /

**By Susan A. Neufeld**

Big Bear, CA – The paving project in Big Bear, from Talmage Road to Pineview Drive, continues Monday, August 28. The Work will be done Monday through Thursday, from 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. There will be no work done Friday or over the Labor Day Weekend and will resume Wednesday, September, 6.

Lane closure and traffic controls will be in place from now until the end of September to complete the grinding and paving work in one direction of Hwy 18 each day starting with the median and then the #1 and #2 lanes. The work will start at either Paine Road or the Stanfield Cutoff and continue in one direction each day. A two hour window will be needed after the paving is completed to allow the material to set up before traffic can be permitted on that portion of the roadway.

Motorists are advised that they will experience delays during the grind and pave operation. Caltrans staff will be on site to monitor traffic in an effort to minimize delay to the motoring public, the community and businesses.

All work is dependent of weather. The entire project is expected to be completed by the end of October 2017.

**SLOW FOR THE CONE ZONES**

(33)

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## Final Corks & Hops of 2017 Saturday, September 2nd

in [Community News](#), [Entertainment](#), [For Your Information](#), [Informational](#), [Mountain Region](#), [News](#), [Subject](#), [Ticker](#), [Volunteering](#) / by [Michael P. Neufeld](#) / on August 27, 2017 at 5:05 am /

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**By Susan A. Neufeld**

Crestline, CA – The final Corks & Hops of 2017 will take place in Crestline on Saturday, September 2, 2017, from 3 p.m. – 8 p.m. Tickets are \$25 advance purchase on the website <http://www.crestlinechamber.org/corksnhops>, or \$30 each day of the event. Tickets are available at the check-in-booths at Arrowhead Credit Union parking lot, or next to Hearth and Sage in Top Town.

### SHUTTLES

Two additional shuttle stops have been added, for a total of five, to help with the flow. All stops are marked on the map you receive at check-in as well as signage at the stops themselves. The new stops are 7-11 and in from of the “In Lieu Of” store. Rhea Frances-Tetley will be on the bus from time to time, to talk up Crestline landmarks and history.

**SALSA TASTING CONTEST**

Again there will be a Salsa Tasting Contest at ZenSpirations Oil Shop on Lake Drive. The salsas are from local restaurants Toni’s, Goodwin’s and La Casita, and a surprise independent brand from Goodwin’s.

### BREWERIES AND WINERIES

The line up of breweries and wineries attending this month are: Joseph Filippi Winery, Lagunitas Brewing, Wildwood Oak Winery, Sycamore Ranch Winery, Stone Brewing, Belching Beaver Brewing, Sierra Nevada, Thorn Brewing and Brew Rebellion. There are always a couple of last minute participants as well.

### RESTAURANTS

Restaurant samplings along the way will be Crestline Cafe, Goodwin’s, The Bear House Family Restaurant, Tony’s and Guiseppis Pizza at Rim Bowling.



### VENDORS, ARTISANS AND ENTERTAINMENT

There will be Artisan & Vintage Vendors, curated by the Inspired Market. These will be along the tasting route, so you can fully enjoy their wares. There will be free, reusable shopping bags, courtesy of Goodwin’s, available at Check-in. Four live music stages are positioned throughout the walk.

### VOLUNTEERS

The Corks & Hops organizing group is always looking for volunteers. If you can, please contact the Crestline/Lake Gregory Chamber at: <http://www.crestlinechamber.org/corksnhops>.

(28)

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## Willkommen To Big Bear Lake's 47th Annual Oktoberfest

in [Community News](#), [Entertainment](#), [For Your Information](#), [History](#), [Informational](#), [Mountain Region](#), [News](#), [Subject](#), [Ticker](#) / by [Michael P. Neufeld](#) / on August 27, 2017 at 5:03 am /

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Plan now to attend the 47th Annual Big Bear Oktoberfest at the Convention Center of Big Bear Lake. (Contributed Photo)

**By Susan A. Neufeld**

Big Bear Lake, CA – It's time to dust off the lederhosen — as the 47<sup>th</sup> Big Bear Lake Oktoberfest returns. The Big Bear Lake Oktoberfest runs for eight consecutive weekends, beginning September 9 through October 28, at the Big Bear Convention Center, located at 42900 Big Bear Boulevard in Big Bear Lake. The times are Saturdays 12 noon to 12 midnight and Sundays 12 noon to 5:30 p.m.



The Oktoberfest celebrates 47 years of German style family fun and good times. With its rustic, Alpine-like setting, Big Bear Lake offers the ideal venue for the Bavarian-style celebration. As Southern California's #1 Oktoberfest, Big Bear Lake's Oktoberfest is ranked as coming closest to the original celebration in Munich, Germany.

### **NEW FEATURES**



There's never a dull moment at Big Bear's Oktoberfest. (Contributed Photo)

New this year, the only Oktoberfest Celebration in California to feature Ayinger Oktoberfest Bier, three bands directly from Germany, as well as expanded outdoor entertainment and a variety of festival foods in the new Food Court.

### **PLENTY OF FUN**

German-themed contests and competitions will include log sawing, stein carrying and holding, shoot & yodel and Big Bear Lake Oktoberfest's own take on beer pong. Children's fun and games include pretzel-eating contests, kiddy mug-holding matches and Midway carnival-style games.

For the eternally young-at-heart, no Big Bear Lake Oktoberfest celebration would be complete without the Chicken Dance. Each weekend, revelers can expect to see hundreds of people crowding the large dance floor and clucking their hearts out to this perennial favorite.

### **ENTERTAINMENT**



Roll out the barrel...and have a barrel of fun!  
(Contributed Photo)

Over the years, the Big Bear Lake Oktoberfest has become world renown for its own tradition and old ambience; celebrating friends, family and good times. A festival like no other, guests are treated to authentic German entertainment, to feast on Brats and Knockwursts direct from the German butcher, and to enjoy the very same beers poured at Munich's Oktoberfest for more than 150 years!

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

The Convention Center of Big Bear Lake is located at 42900 Big Bear Lake Boulevard in Big Bear Lake.

For ticket prices and information, please visit [BIG BEAR EVENTS](#) or call (909) 585-3000.

(33)



Comments are closed.



# Chad Mayes steps down under party pressure over pollution vote

By Stacy Moore, Hi-Desert Star | Posted: Friday, August 25, 2017 5:21 pm

SACRAMENTO — Chad Mayes, a former Yucca Valley town councilman who rose to lead the Republican Caucus in the state Assembly, will step down from that role at the end of this session after taking intense heat for his vote on a cap and trade bill.

Members of the Assembly Republican Caucus unanimously selected Assemblyman Brian Dahle, from a small town in Northern California, to succeed Mayes.

Mayes supported Dahle's bid to become the next leader. He will step down when the legislative session ends Sept. 15.

"Brian Dahle will be an effective leader for the caucus and will continue our work to move the Republican Party toward greater relevance and viability in California," Mayes said in a statement released by the caucus. "I am proud to support him."

GOP groups kept up the pressure on the Yucca Valley native after he and six other Republicans voted to extend California's cap and trade program through 2030. The program allows businesses and utilities to buy permits that allow them to emit a certain amount of carbon pollution.

"If I had to do it all over again, I absolutely would, because we cut taxes, we reduced costs and at the same time we're going to help the environment. I thought that's what Republicans were supposed to do," he said in a July phone interview.

The Republicans' support pushed the bill to victory, but it infuriated fellow party members. Last week, party leaders called for Mayes' replacement.

If the bill had failed, California would have reverted to more draconian measures, called command and control, in which a state air quality agency would set regulations to lower carbon emissions to 40 percent below 1990 levels within the next 12 years.

Mayes voted against the bill that made those stricter measures the default if cap and trade wasn't extended. But with a Democratic majority in the Legislature, that bill passed. He said his vote for cap and trade protected California workers from the job losses that command and control would have caused.

Mayes contends cap and trade is much better for businesses.

"Cap and trade is going to be a better system than command and control," he said. "Republicans don't believe in the government coercing or forcing people. We believe in the market."

Opponents: A chance to let Democrats fail

The bill Mayes helped pass extended a tax exemption for manufacturers and research and development companies, and also gives tax breaks to agricultural businesses and renewable-energy companies when buying new equipment.

“Everyone believed that couldn’t happen,” Mayes said of the concessions he and his Republican allies won. “Manufacturers are fleeing the state and we wanted to give them an incentive to stay.”

Opponents said the cap and trade bill would increase gas taxes up to 60 cents. Mayes said what they failed to point out was that taxes would have gone even higher — up to \$1.25 per gallon — if cap and trade didn’t pass.

“If we didn’t do this, the cost would have been more,” he said.

But the calls for him to resign his leadership kept coming; the Morongo Basin Republicans issued a letter last week asking Mayes to step down.

One of the most vocal calls came from Joseph Turner, an Inland Empire man who issued press releases about Mayes’ personal life and started a Facebook page calling for the Assemblyman’s recall.

“This was a perfect opportunity for Republicans to differentiate themselves from Democrats,” Turner said after Mayes’ vote. “We had a golden opportunity to differentiate ourselves and run the Gov. Grey Davis playbook.”

The Grey Davis play refers to the 2003 recall of Davis, a Democrat, after he tripled vehicle licensing fees.

The recall election gave California a Republican governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Turner said Republicans could have flipped the state back to a GOP majority by letting cap and trade fail.

“The only way you’re going to get any power in the state is you let the Democrats drive the state off a cliff and then you show how Republicans would do it differently,” he said.

“The Democrats gave us a brilliant opportunity to communicate to the working poor in the state that we were the party looking out for them in opposing these burdensome gas taxes and regulations,” Turner said.

“Now it’s back to being the party of rich white guys rather than the party looking out for working-class families.”

‘It was the right

thing to do’

Mayes rebelled against the idea of creating higher taxes and stricter regulations to convince voters to turn on Democrats.

“I’m not sure if that would work, but if it is true, you have to think about the moral side of that,” he said.

“To think people are going to be suffering so you can win elections? That’s not right to me.”

He referred to a coal mine in Trona that likely would have shut down if cap and trade failed and the California Air Resources Board took over.

“What about those 700 employees, what about that town?” he asked.

“It was the right thing to do and at some point you have to have the courage of your convictions, no matter what happens to you.”

**BUSINESS****Last trip to San Bernardino's Carousel Mall with Garner Holt**

Garner Holt of Garner Holt Productions, stands inside Carousel Mall on Tues. Aug. 22, 2017, and talks about the time he operated his haunted house in 1975 at the age of 15. The mall at the time was called Central City Mall. (Stan Lim, The Press-Enterprise/SCNG)

By **FIELDING BUCK** | fbuck@scng.com | The Press-Enterprise

PUBLISHED: August 25, 2017 at 1:53 pm | UPDATED: August 25, 2017 at 2:42 pm

Garner Holt wondered what would happen to the carousel.

"Talk is we're going to have an auction sealed-bid thing," said Sam Catalano, general manager of San Bernardino's Carousel Mall. "We've had three or four operators express interest."

"Let us know, too," said Holt. "We may want to be on the list."

"I guess you're into all things," said Catalano.

"Carousel is kind of headed in our direction."

Holt is the founder of Garner Holt Productions, a San Bernardino company that is one of the world's leading suppliers of robotic figures to theme parks. He was looking down at the exact spot where his career got his start in the mid-'70s.

Holt was visiting the mall with Redlands native Bill Butler, his company's creative design director, at the request of journalists to share their memories for posterity.

The mall has been locked and shuttered since last week and likely slated for demolition as the city plans to redevelop the 43 acres for new retail and residential use.

Holt said it would probably be his last visit to the property.

The group had the vast, silent place to themselves except for a security guard and a couple of sparrows.

Holt knew it as the Central City Mall, the happening place in San Bernardino when he was growing up.

The mall was built behind the historical Harris' department store on E Street and opened in 1972.

"When I was a little kid and they were building this, my mom used to bring me to Harris' and there was a little hole in the wall right over there. I got down on my knees and looked through the hole and you could see the construction went all the way down ... I couldn't believe the enormity of the thing. You couldn't even see the end."

Excited by a trip to Disneyland, Holt decided he wanted to be part of the theme park world and taught himself to build automatons. He built a haunted house in his parents' backyard and at 15 convinced Catalano to present it as a Halloween attraction.

Garner Holt's Haunted House of Mystery was in a trailer parked under the stairwell in the Harris Court, near a Bob's Big Boy. Standing on the landing 40-plus years later, Holt said he could step over the rail and stand on the top of the trailer, and did.



In 1976, Holt installed a talking robot of Uncle Sam a few yards away. Holt reminded Catalano of red, white and blue bells hanging from the ceiling.

"They had a parade out of E Street. I just remember because of the Bicentennial. The Halloween thing I had here for like four years in a row."

"For a kid to do that quality of stuff," Catalano said.

"It was fun. We have pictures of people that lined up all the way down to the other staircase."

After the Harris Court, Holt and Butler strolled to the JC Penney Court and the Montgomery Ward Court, which had a blue fence around its center matching a fence around the carousel.

"There used to be a track around here for a little train," Holt said.

As in the Harris Court, a pink and white clock with four faces was suspended from the ceiling. The hands were gone.

"I don't know why anybody would ever think of painting the clock pink," Holt said. "I guess it was part of the carousel theme."

The \$300,000 carousel, filled with horses and fanciful creatures, was installed in late 1991, when Central City Mall was rebranded to reflect its new entertainment and family theme.

In the next dozen years, the mall lost its three anchors, first Harris', then Montgomery Ward and finally J.C. Penney, which is the only one of the three retail chains still in business.

Catalano said Central City came in just as enclosed malls were becoming fashionable.

"That was the template for quite a while. Then the power centers came, and then the discount outlet malls."

Before returning to his office, Catalano said the existing "huge amount of infrastructure" could be modernized for much less than it would cost to start anew.

“So, are you going to be sad to see this go?” Holt had asked him.

“Yeah,” said Catalano. “Part of your life.”

Tags: **Retail**

FIELDING\_BUCK

## Fielding Buck

Fielding Buck has been a business reporter since 2014 with a focus on logistics, supply chain and GIS. Prior experience includes extensive entertainment reporting. He loves photography and dogs and lives in San Bernardino County.

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## **Mike Gallagher, prominent Hesperia developer, passes away**

By Shea Johnson  
Staff Writer

Posted Aug 26, 2017 at 6:06 PM

Updated Aug 26, 2017 at 6:09 PM

Mike Gallagher, a prominent and influential developer who was particularly ingrained in the city of Hesperia, has died.

Mike Gallagher, a prominent and influential developer who was particularly ingrained in the city of Hesperia, has died.

Gallagher passed Friday after suffering a massive heart attack while at lunch with long-time close friend Hesperia Mayor Paul Russ. He was 68.

Russ, who considers Gallagher his best friend and had known him for 25-plus years, said his death was “totally unexpected.”

“He died doing what he loved doing, talking deals, talking about construction, building,” Russ said Saturday. “It was quick and he didn’t suffer.”

Well-known in circles in Hesperia, Gallagher, as a single developer, was likely one of the largest in the city going back to its incorporation in 1988, according to Russ.

Mostly a high-quality residential home developer, he had moved into the commercial sector as well, and if there was a swath of territory best reflective of his work on both fronts, Russ said, it would be in developments near Rancho Road and Interstate 15.

Russ credited Gallagher with developing the first million-dollar homes in the desert during the market peak in the mid-2000s and increasing the equity in the Victor Valley as a result.

Outside of his business acumen, Gallagher's generosity was recalled as the other side to the "tough negotiator."

Gallagher, a devout Catholic survived by a wife and two children, had donated millions of dollars to his kids' Claremont high school, according to Russ, who also remembered Gallagher's immediate response when Russ became seriously ill.

"The first thing he said was, 'whatever you need. Money's not an object, whatever you need. If you need me to pay for it, I'll do it,'" Russ said.

