

San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

As LA County, others saw increases in homeless population, San Bernardino County bucked the trend

By Ryan Hagen, The Sun

and Susan Abram, Los Angeles Daily News

Wednesday, May 31, 2017



Homelessness surged across Los Angeles County's neighborhoods and suburbs this year compared to 2016, with more than 55,000 people sleeping on sidewalks, in their cars or along the Los Angeles River, according to results of a count taken in January and released Wednesday.

While increases were also seen in other Southern California counties, San Bernardino County saw a slight drop in the number of homeless people from 2016 to 2017, which officials here say was credited to a focus on the needs of specific homeless populations and government partnerships.

LA County's 23 percent spike announced during a news conference in downtown Los Angeles came despite some successes last year, including more housing for veterans and families, according to the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority. But both groups saw those numbers increase in 2017, a result of a tight housing market, high rental costs and more women and youth escaping violent domestic situations, according to the results.

"I don't think anybody in this work can look at the numbers and not feel disappointed," said LAHSA Executive Director Peter Lynn. "But we also placed 14,000 people in housing last year, and those are people who could have been homeless this year. We're using our resources more effectively."

The data was released just a few months after Measure H, a quarter-cent sales tax, was passed by Los Angeles County voters to raise an estimated \$355 million a year for 10 years to help homeless people transition into planned affordable housing. That quarter-cent sales tax is set to begin on Oct. 1.

Los Angeles city voters in November also passed Proposition HHH, a property-tax bond measure that is supposed to raise \$1.2 billion to build 10,000 affordable-housing units for the homeless. But the money only funds the bricks and mortar. Measure H funds are supposed to go to social services for those homes.

Both initiatives came as local lawmakers were pressured to acknowledge the gradual increase of men, women and children sleeping on the streets and in shelters. In 2015, city and county officials declared homelessness an emergency. The city and county dedicated \$100 million each to bolster rapid re-housing and other programs.

Increase contrasts with San Bernardino's decrease

The sharp increase contrasts with neighboring San Bernardino County, where the January count found 1,866 homeless people — a [decrease of 1.1 percent](#) from the previous year.

San Bernardino County [announced its final numbers](#) from the homeless count in April.

Other Southern California counties also saw increases: Riverside County's total went up 11.45 percent from 2016 to 2017, and San Diego County's total rose 5 percent from 2016 to 2017.

"Given the substantial increases in surrounding counties, our modest decrease is quite an astonishing accomplishment made possible by the partnership of the county government and cities," said Philip Mangano, San Bernardino County's homelessness czar. "We intend to continue to drive the numbers down, which should be the only metric of homelessness — fewer people undergoing this human tragedy."

Mangano said one key to San Bernardino's relative success is focusing on the specific needs of certain populations of homeless people — veterans, the chronically homeless, and this year becoming the first in the nation to focus specifically on [unaccompanied homeless women](#).

That "laser focus" seems to be paying big dividends in San Bernardino County, said Tod Lipka, president and CEO of Step Up on Second, a Santa Monica-based nonprofit that was hired last year to provide permanent supportive housing in San Bernardino County.

"Of course the scale is completely different across the two counties," Lipka said. "San Bernardino County has really a focused, laser approach. They can really get into — and they do — monitoring the numbers on a regular basis and applying fixes in a spontaneous way to make sure smaller problems don't become bigger problems."

Supervisor Josie Gonzales, chairwoman of the Intergovernmental Council on Homelessness in San Bernardino County, also praised San Bernardino.

"Propelled by the steadfast support from the County Board of Supervisors and collaboration with partnering agencies over the past ten years, San Bernardino County has streamlined the process of finding housing for those most in need, one sub-population at a time," Gonzales said in an email.

Los Angeles pledges hard work

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti said while Measure H and Proposition HHH will help, the city needs to deepen its investment in affordable housing by adopting a linkage fee on new commercial and residential development to more than double production.

"The results of LAHSA's Homeless Count are not a surprise to Angelenos, who have seen the number of unsheltered people in their neighborhoods grow before their eyes," Garcetti said. "The City of Los Angeles is making progress in our efforts — housing more than 9,000 people in 2016 alone. But the extraordinary number of people falling into homelessness shows that we still face a historic shortage of affordable housing, a staggering mental health crisis, insufficient support for veterans and foster youth, and inadequate resources to help formerly incarcerated Angelenos turn their lives around."

Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas said he was not discouraged by the numbers, but acknowledged that there was hard work ahead.

"We have business to do," Ridley-Thomas said. "No hand-wringing, no fretting, no 'woe is me' — it's just simply time to roll up our sleeves and do what we know needs to be done. You've got to be ready to fight to end homelessness in the county of Los Angeles."

Still, rising rent and the 2.6 percent rental market was concerning, added supervisor Sheila Kuehl.

"I am deeply concerned that, over the next few years, we will continue to be overwhelmed by people for whom rents are simply unsustainable," Kuehl said. "I want to challenge my colleagues at all levels of government to squarely face the realities of our housing market. For far too long policymakers nationally, in the state and locally have prioritized real estate profit over a healthy housing market. Weak housing and rent control

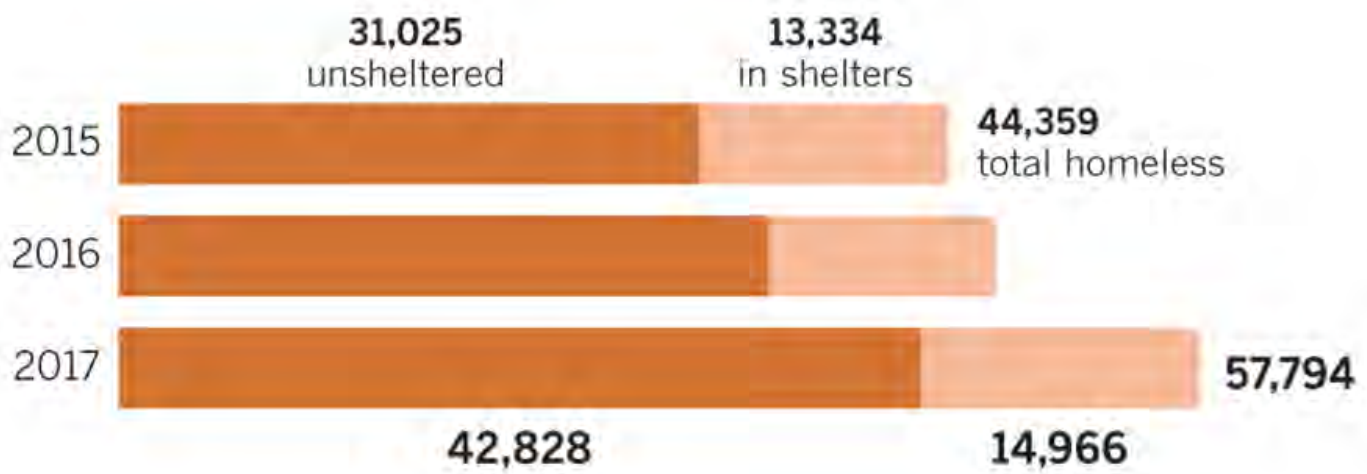
regulation combined with short-sighted land use planning has turned LA County into the most unaffordable place to live in the entire country.”

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/social-affairs/20170531/as-la-county-others-saw-increases-in-homeless-population-san-bernardino-county-bucked-the-trend>

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L.A. County homelessness jumps a 'staggering' 23% as need far outpaces housing, new count shows

L.A. County homelessness soars



Source Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority

Jon Schleuss / @latimesgraphics

Los Angeles County saw a large increase in its homeless population in 2017. (Los Angeles Times)

By **Gale Holland and Doug Smith**

MAY 31, 2017, 3:05 PM

Los Angeles County's homeless population has soared 23% over last year despite increasing success in placing people in housing, according to the latest annual count released Wednesday.

The sharp rise, to nearly 58,000, suggested that the pathway into homelessness continues to outpace intensifying efforts that — through rent subsidies, new construction, outreach and support services — got more than 14,000 people permanently off the streets last year.

“Staggering,” Los Angeles County Supervisor Janice Hahn said in a statement. “It is clear that if we are going to end the homeless crisis, we need to stem the overwhelming tide of people falling into homelessness.”

Said Leslie Evans, a West Adams resident active in efforts to combat homelessness in South Los Angeles: “These are scary numbers.”

The startling jump in homelessness affected every significant demographic group, including youth, families, veterans and the chronically homeless, according to the report. Homeless officials and political leaders pointed to steadily rising housing costs and stagnant incomes as the underlying cause.

Homelessness also increased sharply in the city of Los Angeles, where the count of just over 34,000 was up 20% from 2016.

“There's no sugarcoating the bad news,” Los Angeles Mayor [Eric Garcetti](#) said at a news conference Wednesday where the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority released its report. “We can't let rents double every year. I was particularly disappointed to see veteran numbers go up.”

Garcetti called homelessness a problem that has persisted “through administrations, through recessions,” adding, “Our city is in the midst of an extraordinary homelessness crisis that needs an extraordinary response. These men, these women, these children are our neighbors.”

The Homeless Services Authority linked the worsening problem to the economic stress on renters in the Los Angeles area. More than 2 million households in L.A. and Orange counties have housing costs that exceed 30% of income, according to data from Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies included in the report.

According to the nonprofit California Housing Partnership Corp., median rent, adjusted for inflation, increased more than 30% from 2000 to 2015, while the median income was flat.

Currently, the median asking price for rentals countywide is \$1,995 for one-bedroom apartments and \$2,416 for all multifamily units, according to the real estate website Zillow.

