

Supporting a better Bloomington for our residents and children

By Contributing Writer - August 15, 2018



For the past several years, the Bloomington Municipal Advisory Council (MAC) has been working hard to improve our community. As MAC members, we volunteer our time to meet with business owners, residents, and county departments to find ways to support our community. In total, MAC members have lived in Bloomington more than 150 years and we know the needs and wishes of our community.

While the County has invested millions of dollars in a new state of the art library, baseball fields, and senior housing in Bloomington, we still do not have nearly enough municipal services. This is because our community does not generate enough revenue to cover the limited services we currently receive.

The MAC has been working with the County to find ways to increase revenues so we can have improved services, such as a dedicated Sheriff's patrol, more Code Enforcement to deal with illegal businesses and clean up blighted areas, along with increased services for our seniors and children. These are services that the vast majority of our residents have consistently asked for. We also want to see more infrastructure improvements including street lighting, better roads, and sidewalks so our children can walk to school safely.

As part of this strategy to move Bloomington forward, we are requiring new projects to commit to community benefit agreements with the money staying in Bloomington. These benefit agreements will bring enhanced infrastructure and services to Bloomington. This approach is a first for the County and we are leading the way.

The first project to include a benefit agreement will soon be coming to the Board of Supervisors. It is a warehouse project on Slover Avenue – on an existing industrial corridor next to other industrial properties and near the Union Pacific Railyard. This location is exactly where a warehouse should be located, on an industrial truck route near the freeway. The Bloomington MAC members unanimously support this project. The project has been studied by experts, and a comprehensive Environmental Impact Report has been generated with state-of-the-art mitigation measures. It is designed with a substantial set-back that is seven times the required limit to minimize any impacts to the four houses behind the project.

The project will pay development impact fees for area transportation improvements including a signal light on Slover. A large amount of money from increased property taxes generated by the project will go to the CJUSD to support our children's education, health and safety. Additionally, the project will contribute \$30,000 annually to be used only in Bloomington for enhanced services, \$225,000 for future public works projects in our community and will construct approximately 300 feet in sidewalks to complete a safe route to school for our Bloomington High School students.

Some residents have expressed concerns about the project. We appreciate those who have asked good questions. Constructive feedback has helped make this project better. Unfortunately, some outside groups are using this project to present a false narrative to uninformed residents and are using scare tactics to frighten residents into thinking that some "greedy developer" is "threatening to steal" their homes and "rob" people of their land.

The truth is no one, under any circumstances, can be forced to sell their property to anyone else against their will. These same people, that claim to be for the environment, conveniently turn a blind eye to the unpermitted, unregulated 130-plus illegal trucking operations located next to our schools and in the middle of our residential neighborhoods. These illegal diesel truck operations have an estimated 2,000 trucks a day traveling through Bloomington and are by far the biggest source of environmental pollution and truck traffic in Bloomington. The MAC has asked this outside environmental group to work with us in our efforts to rid our community of these major polluters, yet we have not received one word of support from those that claim to be trying to protect our children. I ask you to look at the true motivations of this outside group, are they really here to help our community, or their own political agenda?

I encourage my fellow Bloomington residents to take the time to learn the facts and make up their own minds based on what's best for Bloomington as a whole, not on someone else's outside personal or political agenda. Please do not allow people with outside motivations to divide our community for their own personal or political gain. Our efforts to improve our community are too important to allow outsiders with an agenda to derail the efforts of many of us that have worked so hard to provide enhanced services, infrastructure improvements and job opportunities for our residents.

In closing, this project is a win for our entire community and I encourage residents and elected leaders to focus on solutions to the real challenges we face, instead of resorting to empty rhetoric and partisan politics. As for the members of the Bloomington MAC, we

will continue to make the best decisions to support a better Bloomington for our residents and children.

Submitted by Gary Grossich

Bloomington MAC Member

Contributing Writer

If you would like to become a contributing writer for IE Community News please email our Editor at editor@iecn.com. If you have a news release to publish send it to press@iecn.com.



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Storms briefly pummel High Desert, flood local roadways



Paola Baker Staff Writer @DP_PaolaBaker

Aug 16, 2018 at 6:34 PM

Aug 16, 2018 at 6:34 PM

High Desert residents got a brief reprieve from the sizzling heat when a summer storm blew into town, briefly causing flooding along some local roadways Thursday afternoon.

The National Weather Service issued a flash flood warning for the region at around 1:45 p.m. after radar showed “thunderstorms producing heavy rain across the warned area.”