Although Russ declined the offer, the sentiment, he said, was a fair representation of Gallagher's character.

Joseph W. Brady, president of The Bradco Companies, said he first met Gallagher in late 1986, not long after Brady first visited the Victor Valley.

Speaking of Gallagher and his business partner, Brady said: "They were both true land people, visionaries and they loved land development, syndications and helping their investors make money."

Brady, who cited Gallagher's large stature as always memorable, referenced the developer's 30-year wait to see the Rancho Road Interchange built.

"It is sad that he did not get a chance," Brady said, "to see the grand opening he waited so long to see."

Meanwhile, Russ and Gallagher spoke everyday in some capacity, either by call or text, and Russ on Saturday was understandably dealing with the loss.

"It's been a rough 24 hours," he said. "I'll get through it, but it won't be the same."

*Shea Johnson can be reached at 760-955-5368 or [SJohnson@VVDailyPress.com](mailto:SJohnson@VVDailyPress.com). Follow him on Twitter at [@DP\\_Shea](https://twitter.com/DP_Shea).*

LOCAL NEWS

# Mother, daughters killed in Bloomington murder-suicide remembered as fighters, full of life



Karina Gonzalez, 35, and her two daughters, Priscilla Gonzalez, 8, and Beatrice Gonzalez, 6. (Courtesy photo)

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By [BEATRIZ E. VALENZUELA](#) |

PUBLISHED: August 25, 2017 at 1:21 pm | UPDATED: August 25, 2017 at 2:22 pm



Karina Salinas Gonzalez was a fighter who was always looking for a better future for her family, according to her sister.

“She was always determined no matter how bad things got,” said Selena Salinas, Salinas Gonzalez’s younger sister. “She always looked for the next step. Even until the end, she already had another job offer where she was going to get paid more.”

The 35-year-old mother of three even prepared her daughters, teaching them as much as she could at home before the tots entered school.

“Karina made sure that even though they weren’t able to go to school yet, she had them learning everything they could and because of that Wendy (Beatrice) was able to skip kindergarten to first grade which she had just started last week,” Salinas said proudly. “Priscilla started third and she loved school but I think it was because she was such a social butterfly.”

But her sister’s plans for a better future for herself and her girls were shattered when San Bernardino County sheriff’s investigators say Salinas Gonzalez’s husband, Eric Gonzalez, 48, and father of the 8 and 6-year-old girls, [turned a gun on his family, killing them, setting their home on fire](#) and then shooting himself.

Although [authorities have ruled their deaths a murder-suicide](#), they have not released any details on what may have led to the deadly encounter Wednesday at the family’s 17900 block of Santa Ana Avenue home.

Salinas said the family knew they couple had difficulties but were unaware of any physical abuse.

• **Related Story:** [Bloomington house fire that killed four declared murder-suicide](#)

“We didn’t know exactly what was going on,” Salinas said but added there were some signs that concerned the family. “So because of these signs that we saw, we tried so hard and did everything we possibly could to help her and to get her out of whatever situation she was in, but she was very reserved and just kept it to herself. ... We really did try and we never gave up.”

Salinas set up a [GoFundMe account](#) asking for help in burying Salinas Gonzalez and her daughters and to help her surviving son. As of Friday afternoon, the crowdfunding site had raised more than \$4,000.

Salinas Gonzalez’s loved ones — including her five siblings and surviving son, Jesse, 18, who was out of town when the shooting and fire took place — are now comforted by memories of the feisty and strong mother and her loving daughters.

Salinas recalled how affectionate Priscilla and Beatrice were.

“As soon as they got here they would always ask my mom and I if they could have a sleepover,” she said of the sisters who had a love of all things “Star Wars.” “They were so so lovable and would always tell you every five minutes how much they loved you.”

Authorities ask that anyone with information regarding this investigation contact Detective Nick Clark at 909-387-3589. Those who wish to remain anonymous can call 1-800-782-7463 or visit [www.wetip.com](http://www.wetip.com).

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**Beatriz E. Valenzuela**

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NEWS

# How California's aerial firefighters are handling 1,000 more fires than last fire season



How California's aerial firefighters are handling 1,000 more fires than last fire season

By **KURT SNIBBE** | [ksnibbe@scng.com](mailto:ksnibbe@scng.com) | Orange County Register

PUBLISHED: August 27, 2017 at 9:16 am | UPDATED: August 27, 2017 at 12:37 pm



## Aerial firefight

Cal Fire statistics statewide for 2017 show that by Aug. 23, there have been 4,398 fires that burned 223,526 acres. That's 1,000 more fires and many more acres burned than all of 2016. Unfortunately, the worst may be ahead of us.

Californians recognized the need to fight fires from the air in the 1930s when crop dusters were filled with water and used to help firefighters on the ground. Today, Cal Fire has 13 air attack and nine helitack bases statewide, allowing aircraft to reach most fires within 20 minutes. The agency's goal is to keep 95 percent of the state's wildland fires to 10 acres or fewer. That's a lofty goal in a state that spans 163,696 square miles, but aircraft are the most effective way to reach remote areas quickly. This year, there have been 34 fires that were at least 300 acres.



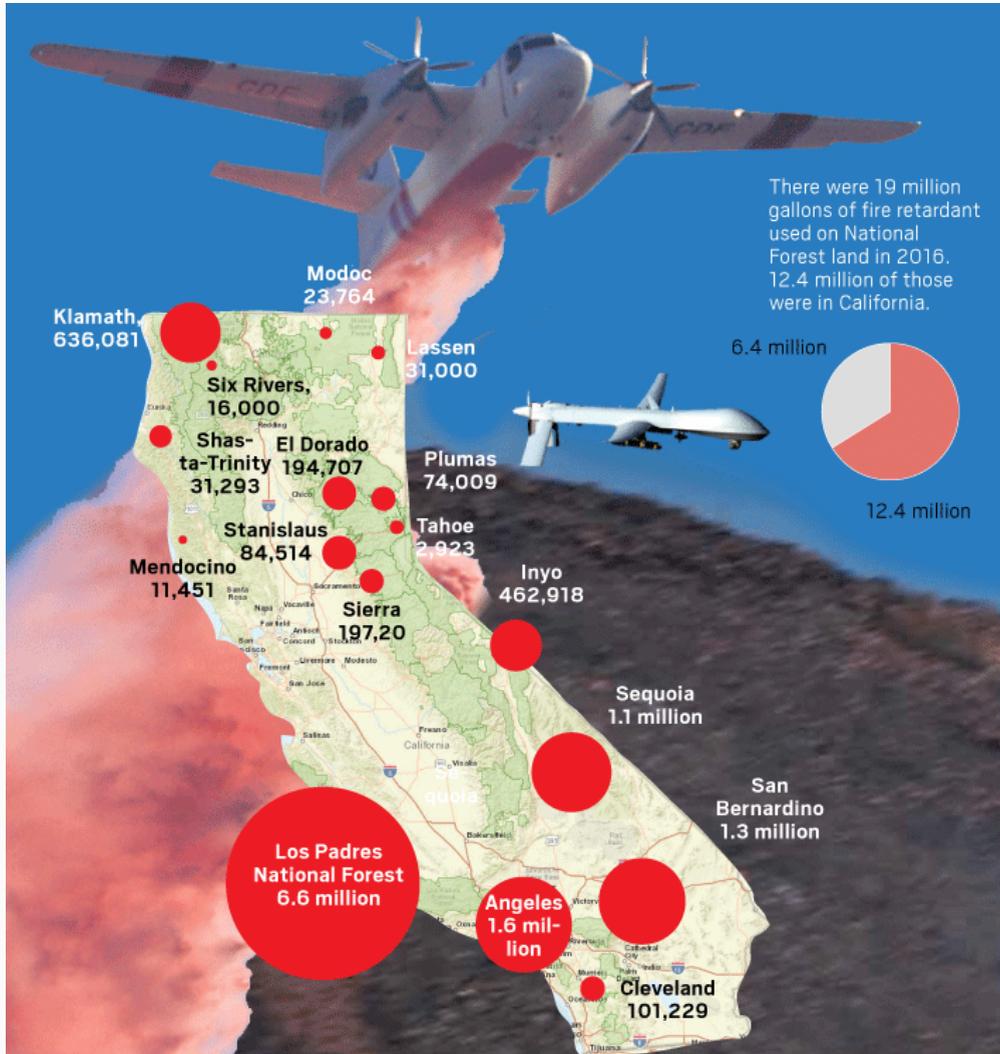
You can see Cal Fire's online mapping [here](#).

The worst might be yet to come this fall when a combination of dead trees, dried underbrush and lightning will occur in the Sierra Nevada and Santa Ana wind conditions develop in Southern California.

## Dousing the flames

The map below gives an indication of where aerial firefighting was needed most in California.

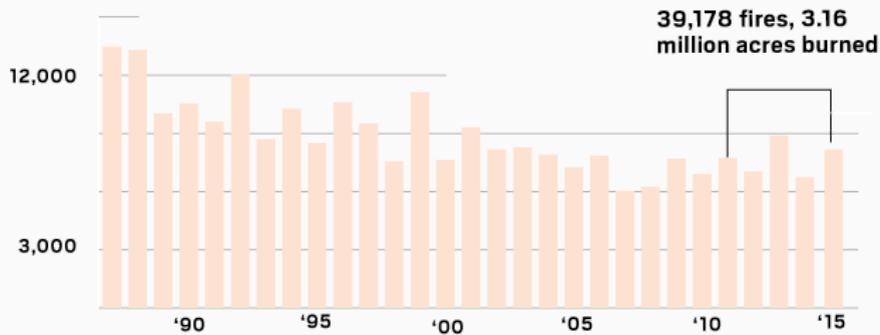
Gallons of fire retardant used in National Forest land in 2016.



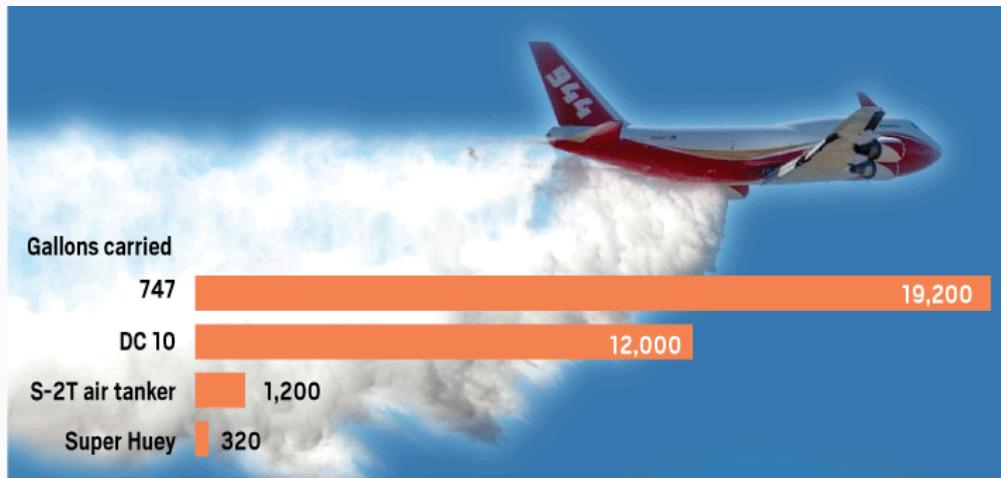
The retardant used to slow the spread of a fire is a slurry mix consisting of a chemical salt compound, water, clay or a gum-thickening agent, and a coloring agent. At 9 pounds per gallon, an S-2T can carry 10,800 pounds.

**State totals**

Total wildfires by year for all jurisdictions. Fires are at least 300 acres.



The Boeing 747-400 Global Supertanker can drop 19,200 gallons. It might be coming to California but has not been approved. On a contract basis, the state has used a DC-10 aircraft, which can drop 12,000 gallons.



In 2006, the DC-10 cost \$26,500 per hour with a three-hour minimum per day. The airplane can drop a 50-foot-wide layer of fire retardant that is three-quarters of a mile long.

Here's a video from the History Channel about the DC-10 based in Victorville.

### Helicopters

State, county and city fire departments have many types of helicopters to use for a fast initial attack.

Helicopters can carry a crew, do medical evacuations and carry about 320 gallons of water by bucket or a fixed tank which can be refilled in about a minute.



Take a look at local fire departments fighting fires with helicopters in the video below.

### **Airtanker**

Cal Fire has 22 S-2T airtankers that can travel 270 mph and carry 1,200 gallons.

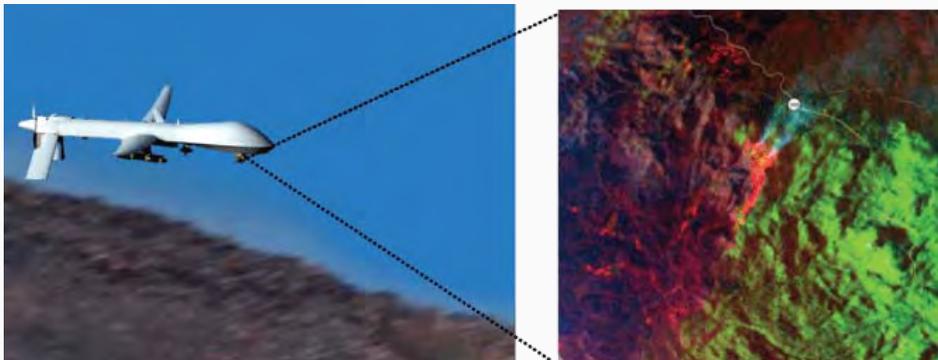
A Cal Fire superscooper makes a perfect landing on Lake Isabella to refill the water tanks and get back to the fire.

### High-tech view

It is illegal for civilians to fly drones near any fire. Fire control stations manage aircraft of all types, and if a civilian interferes by flying a drone, legal action can be taken.

Some agencies are using drones similar to the one pictured above to help firefighters on the ground. The drones can survey fire areas with thermal imaging, and data can help to determine how big the fires are, how fast they are moving and how much fuel they have to burn.

Infra-red imaging used for ultra fast fire attack.



### Prevention tips:

Don't mow dry grass on windy days

Never pull your vehicle over in dry grass

Target shoot only in approved areas

Ensure campfires are allowed, and if so, be sure to extinguish them completely

Check for the Santa Ana winds threat index in your area [here](#).

Sources: Cal Fire, Craig Covey of the Orange County Fire Authority, U.S. Forest Service, Fire Aviation

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## Special bricks to build 'dream' home for disabled youth

By Rene Ray De La Cruz

Staff Writer

Posted Aug 26, 2017 at 3:02 PM

Updated Aug 26, 2017 at 3:44 PM

HESPERIA — Sharon Davis said her recently launched “Buy a Brick Project” is the first step in raising funds to purchase her “dream home” for youth.

Davis, the founder of the Neel Parent Advisory Group, said she’s eyeing a 4,724-square-foot home on Mecca Street in Hesperia for a cultural activity center for physically and developmentally disabled youth.

“We’ll like to raise \$429,000 to purchase and renovate this old home on the corner of Arcadia Avenue and Mecca Street,” said Davis, who formed the group in 1998. “We’re hoping to reach our goal by selling personalized bricks that show the purchaser’s support of our group.”

Davis, whose organization is currently based in Hesperia, said each brick purchased would be personalized with the name of an individual or organization, and placed in walkways, pillars, walls and gardens on the property.

Her goal is to transform the Hesperia home, which consists of five bedrooms, a large living room, kitchen and multiple bathrooms, into an ADA-compliant, multi-faceted youth complex that would include a stage area, music studio, art gallery, game room, office, conference room, wheelchair ramps and storage room.

“The property has mother-in-law quarters with its own kitchen, dining room, living room, bathroom and bedroom,” Davis said. “We’ll probably use that for staff meetings. The entire property is in pretty good shape, we just need the funds to make this dream come true.”

Davis said her heart is set on purchasing the Mecca Street home, but is also open seeking another option should the property go off the market.