“I am deeply concerned that over the next few years we will continue to be overwhelmed by people for whom rents are simply unsustainable,” Supervisor [Sheila Kuehl](#) said in a statement. She called for changes in land use and rent control regulations to boost affordable housing.

Mirroring last year's count, only one of every four homeless people in both the city and across the county were classified as “sheltered,” meaning they were counted in an emergency shelter or longer-term transitional program. That left three of every four, or just under 43,000 countywide, living on the street.

The chronic homeless population — defined as those who have been on the streets at least a year or multiple times and suffering mental illness, addiction or physical disability — increased 20% to more than 17,000, despite increasing numbers placed into housing.

There were few exceptions to the bad news.

Even the homeless veteran population jumped in 2017, marking a backsliding of the gains made last year by city, state and federal programs that slashed the number of homeless veterans by a third. With the number of veterans placed into housing slightly down, the count of 4,828 homeless veterans was up 57%.

The only hopeful sign of homeless initiatives making headway was the strong increase in the number of homeless families being sheltered. Though the population of homeless families increased nearly 30%, those without shelter dropped 21%.

The 2017 count, conducted in January, will become the baseline for a multibillion-dollar homeless program funded by two successful ballot measures.

Proposition HHH, approved by Los Angeles voters in November, will provide \$1.2 billion in bond proceeds over a decade to build permanent housing. Measure H, approved by county voters in March, will provide an estimated \$3.5 billion over 10 years for rent subsidies and services. The county Board of Supervisors is scheduled to vote on budgets for the first three years on June 13.

The combined initiatives aim to create or subsidize 15,000 housing units and pay for services to support those living in them.

Voters “have afforded us opportunity we never had ... to step forward and confront the problem of homelessness in Los Angeles,” said Supervisor [Mark Ridley-Thomas](#). “I am not at all discouraged by this data. We knew intuitively there was an uptick. ... Now we have the resources to stand up to it.”

Ridley-Thomas called on the community to “put your war clothes on and get ready to fight.”

The Los Angeles count, the largest in the nation, is an estimate based on a street tally conducted by 7,700 volunteers over three days and nights. For the last dozen years, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has required cities, counties and other regions to conduct a count in order to receive federal homelessness aid.

The numbers give an imperfect snapshot of the highly fluid homeless population at a point in time. The number of people who lose their homes over the course of a year is more than three times greater on a given night, homeless officials say.

Because the homeless authority has refined its methodology over the years and expanded its volunteer base, year-over-year comparisons can be misleading.

Officials acknowledged, for example, that last year’s 11% increase at least partially resulted from the introduction of a special effort to locate hard-to-find youth.

But the scale of this year’s increase left little doubt that homelessness was on the rise.

Earlier this month, Orange County reported an 8% increase in its homeless population over two years. More than half of the county’s nearly 4,800 homeless people were living without shelter.

A 26% increase toppled years of stagnant or declining numbers in Santa Monica, bringing its homeless population to nearly 1,000, the highest number in a decade. City officials said more than half the homeless

people came from other parts of the county.

A brighter picture emerged from Long Beach, which conducts its own count. The city recorded a 21% decline in its homeless population, crediting a nearly 200% increase in permanent housing there. But the actual decrease — 482 people — barely affected the regional totals.

In Los Angeles County, the most drastic increase — 48% — occurred in the San Gabriel Valley district of Supervisor Hilda Solis, where the count rose to just under 13,000.

Ridley-Thomas' district remained the most affected with nearly 19,000 people counted, a 22% increase.

Surveys conducted with the Los Angeles count provided demographic breakdowns for the portion of the county excluding Long Beach, Pasadena and Glendale, cities that conduct their own counts.

These showed increases of 20% or more for every type of improvised shelter — cars (2,147), vans (1,862), campers and recreational vehicles (4,545), tents (2,343) and makeshift shelters (3,516).

Youths made up the fastest growing homeless age group with those 18 to 24 up 64%, followed by those under 18 at 41%.

Those numbers didn't surprise Heidi Calmus, who works in the Hollywood branch of Covenant House, an international homeless services agency.

Calmus said the agency sees 100 to 150 new homeless youth in Hollywood every month. All the shelters have waiting lists, and permanent housing is impossible to find, even with a rent voucher.

"The system is overwhelmed," Calmus said.

While blacks remained the largest racial/ethnic group, making up 40% of all homeless people, the number of Latinos grew by almost two-thirds. Whites declined by a modest 2% and Asians, though remaining only 1% of all homeless people, increased by nearly a third.

Three-fourths of homeless people reported they had been in the county for five years or more, while 12% had been residents for less than a year.

Times staff writer Andrew Khouri contributed to this report.

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What's behind the dramatic rise in L.A. County's homeless population

By **Doug Smith and Shelby Grad**

MAY 31, 2017, 2:35 PM

"There's no sugarcoating the bad news," Los Angeles Mayor **Eric Garcetti** said Wednesday in reaction to a new count that found Los Angeles County's homeless population has soared 23% over last year.

Here's a breakdown of the findings:

Geography

Homelessness grew in many parts of the county. But rises were largest in the Antelope Valley and eastern L.A. County and the lowest in the South Bay and San Fernando Valley. Within L.A., homelessness rose in all but three city council districts that encompass parts of the San Fernando Valley and the Westside.

Service Planning Area	2016 Total	2017 Total	% Change
1- Antelope Valley	3,038	4,559	+50%
2- San Fernando Valley	7,334	7,627	+4%
3- San Gabriel Valley	3,142	4,127	+31%
4- Metro LA	11,860	15,393	+30%
5- West LA	4,659	5,511	+18%
6- South LA	7,459	9,243	+24%
7- East LA County	3,469	5,189	+50%
8- South Bay	5,913	6,145	+4%
Totals	46,874	57,794	+23%

How homeless numbers have changed in L.A. County, by region.

2017 City of Los Angeles Findings by Council District (CD)

Geography:
City of LA

Population:
Total
(Sheltered and
Unsheltered)

Council District	2016 Total	2017 Total	% Change
CD 1	1,986	2,958	+49%
CD 2	1,084	1,212	+12%
CD 3	890	746	-16%
CD 4	628	783	+25%
CD 5	913	1,160	+27%
CD 6	1,856	2,047	+10%
CD 7	1,206	1,198	-1%
CD 8	1,497	2,178	+45%
CD 9	3,458	3,843	+11%
CD 10	1,112	1,508	+36%
CD 11	2,529	2,741	+8%
CD 12	906	879	-3%
CD 13	3,036	3,282	+8%
CD 14	5,590	7,386	+32%
CD 15	1,773	2,268	+28%
Total	28,464	34,189	+20%

How homeless numbers have changed in the city of Los Angeles, by city council district.

Age and demographics

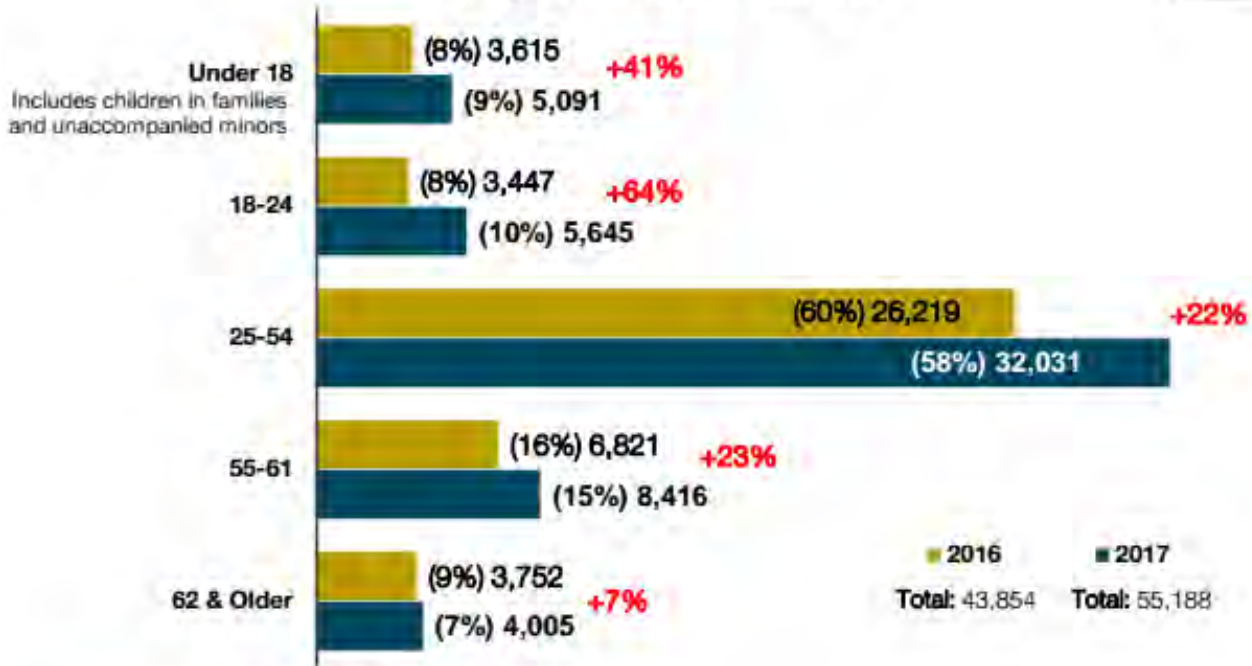
The biggest increases in the homeless population were among people 24 and younger. The biggest segment of the homeless population remained those 25-54 years old. The most common dwellings remained makeshift shelters and campers. The population of homeless veterans also rose.