“Up to 2 inches of rain have already fallen,” the NWS said. “Flash flooding is expected to begin shortly, if it is not already occurring.”

NWS spokeswoman Samantha Connolly said their agency began receiving reports of flash flooding in the area at about 3:30 p.m.

“The Pinon Hills area got about a quarter-inch of rain,” Connolly told the Daily Press Thursday evening.

Roadway flooding was reported along portions of Highway 18 in Phelan as the storm intensified. While it didn’t last long, the rainfall was enough to wash out portions of the road there. Flooding was also reported on Highway 247 in Lucerne Valley and Interstate 15 near Bell Mountain.

Emergency personnel were dispatched to a reported rescue on Highway 18 and Johnson Road at about 3:45 p.m. when a minivan got stuck in the rushing waters.

Phelan resident Kathryn Lirica Watts was behind the wheel. She told the Daily Press she had just picked up her 8-year-old daughter from school when she first noticed the storm brewing.

“While I was driving home it started to rain, right after the railroad tracks on Johnson Road,” Watts said. “Then I noticed there was debris and mud everywhere. The road was completely full of water and mud — you couldn’t even see the yellow line on the road.”

Watts said the minivan hit a pothole near the intersection at Highway 18, causing the van to get stuck as rainfall continued to pummel the roadway.

“It was very scary, and my daughter was in the backseat crying while I was on the phone with AAA,” Watts said.

Luckily for Watts, help soon came calling.

Watts said a California Highway Patrol officer was the first to arrive, followed shortly by San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department deputies and a San Bernardino County Fire Department truck.

“The fire department carried my daughter out to safety. I had to walk, but they helped me along the way,” said Watts, who is partially disabled and wears a knee brace. “They were really nice about helping me through the water.”

A Sheriff’s deputy had Watts and her daughter stay dry by letting them sit in his patrol vehicle before a tow truck arrived, and they were soon on their way to safety.

The flash flood warning was lifted by 4:30 p.m., Connolly said. While there’s still a chance for storms in Friday’s forecast, Connolly said it was unlikely the region would get more rainfall.

“There’s a cell over the San Bernardino mountains, but it’s pretty stationary,” Connolly said. “There’s a chance of storms in the mountains [Friday], but we don’t expect anything to get up into the High Desert.”

Friday’s forecast shows a 20 percent chance of storms, with daytime temperatures expected to reach anywhere between 95 to 100 degrees.

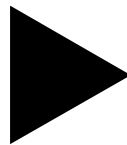
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Summer Storm Brings Wild Weather to Parts of SoCal; Flash Flood, Severe Thunderstorm Warnings Issued

POSTED 8:53 AM, AUGUST 16, 2018, BY TRACY BLOOM, *UPDATED AT 04:07PM, AUGUST 16, 2018*



Heavy Rain, Hail Hits SoCal



A summer storm blew through parts of the Southern California Thursday, bringing hail and heavy rain to parts of the Inland Empire and triggering a number of regional weather advisories.

Thunderstorms earlier in the day brought about 2 1/4 inches of rain at Yucaipa Ridge near Forest Falls, while drenching Big Bear Lake with around 1 1/2 inches of precipitation, according to the National Weather Service.

Areas like Beaumont, Cherry Valley and Big Bear Lake in particular appeared to be inundated with wet weather and hail that continued through mid-afternoon, videos and images posted on social media showed.

A lightning strike sparked a small brush fire in the San Bernardino National Forest north of Big Bear Lake, officials said shortly after 12:30 p.m. It measured roughly 20 feet by 20 feet with no rate of spread.

The wild weather came amid forecasts calling for an "active day" across the high desert and mountain of Southern California, with widespread thunderstorms expected to continue through the remainder of the afternoon.

A number of areas were under flash flood warning, including the Cranston Fire burn scar around Idyllwild.

"A small shift in the cell's position could pose a serious flash flood threat," San Bernardino National Forest officials tweeted.

Because of the potential threat for flooding, evacuations have been issued for the following areas: Hurkey Creek, Apple Canyon, Fleming Ranch and Strawberry Creek, Riverside County officials said.

As a precautionary measure, Highway 74 has been shut down through Mountain Center due to inclement weather, according to Caltrans. A stretch of Highway 243 is also closed.

It was not immediately clear how long the road closures and evacuations would last.

Flash flood warnings are also in effect for a number of Inland Empire areas, among them Beaumont, San Jacinto, Yucaipa, Hesperia and Apple Valley.

Shortly before 2:30 p.m., the weather service issued a severe thunderstorm warning in an area including Hemet, Menifee and Perris.