Over the years, the group has used art, music, cooking, dancing, singing, and acting to serve teens and young adults with and without mild to moderate learning, physical and mental disabilities, said Davis, an advisor for the group's Goodwill V.I.N.T.A Ambassadors and former board member of the California State Council on Developmental Disabilities.

"I have worked with some of the most talented tweens and young people with the big hearts," Davis said. "We've bounced our activities from place to place over the years, but I think it's time for a permanent place for our young people to unleash their talents."

According to Davis, her group has served many young people with autism, depression, Down syndrome, Asperger syndrome, and some who live on the streets of the High Desert.

"You'd be surprised how many youth are living out on the streets," Davis said. "They are living in bushes and behind stores, with nowhere to go. We can't house them, but they'll have a place where they can be a part of a family."

Davis, who has a disabled daughter, said many young people with special needs may not be able to "tie their shoes or fill out a job application," but do have extraordinary abilities in the area of poetry, art, acting and singing.

"My mission has been to release the gifts and talents of these young people and I think this home will be the perfect spot to do so," Davis said. "I hope the community can pull together to make this a reality."

Bricks are available for \$50, \$100 or \$200 donations. For more information on the Brick Project visit [www.gofundme.com/the-brick-by-brick-project](http://www.gofundme.com/the-brick-by-brick-project).

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## Victorville market sells \$1.2M lottery scratcher

By Shea Johnson

Staff Writer

Posted Aug 26, 2017 at 11:55 AM

Updated Aug 26, 2017 at 12:37 PM

“She happy, man. She need it,” store owner Tony Teli said. “I’m happy more than her.”

VICTORVILLE — A local market recently sold a \$1.2 million lottery ticket, only six weeks after its new owner assumed operations.

Victor Valley Liquor and Junior Market, located on Tamarack Drive, off Amargosa Road, sold the winning Set for Life scratcher Aug. 15, according to owner Tony Teli.

The winner ultimately will receive \$4,000 a month for 25 years.

Teli, who bought the store July 1 and began selling lottery tickets two weeks later, said the winner, a woman he described as in her early- to mid-thirties, did not wish to be identified.

It was her “first time in our shop here,” he said. “She bought three tickets, left, go scratch in her car.”

But she returned to purchase one or two more tickets and left again, he said. Roughly five hours went by when the woman came back into the store and asked Teli if he’d check a ticket for her.

He did, and became aware she had just won \$1.2 million.

“She happy, man. She need it,” he said. “I’m happy more than her.”

Teli has since advertised the win with a banner outside his market, noting that a millionaire had been made there. While he took questions from a reporter Friday, a man listening to the conversation felt encouraged to buy tickets of his own.

Teli said his store has sold over 200 big-ticket wins, but usually between \$100 and \$1,000 — nothing near the \$1.2 million sold earlier this month — and he proudly displays the winning tickets behind the checkout stand in full view for customers.

His message to others: “Maybe you’re next?”

*Shea Johnson can be reached at 760-955-5368 or [SJohnson@VVDailyPress.com](mailto:SJohnson@VVDailyPress.com). Follow him on Twitter at [@DP\\_Shea](https://twitter.com/DP_Shea).*

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## **Military bases' contamination will affect water for generations**

**By Corinne Roels, Briana Smith and Adrienne St. Clair / News21 Staff Writers**

Posted Aug 25, 2017 at 3:09 PM

Updated Aug 25, 2017 at 5:29 PM

VICTORVILLE — Once a fighter jet training base critical to the Cold War, little remains of the former George Air Force Base but rows of dilapidated houses, a dismantled military hospital and dangerous chemicals from pesticides, jet fuels and other hazardous wastes that have poisoned the water for decades.

“Now when I see the base today, areas of it look like a war zone,” said Frank Vera, an Air Force veteran stationed on the base in the early 1970s. “I don’t think people know what to do with some of these areas because they are so contaminated.”

George is among at least 400 active and closed military installations nationwide where the use of toxic chemicals has contaminated or is suspected of contaminating water on bases and nearby communities with chemicals ranging from cleaning solvents and paints to explosives and firefighting foam, according to a News21 investigation.

At 149 current and former U.S. military bases, the contamination is so severe that they have been designated Superfund sites by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, meaning they are among the most hazardous areas in the country requiring cleanup.

One of those installations, Hill Air Force Base just north of Salt Lake City, is both one of the state’s largest employers, with 21,000 employees, and a Superfund site. Since 1987, the EPA has been monitoring the base, where more than 60 chemicals were found in soil and groundwater. According to EPA records, an “unsafe level of contamination” still exists on some areas of the base.

“Even though the DOD has made significant strides in identifying and investigating the level of contamination at domestic base sites, the pace of actual cleanup has been quite slow,” according to a research study from the Berkeley School of Law. “As the Governmental Accountability Office (GAO) recently found, ‘most of the time and money has been spent studying the problem.’”

According to a 2017 GAO report, the Department of Defense already has spent \$11.5 billion on evaluations and environmental cleanup of closed bases, and it estimates \$3.4 billion more will be needed.

In March, the DOD said it would be testing the water at 395 active and closed bases across the country to determine whether perfluorinated compounds are contaminating the drinking water on bases and in communities around them.

Originally developed by corporate giants 3M and DuPont for use in consumer products like Teflon, Scotchgard and stain-proof clothing, these chemicals, known as per- and polyfluorinated alkyl substances (PFAS), were used by the DOD since the 1970s in firefighting foam to extinguish jet fuel fires.

In 2012, the EPA added PFAS to its list of unregulated contaminants that may be hazardous to human health, though records indicate the Pentagon knew of the hazards decades earlier. In 1981, the Air Force Aerospace Medical Research Laboratory conducted studies that found that exposure to earlier variations of PFAS were harmful in female rats and caused behavioral changes in offspring.

The Air Force started replacing the original firefighting foam with a “new, environmentally responsible firefighting foam” in August 2016.

Because the chemicals don’t break down easily, communities still are finding them in their drinking water. For example, in May, residents in Airway Heights, Washington, were instructed not to drink their tap water after elevated levels of PFAS were found in drinking water wells on and around the active Fairchild Air Force Base.

“I think it’s crazy that pretty much the whole time I’ve lived out here, approximately 12 years, I’ve been drinking bad water,” said Martha Grall, an Airway Heights resident. “Because they didn’t feel like sharing that information years ago, I have no faith in believing anything they have to say now when they try and tell us it’s safe now.”

Though the Air Force started treating the water, Grall said, "As far as trusting the tap water, I don't think I ever will."

Fairchild is one of more than 30 bases where PFAS contamination was discovered this year. In 2015, the DOD reported to the GAO that "the cost of cleaning up perfluorinated compounds will likely be significant." The Air Force had budgeted \$100 million over a five-year period for the investigation and remediation of the chemical. However, the Air Force has already spent more than \$150 million as of June 2017.

As of August, the DOD had yet to complete testing for PFAS at more than 200 bases.

"There are lots of places where this is a problem," said Congressman Dan Kildee, a Democrat from Michigan. "And there are lots of places where it's a problem, and the people don't even know it yet."

"The biggest concern right now is that the Air Force hasn't had any sense of urgency," he said. They ought to be leading the effort to solve this problem. To find people who might have been affected, and to provide whatever relief is appropriate."

But U.S. Navy Commander Patrick Evans, a Pentagon spokesman, told News21 in a statement, "We take this matter very seriously and pledge an unshakable commitment to protecting human health and the environment."

## **DECADES AFTER BASE CLOSURES, PFAS THREATEN COMMUNITIES**

The former George Air Force base sits on the edge of the Mojave Desert in California. Many parts of it are abandoned. The operations building and movie theater are boarded up. Tumbleweeds, mounds of concrete and building materials fill the dugout of an old baseball field. But while almost any sign of military life is gone, the water contamination is not.

"The Air Force is promising to clean it up," said Vera, the veteran who served at the base. "But in the end, they are just walking away from the contaminated bases and the people are stuck with this nightmare."

In 1990, the base was added to the EPA's Superfund list. Jet fuel, benzene, trichloroethylene (TCE), pesticides and radioactive wastes have contaminated groundwater, EPA records show.

George was closed in 1992 as part of the Base Realignment and Closure, or BRAC. Within one year, the DOD began transferring land over to local communities to be redeveloped. But 25 years later, the water still is contaminated.

"You don't see George as far along as some of the other military bases," said Bill Muir, the senior engineering geologist for the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board, responsible for protecting water in the region.

In 2015, PFAS chemicals also were found by the Air Force in the groundwater at the base, a potential threat to the businesses that have been built on the base, as well as surrounding communities.

"We're not aware that the perfluorinated compounds have impacted any of the drinking water wells downgradient of the base," Muir said. "There is potential, and that's why the Air Force will be sampling in the future, and we'll encourage that."

Vera, 64, worked in the gun shop, where he said he used chlorinated solvents to clean weapons. "I would come out of there drenched in TCE," he said. "They would empty the wash tank periodically and just dump it down the drain."

"The Air Force and the government in general, betrayed not only me, but everyone who stayed at these Superfund sites because they absolutely knew that they were contaminated," said Vera. "They knew the harm it would possibly cause us."

"I drank gallons and gallons of water because it was the desert," he said. "A lot of times, it was dark and had a real chemical taste. It tasted like JP-4, jet fuel."

In 2008, Vera created a website, Georgeafb.info, which started out as an "information repository" to keep his records and documents. Lisa McCrea, a former military wife, learned about the tainted water from his website.

“Lots of us didn’t know a thing about the contamination,” said McCrea, 49. “We owe so much to Frank for his tireless years of work on this, trying to bring this to light (and) letting everybody know because there’s still families out there that have no clue.”

McCrea lived on the base with her family for four years. She recalled the unsettling memory of pesticides being sprayed on her home, leaving yellow stains on the walls and on their clothes. In July, she made the trip from Ohio to California to revisit the base.

“It’s hard to believe that we used to live here day in and day out without any protection,” said McCrea, standing in front of her former house. “And it’s even more upsetting that they (Air Force) let us live here without doing anything about it.”

Terri Crooks, 59, is an Air Force veteran who was stationed on the base in the mid-’80s where she worked as an administrative clerk. She later was diagnosed with breast cancer and gynecological issues.

From Vera’s website, Crooks learned that her conditions could be related to exposure to pesticides and submitted a claim to the Department of Veterans Affairs in 2015. The VA awarded her 70 percent disability, acknowledging that her health conditions could be connected to her military service at the base.

Crooks was exposed to the chemical nearly 40 years ago, but Muir said a pesticide plume is among George’s biggest contamination problems even now.

“The Air Force needs to work to aggressively treat these zones of contamination,” Muir said. Instead, it proposed using Monitored Natural Attenuation, a remediation strategy that allows nature to break down the chemicals over time.

Phil Mook, a senior representative for the Air Force Civil Engineer Center, which is overseeing cleanup at George, said the Air Force has spent the last 30 years removing contamination.

“We’ve done a lot of work,” Mook said. “We still have work to do. In about 30 years, we’ll have much smaller TCE, fuels and petroleum. Estimated, another 70 years after that, we have the last little tail of it.”

But according to the Lahontan Water Board, that treatment at George could take up to 500 years for the pesticide and solvent contamination to reach safe levels, and up to 40,000 years for areas of fuel contamination in the groundwater.

The MNA method is used at more than half of the military locations classified as Superfund sites, according to EPA data.

“We can’t accept monitored natural attenuation,” Muir said. “We need active remediation. We want a more aggressive approach than watching it.”

“We have been forgotten,” McCrea told News21. “The base closed, everyone scattered to the wind, and I guess they figured, problem solved,” she continued. “To this day, there has been no word from the United States Air Force about the contamination at George Air Force Base.”

*This report is part of the **Troubled Water project produced by the Carnegie-Knight News21 initiative**, a national investigative reporting project by top college journalism students and recent graduates from across the country and headquartered at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University.*

**LOCAL NEWS**

# Redlands Unified has a new classroom aide: Google



From left, fourth graders Emily Nguyen, 9, Ellyn Schofield, 9, and Jadah Nordby, 9, use google tools to create documents in Mrs. Kelly Shira's class on Friday, August 25, 2017 at Judson and Brown Elementary School in Redlands, Ca. (Micah Escamilla, Redlands Daily Facts/SCNG)

By **KRISTINA HERNANDEZ** | Jennifer.Maher@inlandnewspapers.com

| Redlands Daily Facts

PUBLISHED: August 26, 2017 at 9:00 am | UPDATED: August 26, 2017 at 3:26 pm



Redlands Unified School District is not shying away from the latest technological advances. It's embracing them.

In many classrooms across the district, teachers and students are turning to a new tool to help them on their educational journeys: Google.

The tech company's GSuite for Education program offers additional resources that can be accessed from the classroom and home alike. And the best part, school district officials say, is it's free.

According to Jamie Cortz, RUSD director of instructional technology and accountability, the Google program "will help increase collaboration and thinking and, at the same time, prepare (students) for college and career because it's a completely different landscape for post-graduate students these days."

Kelly Shira, a fourth-grade teacher at Judson & Brown Elementary, has been using Google tools in her classroom since last year.

But now that the district has launched an official effort, she has noticed both students and their parents feel more connected to the classroom.

On Friday, Shira's students used Google Slides to create a presentation on Kate DiCamillo's "Because of Winn-Dixie." The idea was to create a slide about the story's structure and the characters featured in the award-winning book.

"It provides us with a tool to help us engage the students," she said. "I would say this generation of students is really high-energy and very tech-savvy. So, the fact that the district is implementing these tools and giving them to us to enhance our instruction is truly incredible.

"We're going into the right direction."

Giovanni Palos, a student in Shira's class, agreed.

"It's pretty cool," the 9-year-old Redlands boy said. "It's kind of exciting because when we are doing a group project we are only using one computer. And we're on this Google Drive thing and instead of having to download this PowerPoint thing, it's right there."

Even as the district moves forward with its Google launch – it's being rolled out in phases – RUSD officials are taking precautionary measures to ensure student safety. The district has distributed letters about the program to parents, and teachers are being trained on proper use of the tools.

Keeping parents informed of the goings-on at schools is part of the district's effort to be more transparent, Cortz said.

“Because we want to roll out things in a responsible, thoughtful way, we want to provide more training for teachers and instruction for kids,” Cortz said, “and provide the opportunity for parents to attend parent meetings and get more information to them so they understand what their kids are working on and using.”

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Tags: [Echo Code](#), [education](#), [Top Stories RDF](#)

HERNANDEZ, KRISTINA  
**Kristina Hernandez**

Kristina Hernandez is a reporter by day; pop culture addict by night. She has been a journalist for the Southern California News Group since 2005. She likes popcorn.

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LOCAL NEWS

# Sarcastic comments hurled at Redlands and Yucaipa rallies for, against Trump



a rally in support of President Donald Trump at Alabama Street and Lugonia Avenue in Redlands as anti-Trump supporters rally on the opposite corner on Saturday, Aug. 26, 2017. (Photos by Frank Perez, Contributing Photographer)

By **RYAN HAGEN** | Press-Enterprise

PUBLISHED: August 26, 2017 at 9:11 pm | UPDATED: August 27, 2017 at 8:38 am



Rallies in Yucaipa and Redlands collectively drew dozens of people Saturday evening, all responding to a tense nationwide atmosphere and criticism of President Donald Trump.

The largest of the rallies by far was in Yucaipa's John Tooker Park, drawing about 50 people taking a stand against white supremacy.

It was organized as a response to a rally advertised on Craigslist and other sites that called on "Christian Americans" to march in support of Trump. That invitation, which had been deleted before the event began, criticized the "extreme left" for removing "bronze representations of iconic American heroes" and warned attendees to arm themselves because of possible "terrorist groups such as BLM, illegal immigrants and/or left extremists."