Age

Geography:
LA CoC

Population:
Total
(Sheltered and Unsheltered)

Total Homeless Population by Age
Los Angeles Continuum of Care, 2016 - 2017



LA CoC excludes Glendale, Pasadena, and Long Beach CoCs

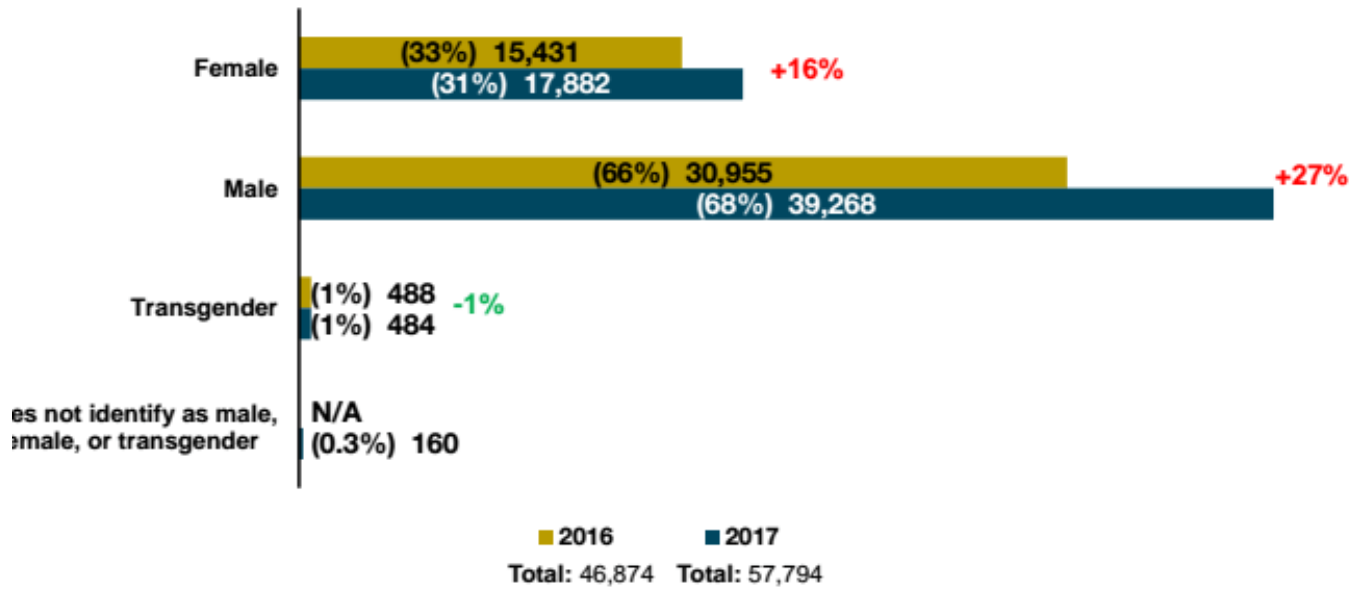
Share of total homeless population in parentheses.

Gender

Geography:
LA County

Population:
Total
(Sheltered and Unsheltered)

Total Homeless Population by Gender
Los Angeles County, 2016 - 2017



Share of total homeless population in parentheses.

Vehicles and Encampments

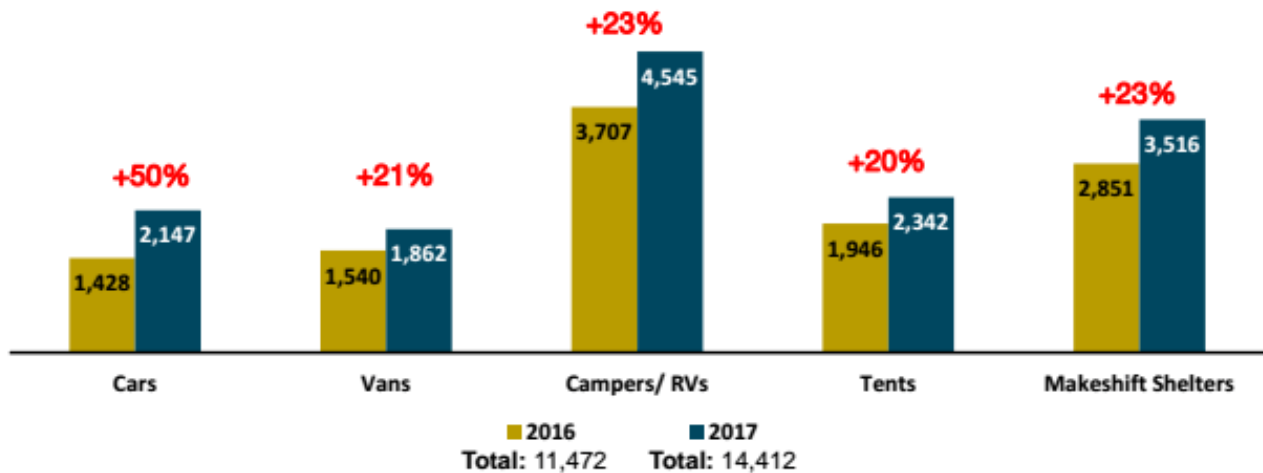
Geography:
LA CoC

Population:
Vehicles and Encampments

14,412 Vehicles and encampments

26% Increase from 2016 total of 11,472

Total Number of Vehicles and Encampments by Dwelling Type
Los Angeles Continuum of Care, 2016 - 2017



Veterans

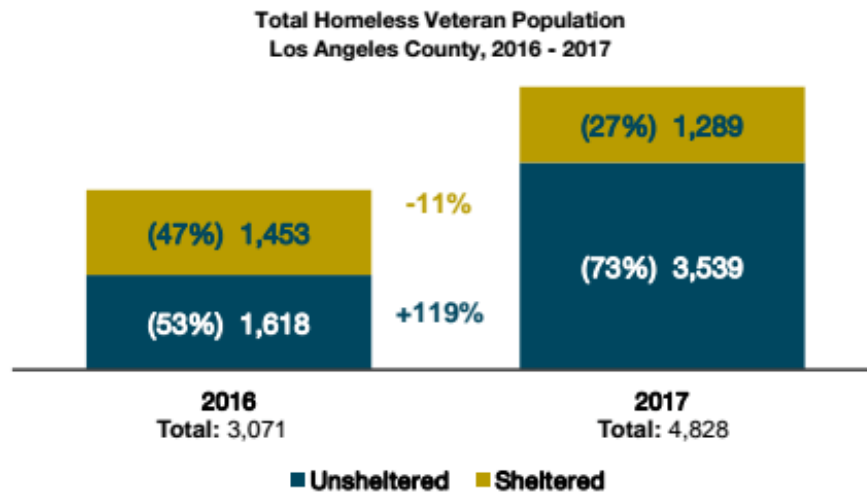
4,828 Veterans experience homelessness on a given night

57% Increase from 2016 total of 3,071

20% Increase from 2015 total of 4,016

Geography:
LA County

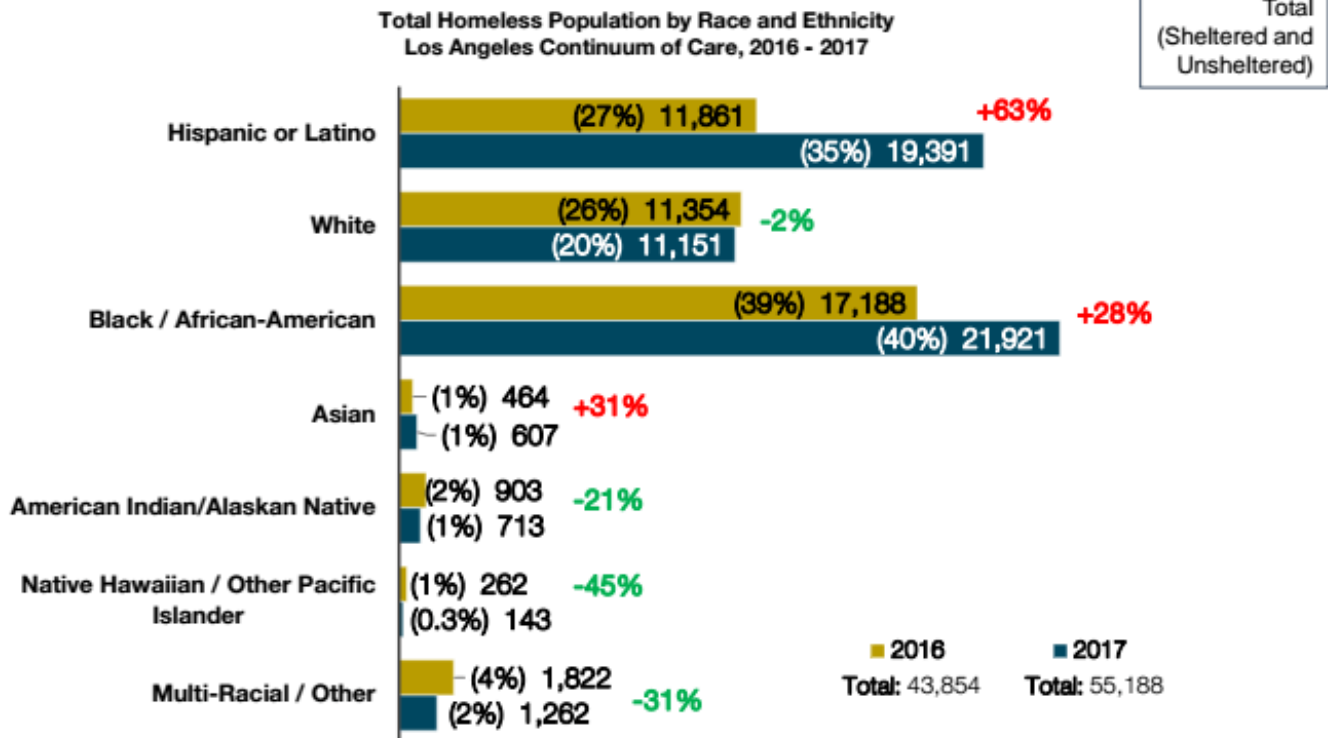
Population:
Veterans



Race

Blacks made up the largest group of homeless people in the county, followed by Latinos and whites.