Severe thunderstorm warnings have also been issued for Hemet, Menifee, Perris, Beaumont, Calimesa and other areas.

All of the warnings were scheduled to expire during the afternoon.

Elsewhere, in Los Angeles County, scattered thunderstorms were developing over the San Gabriel Mountain, potentially bringing heavy rain and gusty winds by mid-afternoon.

Forecasters warned that localized flooding could impact some roads.

More storms are "likely" to hit that area through the rest of the afternoon.

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Fallen Officer Memorial Award 2018 Recipient Selected

Aug 16, 2018 Updated 19 hrs ago



LOS ANGELES, Aug. 16, 2018 /PRNewswire/ -- Sergeant Heather Forsythe is the 2018 Mark Dunakin Award for Extraordinary Achievement recipient presented by Union Institute & University to a new graduate of the Criminal Justice Management undergraduate program.

"The award is humbling. Sgt. Dunakin and the other officers gave their lives to keep their community safe," said Forsythe. "I am committed to working in our community and keeping it safe too."

The Mark Dunakin Memorial Award honors the memory of Sergeant Dunakin, a UI&U student who tragically lost his life on March 21, 2009, at the age of 40, when he and three other Oakland police officers were killed in the line of duty. The award is presented to a new graduate of the UI&U Criminal Justice Management major who serves in law enforcement and who emulates Sergeant Dunakin's commitment to community service, academic success, and enthusiasm for Union's Criminal Justice Management major.

Sgt. Forsythe was chosen by the faculty as an example of someone who not only works hard and maintains high standards, but also is deeply committed to serving others in her community and beyond. She will receive the award at the California Commencement on August 19.

"Union is a perfect fit for me. I had to find a university with a real world curriculum that allowed me to work full time," said Forsythe.

She is a 17-year law enforcement veteran and sergeant with the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department where she is a specialist in the Criminal Intelligence Division and Terrorism Liaison Officer Coordinator for the San Bernardino County. She presents workshops on terrorism and co-hosts and coordinates the monthly Inland Empire Terrorism Early Warning, providing relevant training in counter terrorism, active shooter, and suspicious activity.

Her list of achievements include POST Certified Academy Instructor (AICC) and Field Training Officer (FTO), and an instructor for Basic Academy, teaching POST Learning Domain 43- Emergency Operations/ Law Enforcement Response to Terrorism. She also instructs for POST supervisory school, teaching Terrorism Liaison Officer for supervisors and at the Advanced Officer Training Division teaching Terrorism Awareness and Criminal Intelligence Investigations.

Sgt. Forsythe previously worked in developing the "Women's Warriors" recruitment program that provides pre-academy mentorship to women who want to join law enforcement in the San Bernardino County. She was also a liaison for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in San Bernardino.

In her community, she has been a volunteer as a youth/explorer scout advisor for eight years, and worked with Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) on the Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC) task force.

This past March, she planned and hosted a faith-based active shooter awareness/ preparedness seminar with the Department of Homeland Security. The conference had approximately 400 local faith-based leaders and members in attendance. She also has conducted numerous site security assessments at schools, churches and community buildings for the CDC/ Department of Public Health Strategic National Stockpile

Points of Dispensing program. She is an administrator for CalCOP which is a critical infrastructure assessment data base.

The other recipients of the Union Institute & University Mark Dunakin Memorial Award for Extraordinary Achievement are:

2011 - Isabel Resendez 2013 - Frederick Henry Bobbitt Jr. and Tony Silva 2015 - Ray Framstad 2016 - Sergio Lepe 2017 - Orrlando Mayes

To learn more about the Union Institute & University Criminal Justice Management program, visit the link below or call 800-861-6400.

About Union Institute & University Union Institute & University is a non-profit, regionally accredited university specializing in providing quality higher education degrees for adults nationwide. Founded in 1964, Union's academic programs and services are the result of more than five decades of identifying and refining ways to structure and deliver education to meet the needs of adults. Distinguished as the pioneer in adult education, Union perfected the concepts now common in higher education such as the hybrid model, a blend of online and traditional classroom instruction, interdisciplinary studies, and student centered education with socially relevant and applicable learning outcomes in its undergraduate, master's and doctoral degree programs.

The university is guided by its core mission to educate highly motivated adults who seek academic programs to engage, enlighten, and empower them to pursue professional goals and a lifetime of learning, service, and social responsibility.

Union is a national university with academic centers located in: Ohio, Florida, and California.

For more information about Union Institute & University, visit www.myunion.edu or call 1- 800-861-6400.