Six pro-Trump activists stayed until the end of the much larger counter-protest, although a few drove by and left. There were no visible weapons on either side, and the only confrontation came in the form of sarcastic comments from both sides and one man flipping off the anti-Trump group as he drove by.

But even if they were clearly in the majority, it was still important for people to show they opposed racism and racist policies, said Rebekah Rodriguez-Lynn, one of the organizers.

“Some people think you can ignore racism and it’ll get bored and go away,” said Rodriguez-Lynn, who also founded Indivisible Yucaipa Area. “We need to get away from this framework that racism is a state of mind. Racism is a political strategy. Racism is a system that is used to divide us, and I think we saw a master class in that last election – and every day since.”

Protesters held signs including “Make Racism Wrong Again” and “No KKK.”

Speeches included one from Caecilia Johns, a Yucaipa community volunteer who lived through Nazi Germany.

“I went through that 80 years ago,” Johns said. “I don’t want to go through it again.”

The Trump supporters stood at the edge of the group, silently observing.

“I came because I’m a conservative Christian and I wanted to show that just because I have different beliefs doesn’t make me hateful or a white supremacist,” Tenaya Delgado, 43, of Yucaipa, said afterward. “I feel that Trump is being scapegoated for a lot of this. Like with the statues – if they’re so hateful, why is it only becoming a big deal now?”

On the southwest corner of Lugonia Avenue and Alabama Street in Redlands, Gregory W. Brittain of the Tea Party Patriots led about a half-dozen people in chants in support of Trump and conservative politics, as he has every month since January.

He wanted to show that, even in Democrat-leaning California, conservatives are not alone, and said he wasn’t familiar with the details of the other rallies that were scheduled to be held Saturday, but probably agreed with those that support Trump.

“Unless they’re waving Nazi flags – and they’re probably not – I support them,” Brittain said.

A similar number of counter-protesters stood on the southeast corner.

“As a Christian, this is what I think the Bible is about: social justice and equality,” said Rosemary Touhy, 63, of Loma Linda.

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**Ryan Hagen**

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## OPINION

# The great transit rip-off



AP Photo/Jae C. Hong

In this Saturday, May 16, 2015 photo, A Metro Expo Line train travels as traffic builds up on the 110 freeway in Los Angeles.

By **JOEL KOTKIN** | and **WENDELL COX** | |

August 27, 2017 at 12:06 am



Over the past decade, there has been a growing fixation among planners and developers alike for a return to the last century's monocentric cities served by large-scale train systems. And, to be sure, in a handful of older urban regions, mass transit continues to play an important — and even vital — role in getting commuters to downtown jobs. Overall, a remarkable 40 percent of all transit commuting in the United States takes place in the New York metropolitan area — and just six municipalities make up 55 percent of all transit commuting destinations.

But here's an overlooked fact: Transit now serves about the same number of riders as it did in 1907, when the urban population was barely 15 percent of what it is today. Most urban regions, such as Southern California, are nothing like New York — and they never will be. Downtown Los Angeles may be a better place in which to hang out and eat than in the past, but it sorely lacks the magnetic appeal of a place like Manhattan, or even downtown San Francisco. Manhattan, the world's second-largest employment center, represents a little more than 20 percent of the New York metropolitan area's employment. In Los Angeles, by contrast, the downtown area employs just 2 percent.

### **Transit is failing in Southern California**

As we demonstrate in a new report for Chapman University, our urban form does not work well for conventional mass transit. Too many people go to too many locales to work, and, as housing prices have surged, many have moved farther way, which makes trains less practical, given the lack of a dominant job center. But in its desire to emulate places like New York, Los Angeles has spent some \$15 billion trying to evolve into what some East Coast enthusiasts call the “next great transit city.”

The rail lines have earned Mayor Eric Garcetti almost endless plaudits from places like the New York Times. Yet, since 1990, transit's work trip market share has dropped from 5.6 percent to 5.1 percent. MTA system ridership stands at least 15 percent below 1985 levels, when there was only bus service, and the population of Los Angeles County was about 20 percent lower. In some places, like Orange County, the fall has been even more precipitous, down 30 percent since 2008. It is no surprise, then, that, according to a recent USC study, the new lines have done little or nothing to lessen congestion.

This experience is not limited to L.A. Most of the 19 metropolitan areas with new mass transit rail systems — including big cities like Atlanta, Houston, Dallas and even Portland, Ore. — have experienced a decline in transit market share since the systems began operations.

### **Transit as social engineering**

To achieve their transit goals, boosters in Southern California and other wannabe metros need to “elect a new people,” to paraphrase German Communist playwright Bertolt Brecht. Desperate to force commuters onto trains, they feel compelled to foster a dense, “pack and stack” housing pattern that they feel might better fit the needs of expanding transit agencies.

Virtually all housing development proposals are required to be “transit-oriented,” which seems bizarre, given the sector’s declining market share. Meanwhile, poor people get degraded local bus service and ever-higher gas prices to accommodate a supposed surge of wealthier potential transit riders. This won’t help them find jobs, either. In the Los Angeles metropolitan area, for a commute of 30 minutes or less, the average employee is within 60 times as many jobs by car as by transit.

### **Are there alternatives?**

Rather than try to re-engineer the region, perhaps we should seek mobility solutions that can work. Building new rail lines – and, and even more absurdly, trolleys, which average a pathetic 8 miles per hour – will do nothing relieve traffic. More densification can be expected only to worsen congestion.

Arguably, the most promising step would be to encourage work at home. There are already more people working at home than transit riders in Southern California. Since 1990, home office use increased by eight times that of transit use, with virtually no public expenditure. Home-based workers, needless to say, do not receive subsidies.

Ride-hailing services such as Uber and Lyft, cited as a factor in the recent ridership declines in Los Angeles – and even New York – can also provide cost-effective solutions. Already, one local transit operator in suburban San Francisco has established a one-year pilot program to extend local transit service through ride-hailing, and canceled a lightly patronized bus route, reducing costs while providing quicker door-to-door service.

Furthermore, rapidly evolving autonomous technologies could speed up traffic along freeways. They may take time to gain widespread acceptance, but are likely to be in place well before the much-ballyhooed “build-out” of the Los Angeles rail system, which, in any case, cannot make transit commuting remotely competitive with the car, except, perhaps, for very few. Under any circumstance, autonomous technology seems likely to further weaken conventional transit.

Southern Californians need to demand transportation policies that accommodate them, not those that merely acquiesce to the urbanist fantasies of planners, politicians and developers. Decision-makers need to both embrace our geography and economic form and look for 21st-century solutions to 21st-century problems.

## LOCAL NEWS

# Beaumont avoids fines (but others don't) in settlement with SEC over bond probe

By **LIAM TRUCHARD** | ltruchard@scng.com | The Press-Enterprise  
PUBLISHED: August 23, 2017 at 5:59 pm | UPDATED: August 24, 2017 at 12:04 am



Beaumont took another key step in rehabilitating its finances Wednesday, resolving a dispute with a key federal agency over its bond financing.

The Beaumont Financing Authority and its former executive director settled with the Securities and Exchange Commission over accusations of false statements in connection with five bond offerings. In addition, the underwriting firm behind those offerings and its co-founder settled claims they failed to conduct reasonable due diligence.

Despite the settlements — which in some cases include fines, suspensions and bans — none of those charged have admitted to any wrongdoing, according to [statements from the SEC](#) and the city. And [Beaumont, which has been under financial stress for several years](#), avoided any payouts.

“The BFA is pleased to resolve this investigation without any financial penalties that would further hinder the city’s financial recovery,” Beaumont Mayor Lloyd White said in a release.

Former Beaumont City Manager Alan Kapanicas, who also served as the financing authority’s executive director, will pay a \$37,500 penalty and is barred from participating in any future municipal bond offerings. He was alleged to have approved and signed misleading offering documents, [according to a Beaumont city release](#).

O'Connor & Company Securities Inc., the underwriter, will pay a \$150,000 penalty and retain an independent compliance consultant to review its policies and procedures. Its co-founder and former primary investment banker Anthony Wetherbee will pay a \$15,000 penalty and serve a six-month suspension from the securities industry, according to the SEC.

“Investors in municipal bonds depend on timely and complete continuing disclosure from municipal issuers,” said LeeAnn Ghazil Gaunt, Chief of the SEC Enforcement Division’s Public Finance Abuse Unit, in a statement. “Issuers and underwriters will continue to be held accountable when they fail to provide investors with an accurate picture of past compliance with continuing disclosure obligations.”

Financing authorities are established by local governments to aid with the issuance of bonds. Beaumont’s had issued approximately \$260 million in municipal bonds in 24 separate offerings from 2003 to 2013, according to the SEC. For each of those offerings, a community facilities district established by Beaumont agreed to provide investors with annual continuing disclosures, including financial information and operating data.

From at least 2004 to April 2013, the district failed to provide investors with the promised information, according to the commission. The authority failed to disclose its compliance record when it conducted the 2012 and 2013 offerings totaling more than \$32 million, the commission said. As a result, “the bonds appeared more attractive and investors were misled about the likelihood that the district would comply with its continuing disclosure obligations in the future,” according to the SEC.

Under the settlement, the BFA has agreed to retain an independent consultant, who will generate recommendations for the authority to adopt.

“We look forward to working with an independent consultant to help the BFA further establish strong policies in all aspects of our municipal disclosures, the accounting for bond proceeds and record keeping,” said White, noting the city has never defaulted on debt service payments for its bonds.

The settlement is another step in Beaumont’s quest to pull itself out of a financial quagmire.

In April, the city [reached a deal with the Riverside County Transportation Commission](#) concerning a lawsuit over Transportation Uniform Mitigation Fees. Beaumont, which found itself facing a \$67-million hole and possible bankruptcy, will now pay back about \$30 million. But some of that is credit for transportation projects and includes structured payments over more than 20 years.

[Seven former Beaumont city officials – including Kapanicas – were charged in May 2016 with corruption charges](#), including embezzlement and misappropriation of public funds. All have pleaded not guilty. That case is continuing.

In addition to the SEC investigation, the [state controller's office conducted an audit of the city's finances](#). White said the city is “making a lot of progress” on the controller’s recommendations.

“I think there’s a few more boxes we need to check, but we’ve got a lot accomplished,” he said in an interview Wednesday.

“I think (the SEC settlement) closes the door ... as far as lawsuits,” White added. “I think this was the last piece that we were really hoping to close.”

*Staff writer Michael J. Williams contributed to this report.*

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Staff mug of metro editor Liam Truchard.

**Liam Truchard**



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## LOCAL NEWS

# Moreno Valley won't give mayor 713 percent raise — for now

By **IMRAN GHORI** | [ighori@scng.com](mailto:ighori@scng.com) | The Press-Enterprise

PUBLISHED: August 23, 2017 at 5:04 pm | UPDATED: August 24, 2017 at 10:09 am



Days after proposing a massive salary increase for the mayor, Moreno Valley officials appear to be backing away from the idea.

Last week, city officials introduced a plan to [raise the mayor's base salary](#) from [\\$13,212 annually](#) to \$108,212 — a 713 percent increase. The mayor also receives \$17,764 in supplemental pay and \$4,479 in benefits.

The salary jump would have made Mayor Yxstian Gutierrez the highest paid mayor in Riverside, San Bernardino and Orange counties and the 10th highest in the state, according to figures from [Transparent California](#), which tracks government salaries.

In a Wednesday, Aug. 23, email, Gutierrez said the proposal came from city administrators and he appreciated it.

However, he wrote: “I feel the people of Moreno Valley should decide if they want a full-time mayor and the level of compensation.”

Gutierrez said the issue should be “voted by the people” through a ballot measure. He did not say if the council would discuss putting a ballot measure before voters nor did his email address the amount of the proposed increase.

As of Wednesday afternoon, city spokeswoman Kimberly Sutherland had not responded to questions about the proposal.

The planned raise — and the amount of the increase — has been criticized by residents and open-government advocates.

On Friday, Aug. 18, the city called a special meeting with three days' notice — instead of the usual 12 days — to discuss the proposal. But officials canceled the meeting hours later. Last week, Gutierrez said it would be brought back later. In his latest email, Gutierrez did not address what might happen with the original proposal.

Some residents interviewed across the city earlier this week said they were shocked by the large proposed hike in a city where the median household income is \$54,590 and the per capita income is \$18,262, according to the US Census Bureau.

Moreno Valley resident Dean Enright, 82, had an emphatic response as he paused from shooting pool at the Moreno Valley Senior Center on Monday, Aug. 21.

“He must be out of his gourd,” said Enright, who added that, given conditions in the city, the mayor doesn't deserve a raise.

“The city streets are atrocious,” he said.

Ronald Greene, 73, who was playing with Enright, suggested city officials should earn less.

“He wants to get as much money as he can,” he said of the mayor. “That doesn't seem right.”

Saleem Zmily, 59, who was smoking a cigarette outside the Starbucks on Frederick Street, said he wasn't sure if the mayor deserved more money. But, if the city made such a move, the increase should be gradual, he said. Zmily, who owns the Wienerschnitzel on Alessandro Boulevard, said he's been a business owner for 25 years and never seen such a sharp jump in pay.

“The increase is ridiculous,” he said. “When we do them, we do them by a level.”

Leslie Ambriz, 20, who works at an after school program at Box Springs Elementary School, said she'd rather see her tax money go to the community.

“I wish I was making that much for a part-time job,” she said.

In Moreno Valley, the mayor's post is mostly ceremonial and part-time. It carries the same voting power as other City Council members. Additional duties are presiding over council meetings and making appointments — subject to the council's ratification — to city commissions and boards.

The city's daily operations are run by the city manager. City Manager Michelle Dawson earns \$255,852 a year, plus \$15,634 in other pay and \$86,139 in benefits.

In a city report proposing the salary increase, Dawson cited Gutierrez's [win in 2016](#) as the city's first elected mayor as a reason for the raise. Before voters approved a [2014 measure](#) making the position directly elected by voters, the council selected one of its members as mayor.

When deciding to place the measure before voters, city officials stated that the mayor's duties would be the same as council members, except for the extra duties such as overseeing meetings.

"The mayor's powers are essentially unchanged," stated the ballot argument in favor of the measure signed by proponents, including then-Mayor Jesse Molina. Under state law, the mayor's powers can only be expanded by becoming a charter city — which would require voter approval.

In a city report, then-City Attorney Suzanne Bryant broached the question of adding a ballot measure that would set the mayor's salary. The city council, of which Gutierrez was a member, chose to keep the pay the same and not put the question before voters.

Last week's proposed increase came as Gutierrez began the first month of unpaid leave this academic year from his job as a Moreno Valley Unified School District teacher. His annual district salary in 2016 was \$67,180, plus \$12,065 in benefits, according to Transparent California.

In proposing the \$95,000 increase, Dawson's report compared Moreno Valley to 20 other cities, using figures from Transparent California to arrive at an average.

Robert Fellner, research director for Transparent California, called the city's methodology "shocking." He said it was "entirely inappropriate" to compare Moreno Valley's salary with cities in which the mayor's duties aren't the same.

The city's salary survey included 17 charter cities with a strong mayor form of government in which the mayor's office has executive authority such as supervising city employees. Among the cities in Moreno Valley's study were San Francisco — which is unique in California because it is both a city and county — and Los Angeles, San Jose and San Diego, whose populations are many times larger than Moreno Valley.

The three general law cities on the list — that like Moreno Valley have a council-manager government — were Fontana, Fremont and Oxnard. All have similar populations in the 200,000 range with mayor's base salaries ranging from \$45,174 to \$20,040. When total extra pay and benefits are taken into account, Moreno Valley's mayoral compensation is in a similar range to those cities.

Tags: [government](#), [Top Stories PE](#)



## Imran Ghori

Imran Ghori has been a reporter with The Press-Enterprise since 1999. He covers Moreno Valley and Jurupa Valley.

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OPINION

# Raising property taxes for public pensions



AP Photo/Nam Y. Huh

Firefighters battle a blaze in Harvey, Ill., Thursday, May 24, 2007.