Race and Ethnicity



Why the big increase?

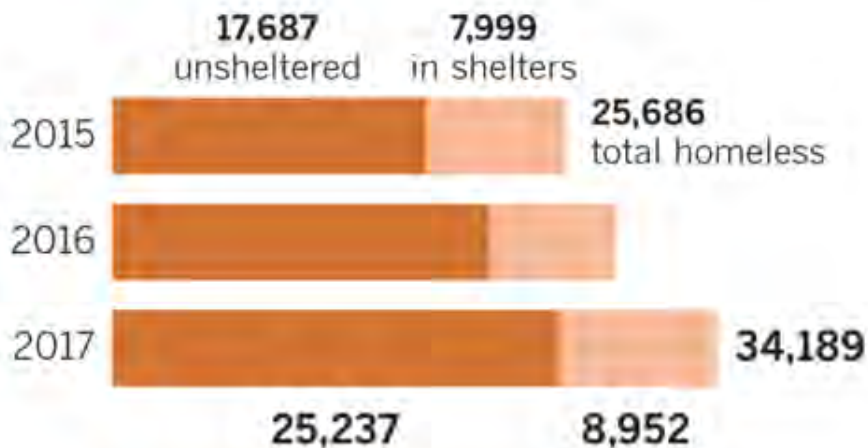
Homeless officials and political leaders pointed to steadily rising housing costs and stagnant incomes as the underlying cause.

"We can't let rents double every year. I was particularly disappointed to see veteran numbers go up," Garcetti said.

The Homeless Services Authority pointed to economic stress on renters in the Los Angeles area. More than 2 million households in L.A. and Orange counties have housing costs that exceed 30% of income, according to data from Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing studies included in the report.

According to the nonprofit California Housing Partnership Corp., median rent, adjusted for inflation, increased more than 30% from 2000 to 2015, while the median income was flat.

City of Los Angeles homeless population



Source Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority

Jon Schleuss / @latimesgraphics

Is there help on the way?

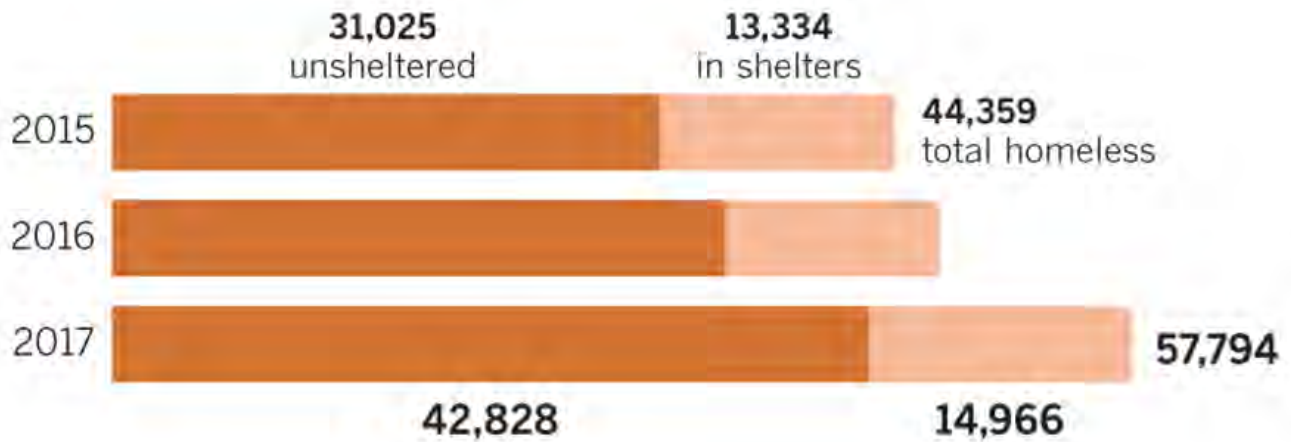
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L.A. County homelessness soars



Source Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority

Jon Schleuss / @latimesgraphics

(*Los Angeles Times)

Not just an L.A. problem

Earlier this month, Orange County reported an 8% increase in its homeless population over two years. More than half of the county's nearly 4,800 homeless people were living without shelter.

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Youth homelessness surges in L.A. 'Why are you out here?' 'My mom is a really bad mom'



Nick Semensky, left, hands a bag of hygiene supplies to Charles Stacks, 23, and Marquis Drew, 26, in Hollywood on Tuesday. Semensky is a member of a homeless outreach team. (Christian K. Lee / Los Angeles Times)

By **Gale Holland**

JUNE 1, 2017, 8:25 AM

Dandre Pope said his mother dropped him off at a Hollywood youth shelter when he was 15, and he started to get into trouble.

Now 31, the Watts native stays in an encampment on Hollywood Boulevard, around the corner from a popular fitness club, siphoning power off a utility pole to power his telephone and sampling the capacious offerings — taquitos to hot wings — from a nearby convenience store.

The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority [reported Wednesday](#) that 6,000 homeless young people like Pope were tallied across the county in January, a 61% increase over the 2016 total.

The homeless services agency improved the youth count, Executive Director Peter Lynn said, which could account for part of the jump. But Heidi Calmus of Covenant House California, an international youth homeless services agency with a branch in Hollywood, said the sharp increase was no surprise.

All the youth shelters have waiting lists and affordable housing is tough to find, even with a rent voucher, Calmus said.

"The system is overwhelmed," Calmus said Tuesday night as she and a colleague, Nick Semensky, delivered toiletry bags and sandwiches to young people living in the streets.

Most of the young people are ages 18 to 24, Lynn said. Many were released from foster care or group homes, or like Pope, were set loose by their families.

They distrust authority and have no appetite for giving up the freedom of the streets for another regimented living situation, Semensky said.

"Emergency housing is instantly available on skid row, but they will have to be with older people and they may feel like they're in the jail or prison they've already been in," Semensky said. "And they say, 'If I'm going to be homeless I might as well be homeless in L.A., it's more exciting.'"

Like Pope, they are on the street longer than in the past, Calmus said. Some have had bad experiences in homeless settings and now are running out of options, she added.

Maggie Reyes, 24, said she spent almost a year at a youth shelter before another woman started stealing her belongings. She moved back with her mom, who has struggled to hold onto housing. She is hoping to get her own subsidized housing before the special services for young homeless people are cut off when she turns 25.

Michael Z., 24, said he was thrown out of his house after graduating high school because of his drinking and drug use. He said he no longer drinks and has finally found a good job.

He asked that his last name not be used because he has to conceal his homelessness from his employer. Agencies try to help him with housing, but landing a place appears to be a distant hope at best, he added.

"It takes so long to rehab from the streets," he said.

Reyes said the homeless youth she sees in the street are getting younger and younger.

"I'm always running into kids who say, 'I'm really 15' and I'm like, 'Why are you out here?' They're like, 'My mom is a really bad mom,'" Reyes said.

"Every year there are more coming than going," she said.

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ALSO

San Diego awarded \$6M state grant to get chronic homeless off the street



San Diego bested other regions in gaining state grants to help get the chronic homeless off the streets. (Howard Lipin / San Diego Union-Tribune)



By **David Garrick**

MAY 31, 2017, 2:20 PM | SAN DIEGO

San Diego got a big boost in its fight against homelessness on Wednesday with a \$6 million state grant that will help get many more low-level criminals with drug problems off the street.

The city and count jointly received the grant after state officials judged their proposal superior to 57 other jurisdictions seeking long-promised money from a 2014 state ballot measure that reduced many felony crimes to misdemeanors.

The city will use its \$3 million to sharply expand a program launched in December that allows chronic, non-violent criminals with drug problems to avoid jail time if they agree to move into government-funded housing including drug treatment.

The money, \$1 million per year over three years, will allow the city to offer the opportunity to eight times as many people by providing funds to expand the number of available beds from 10 to 80.

RELATED: New San Diego program targets chronic drug offenders

The program has been called innovative because rather than cracking down on repeat offenders who clog the justice system, it gives them a chance to turn their lives around and get off the streets permanently.

City Attorney Mara Elliott, who oversees the program launched by her predecessor Jan Goldsmith, said the new money will bolster one of many creative solutions San Diego is exploring to reduce its homeless population.

"It's a pilot program that's proving to be worthy of funding, a great deal of funding," she said. "We're hoping this is the beginning of new ideas and new approaches to tackling homelessness."

The county will use its \$3 million to launch a new program targeting people who face criminal charges and have other problems such as drug addiction or mental illness.

It will provide counseling, treatment and job training to all participants and "rapid re-housing" for 60 people at a time.

The city will also benefit from the county program because that's one of two specific geographic areas the county program will target. The other is the North County cities of Oceanside, Vista, San Marcos and Escondido.

Of the 58 applicants for \$104 million in funding from the 2014 state ballot measure, 23 were awarded grants. The only other local agency to get money is the Oceanside Unified School District, which will receive just under \$1 million.