By **JON COUPAL** |

August 26, 2017 at 12:01 am



California's iconic 1978 tax cutting measure, Proposition 13, was motivated by a desire to, first and foremost, limit out of control property taxes. To that end, the measure has been a remarkable success saving California property owners more than half a trillion dollars in its 39 year history. (Notwithstanding that achievement, California still ranks in the top third of all states in per capita property tax collections). Prop. 13 was less effective, however, in its secondary goal of limiting the growth in government spending. In fact, it is not unfair to say it has fallen far short given today's high overall tax burden and the state's profligate spending habit. Government remains California's number one growth industry.

Some California citizens who voted for Proposition 13 almost four decades ago may have forgotten that the drafters were in fact concerned about government spending as well as tax relief. A few still contend that taxpayer groups such as Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association should focus only on protecting homeowners against rising property taxes and avoid issues like the costs of regulation, environmental policies or the cost of public employee pensions. But fortunately, most astute taxpayers understand that their tax burden is inextricably related to government spending and that there are tremendous risks in failing to engage on government policies that drive up public costs.

One Illinois town has learned that the hard way. The city of Harvey has been ordered by a state appellate court to approve a property tax levy specifically for its firefighters' pension. That court order, however, may be difficult to enforce given that Harvey already has effective tax rates of 5.7 percent for residential and 14.3 percent for commercial properties. (Under Proposition 13, the maximum tax rate for all real property is 1 percent).

As stunning as this decision may be, residents of Illinois better prepare themselves because Harvey won't be the last. Many of Illinois' 600-plus local police and firefighter pensions are similarly underfunded which may explain massive flight out of the state by its taxpaying citizens.

The real question for California taxpayers is whether what is going on in Illinois could happen here in California. More specifically, could a California court order a city, county or special district to raise property taxes to cover unfunded public employee pension obligations? It's possible, but it would be more difficult for those who seek such a move. First, Proposition 13's one percent rate limit is in the constitution, so a state court would have to find — which it could — that the pension obligations were guaranteed under the United States Constitution. That is not an inconceivable outcome. Indeed, it is possible that a federal court might reach that conclusion more easily.

That a federal court might order a local property tax increase is not without precedence. In 1990, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that federal judges may order local governments to increase taxes to remedy constitutional violations such as school segregation. The court took an expansive view of judicial power to actively manage institutions and activities usually within the power of states and localities.

If property owners need a reason to watch the entire controversy over public employee compensation, especially pension benefits, this is it. Don't assume what happened in Harvey, Illinois couldn't happen here.

*Jon Coupal is the president of Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association.*

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Tags: **Guest Commentary**



**Jon  
Coupal**

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# Under Obama, a gold mining firm was fine with a Mojave Desert monument. Under Trump, an aboutface



Aren Hall, environmental manager of the open-pit Newcastle mining operation, surveys the eastern Mojave Desert site. (Louis Sahagun / Los Angeles Times)



By **Louis Sahagun**

AUGUST 28, 2017, 7:15 AM | REPORTING FROM CASTLE MOUNTAINS NATIONAL MONUMENT

**L**ess than a year ago, President Obama's designation of a new national monument in the eastern Mojave Desert — featuring a row of jagged peaks rising above native grasslands and Joshua trees — was hailed as a compromise that served the goals of conservationists and the mining industry.

The 20,920-acre monument surrounded, but did not include, an open-pit gold mining operation at the southern end of the Castle Mountains. That allowed Newcastle Gold Ltd. of Canada to proceed with plans to excavate 10 million tons of ore from its 8,300-acre parcel through 2025.

“The company appreciates that it has been consulted throughout this process,” Newcastle said at the time. “The new land designation reflects a compromise position that meets our needs as well as respecting the interests of other stakeholders in the area.”

So, conservationists said, they were caught off guard to learn Newcastle’s position shifted after the [Trump](#) administration moved to roll back federal protections on many of the monuments created by previous administrations.

Castle Mountains National Monument was not on the list of 27 sites proposed for status modification or elimination. In a plan delivered Thursday to the White House, but not released to the public, Interior Secretary [Ryan Zinke](#) said he has suggested the president make changes at “a handful” of those monuments.

Yet letters obtained through a [Freedom of Information Act](#) request show that Newcastle and Rep. [Paul Cook](#) (R-Yucca Valley) have told Zinke the designation was made without adequate public outreach or input from the company.

The firm’s recommended solution: Reduce the size of Castle Mountains National Monument by 50%.

“The company gave its word that the deal we struck nearly a year ago was good,” David Lamfrom, director of California and desert wildlife programs for the National Parks Conservation Assn., said last week. “So we’re ... furious to learn that the company and its supporters have been secretly complaining that the process was unjust.”

In an interview, Gerald Panneton, chief executive of Newcastle, confirmed that the company met with Interior Department officials in June to discuss shrinking the monument. He dismissed the company’s initial cheery assessment of Obama’s designation as “words used to calm investors.”

“There were never adequate consultations with us,” said Panneton, who joined the company after the designation was made. “That’s a problem because we need room to explore and grow.”

In an opinion piece published Wednesday in the Desert Dispatch newspaper, Cook accused Obama of creating the Castle Mountains monument under the Antiquities Act “without a public meeting or public comment” as part of a “backroom deal” with conservationists. He also said Trump has specifically asked Zinke to modify the monument.

Alex Hinson, a spokesman for the U.S. Department of the Interior, declined to comment.

The area where the monument is located, about 100 miles south of Las Vegas, has a long history of battles pitting preservationists against mining, grazing and recreational interests.

In the late 1980s, plans to use a controversial gold-mining technology came under attack by environmentalists, who claimed it would dry up a perennial spring and attract wildlife to cyanide-laced water.

In 1994, the mineral-rich portion of land was carved out of the adjacent Mojave National Preserve at the request of Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), who recognized the economic value of its gold mining operations. The then-Viceroy Mine produced more than 1 million ounces of gold by the time its main pits — dubbed Leslie Ann, Oro Bell and Jumbo — were shuttered in 2001 due to low gold prices.

Standing one recent day at the edge of a mining pit dug into the mountains, Newcastle environmental manager Aren Hall smiled and said, “Impressive, isn’t it?”

Panneton said Newcastle aims to resume production next year.

“We’re more than happy to sit down with environmental groups and work out our differences,” he said. “For example, the mine could help subsidize the monument and Mojave National Preserve once it’s up and running and making a profit.”

Lamfrom, however, has his doubts.

“The company’s word is not as good as gold,” he said

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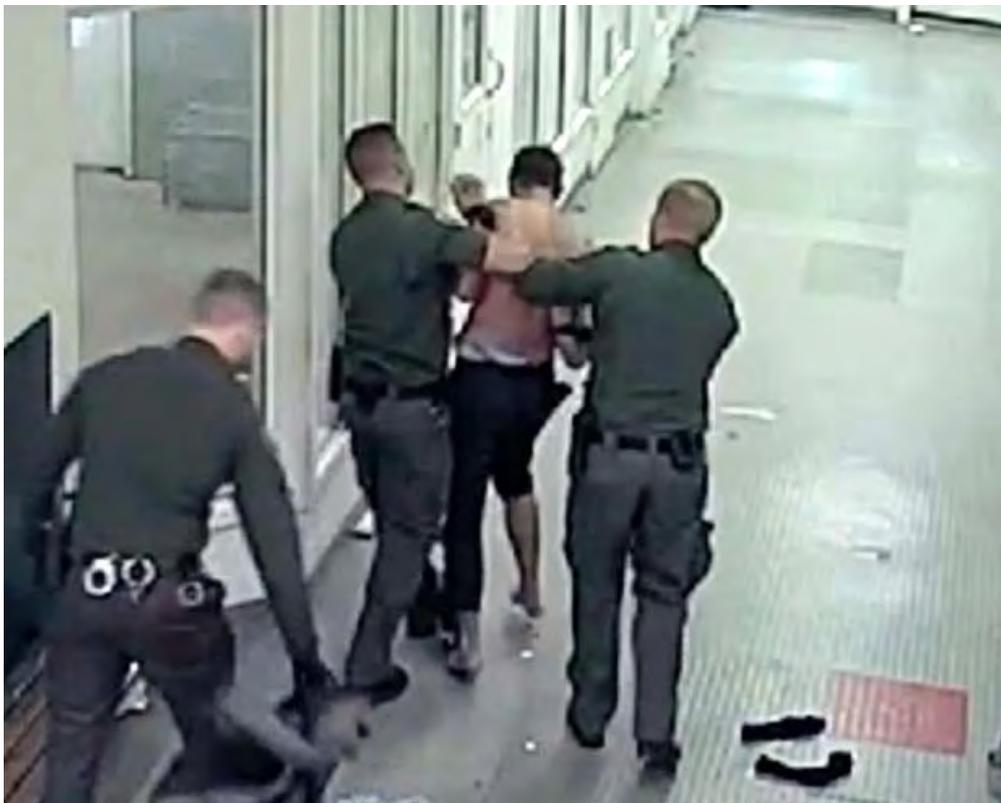
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NEWS > CRIME + PUBLIC SAFETY

## VIDEO: Are Southern California jailers injuring inmates with abusive 'chicken winging' holds?



Charles Huntsman is controlled by Orange County Sheriff's Deputy Wesley Dean, left of Huntsman, as he is booked on suspicion of drunken driving at the Orange County Jail in Santa Ana in May, 2016. Huntsman's arm was broken just above the elbow seconds later. (OCSD security camera video)

By **JORDAN GRAHAM** | [jgraham@scng.com](mailto:jgraham@scng.com) and **TONY SAAVEDRA** |

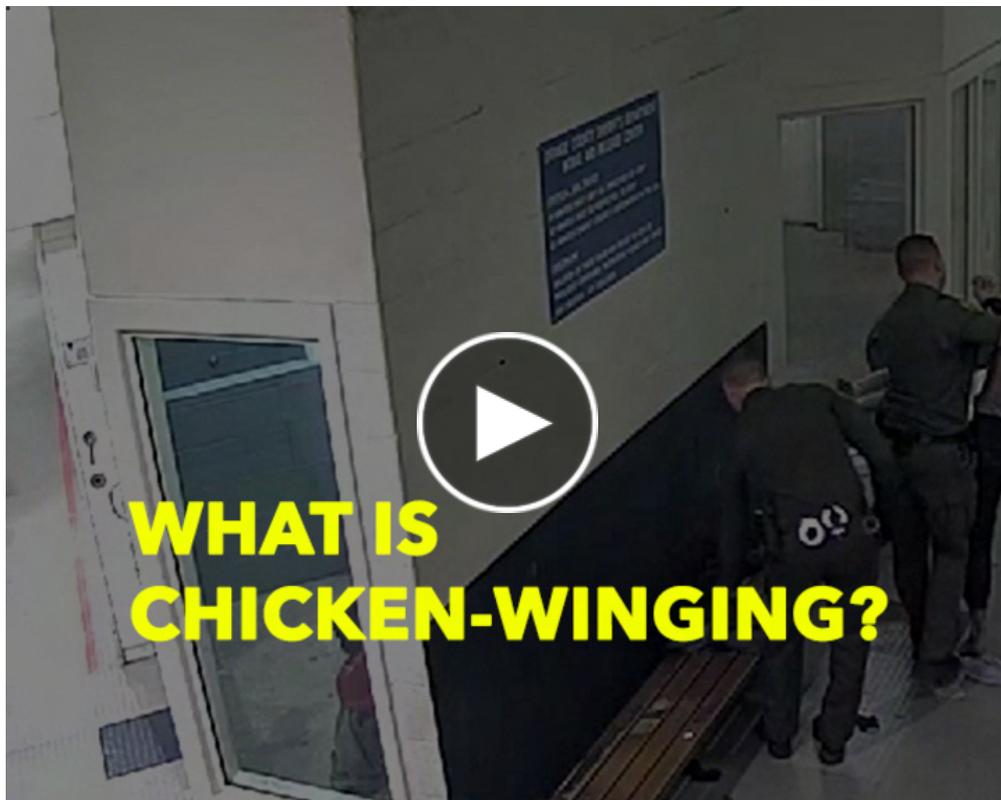
tsaavedra@scng.com | Orange County Register

PUBLISHED: August 25, 2017 at 4:23 pm | UPDATED: August 27, 2017 at 9:47 pm

77 COMMENTS

Orange County Sheriff's Deputy Wesley Dean was admittedly agitated and looking to inflict pain on a jail inmate when he wrenched the man's hand high behind his back, breaking his arm just above the elbow.

After the inmate sued the county, Dean admitted during a sworn deposition that he used excessive force. He apologized for snapping the suspected drunken driver's humerus bone while using an unsanctioned technique inmates in Southern California jails call "chicken winging." He also apologized for intentionally stomping on inmate Charles Huntsman's bare foot six times as he pushed the intoxicated man toward a cell. Dean characterized the incident as a rare, personal lapse, not indicative of department protocol.



"It wasn't an academy-approved technique," Dean said of the May 2016 arm-bending, which occurred minutes after Huntsman entered the jail and as a second deputy held the inmate's other arm. "It's not a situation I'm proud of."



X-ray of the broken arm of Charles Huntsman.

The issue has resurfaced repeatedly in recent years in claims for damages filed against the agency, lawsuits and settlements, as well as a recent high-profile critique of the jail system by a civil rights group. How frequently improper control-holds are used on Orange County jail inmates – and how many injuries may result – isn't clear. Detailed data on complaints involving such encounters wasn't readily available from the department.

Chicken winging is an imprecise term used by inmates for any type of control-hold in which the arms are swept behind the back and pushed up toward the shoulders. Some versions of the holds are sanctioned by the sheriff's departments in Orange and San Bernardino counties and other law enforcement agencies. More extreme and often unauthorized versions of the hold include torquing the straightened arms upward away from the back and toward the head, causing the subject to bend over.

Arm-holds have figured in legal claims and court battles – including a \$227,000 settlement in the Huntsman case last month – against the Orange County Sheriff's Department dating back to at least 2008. They were cited prominently in a two-year investigation of the county jail system released in June by the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California. And a former nurse at the county jail told the Southern California News Group that over-aggressive chicken winging has been used by deputies despite warnings from medical workers that it would harm inmates.

Orange County officials have denied all the claims for damages.

Allegations of chicken winging aren't limited to Orange County. Last month, inmates at a San Bernardino County jail were given a \$2.8 million settlement for abuses that included painful arm-holds. An attorney involved in the award said San Bernardino County sheriff's employees continue to use improper techniques.

"We're getting calls that it's worse than ever before ... it's a form of torture," Victorville attorney James Terrell said.

While some pain-compliance holds are allowed by Southern California sheriff's departments, law enforcement officials stress they may not be used to intimidate, harass or provoke inmates. Sheriff's officials in Orange, San Bernardino and Los Angeles counties said all complaints of inmate abuse are taken seriously and investigated.

"Deputies must have an understanding of, and true appreciation for, the limitations of their authority," said Orange County Assistant Sheriff Bob Peterson. "This is especially true with respect to deputies overcoming resistance while engaged in the performance of their duties."

The recent allegations involving improper use of control-holds in Orange County jails come as the system continues to grapple with other criticisms of its operations, including the slaying of an inmate in June and the escape of three prisoners in 2016. The U.S. Department of Justice's civil rights division is investigating allegations that Orange County deputies and prosecutors systemically misused jailhouse informants and withheld evidence to illegally obtain convictions. And a separate federal probe, triggered by the 2006 murder of an inmate, is examining the workings of the five-jail network.

Jonathan Smith, who served as the U.S. Department of Justice's top civil rights lawyer until 2015 and is familiar with the department's investigations of the Orange County jails, said the allegations of improper chicken winging found by Southern California News Group suggest institutional problems may remain within the sheriff's agency.

"I know the Orange County jail has been under scrutiny. There is some view that it improved," Smith said, "but it seems they've returned to their own bad (practices)."