The ballot measure, Proposition 47, forced local agencies to deal with more misdemeanor offenders and released criminals needing treatment and counseling.

But it promised to provide local agencies with some of the savings yielded by the measure reducing the number of people in California prisons.

The grants awarded on Wednesday are the first under Proposition 47.

Other jurisdictions getting funding include the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services, which got \$20 million, and several other health agencies that got \$6 million each in Orange County, Alameda County, San Bernardino County, Solano County, Monterey County and San Joaquin County.

While state officials rated San Diego's proposal as the most worthy of all applicants, that doesn't entitle them to additional money.

The city of San Diego has been lobbying for Proposition 47 money for more than a year to boost the criminal diversion program, officially called San Diego Misdemeanant At-Risk Track – or SMART.

It's an expansion of a program launched by Goldsmith, the former city attorney, in late 2014 called the Community Justice Initiative. That program allows people charged with most misdemeanors to avoid jail time and a criminal record if they complete two days of community service and pay a \$120 fine.

That program has had 1,920 participants who have completed 30,720 hours of community service.

But there was a group of chronic offenders that needed something else, said Lara Easton, chief deputy city attorney in the Neighborhood Justice & Collaborative Courts Unit.

"We noticed there was a subset of the population that wasn't taking a CJI offer," she said. "When we got to the root of the problem it was because they were chronically homeless, chronically drug addicted and weren't really incentivized by having two days of public work service. What they needed was treatment and housing."

So the city created SMART, but could only come up with money for 10 beds -- a small fraction of the number needed to allow everyone who could benefit from the program to participate.

"There are plenty of customers out there, but we don't have any beds to offer them," said John Hemmerling, an assistant city attorney for the Community Justice and Criminal Justice divisions.

With the grant money, which will be available June 16, the city will seek out additional social service agencies that can provide beds and treatment.

"We do intend to ramp up on this and we are looking at some other options that are out there," Hemmerling said. "We're very optimistic."

Mayor Kevin Faulconer, the San Diego Police Department, District Attorney Bonnie Dumanis and many county officials helped prepare the successful grant application.

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This article is related to: [Homelessness](#)



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HOME **NEWS CENTER** BLOG

Thursday, June 1, 2017



California Department of Housing Community Development Director Ben Metcalf to Discuss State Housing Shortage at Housing Policy Conference

Share Article



The Building Industry Association Baldy View Chapter (BIA), National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) and California Building Industry Association (CBIA) will host the Fourth Annual Housing Policy Conference at the Ontario Doubletree from 9:30 a.m., to 1 p.m. on June 2. California Housing Community Development (HCD) Director Ben Metcalf will provide keynote remarks and discuss a recent HCD report that estimates California’s decade-long housing shortage remains at approximately 100,000 homes annually

RANCHO CUCAMONGA, CA (PRWEB) JUNE 01, 2017

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“The quality of life throughout San Bernardino County is in serious jeopardy due to a chronic housing shortage which continues to increase the costs of rent, shuts the door on aspiring first-time homebuyers and moves more middle class families into poverty,” said BIA CEO Carlos Rodriguez. “Our conference seeks to identify a consensus of policy solutions that will help address the pent-up demand for housing throughout our county and the Golden State.”

The conference will also feature U.S. Representatives Pete Aguilar (D-31st Dist.) and Norma Torres (D-35th Dist.) in a special Federal Policy Overview panel moderated by NAHB Vice President of Government

Our conference seeks to identify a consensus of policy solutions that will help address the pent-up demand for housing throughout our county and the Golden State.

Affairs Lake Coulson. CBIA Chair Jeff Pemstein, Vice-Chair Michael Battaglia, Randall Lewis, Lewis Management Corp. and Mark Torres, Lennar Homes will also participate on a state/local panel discussion.

"The status quo is simply unacceptable when we consider that San Bernardino County needs 78,983 more affordable units to meet its shortfall - up by 15,000 from 2015," said Rodriguez. "We have a moral obligation to address the growing workforce housing demand in our region and our conference will outline policy solutions for our elected leaders to consider."

Conference attendees will also benefit from a collaboration between BIA and the American Institute for Architecture Inland California Chapter (AIA). "We are pleased to announce a new partnership with AIA," said BIA President Ali Sahabi, Optimum Group. "As part of our efforts to forge new relationships and partnerships with other professional trade associations, this year's Housing Policy Conference is eligible for three hours of AIA HSW Continuing Education credits"

Attendees may register online at <http://www.biabuild.com/housing-policy-conference> or on site the day of the event.

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San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

Credibility of key witness in Colonies trial challenged

By Joe Nelson, The Sun

and Richard K. De Atley, The Press-Enterprise

Wednesday, May 31, 2017



SAN BERNARDINO >> A defense attorney on Wednesday continued challenging the credibility of former San Bernardino County Assistant Assessor Adam Aleman on claims he heard and saw details that pointed to bribery in settling a \$102 million lawsuit between the county and developer Colonies Partners in 2006.

It was during one of those meetings, Aleman had testified in a San Bernardino courtroom, that defendant developer Jeff Burum had promised then-County Supervisor Bill Postmus that “everyone would be taken care of politically” once the [Colonies](#) matter was settled.

Prosecutors allege three county officials each took \$100,000 bribes, which were reported as campaign contributions, from Rancho Cucamonga developer Burum, via his Colonies Partners LP investor group, to gain approval for the \$102 million court settlement over flood control work at Colonies’ 434-acre residential and commercial development in Upland.

Defendants include Burum, former county Assistant Assessor Jim Erwin, former county Supervisor Paul Biane, and Mark Kirk, the chief of staff for former Supervisor Gary Ovitt.

All the defendants have denied any wrongdoing, saying the contributions from Colonies Partners were public donations to legal political action committees, were part of the Colonies’ attempts to mend fences after the contentious legal dispute and were available online for public review. Burum is a co-managing partner of Colonies Partners.

Aleman had described in earlier testimony attending six to 12 different 2006 meetings between January and June with Postmus and Burum at restaurants and on the patio of the Red Hill Country Club in Rancho Cucamonga.

But, Aleman told Burum defense attorney Jennifer Keller on Wednesday, he could not recall which location it was where Burum made the statement he claimed.

Under Keller’s questioning, Aleman ran into trouble about the locations of the restaurants. Aleman had claimed the meetings took place at an El Torito in Upland and an Acapulco Restaurant at Montclair Plaza.

“You never were at the El Torito in Upland,” Keller told him. “You told (District Attorney investigators Hollis “Bud” Randles and Robert Schreiber) in February 2009 they met at an Ontario El Torito, next to the Black Angus.

“You never said anything to investigator Randles and Schreiber about meeting at an El Torito in Upland?”

“Sorry, it may have been the one in Ontario,” Aleman said.

Keller also asked Aleman about testifying under direct examination from Deputy Attorney General Melissa Mandel that the Acapulco restaurant where one meeting with Burum occurred was at the Montclair Plaza, but that he previously told investigators the restaurant was in Ontario.

Keller asked Aleman to describe the patio at the Red Hill Country Club. He said it was a large patio with restaurant service. Keller further described it as patio that wraps around with views of rolling hills and the golf course. Aleman did not disagree.

Then she told Aleman there was no club house or patio at the country club during the January-June 2006 time frame Aleman had described. They had been razed for remodeling.

“At no time during your 70 interviews (with District Attorney investigators) you never mentioned you met with Mr. Postmus and Mr. Burum at the Red Hill Country Club,” Keller said.

“I can’t recall,” Aleman said.

She also challenged Aleman’s recollection of being at a hotel room meeting with several figures in the case in November 2006. Aleman told a 2011 grand jury it was at a Sheraton. The meeting was actually at the Doubletree Inn in Ontario, and none of the men attending recalled Aleman being there, Keller noted.

“You put yourself in a hotel where a meeting never happened,” Keller said.

“Those are your words,” Aleman said back.

“Those are the words of everybody but you, Mr. Aleman,” she replied.

“All we have is your word? You don’t have anything to document your presence at those meetings?” Keller asked.

Aleman said he didn’t.

[Aleman](#) and [Postmus](#) entered into plea agreements with prosecutors within two years of one another in 2009 and 2011, respectively. They both agreed to testify against the defendants and cooperate with investigators in exchange for lighter sentences.

Also on Wednesday, Keller drilled Aleman on the fact that, despite repeated efforts by him, Postmus consistently denied taking a bribe from Burum, and during one conversation Postmus even told Aleman the settlement was the right thing.

“You knew the most valuable information that you could provide was anything showing there had been a bribe to Mr. Postmus, right?” Keller asked Aleman, who responded by saying the information he was seeking for investigators was “all encompassing” in regards to the Assessor’s office and Colonies investigation.

Keller also took Aleman to task on what he told Mandel on direct examination, saying how settling the Colonies case was rarely discussed by Postmus until he returned from a China trip in September 2005, where he was supposedly wined, dined and pressured by Burum to settle the Colonies litigation.

Keller pointed out to Aleman a Feb. 19, 2009 interview he had with district attorney investigators in which he told them he had multiple conversations with Postmus following a March 2005 meeting at Biane’s Rancho Cucamonga office in which attorneys were excluded from the second half of the meeting, when a \$77.5 million settlement agreement was negotiated between Postmus, Biane, Burum and Colonies’ principals.

That proposed settlement unraveled when news of the meeting and what occurred was leaked to the media.

Testimony resumes Thursday before Judge Michael A. Smith in San Bernardino Superior Court.

San Bernardino County Sun (<http://www.sbsun.com>)

Sterling recycling center throws off one of two San Bernardino lawsuits

By Jim Steinberg, The Sun

Wednesday, May 31, 2017

HIGHLAND >> A San Diego Superior Court judge has denied assertions by the city of San Bernardino that the environmental study for a proposed \$128 million wastewater treatment and recycling project is inadequate.

“The CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) was adequately undertaken such that the lead agency and the public were reasonably able to analyze the costs and the benefits” of the Sterling Natural Resource Center, Judge [Joel R. Wohlfeil wrote in an opinion issued last month](#).

“The positive ruling affirms the Sterling Natural Resource Center is in compliance with CEQA, and allows the project to advance with its plans of creating a state-of-the-art recycled water facility,” a joint statement from Sterling’s proponents, the San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District and the East Valley Water District, said.

“This ruling brings the San Bernardino Valley one step closer to building a project that will reduce the amount of water used only once locally and then sent down the Santa Ana River for Orange County to treat and reuse,” Valley District Board President Susan Longville said in a statement.

Stacey Aldstadt, general manager for the San Bernardino Municipal Water Department, could not be reached for comment Wednesday.

Recently, the State Water Resources Control Board authorized a crucial permit for the Sterling plant, which would allow the project to move forward with its plans of recharging the Bunker Hill Basin with up to 10 million gallons of recycled water daily. The plant would be located in Highland.

The project also received recent authorizations from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Army Corps of Engineers.

In April 2016, San Bernardino sued San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District, which is the lead agency in developing the Sterling National Resource Center, and East Valley Water District, which will ultimately own the plant, for the environmental report supporting the project.

In June 2016, San Bernardino fired off another lawsuit attempting to block the Sterling plant, alleging the project circumvented the San Bernardino County Local Agency Formation Commission, a charge proponents deny.

A trial date for the LAFCO case has been set for early December.

San Bernardino, in its first anti-Sterling lawsuit, cited several flaws in the environmental study for proposed plant, Wohlfeil wrote.

These include failure to fully analyze and evaluate impacts, the judge wrote in his opinion.

The environmental report “appears to offer several good faith alternative means to lessen its impact,” Wohlfeil wrote.

San Bernardino stands to lose \$4.5 million annually for 20 years if the new facility is built, as it treats East Valley's wastewater and has for many years.

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/general-news/20170531/sterling-recycling-center-throws-off-one-of-two-san-bernardino-lawsuits>

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Our View: It's time to rethink public transportation

Thursday

Posted at 12:01 AM

By Daily Press Editorial Board

Staff Writer Shea Johnson's eye-opening report on Victor Valley Transit Authority funding on Sunday illustrates how government often gets stuck in a rut, usually at the taxpayers' expense.

In March, VVTA collected \$300,000 in passenger fares, but the cost to operate the bus system throughout the High Desert was about \$1.85 million. That means the \$1.55 million needed to keep the system running came from taxpayer-funded subsidies, either San Bernardino County's Measure I sales tax, state Transit Assistance Funds or the Local Transportation Fund.

While VVTA Executive Director Kevin Kane rightly says this public program provides opportunities for people, we wonder if opportunities couldn't be expanded and costs reduced by changing the way VVTA — and many other bus systems — operate.

Already VVTA pays mileage to people willing to transport neighbors covered under the Americans with Disability Act. Most of these trips are to receive health care. Why not expand that program for all passengers? We bet there are people, especially retirees, who would be willing to drive someone for a fee.

Or why not provide those who use public transportation with vouchers and let them contact Uber when they need a ride? We think these riders should still contribute part of their "fare," but they'd get better service for their money.

And Uber and other similar services might even provide government with a rate break if they were given these contracts.

Think of it. No more mostly empty buses on the roadways. No more costly overhead. Passengers wouldn't be at the mercy of the bus schedule or bus stops to get where they needed to go. No more standing in the rain or heat. Just call Uber or some similar service to be picked up at home and taken to their destination.

Would this cost \$1.85 million a month? Even if it did, wouldn't the convenience for the customer trump the current system?

There may be even other ideas out there that would reduce costs and improve services for those who rely on VVTA.

We're not suggesting we pull the plug on VVTA overnight or even ever. But we think it is past time to start coming up with ideas to reduce the burden on taxpayers, who are shouldering the load for more and more programs every day.

According to the Hamilton Project that the Brookings Institute launched in 2006, only 2 percent of the more than 1,800 mass transit systems in the U.S. exceeded operating expenses with revenue from fares. In the private sector, companies that perennially lose money go out of business. Maybe that's how it should be in the public sector, too.

A toll on us all

Wednesday

Posted May 31, 2017 at 10:36 AM

Updated May 31, 2017 at 9:15 PM

By Angela Valles

Toll lanes are spreading like the plague.

They have infected Riverside County. And San Bernardino County is “thisclose” to allowing toll lanes. The estimated start date for toll lane construction is late 2018.

We must quarantine San Bernardino County if we are to protect working-class residents from the Zombie-like elected officials carrying the disease.

And who are the Victor Valley carriers? Each one of the following elected officials voted for toll lanes:

Supervisor Robert Lovingood

Former Victorville Councilman Ryan McEachron

Former Hesperia Councilman Mike Leonard

Adelanto Councilman Jermaine Wright

Apple Valley Councilman Curt Emick

Remember, these councilmembers do not just vote on their own. Their Council colleagues support them and are aware of it.

The San Bernardino County Transportation Authority, formerly known as SANBAG, is tasked with spending the billions of dollars it receives from county sales tax funds specifically designated for transportation projects as part of Measure I.

Each of the five county supervisors sit on the voting board along with a city councilmember from each city. They are supposed to represent the voters.

I have yet to meet one person in the Victor Valley who supports toll lanes. Everyone believes we are overtaxed and that government has squandered the funds it is supposed to use on infrastructure improvements.

Yet, we have these elected officials trying to hide their support for toll lanes in SBCTA meetings that the majority of people have no idea exists.

The people of the Victor Valley I speak to on traffic and transportation matters are tired of seeing tens of millions of dollars wasted on mass transit boondoggles that ferry empty buses and train cars to and fro.

They're tired of seeing high occupancy vehicle lanes built with tax dollars and then converted to toll lanes after the taxpayers already paid for them.

And they are beyond furious that government hacks want them to pay to use toll roads simply because they have wasted billions of dollars on illegal aliens and welfare programs instead of building roads with our taxes like they are supposed to do.

How do we put pressure on these elected officials and a "down the hill" agency filled with unelected bureaucrats hell-bent on pushing us out of cars and into inefficient and impractical mass transit solutions?

First, you need to connect with "Toll Free IE" on Facebook. This is a group of citizen activists fighting toll lanes. You can contact them at [Facebook.com/tollfreeie/](https://www.facebook.com/tollfreeie/) for more information and help.

Second, it is time to recognize that San Bernardino County is too big for the SBCTA and that the SBCTA is too out of touch with the Victor Valley. Victor Valley needs to break off and form its own regional transportation agency. This will provide greater attention and focus on our issues and concerns and also create more transparency and accountability with our elected officials.

Third, we need to let every councilmember know that they are being watched on the issue of toll lanes.

Fourth, the people of the Victor Valley must give some serious consideration to the idea of repealing the Measure I sales tax and replacing it with a measure that prohibits the use of any transportation funds on toll lanes.

If we don't take immediate steps to stop these toll lanes, we are going to be stuck with them. It is time to send a wake-up call. It is time for the people to take back their government and show these elected officials and unelected and unaccountable bureaucrats who is really the boss.

You. Me. Us!

If you have suggestions on subjects or comments please contact me at

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Mojave Water Agency announces new GM

Wednesday

Posted May 31, 2017 at 3:48 PM

Updated May 31, 2017 at 3:48 PM

By Staff Reports

APPLE VALLEY — With General Manager Kirby Brill set to retire, the Mojave Water Agency has tapped Tom McCarthy to lead the organization.

A civil engineer and geologist with more than 20 years of experience, McCarthy currently serves as the Acting Engineering Manager/Chief Engineer and Water Resources Planning Manager for Anaheim Public Utilities, according to MWA spokesperson Yvonne Hester.

McCarthy's contract was approved at the May 25 regular meeting of the MWA board of directors, Hester said. He is scheduled to begin his new role on June 12.

"This is an incredible opportunity to be a part of the Mojave Water Agency that has a growing statewide reputation for quality and innovation," McCarthy said. "I am looking forward to continuing to work collaboratively with the region's stakeholders and the excellent staff to meet the region's future water challenges."

Kimberly Cox, MWA Board President, said McCarthy also brings experience in project management and water adjudication. Additionally, his work as project technical lead for all Southwest-based water resource projects during his tenure at MWH Global Inc. offers private-sector experience.

McCarthy holds a Master of Science degree in Civil and Environmental Engineering from the University of California, Los Angeles, and a Bachelor of Science degree in Geological Science from the University of Oregon, according to Hester.

Meanwhile, Brill — who has led MWA since 2000 — described his departure as "bittersweet."

“I am proud of the work that we as a region have accomplished,” he said. “Our Board of Directors had the courage to make tough decisions, and our staff has worked collaboratively and creatively to accomplish some high goals. I will miss working with such an extraordinary group of people. It’s truly been a blessing.”

Cox elaborated on those tough decisions, describing MWA’s reputation as “less than stellar” when Brill joined MWA 17 years ago.

“(MWA’s) role was obscure as the adjudication was in the early stages of implementation,” Cox said. “Kirby opened the doors to our stakeholders to be a part of shaping the region’s water future.