## **He heard the arm 'pop'**

Charles Huntsman was driving through Newport Beach shortly after 11 p.m. in May 2016 when the red police lights lit up his rear view mirror. A 33-year-old waiter from Newport Beach with a previous hit-and-run conviction, Huntsman was arrested for driving under the influence and transported to the Intake Release Center at the Orange County Jail in Santa Ana.

He was there fewer than three minutes when he was injured by deputy Dean.

Dean testified that Huntsman cursed at the jailers and disobeyed directions. After watching the video, Dean conceded he gave Huntsman sometimes less than a second to comply with orders and he didn't feel physically threatened by the inmate. When asked by an attorney why he became so agitated, Dean said that the inmate was fidgety, had wagged his tongue at the deputies and was "more passive-aggressive than anything."

Dean, a three-year jail veteran, testified he threw Huntsman's shoe down a corridor because he was frustrated. He stood the inmate up, bent Huntsman's arm high behind his back, marched him down the hallway and thrust him against a wall, breaking his arm. After Dean heard Huntsman's arm "pop," the deputy and his supervisors failed to file a use-of-force report, although Dean acknowledged department policy required him to do so. Dean testified he knew he had defied the rules and heard Huntsman screaming in pain, complaining his arm had been broken.

Experts in police use-of-force techniques say the string of inmate abuse complaints in Orange County – 17 damage claims and lawsuits, including six involving arm-holds since June 2014 – is troublesome.

"You'll get compliance a lot quicker, but if you go high enough, their shoulders will go out of their sockets," said George Wright, a criminal justice professor at Santa Ana College and a former U.S. Treasury agent. "You wouldn't teach it and, if you saw somebody do it, you'd correct them."

Smith, the former federal justice department civil rights lawyer, said the injury caused by deputy Dean was particularly concerning.

"You know what force it takes to break somebody's arm? It's a huge amount of force," said Smith, now the executive director of the Washington Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs.

According to the ACLU, improper chicken winging occurs throughout Southern California.

In July, nearly 40 inmates at the West Valley Detention Center in Rancho Cucamonga were given the \$2.8 million settlement from San Bernardino County after they alleged sheriff's deputies frequently chicken-winged them and used Tasers without provocation.

One current inmate who was not involved in the lawsuit, William Hernandez, 53, of Big Bear, said abusive arm-holds continue to be used at the detention center despite the recent settlement.

"They grab guys and practically tear their arms off behind their backs. They chicken wing them," said Hernandez, who is awaiting sentencing for rape and burglary.

San Bernardino County Sheriff's Lt. Sarkis Sohannessian said deputies there do not apply rear control-holds in a manner that will injure inmates or suspects.

"We do not train in elevating the hand so much as to inflict injury or 'torture,'" Sohannessian said. "These statements (by inmates) are one-sided and our deputies are not trained in 'chicken winging' to injure, nor is it an approved technique by our agency."

ACLU jail coordinator Esther Lim said her organization receives many complaints from inmates at Los Angeles County detention facilities, who regularly report chicken winging involving excessive force. Los Angeles County sheriff's officials say deputies in that agency are taught only to use enough force to control the subject.

Chicken winging, also known as "pretzeling," is cited frequently in the ACLU of Southern California's June critique of Orange County's jails, which described numerous allegations of excessive force by deputies against inmates. At least 10 of the 120 inmates interviewed for the report said they experienced or witnessed deputies twisting inmates' arms behind their backs, inflicting pain.

"Incarcerated individuals reported that the technique is used when no force is needed and in circumstances where far less severe force was appropriate and sufficient," the ACLU wrote.

One female inmate reported seeing deputies beat incoming inmates, several of whom were chicken-winged and "pushed around" for no apparent reason, according to the ACLU report.

Citing the report's findings, the ACLU called for Sheriff Sandra Hutchens to resign immediately. Hutchens stunned department observers by announcing retirement plans that same day, although she said her decision had nothing to do with the allegations. Hutchens rejected the ACLU report's findings, saying the authors relied on questionable accounts by former inmates and failed to interview department staff.

Hutchens also said the 120 people interviewed by the ACLU were only a small portion of the 350,000 inmates who passed through the county's jails over the past six years.

Five of six claims and lawsuits against the county over the past three years that allege abusive arm-holds describe nearly identical scenarios: A person is arrested for driving intoxicated and taken to jail, where they are abused for small or imagined slights, such as looking around or having difficulty following directions.

That's what Alison Boroch, a 41-year-old Trabuco Canyon entrepreneur, said happened to her in May 2015.

Boroch, who owns a graphic design firm, sued the county in December, saying her one-night stay in jail left her with an aching arm and a bloody head. Boroch was originally supposed to be cited and released on her own recognizance on suspicion of drunken driving, according to court documents. But during booking, deputies became impatient with the woman when she didn't hand them her socks and later when she argued with jailers about taking out her belly ring, according to a deputy's sworn deposition.



Alison Boroch filed a lawsuit against Orange County in December alleging mistreatment by OC Sheriff's Deputies Olivia Coco and Terra Carrillo, who are flanking her. Brooch alleges deputies injured her arm during her booking. (OCSD security camera video)

Security videos show deputies Olivia Coco and Terra Carrillo flanking Boroch, yanking her arms behind her back, forcing her down a hallway as she grimaces in pain. "Both arms, shoulders feel like they are being dislocated," Boroch later testified. "I'm involuntarily shrieking due to the pain." Coco and Carrillo didn't file a use-of-force report. Coco testified later that she and Carrillo used a sanctioned control-hold and not force requiring a report.

In a sworn deposition, Coco testified she had ordered Boroch to face the wall and that when the woman turned her head for a moment, the deputy feared Boroch was preparing to attack. She added that Boroch was overreacting, had a "smart-ass attitude," and jailers couldn't allow other inmates to think they could act similarly "aggressive or disrespectful."

"You could barely put your hand on somebody and just put your hand on their shoulder and they scream and they act like you're attacking them," Coco said during the deposition. "I didn't think (Boroch's experience) was traumatic at all." The case is awaiting trial.

Coco and Carrillo also were accused of using excessive force on Elena Grant, 49, of Newport Beach, the founder of an online medical-supply store. Grant sued the county in 2015, alleging that the two deputies injured her while booking her for suspected drunken driving in April 2014. The case is currently in trial.

In the security video of Grant's booking, three female deputies suddenly grab her, raise her arms behind her back and march her down a long hallway. Grant can be seen contorting in pain.



Elena Grant sued the county in 2015 alleging deputies injured her while booking her on suspicion of drunken driving. Grant alleges deputies injured her back while transporting her to a cell at a county jail. (OCSJ security camera video)

The county said in court documents that Grant failed to comply with orders and deputies placed her in a routine control-hold.

A former jail worker, who has filed a federal workplace discrimination complaint against the department, also alleged in an interview that deputies regularly use excessive force, including chicken winging, in Orange County jails.

Jennifer Westfield, 31, a licensed vocational nurse who resigned from the jail in December, said in an interview that during seven years treating Orange County inmates, she saw them chicken-winged frequently, and witnessed a deputy break a man's arm while using the technique. During that incident, Westfield alleged, jail supervisors scrambled to explain the fracture, asking nurses if they could find evidence the man had a history of osteoporosis or other health disorders.

When some nurses confronted deputies about the harms of twisting and wrenching inmates' arms, Westfield said they were rebuffed and criticized for speaking out.

"They go off on us," Westfield said. "You will get totally disrespected by the deputies after that. Those nurses are then labeled...It's known that if you speak against the deputies, that you will be labeled as a snitch, and you carry that reputation."

Two other retired nurses interviewed by the Southern California News Group said they did not see anything improper with the deputies' handling of inmates and never experienced intimidation.

### **Institutional failures**

In 2009, Orange County paid Newport Beach real estate broker Jeff Pittman a \$20,000 settlement after he alleged deputies wrestled him to the ground with an arm-hold maneuver, choked him and used a Taser on him while booking him into jail for suspicion of drunken driving. Pittman's attorney Thomas Beck said deputies yanked his client's arms backward until they rose above his head, causing "intense pain."

That complaints of improper chicken winging continue to emerge should be a cause for concern and close scrutiny, some experts said.

"If it happens routinely at any given jail, it speaks to the culture of the workforce, and it's the responsibility of the jail to set that culture," said Martin F. Horn, a distinguished lecturer at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York.

Dean, the deputy who admitted improperly using the hold that broke Huntsman's arm, testified he was interviewed by internal affairs and later suspended for three days. Dean also explained that he later completed three days of routine, annually required training for deputies working the jails, including refresher instruction on how to properly perform control-holds.

But he testified he wasn't asked or required to take additional training for breaking Huntsman's arm. By April, he added, he was working patrol duty – generally considered a better assignment among deputies.

LA Daily News (<http://www.dailynews.com>)

## On LA County's remote north end, the homeless are stuck. Is hope on the horizon?

By Susan Abram, Los Angeles Daily News

Sunday, August 27, 2017



At the desert edges of north Los Angeles County, where the August sun beats down with no mercy, men who live in tents or in cars near the recently shuttered homeless shelter cling to a few last, remaining hopes.

Bone-thin and dazed, Bruce Reed struggled to lift himself from his bed of dirt and rocks one recent afternoon. The 28-year-old hoped someone, anyone, would come by to refill a water bottle long gone dry.

Across the way on Yucca Street, Richard Gomez, 52, sat wheezing in a wheelchair outside his wilted, discolored tent. Gomez still wore a paper wristband he got at the hospital two weeks ago, when he was admitted for a collapsed lung. He hoped a settlement check he said he won against the Sheriff's Department might come soon.

Not far from Gomez, James Allen, 72, reclined in the passenger seat of his late-model, broken down Acura with no where to go. A nice lady from the county's Department of Mental Health visited him earlier in the day with a sandwich and Gatorade, he said. He hoped she would return to tell him she's found affordable housing, so that he no longer had to sleep in his oven-like car.

Under triple digit temperatures and far from nearby social services, the men's hopes could easily evaporate and turn into despair. While none of them were frequent users of the Lancaster Community Shelter, the only homeless shelter of its kind in the Antelope Valley, its closure earlier this month hurt them, they admitted. It provided some relief and brought attention to their needs.

"This place is the Devil's heaven," Allen said of the heat and isolation he felt as he stared out blankly toward parched, vacant lots that surrounded him.

"He gets everybody 'cuz nobody can leave," he added.

Homelessness surged by 50 percent this year across the Antelope Valley, just like it did in East Los Angeles. That means there are now 4,559 homeless men, women and children in the region, up from last year's 3,038, according to figures released by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, also known as LAHSA.

• **RELATED STORY:** [Homelessness surges by 23 percent in LA County](#)

The gains were mostly seen in the unincorporated areas outside the cities of Palmdale and Lancaster, the data show.

But unlike downtown Los Angeles and the suburbs around it, the Antelope Valley's geography works against those in need of resources, noted Carol Crabson, the CEO of Valley Oasis, a Lancaster-based organization that provides services to those who escape domestic violence and homeless people.

The organization serves from 1,500 to 2,000 a year, she said. Last year, 6 percent of the people who were assisted were from the central and southern areas of Los Angeles County, looking for affordable housing in the Antelope Valley, Crabson said.

“The homeless up here face unique challenges because of the extreme weather conditions and the isolation from other areas,” Crabson said. “If you’re a homeless person from Long Beach, you can get on a bus and go to downtown L.A. Up here, you can’t do that. There is a lack of affordable housing out here too, like there is all over Los Angeles County.”

• **RELATED STORY:** [Where do the homeless sleep? LA County now knows](#)

When the Lancaster Community Shelter closed its doors for lack of funding on Aug. 6, it was a blow to the community and came at a time when more people needed it the most, Crabson added. The shelter was run by Grace Resources and provided emergency beds to dozens of people each night.

While Valley Oasis and several other social service providers and churches were able to step in to help those who were displaced, Crabson said more funding is needed so that providers can understand the increase in homelessness and work together to form long-term solutions. A better plan needs to be in place, so providers don’t compete against one another for scarce dollars that force agencies to water down their services, she added.

The issue of funding caught State Sen. Scott Wilk’s attention just before the shelter closed. Earlier this summer, Wilk, R-Santa Clarita, requested a state audit to look into how LAHSA distributed its funding and why the Antelope Valley last year received \$397 per person from the county for homeless services, while downtown L.A. received \$4,700.

A spokesman from LAHSA said Friday the agency is cooperating with the audit.

Meanwhile, Los Angeles County supervisors Kathryn Barger and Mark Ridley-Thomas took note of the ongoing issues in the Antelope Valley and earlier this month, approved a motion to form a consortium. A panel made up of representatives from the cities of Palmdale and Lancaster, community-based organizations, clergy, law enforcement, LAHSA and the county departments of Mental Health and Public Health, will attend.

The Antelope Valley Homeless Consortium will meet for the first time at 4 p.m. Monday at Highland High School 39055 25th St. West, Palmdale.

“There is an immediate need to increase the capacity of homeless services in a regional, holistic, and collaborative fashion in the Antelope Valley,” Barger said in a statement earlier this month, adding the consortium “will develop regional strategies to bolster supportive services and housing for the homeless.” Crabson said she and other providers are excited by the idea of the consortium.

“We feel hopeful that great things are going to come out of this process. But it is to me a process,” she said. “We’re not going to have all the answers at 8:30 at night. But we will have a sense of direction.”

Some who used the shelter, such as Drako Blackburn, 34, and Cierra Morandi, 21, said they’ve been able to find alternative places to sleep. Both now live in tents in a friend’s backyard.

On a recent Friday afternoon, the two took a stroll through downtown Lancaster, where free weekly summer concerts take place and high-end boutique shops, galleries and cafes line the busy boulevard.

“There’s a lack of jobs, a lack of resources,” Morandi said of the Antelope Valley, where she moved with family as a youth, but has been on her own since she was a teen.

Still, she and Blackburn have found a way to adapt to the hot summers and cold winters in the Antelope Valley.

“We’ve been having to move around a lot,” Morandi added. “We’ve become nomads.”

LA Daily News (<http://www.dailynews.com>)

## California's housing crisis — it's even worse than you think

By Matt Levin, CALmatters

Sunday, August 27, 2017



Half the state's households struggle to afford the roof over their heads. Homeownership—once a staple of the California dream — is at its lowest rate since World War II. Nearly 70 percent of poor Californians see the majority of their paychecks go immediately to escalating rents.

This month, state lawmakers are debating a long-delayed housing package. Here's what you need to know about the scope of one of California's most vexing issues:

### Just how hard is it to buy a home in California?

Hard. Really hard. Both compared to how hard it is in other states, and how hard it was for previous generations of Californians to buy homes.

While it's always been more expensive to be a homeowner in California, the gap between us and the rest of the country has grown into a chasm. The median California home is now priced 2.5 times higher than the median national home. As of 2015, the typical California home costs \$437,000, easily beating the likes of Massachusetts or New York (only Hawaii had more expensive houses).

Despite relatively low mortgage rates, exploding housing prices have caused California's homeownership rate to dip significantly. Just over half of California households own their homes—the third lowest rate in the country, and the lowest rate within the state since World War II.

It's not just housing prices that are affecting homeownership rates. Studies have found that student debt loads, rising income inequality and changing housing preferences among younger Californians are also at play.

### Rents didn't dip during the recession, and now are soaring

Rental costs across the state are some of the highest in the country. While listed housing prices dipped dramatically in the wake of the Great Recession, rents in California remained relatively stable before soaring in recent years in hot markets.

Across the state, the median rental price for a two-bedroom apartment is about \$2,400, the third highest in the country. But statewide figures water down how absurd the situation is getting in urban coastal markets, where the vast majority of Californians live. The median rent for a two-bedroom apartment in San Francisco reached more than \$4,000 this year.