“Instead of being told what MWA was going to do, our stakeholders had a seat at the table and participated in key decisions that have helped drought-proof our region, and provide a platform of sustainable water management to support land use decisions in the communities we serve.”

Capital investments in recharge projects in the Victor Valley and beyond are among the key initiatives developed during Brill’s MWA tenure. In particular, he oversaw the Regional Recharge and Recovery project, which delivers water from the California Aqueduct in Hesperia to recharge sites in the floodplain aquifer in that city and Apple Valley.

MWA also made strategic water purchases and initiated a science-based decision-making process by instituting a data collection and evaluation program for the region’s water supply under his leadership, according to Hester.

In addition, MWA’s award-winning Small Water Systems Assistance program was developed to offer expertise to small systems to improve efficiency and comply with changing state regulations.

Brill is an active member in the California water community, Hester said. He served as vice chair of the California Groundwater Coalition and was a member of the board of trustees with both the Southern California Water Committee and the State Water Contractors Association.

Brill’s last day is scheduled for July 21.

Apple Valley: Some mail-in ballots returned to Measure F voters

Wednesday

Posted May 31, 2017 at 8:54 PM

Updated May 31, 2017 at 8:54 PM

By **Matthew Cabe**

Staff Writer

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APPLE VALLEY — An issue with a machine at the U.S. Post Office here has resulted in the return of some mail-in ballots for the June 6 special election on Measure F, sparking concern in the community.

Apple Valley resident Carolyn Forston said both her and her husband's ballots — postmarked May 27 — were returned Tuesday.

"I thought I might have forgot to put a stamp on it, but it was all right," Forston said. "The person helping me at the Post Office (on Wednesday) said, 'You're the third one today.'"

The returns worried Forston, who said many voters rely on mail-in ballots.

"There are people out there who don't drive and that's why they have a mail-in ballot," she said. "Because they don't have the means to take it in themselves. It doesn't say why it's returned, it's just returned. How would they know?"

James Salley, customer service supervisor at the Post Office located off Highway 18, told the Daily Press one machine incorrectly read the barcodes on a small number of ballots. Those ballots were returned to voters.

Salley described the situation as being "a luck of the draw" insofar as which ballots were processed incorrectly.

“When it doesn’t read correctly, (the ballots are) being sent back (to the voters),” he said. “There’s no telling exactly what caused it ... Better (for the voters) to bring it in themselves and drop it off.”

A co-worker who handles a majority of the mail-in ballots said about 15 barcodes were read incorrectly, according to Salley, who added that he wasn’t aware of any voters dropping off mail-in ballots on Wednesday.

The San Bernardino County Elections Office has issued 22,867 mail-in ballots in the town since April, according to data provided by Registrar of Voters Michael Scarpello, an increase of more than 4,500 since Apple Valley’s last special election in 2013.

There are currently 36,608 registered voters in Apple Valley; nearly 63 percent have mail-in ballots.

Scarpello said the county Elections Office is in talks with the town’s Post Office to determine if further issues exist. He described the situation as “a very isolated incident.”

“We’ve only heard from one voter who said they had their ballot returned to them,” Scarpello said.

Meanwhile, initial reports that returns also occurred during last year’s June primary and November general election were deemed false by Salley.

“We had no problem with the ballots in November,” Salley said. “It’s only affected the current mail-in ballot.”

Some ballots were mailed back to voters last October, though, according to Scarpello, but he noted the issue stemmed from incorrectly placed stamps that resulted in faulty processing.

“In this particular case, that would be a voter error, not a machine error,” he said, adding that the Post Office closely monitored that situation and instructed staff to deliver those ballots to supervisors rather than back to voters.

Measure F could decide the fate of the town’s ongoing attempt to take Liberty Utilities’ water system by eminent domain. A “yes” vote would allow the town to borrow up to \$150 million to acquire the system should a court grant that right;

a “no” would likely end the takeover bid.

Thus far, 6,305 Measure F ballots have been received by the Elections Office, according to Scarpello.

Town spokesperson Charlene Engeron said the Town Clerk’s office has been in contact with the Registrar of Voters and the Post Office regarding the mail-in ballot issue.

“One thing that’s important ... is obviously if somebody gets their ballot back on June 7,” Engeron said. “Elections Code says (the ballot) has to be postmarked by June 6, so if they don’t get it back before June 6, we’ll have to talk to Registrar of Voters.”

An exact number of returns was unknown late Wednesday; however, for town voters whose ballots were returned, Scarpello suggested taking them back to the Post Office. The Elections Office is awaiting response from the Post Office on additional remedies.

In the interim, mail-in ballots can also be taken to drop-off locations before June 6 and at polling places on Election Day, according to Scarpello, who said those locations are available on **the Elections Office website**, Scarpello said.

Matthew Cabe can be reached at or at 760-951-6254. Follow him on Twitter@DP_MatthewCabe.

L.A. City Council backs proposed settlement that could reduce DWP rate hikes



The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power headquarters, pictured in 2015. The DWP sends more than \$200 million each year to the city budget, even as customers' rates steadily climb. (Robert Gauthier / Los Angeles Times)

By **David Zahniser**

MAY 31, 2017, 7:25 PM

The Los Angeles City Council backed a proposed legal settlement Wednesday that could reduce the electric bills of Department of Water and Power customers by hundreds of millions of dollars over the next four years.

The agreement, if approved by a judge, would resolve three lawsuits that took aim at the city's long-standing practice of using 8% of the DWP's yearly electricity revenue to balance the city budget.

The city's general fund, which pays for police patrols, firefighters and other basic services, received about \$267 million from the DWP in the 2015-16 fiscal year.

DWP critics had called the yearly payment an illegal tax increase. The utility sent the money in that same period, when the council voted to increase electricity rates by an average of nearly 3.9% a year.

Under the proposed settlement, the DWP would credit its customers for 8% of the money generated by a rate hike approved last year. The credit — which would be deducted from future DWP bills — would cover rate hike revenue collected during the 15-month period that ends June 30.

The city would put \$52 million into a fund that would cover those credits, according to the settlement proposal. However, the final amount needed could change.

The settlement would also require the DWP to reduce by 8% rate hikes that were approved last year that would go into effect between July 1 and 2020, according to a city official familiar with the settlement agreement. That reduction could deliver hundreds of millions of dollars more, said the official, who was not authorized to speak publicly about the matter.

The settlement would also allow the city to dodge a major financial bullet.

Under the proposal, the DWP would continue to send its yearly payment to the general fund. However, the size of the payment would be lower — representing 8% of the power revenue collected by the utility under a rate ordinance approved in 2008.

That decreased payment is already reflected in Mayor Eric Garcetti's budget for the upcoming fiscal year, which was signed last week. The mayor's spending plan calls for the DWP to send \$242.5 million to the general fund, a decrease of almost \$25 million compared with two years ago.

Garcetti spokesman George Kivork declined to discuss details of the settlement, saying only that the mayor supports the council's decision to move the proposal forward. But last month, Garcetti described the decrease in the DWP transfer as a major contributor to the city's budget shortfall.

Under the settlement, city officials will be prohibited from increasing the percentage of the transfer. "That's now a capped number," Garcetti said during last month's question-and-answer session on his budget plan.

The transfer currently represents about 4% of the city's general fund revenue.

Attorneys for the plaintiffs in the three cases did not respond to requests from The Times for comment.

Opponents of the DWP transfer had argued that it violates Proposition 26, approved by state voters in 2010. Proposition 26 bars public utilities like the DWP from charging more for government services than it costs to provide them.

By transferring 8% of the DWP's electricity revenue to the budget, the city was overcharging ratepayers 8%, opponents charged.

The transfer has grown in recent years, even as city leaders imposed higher costs on its customers. In March 2016, the council approved a five-year package of rate hikes that represented an average increase of 3.86% per

year. DWP spokesman Joe Ramallo said the five-year package of rate increases will be smaller, thanks in part to lower-than-expected natural gas prices.

Vanessa Rodriguez, spokeswoman for City Council President Herb Wesson, confirmed that the council had put forth a settlement proposal but declined to discuss specifics.

Los Angeles is not the only city facing a challenge to its utility transfer. This year, a Superior Court judge ruled that Glendale transferred money from its electric utility to its general fund in violation of Proposition 26.

The judge ordered Glendale to repay its ratepayers nearly \$57 million in power revenue. Lawyers for Glendale have filed an appeal.

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'Don't wait for them. You lead' on health care, nurses' leader tells rally 1:38



Capitol Alert

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CAPITOL ALERT

MAY 31, 2017 11:17 AM

Higher taxes on cars and dining to pay for California health care? Nurses have a proposal

BY ANGELA HART
ahart@sacbee.com

The high cost of paying for Canadian-style health care for all Californians has for more than two decades killed proposals by politicians to adopt such a system.

But advocates of the model have some ideas for two Democratic state senators trying to remake California's health care market into a taxpayer funded model that gets rid of the need for insurance companies and covers everyone regardless of immigration status or ability to pay.

A report by economists at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, released Wednesday, found that overall health care spending in California would fall 18 percent under the proposal from state Sens. Ricardo Lara, D-Bell Gardens, and Toni Atkins, D-San Diego.

Accounting for savings achieved with their Senate Bill 562, it would cost \$331 billion per year to run a universal coverage system in which state government, with taxpayer dollars, pays for medical services and procedures - down from more than \$404 billion in spending under today's system, according to the economic analysis. It was paid for by the California Nurses Association, the bill's lead sponsor, which also endorsed Lara in his 2018 run for state insurance commissioner.

The report proposes a complete overhaul of the state's current health care system. People would no longer have to purchase insurance through Kaiser or Anthem Blue Cross, for example. Instead, health care payments would be reorganized under a single state-run system funded, in part, by new taxes on consumer purchases like new cars and dining out at restaurants, and business revenue.

There would be no insurance premiums. No out-of-pocket costs for prescription drugs. No more deductibles.

To make the universal care proposal work, however, existing state and federal funding that subsidizes health care for low-income people, seniors and people with disabilities would have to remain in place. That could be a challenge under President Donald Trump and the Republican-controlled Congress. Of the \$331 billion needed to run the system, \$225 billion would come from state and federal sources, a portion of which is currently spent on MediCal and Medicare.

Cost savings would come through reductions in executive salaries and administrative costs for health care billing, as well as unnecessary or inefficient medical services. The state could also negotiate with pharmaceutical companies for lower drug prices and restructure reimbursement rates paid to providers – the current fee structure pays based on the quantity and complexity of medical services provided.

Providing universal access to care would also lower costs by allowing people to see the doctor when they need to instead of delaying doctor visits because they can't pay, the report found.

“We are on a collision course for rising health care costs and a crisis for California's middle class,” Lara said at a news conference Wednesday. “The good news is California can get a lot more for our money when the Legislature passes the Healthy California Act. We will actually spend less than we do on health care, families will pay less...businesses will also pay far less.”

Business groups, including the California Chamber of Commerce, and health insurers like Kaiser oppose the proposal.

Micah Weinberg, president of the economic institute at the employer-backed Bay Area Council, called it “nutso” and argued it would actually increase health care spending.

“The idea that you can reduce unnecessary and inefficient delivery of services in a system with unlimited free health care where doctors determine medical necessity is just nonsense,” Weinberg said. “With everything going on in D.C., I understand the desire to meet crazy with crazy. But that's just what we're doing here.”

The findings represent a complete reversal from current thinking. Among the politicians who have publicly expressed concerns about the cost are Gov. Jerry Brown, who would have to sign off on the bill for it to become law.

Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon has also questioned the cost and uncertainty in Washington, but “any single-payer proposal will receive full consideration in the Assembly,” according to his spokesman Kevin Liao. California Senate leader Kevin de León has been more receptive. He said recently that he welcomed Lara and Atkins to bring forth their proposal.

Lara said he will use the economic analysis to build the financing plan for the bill. It must pass the Senate floor by Friday to move to the Assembly.

The report proposes a two-fold tax structure: Sales taxes on everything except basic needs – grocery store purchases, housing, utilities – would go up 2.3 percent. Businesses that take in more than \$2 million per year would pay an additional 2.3 percent in taxes on gross receipts.

There are tax exemptions for low-income people and small businesses. The report's authors and sponsors argued that implementing its recommendations would actually save people money by lowering overall health care costs. It estimates that though taxes would go up, reductions in health care costs would save California households 9 percent of total income.

Savings from reduced health care costs for businesses are estimated, overall, at 22 percent, and 13 percent for medium-sized businesses. Large employers would see a smaller sliver of savings.

The findings echo total health care spending of roughly \$400 billion today in California, also identified by the Senate Appropriations committee last week. It found that the state would need to find an additional \$200 billion per year.

Under the nurses' proposal, the state would need to come up with an additional \$106.9 billion. Most of that would come from taxes on businesses (\$92.6 billion), with \$14.3 billion from increasing sales taxes.

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Capitol Alert

The go-to source for news on California policy and politics

CAPITOL ALERT

JUNE 01, 2017 6:00 AM

How many people have taken advantage of California's assisted death law?

BY ALEXEI KOSEFF
akoseff@sacbee.com

Few California politics stories in recent years were bigger, or more intensely personal, than the legalization of assisted death. Even Gov. **Jerry Brown** reflected on his own mortality, and the comfort he would find in the bill's options, when he signed it into law in October 2015.

Since it took effect last June, terminally ill adults with less than six months to live have been able to seek lethal medication from a physician. So, a year later, how many have?

We won't know exactly until next month, when the **California Department of Public Health** is set to release its first annual statistical report on the number of assisted death prescriptions, how many patients used them and how many doctors wrote them.

But **Compassion & Choices**, the advocacy group behind the law, said they have already consulted with at least 504 Californians who went on to receive a prescription. That alone is more than a quarter the number of patients - 1,749 - that have ever sought lethal medication in Oregon, the first state to legalize assisted death in 1997; it's likely that many more have undertaken the process without the organization's help.

Compassion & Choices released the figure Thursday to tout the success of the law ahead of its first anniversary on June 9. It remains a controversial issue nationally, with religious and disability rights groups raising moral objections and concerns that it could be abused to target the elderly, the poor and other vulnerable populations.

While dozens of states each year continue to introduce assisted death bills, only two more have passed - in Colorado and Washington, D.C. - since California, bringing the total to seven jurisdictions.

WORTH REPEATING: "P.S. Coal is not coming back." - Rep. **Ted Lieu**, D-Torrance, saying in a statement that he is deeply disappointed by reports that Trump will withdraw from the Paris climate agreement

WORLDS APART: Billionaire environmentalist **Tom Steyer** was everywhere during the 2016 election cycle – or at least it felt like it – sparking speculation about his own political ambitions. He still hasn’t announced whether he’s running for governor of California, but the chatter is unlikely to diminish as he ramps up activity with the **Fair Shake Commission**, his project tackling the politically hot topic of income inequality and economic insecurity. The commission plans to release its latest policy report, 10 a.m. at Liberty Hall in Oakland, with a discussion featuring Steyer, the Center for American Progress’ **Neera Tanden**, former U.S. Rep. **George Miller**, PolicyLink CEO **Angela Glover Blackwell**, California Community Colleges Chancellor **Eloy Ortiz Oakley** and former California Finance Director **Ana Matosantos**.

VIDEO OF THE DAY: Brown says President **Donald Trump**’s position on climate change is backfiring.

WIDE DIVIDE: For years, California politicians have struggled with closing an academic achievement gap between black and Latino students and their Asian and white peers – a problem that only seems to be getting more vexing. So what are the most successful, and cost-effective, programs for improving the performance of minority and low-income students? **George Farkas**, a professor of education at UC Irvine, will review his research, noon at the UC Center Sacramento on K Street.

MUST READ: Organized labor is squaring off with health care professionals over a bill to increase nursing staff at dialysis clinics

FALLING SHORT: The advocacy group **Campaign for College Opportunity** wants to increase degree attainment among California adults to 60 percent from 48 percent by 2025 – an ambitious vision that would require the state to produce an additional 1.7 million graduates over the next eight years. On that front, the organization argues, California is failing miserably: college readiness and affordability are mediocre, while attendance and completion are even worse. In a new report released today, the campaign is challenging California officials to “raise the grades.” It comes amid growing public and political frustration over tuition hikes and enrollment access for California high schoolers in the state’s public university systems.

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Bad bills for business before Legislature

By The Editorial Board, San Bernardino County Sun

Wednesday, May 31, 2017



As a key deadline looms for state bills to advance, California businesses are crossing their fingers and hoping for the best — or, more accurately, to avoid the worst.

There is a flurry of activity at the Capitol, as Friday marks the final day for bills to advance out of the Assembly to the Senate, or vice versa, for consideration this year.

Democratic lawmakers apparently are not fazed by the fact that California has consistently, and for many years, ranked at or near the bottom of numerous analyses and surveys of state business climates.

Nor do they seem concerned that this oppressive tax and regulatory climate has prompted many businesses to expand elsewhere or pick up and move to states offering more economic opportunity, costing thousands of jobs.

The following is a roundup of several significant business-related bills under consideration that have been designated as “job-killer” bills by the California Chamber of Commerce and/or made “The Good, the Bad & the Ugly” list of bills put together by the California chapter of the National Federation of Independent Business.

AB1209 (Gonzalez Fletcher, D-San Diego) would require employers with 250 or more workers to annually report on a public website the difference in mean and median compensation of male and female board members and employees for each job classification.

AB1576 (Levine, D-Marin County) would continue the gender discrimination pandering by prohibiting businesses from charging different prices for “substantially similar” products based on the gender of the “targeted” consumer (and providing a bonanza of frivolous lawsuits to trial lawyers), despite the fact that gender differences may lead to differences in supply and demand. Moreover, competitive market forces and consumer choice, not government mandates, should determine the prices people pay for goods.

SB63 (Jackson, D-Santa Barbara) would mandate 12 weeks of protected maternity and paternity leave for employers with as few as 20 workers (literally doubling down on Jackson’s previous bill to mandate six weeks of leave that Gov. Jerry Brown vetoed last year). It passed the Senate on a 25-13 vote on Tuesday.

SB562 (Lara, D-Bell Gardens, and Atkins, D-San Diego) would adopt a single-payer health care system statewide. The government takeover of the health care industry would impair care and cost \$400 billion a year — more than twice the total state budget — requiring massive tax increases.

SB567 (Lara, D-Bell Gardens) would impose additional business taxes, including a capital gains tax on property transferred upon the owner’s death to family members with more than \$1 million in annual income, and the elimination of a deduction for performance-based or commission compensation above \$1 million earned by executive officers. These provisions are inconsistent with federal tax law, and would make California an even less desirable place in which to do business.

There is only so much that employers and wealthy individuals can, or are willing to, bear before they close up shop or move to less greedy states. With bills like these year in and year out, Democratic lawmakers seem determined to test whether the next imposition will be the straw that breaks the camel's back.

URL: <http://www.sbsun.com/opinion/20170531/bad-bills-for-business-before-legislature>

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