### “It may cost more to live here, but they pay you more”

That's somewhat true — median earnings for Californians are higher than the national average, and are significantly higher in certain regions like the Bay Area with tremendously pricey costs of living.

But on average, income over the past two decades has not kept pace with escalating rents.

The problem here is not just housing. Income inequality and wage stagnation in California also hinder low and moderate-income households' ability to pay for a home.

But in certain markets, even extremely high incomes aren't enough to blunt the cost of housing. In San Jose, where the current median income is nearly \$100,000, renters can still expect to pay 40 percent of their monthly income on rent, according to an analysis by the real estate data firm Zillow.

### **Cities are being gentrified — as is the entire state**

It's difficult to measure things like "gentrification" and "displacement"—when the arrival of higher-income, higher-educated residents in a community results in the expulsion of longtime lower-income residents. But there's little question change is happening rapidly across many California cities.

Researchers at UC Berkeley found that more than half of low-income households in the Bay Area are at risk of, or already experiencing, gentrification. It's not just lower-income communities bleeding households—higher-income neighborhoods are losing their lower-income members as well. And in places like the Boyle Heights neighborhood of Los Angeles, gentrification protests have exposed escalating tensions between longtime Latino residents and new, predominantly white arrivals.

Where are these low-income people going? Increasingly, out of state.

From 2000 to 2015, the state lost nearly 800,000 residents with incomes near or below the poverty line. Nearly three-quarters of those who left California since 2007 made less than \$50,000 annually. The leading destination for California's poor? Texas.

### **Rising rents are causing more homelessness**

Housing costs are just one factor in the complex tangle of reasons people become homeless. California actually has fewer people experiencing homelessness now than it did a decade ago. But there's little question rising rents are linked to more Californians living in cars, shelters, and on the streets—especially in the greater L.A. area.

While the vast majority of states saw a dip in their homeless population between 2015 and 2016, California saw an increase of about 2,400 people, according to statistics compiled by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. California accounts for about 12 percent of the nation's population, but more than 20 percent of the nation's homeless live here.

Recent numbers from Los Angeles County, where the number of people experiencing homelessness grew 30 percent over the past two years, have prompted cries for more eviction protections and rent control. Zillow recently estimated that a 5 percent increase in rent would result in an additional 2,000 homeless Los Angelinos. In 2016 rents grew an average of 4 percent there.

### **Millennials, mom and dad, and avocado toast**

Nearly a decade removed from the depths of the Great Recession, and 38 percent of California's 18 to 34-year-olds still live with their parents, according to U.S. Census data. That's roughly 3.6 million people—more than the entire population of Chicago.

Again, housing costs are not the only thing keeping junior from moving out. Student debt loads, disappearing labor markets, and delaying marriage are also contributing to the trend. We've seen no thorough analysis yet on how California's abundant avocado toast supply may be keeping millennials confined to their nests.

### **It's a statewide problem**

The extremes of the state's housing crisis are concentrated in the Bay Area and greater Los Angeles, but the challenge is truly statewide. A widely-cited report by the consulting firm McKinsey Global Institute found that in every metropolitan area in the state—from Fresno to Palmdale to Salinas—at least 30 percent of residents could not afford local rents.

The intense pressures of housing costs in coastal urban centers are spilling into inland cities. While San Diego, San Francisco and L.A. top the list of toughest rental markets in the country, cities like Sacramento and Riverside recently have experienced the largest year-over-year increases.

#### **The housing crisis has major repercussions for the economy**

Big business is also feeling the pinch of California's housing crisis.

The McKinsey Global Institute found that housing shortages cost the economy between \$143 billion and \$233 billion annually, not taking into account second-order costs to health, education and the environment. Much of that is due to households spending too much of their incomes on the rent or mortgage and not enough on consumer goods.

Even the attractive salaries and lavish perks of Silicon Valley struggle to overcome the local housing market, as young tech talent flees to the relatively inexpensive climes of Austin or Portland. Nearly 60 percent of Los Angeles companies in a recent University of Southern California survey said the region's high cost of living was affecting employee retention.

#### **It won't be getting better anytime soon**

The state estimates that it needs to build 180,000 homes annually just to keep up with projected population growth and keep prices from escalating further out of control.

Unfortunately, for the past 10 years, the state has averaged less than half of that. In no year during that span did California crack the 100,000 barrier.

There's fierce debate over how long it takes low-income residents to benefit from the construction of new market-rate housing — a renter on the wait list for housing vouchers won't take much comfort in the luxury condos being built in downtown Oakland or Los Angeles. While California faces an affordable housing gap at nearly all but the highest income levels, the low-income housing shortage is most severe.

According to the nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office, helping just the 1.7 million poorest Californians afford homes would cost \$15 to \$30 billion a year. The Los Angeles Times estimated that the three marquee bills considered by lawmakers this month would provide less than 25 percent of that total.

*This is an excerpt of the project "Californians: Here's why your housing costs are so high." For the full report, go to [calmatters.org](http://calmatters.org). CALmatters is a nonprofit, nonpartisan media venture explaining California policies and politics.*

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URL: <http://www.dailynews.com/business/20170827/californias-housing-crisis-its-even-worse-than-you-think>

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# California passed a law boosting police transparency on cellphone surveillance. Here's why it's not working

By **Jazmine Ulloa**

AUGUST 27, 2017, 12:05 AM

**S**everal years ago, little was known about the StingRay, a powerful surveillance device that imitates the function of a cell tower and captures the signals of nearby phones, allowing law enforcement officers to sweep through hundreds of messages, conversations and call logs.

The secrecy around the technology, which can ensnare the personal data of criminals and bystanders alike, spurred lawsuits and demands for public records to uncover who was using it and the extent of its capabilities. In California, a 2015 law requires law enforcement agencies to seek permission at public meetings to buy the devices, and post rules for their use online.

But a Los Angeles Times review of records from 20 of the state's largest police and sheriff's departments, plus the Alameda County district attorney's office, found some agencies have been slow to follow or have ignored the law. Several that partner with federal agencies to work on cases are not subject to the law's reporting requirements. The result is that little information on StingRay use is available to the public, making it hard to determine how wide a net the surveillance tools cast and what kind of data they gather.

## Who has stingrays

Out of 21 law enforcement agencies surveyed, 12 were found to own or have access to a StingRay or similar device. Nine of those agencies had developed and released online public policies.

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Department	Device	Policies
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LAPD	OWN	YES
Long Beach Police	OWN	YES
L.A. County Sheriff	OWN	YES
<a href="#">San Diego Police</a>	OWN	YES
San Jose Police	OWN	YES
Fresno Police	ACCESS**	NO
Sacramento Police	OWN	YES
Sacramento County Sheriff	OWN	YES
Oakland Police	ACCESS**	YES
Alameda district attorney's office	OWN	YES
Santa Ana Police	ACCESS**	NO
Anaheim Police	OWN	YES

*\*\*Officers don't operate the stingray but work with other agencies that may*

Source: L.A. Times review of public records

The Times reviewed more than 400 documents it received from public information requests, including grant proposals, purchase orders and memos on the use of StingRays and similar devices generically called “stingrays” or “dirtboxes.”

The devices, which cost between \$242,000 and \$500,000, are primarily marketed for preventing and responding to terrorist threats, but the documents suggest they are used most frequently in felony criminal cases, such as burglaries, murders and kidnappings.

Out of 21 law enforcement entities The Times surveyed, 12 either owned stingrays or used or had access to them through partner agencies. Nine owned the surveillance devices, and each of them posted public policies online as required by law. Three of the nine went a step further to conduct annual reporting audits that showed when and in what cases the devices were used.

But some stingray policies posted by the law enforcement agencies revealed little about the devices besides noting they were in use. Other agencies took months to post their stingray guidelines online. The Los Angeles Police Department, which owns a stingray, updated its public safety policies to include its stingray guidelines only after questions from The Times.

Data on stingray purchases and use have long been difficult to come by, a problem the 2015 law requiring more public accountability was meant to correct — and has yet to fix.

### **California police would have to disclose the use of more surveillance devices under this proposed law>>**

The Times found that the nine agencies that own stingrays bought them between 2006 and 2013, mostly with federal grant money or under programs or agreements that prohibited any public disclosure, following a national trend. Local tax dollars weren't used on the purchases, and city and county officials didn't ask about them in a public forum.

Just two of the 21 law enforcement agencies polled by The Times have ever publicly discussed buying new devices before city or county officials: Santa Clara (which did not buy a device) and Alameda counties.

And only one agency, the Oakland Police Department, has gathered input from the public to develop guidelines for stingray use, which isn't required under the 2015 law.

“Any tool can be used for good or bad,” said Brian Hofer, chairman of Oakland's Privacy Advisory Commission, which helped establish the surveillance policies. “This is the most controversial piece of equipment that we know about, and they should not be used in the dark.”



The StingRay II gives off the strongest wireless signal in an area, tricking nearby phones, tablets and laptops to connect. (Associated Press)

## A device cloaked in secrecy

Stingrays tend to be the size of small briefcases and mimic the function of cell towers. They give off the strongest wireless signal in an area, tricking nearby phones, tablets and laptops to connect.

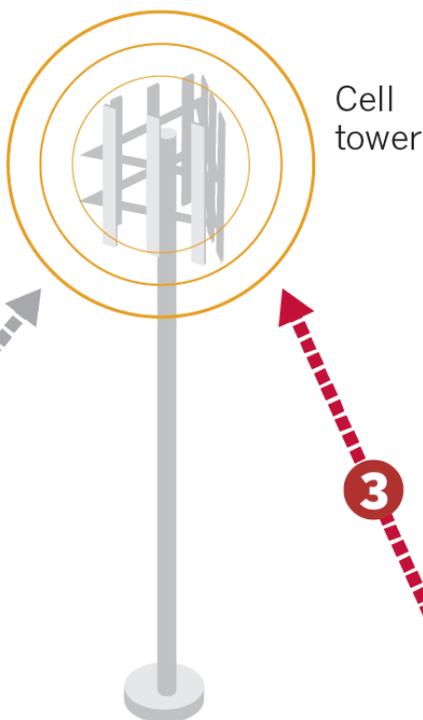
Investigators can target the location data of specific phones, allowing them to track suspects and their associates. They can also sweep up communications over a wide area. How much and what types of data they collect — location information, audio or images — depends on how the devices are designed and how law enforcement agencies use them.

# How 'stingrays' work

Wireless devices such as phones and laptops link to nearby cell towers to send or receive calls and data. A stingray intercepts this data, and is often used in a vehicle with a computer and mapping software.

## Normal cellular connection

Cellphone or other device picks up the nearest tower with the strongest signal.



Data transmission

Device user



Investigators may target phones and devices by their unique identifying numbers, collecting data such as location information, audio, text and images.

1 Data intercepted

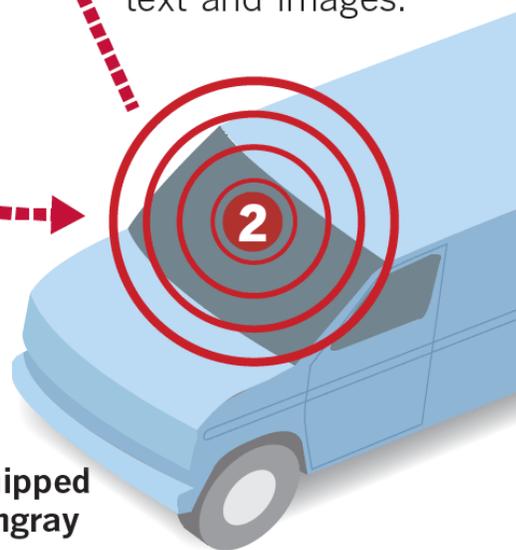
3

2

## With Stingray

- 1) Stingray mimics a cell tower, but gives off a **stronger signal**.
- 2) Devices are tricked by this and connect.
- 3) The signal is then passed along to the tower.

Van equipped with stingray



Source: Times reporting

Paul Duginski / @latimesgraphics

The technology has been used for about 20 years by federal, state and local law enforcement, often secretly, under manufacturer agreements that typically prohibit agencies from disclosing the purchases.

The public did not learn about the existence of the equipment until 2011, after an inmate in federal prison, Daniel Rigmaiden, spent three years scouring government records and meeting transcripts on a hunch that investigators used some kind of secret device to catch him.

Rigmaiden, a native of Seaside, Calif., who hadn't had a stable living situation, was arrested in Phoenix for filing fake tax returns. Police were able to find him through tracking an old Verizon wireless card he seldom used to connect online.

"It wasn't just that [investigators] were able to get historical call data from Verizon," said Linda Lye, an attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union, which filed an amicus brief in support of his case. "They were able to pinpoint him to a particular apartment in a particular apartment building, which was far more precise."

### **State bill requiring California police to disclose surveillance equipment clears its first hurdle>>**

In 2015, California lawmakers passed the sweeping Electronic Communications Privacy Act, which prohibited any investigative body in the state from forcing businesses to turn over digital communications without a warrant. That same year, state Sen. Jerry Hill (D-San Mateo) introduced legislation to compel local law enforcement agencies to disclose more information about the use of stingrays in California.

"Our country has a rich history of democracy and civilian oversight," Hill told a Senate judiciary committee that May. "The stealthy use of these devices undercuts the very nature of our government."

The law, which took effect in January 2016, requires cities and counties that operate a stingray to create guidelines for how and when officers use the equipment. Any agency that wants to buy a device must first receive approval at a public hearing.



Investigators can target the data of specific phones. (Spencer Platt / Getty Images)

## Opening access to information

The state law helped open up some public access to information about how and where the devices are used. Privacy advocates and lawyers have kept up the public pressure in some cities and counties, particularly in the Bay Area, calling on officials to put ordinances and guidelines in place to bar police from collecting data from those not under investigation.

Under most of those policies, officers can use the technology only when it is critical to a case and is approved by higher-ranking officers, or in emergency situations such as natural disasters. Investigators are also required to obtain search warrants. Any data not considered official evidence can't be sought, recorded or stored. Officers must delete or destroy all information gathered by the equipment related to an investigation at the end of the period in which they're authorized to use the technology.

Three agencies keep track of when officers use a stingray — the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, the San Jose Police Department and the Alameda County district attorney's office. But their data offer few details about the cases.

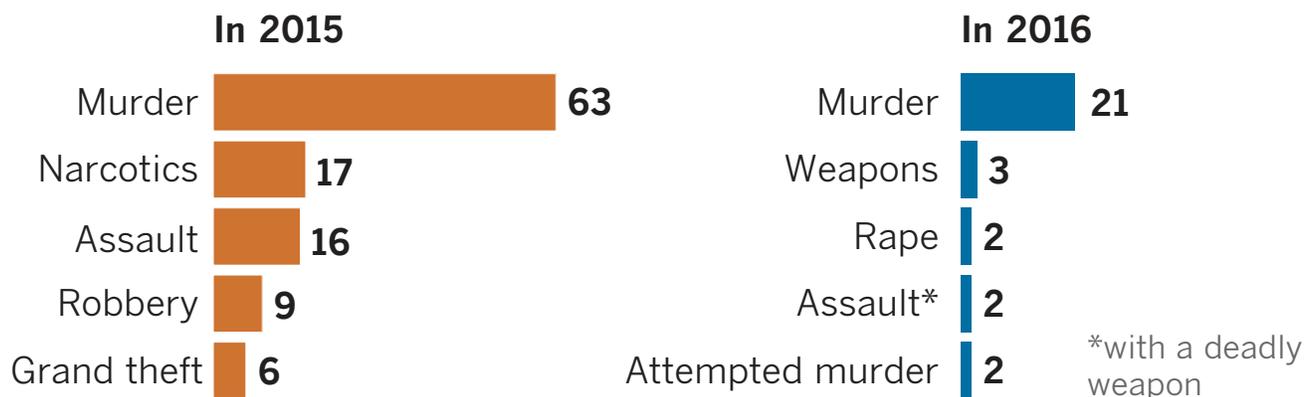
In Los Angeles County, a report from the sheriff's office showed deputies followed state law and obtained a search warrant in nearly all 138 investigations that required a cell site simulator in 2015, and 38 investigations in 2016, the majority of which were murder cases.

In that time, the device helped officers arrest 70 suspects and find one crime victim. Sheriff's Department officials declined to disclose further information or records on those cases.

## Stingray use in Los Angeles County

Sheriff's deputies in Los Angeles County asked to use the surveillance equipment for investigations 138 times in 2015 and 38 times in 2016.

### Most common investigations using stingrays



Source: L.A. County Sheriff's Office

Ally Levine / @latimesgraphics

The Alameda County district attorney's office, which purchased a device to be operated by the Sheriff's Department and other area police agencies, said the stingray had not been used as of January.

The San Jose Police Department bought a \$500,000 stingray in June 2013, and used it about 20 times between early September 2016 and June 2017.

Law enforcement officers in Oakland and San Jose, as well as several other California cities, say the law requiring them to disclose use of the devices has allowed them to ease community fears over what the technology can and can't do.

"You watch TV and you'd think that we are sucking their phones dry of all the images, of all the texts, of all the pictures and emails," said San Jose Police Lt.

Steve Lagorio, who crafted guidelines for stingray use with the city attorney's office. "But we are not. We don't have that capability."

The cellphone interceptor at his department is strictly used to target the phones of individual suspects, and Lagorio said he doubted any local law enforcement agencies used the equipment to do much more than that.



A traditional cellphone tower. Cell tower interceptors, often called "stingrays" or "dirtboxes," tend to be the size of small briefcases and mimic traditional cell towers. (Jeff Roberson / Associated Press)

## Calls for oversight

Privacy advocates and lawyers say a state agency is needed for oversight to ensure law enforcement agencies are following the law and post their own guidelines.

Most of the records on purchases and grant proposals reviewed by The Times were highly redacted, providing little insight into how their equipment is designed and what it can collect.

The LAPD provided purchase orders and invoices that show the department first obtained price quotes for stingray equipment in 2004, but it is unclear when it

acquired the technology. LAPD officials said only that the stingray was not deployed due to technical malfunction issues, but declined to elaborate.

Other records from the Police Department show it obtained another stingray in June 2012, but the department declined to release additional information on the purchase, including its cost.

It was used more than 21 times in routine criminal investigations over four months in 2012, according to LAPD records that were first obtained by the First Amendment Coalition, a nonprofit that works to advance free speech and open-records laws.

In response to an information request regarding its purchases of stingray devices, the San Francisco Police Department provided heavily redacted records, including a 2012 grant proposal and shipping receipt showing the purchase of “specialized surveillance equipment” in 2007.

The department also gave The Times a document indicating a stingray was bought with 2009 federal grant funds. But a spokesman said the department did not have any public policies on the technology because the equipment was not in use.

Seventeen of the 21 agencies polled by The Times said they did not keep or declined to provide data on how often and in what types of cases they used stingrays.

Privacy advocates point to a loophole in the law that allows some law enforcement agencies to avoid reporting their use of the devices. Police departments that partner with another agency that owns and uses a stingray in an investigation are not required to publish their own guidelines for using the equipment.

The Santa Ana and Fresno police departments, for example, said they did not have any records on the use and policies of surveillance devices. But both departments acknowledge they work with agencies that do have them, including the FBI and the U.S. Marshals Service, and might have indirect access to the data they produce.

“Our officers don’t use the equipment, but we often look for fugitive hunters,” Santa Ana Police Cpl. Anthony Bertagna said. “Anaheim [police] may have one, the U.S. Marshals may have one.... They do help us catch fugitives, but whether they have one — you’d have to ask them.”



A new proposal by state Sen. Jerry Hill (D-San Mateo), left, would expand the state’s transparency laws on StingRays and extend it to all surveillance devices. (Rich Pedroncelli / Associated Press)

## Increasing transparency

This legislative session, a new proposal by Sen. Hill would expand the state’s disclosure law on stingrays to all surveillance devices, including facial recognition software, drones and social media monitors.

Senate Bill 21 would require law enforcement agencies to disclose not only the use of the surveillance equipment, but the use of any information obtained from the devices.

Civil rights lawyers and advocates have supported the measure, saying transparency is necessary at a time when concerns over surveillance of immigrant and Muslim communities have risen under the Trump administration.

The legislation was narrowly approved by the state Senate, with heavy opposition from law enforcement officials who argued it would give criminals a road map to police agencies' crime-fighting technology.

Its prospects of passage in the Legislature are unclear. Hill says he understands the technology has many benefits for law enforcement.

“[But] we need people — we need agencies — to be accountable, and we need civilian bodies to create that accountability standard,” he said.

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**BUSINESS**

# Californians have twice as much debt as income. That could mean trouble if another recession hits.



File Photo by Micah Escamilla/Redlands Daily Facts

A new analysis ranks California last among states mostly likely to survive the next recession. California's often volatile housing market would likely be a factor in slowing the the state's recovery in the next economic downturn.

By **KEVIN SMITH** | Press-Enterprise

PUBLISHED: August 25, 2017 at 1:55 pm | UPDATED: August 26, 2017 at 3:34 pm



A newly released [ranking](#) of states mostly likely to survive the next recession finds California on shaky ground.

The report from [FitSmallBusiness.com](#) ranks the Golden State at the bottom of the list. The analysis draws upon data from the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), the [Bureau of Economic Analysis](#) and the [Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation](#), among others.

### **A broad evaluation**

Each state was evaluated on a variety of factors including existing debt level, unemployment rate, housing prices, average credit card debt and statewide deficit versus surplus.

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The Golden State's ranking shows that Californians have nearly 2.35 times more debt than income. That was calculated by taking the average per-resident debt of \$65,740 and dividing it by the state's median income of \$28,000.

Other states – including Nebraska, Kansas, Hawaii and West Virginia – have far lower debt levels.

California's unemployment rate of 4.7 percent (it has since risen to 4.8 percent since the rankings were done) isn't bad, although 34 other states have lower jobless rates. North Dakota, which topped the FitSmallBusiness list as the state most likely survive the next recession, is tied with Colorado for the lowest unemployment rate of 2.3 percent.

On the flip-side, Alaska's unemployment rate is 6.8 percent and New Mexico's is 6.4 percent.

### **Housing is an issue**

The rankings also note that California has some of the highest home prices in the nation.

Lars Perner, an assistant professor of clinical marketing at the [USC Marshall School of Business](#), said California's housing market has always been volatile.

“Our Achilles heel here – the thing that always tends to have a domino effect – is real estate,” he said. “In good times prices go up to exorbitant levels, and when a crash occurs they go so low it's hard for people to refinance and they end up owing more than their homes are worth.”

Recent figures from price tracker [CoreLogic](#) show that Los Angeles County's median price for a single-family home in July was \$610,000, up 4.1 percent from a year earlier. Orange County's median price was considerably higher at \$750,000, which was up 3.4 percent from July 2016.

California also ranks poorly in the category of state income tax rates. California's rate is 13.3 percent, much higher than North Dakota, where the state income tax rate is just 3.2 percent. Oregon, which landed 49th on the survivability list, had the second highest rate of 9.9 percent. Other states with high rates include New Jersey (9.97 percent), Minnesota (9.85 percent) and Iowa (8.98 percent).

### **Higher credit card debt**

The report's data from [TransUnion](#) finds that Californians have an average credit card debt of \$5,769, compared with \$4,932 in North Dakota, \$4,833 in Nebraska and \$4,851 in South Dakota.

Economist Robert Kleinhenz, executive director of economic research for [Beacon Economics](#) in Los Angeles, added a caveat to the rankings. He notes, for example, that energy states like North Dakota and Oklahoma landed high on the list around the time of the last recession but have since suffered as energy prices have tumbled.

“To do this right, you really need to look at how each state has fared through a number of recessions,” Kleinhenz said. “But on that score, California still does not do as well as it has in the past.”

The rankings also show that the value of California's gross domestic product – which includes all goods and services – has fallen 4 percent since the last recession that began in late 2007 and ended in June 2009.

Other states posted bigger GDP declines during that period, including Michigan (down 8.4 percent) and Indiana (down 6.3 percent) but a number of state saw their GDP grow. Those include Alaska (up 8.7 percent) and Connecticut (up 4.2 percent).

### Another recession?

Could the Golden State be headed for another recession? Not anytime soon, according to Kleinhenz.

“We look for warning signs that may be precursors to a recession,” he said. “That could include a spike in energy prices. Well, that’s off the table now. And we’re not concerned about inflation right now either. We also look to the Fed raising interest rates. Rates are on an upward trajectory now but you have to remember that they are going from rock bottom to a little higher than rock bottom. And each of these kings of things would have to be sustained for a few quarters to become a real concern. We just don’t see warning signs of a recession now.”

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**Kevin Smith**

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U.S.

# Cities and Schools Walk Free-Speech Tightrope in Wake of Charlottesville

To legally deny protesters a permit, there must be evidence that they clearly intend to incite violence



Counter-protesters traveled to Berkeley, Calif. over the weekend to oppose a planned "No to Marxism" demonstration, which was canceled on Friday. PHOTO: ELIJAH NOUVELAGE/GETTY IMAGES

By Sara Randazzo

Aug. 28, 2017 11:58 a.m. ET

Cities and public universities are evaluating ways to prevent violent protests without limiting free speech-rights in the wake of the recent violence in Charlottesville, Va., a balancing act likely to tie up lawyers and public dollars in the coming months.

"There's a difference between free expression on the one hand and violence on the other," said Mike Feuer, the Los Angeles city attorney. Mr. Feuer said that while he strongly supports peaceful protest, he'd like to more heavily scrutinize those applying for permits to make sure they don't have plans to incite violence. The Los Angeles Police Commission, with consultation from Mr. Feuer's office, runs the permitting process.

The constitutional right to free speech is firmly ingrained in the public consciousness, and those on both sides of the political spectrum typically agree that attempts to constrain the First Amendment can be fraught.

"When talking about the First Amendment, the thing that we are most terrified of is that the government is choosing either people they like or messages they like," said Jessica Levinson, a professor at Loyola Law School in Los Angeles.

Cities and other public entities are allowed under the First Amendment to limit the time, place and manner of speech or public assembly, as long as the restrictions are applied evenly and not as a means of suppressing speech.

But finding grounds to deny a permit ahead of time can be tricky, legal experts said, because it isn't enough to say violence might occur. Instead, there must be evidence that the protesters clearly intend to incite violence.

"It becomes a really difficult call, in terms of, at what point do you say there's an imminent threat of violence?" Ms. Levinson said. Courts have been wary of censoring events before they happen, she said.

Mr. Feuer said denying a permit would be the last resort. The city could also control events by prohibiting what people bring, creating physical barriers between protesters and counter-protesters, and deploying more law enforcement. He pointed to Boston, which banned sticks, bats and backpacks ahead of a white supremacist rally earlier this month and cordoned off counter-protesters.

“There’s no First Amendment right to carry a stick,” Mr. Feuer said.

Restricting what protesters can bring also risks butting up against another constitutional right, the Second Amendment’s right to bear arms, especially in states that allow weapons to be carried openly. The American Civil Liberties Union recently reaffirmed it will no longer defend hate groups seeking to march with firearms.

Officials in San Francisco approved a rally permit last week on the condition that guns be banned, even for those with concealed carry permits, along with anything else that could be considered a weapon and a long list of other items including selfie sticks, helmets and balloons. Organizers of that protest ended up canceling the event, citing safety concerns, but left-wing counter-protesters still streamed into the city Saturday.

On Sunday, violent scuffles erupted and 13 people were arrested in nearby Berkeley, where counter-protesters had arrived to oppose a planned “No to Marxism” demonstration that also was canceled by organizers Friday. City officials had denied a permit to the Berkeley event.

Universities have slightly more leeway when deciding how to control events, and it can matter if a speaker is invited by a student or faculty, or is just looking to rent space on campus for their own event.



At least five universities have denied event requests by an organization run by white nationalist Richard Spencer, shown at a rally in Washington in June. PHOTO: JIM BOURG/REUTERS

At least five universities have denied recent requests by white nationalist Richard Spencer’s organization to hold events on campus, including Pennsylvania State University, the University of Florida and Michigan State University. School officials all cited the violence in Charlottesville and a need to protect student safety. Penn State President Eric Barron said “the First Amendment does not require our University to risk imminent violence.”

Lee Tyner, general counsel of the University of Mississippi, said that more than in the past, people seem to be using universities “as a platform for the fight,” which raises different considerations. A university’s primary obligations, he said, are to their students and faculty, not to providing a forum for any member of the public to speak.

“Universities remain committed to the notion of being a marketplace of ideas,” said Mr. Tyner, who said he has spoken about the issues with officials at a number of schools since Charlottesville.

At the University of Virginia, administrators said the general counsel’s office is exploring revisions to its policies around constitutionally protected activities on campus. UVA Law School Dean Risa Goluboff said in a letter sent to students and faculty that “We must recover from violence, from bigotry, from vulnerability. We must heal. We must also act.”

At University of California, Berkeley, the school's chancellor has declared it "free speech year." The school, home to the Free Speech Movement in the 1960s, faced criticism earlier this year over its handling of events with conservative writers Milo Yiannopoulos and Ann Coulter.

Berkeley's Republican student group sued the university after it wouldn't allow Ms. Coulter to speak at a time the group had scheduled, alleging the university had an unconstitutionally vague policy around high-profile speakers. Berkeley filed a motion to dismiss the case, saying it offered an alternative time for Ms. Coulter to appear and was instituting legal time, place and manner restrictions to address security threats.

Berkeley already has committed hundreds of thousands of dollars to security for events in September, said Dan Mogulof an assistant vice chancellor at the school, and will continue to bear the cost as the year goes on. It also released a 29-page events policy guide covering how and when to request space.

Every dollar spent on security is less money available for other uses, Mr. Mogulof said. But "none of that gives us the ability to abandon our mission to free speech. The money will be found."

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# Southern California firefighters headed to Texas to help with Hurricane Harvey rescue efforts



By **Hailey Branson-Potts**

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**D**ozens of firefighters across Southern California have been deployed to Texas to help with search and rescue efforts after Hurricane Harvey slammed into the Gulf Coast.

A team of 70 Los Angeles firefighters, 10 members of a support crew and four dogs were activated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency to deploy to Texas, along with a 15-member Los Angeles County Fire Department swift-water rescue team.

Across southern Texas, officials had yet to learn the full extent of [the damage](#) from the Category 4 storm. Emergency responders combed through the debris of collapsed buildings, broken power poles and uprooted palm trees as heavy rain and lashing winds continued to pound the area in what was one of the worst natural disasters in state history.

At least five people were reported dead, according to the [National Weather Service](#) in Houston, and authorities expect that number to climb as floodwaters recede.

The Los Angeles firefighters were expected to board buses and leave from a Sherman Oaks fire station Saturday night, said Los Angeles Fire Department spokeswoman Margaret Stewart.

FEMA requested the swift-water rescue team about 2 p.m. Sunday.

Within 30 minutes, the crew loaded four hard-bottom boats and two inflatable boats onto a box truck and hit the road for what was expected to be a 20-hour drive to Houston. The team is scheduled to arrive Monday afternoon.

“As soon as they get there they should go straight to work,” said Los Angeles County Fire Inspector Joey Marron.

They’ll probably be going door to door, rescuing residents trapped in their homes and rendering aid to those injured, he said.

A search and rescue task force from the San Diego Fire Department also was activated Saturday night and was preparing to travel to Houston, the department [wrote on Facebook](#).

Another team of firefighters left Irvine for Texas on Friday, the day the hurricane made landfall, according to the Orange County Fire Authority.

The Southern California teams are three of the state’s eight Urban Search and Rescue [task forces](#), which are specially trained to search collapsed buildings and other confined areas after natural disasters and other emergencies.

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