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2 Boys Arrested After Firing Pellet Gun During Shootout With Officers in Joshua Tree: SBSB

POSTED 4:08 PM, AUGUST 16, 2018, BY KRISTINA BRAVO, UPDATED AT 05:37PM, AUGUST 16, 2018



Two teenagers were arrested after allegedly firing an air rifle during a shootout with deputies in Joshua Tree, officials announced Thursday.

An officer responded to a report of shots fired at a trailer in the 6200 block of Sunburst Avenue around 10:23 p.m. on Wednesday, according to the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department.

As the deputy spoke to the reporting party, they heard shots being directed at them, the agency said. The trailer was hit, and they ran behind the trailer, the Sheriff's Department added.

The officer asked for additional deputies, telling the dispatcher that he sensed the shooter or shooters moving closer, the agency said. The handheld spotlight the deputy was using was struck, according to officials.

The deputies who arrived at the scene reported finding an individual wielding a long rifle moving toward the trailer, the Sheriff's Department said.

That person allegedly ignored the officials' order to drop his weapon. That's when at least one of the officers opened fire and started chasing him and another individual seen running in the area, according to authorities.

Deputies apprehended one of them at a nearby apartment complex, the Sheriff's Department said. He was allegedly carrying a backpack with the rifle inside.

The second person entered an apartment and was arrested a short time later, according to the agency. The deputies discovered a second backpack that contained rifle pellets, authorities said.

The Sheriff's Department identified the suspects as two boys, 16 and 17, who lived in Joshua Tree. The agency described the weapon used as a "high powered .177-barrel break, pellet gun."

Neither the teenagers or the deputies were hurt, the agency said. The boys were set to to be booked into a juvenile hall on suspicion of assault with a deadly weapon, according to the Sheriff's Department.

Deputy shooting called justified

By Kurt Schauppner The Desert Trail | Posted: Thursday, August 16, 2018 11:01 am

TWENTYNINE PALMS — The fatal shooting of Dominic Christopher Hodges, 39, of Yucca Valley, by sheriff's deputies Christopher Bingham and Jacob Tiel, on Jan. 17, 2017, here has been called justified by the San Bernardino County District Attorney's office.

Investigators called the deadly force used by both deputies a proper exercise of their right to defend themselves and others.

Hodges was killed during an armed standoff with deputies from the Morongo Basin sheriff's station at the Twentynine Palms Motel 6.

Events that led to Hodges' death began when he and a woman, believing they were being stalked by an unknown person who wanted to kill them, left their Yucca Valley residence and checked into motel 6.

Sometime around 3 a.m. Jan. 17, the woman with Hodges called the night auditor at the motel to say there was a man with a gun outside the room trying to get them.

The third party contacted Bingham at the Morongo Basin sheriff's station and Bingham and Tiel, also from the Morongo Basin station, responded to the motel at about 3:20. Both were in uniform and driving marked patrol vehicles.

The night auditor advised them she tried multiple times to call the room where Hodges was staying but could not get an answer.

Bingham and Tiel drew their weapons before they got to the room, where Bingham knocked on the door and said "sheriff's department." Deputies heard a gunshot a few seconds later so Bingham advised dispatch, over the radio, that shots had been fired.

Tiel told Bingham he saw someone approach the door. The door opened and a man, later identified as Hodges, stepped out of the room holding a gun which he turned toward Bingham and started firing. Bingham and Tiel returned fire and retreated.

The deputies asked for backup and additional officers arrived. The woman was persuaded to leave the motel room. After a standoff, during which there was no additional contact from Hodges, officers from the Specialized Enforcement Detail used a remote-controlled robot to enter the motel room.

It was then determined that Hodges was deceased. A Taurus 9mm pistol was located on the floor at the foot of the bed.



On the scene

SWAT team members stand by.

During an interview the evening after the shooting, the woman reportedly told detectives that she and Hodges were at home the evening of Jan. 16, when several unknown people and Publisher's Clearing House employees surrounded the house and whispered amongst themselves.

Hodges, she said, became frightened and armed himself with a rifle, revolver and 9 mm semi-automatic pistol before the pair went on a fear-filled odyssey that led to the motel.

She also reportedly told detectives she had taken methamphetamine, Norco, Percocet, Soma and Xanax but that she was not under the influence and could not feel the effects of the prescription medications which Hodges had obtained illegally for her.

https://www.fontanaheraldnews.com/opinion/giant-music-festival-in-fontana-had-both-happiness-and-tragedy/article_3f1e0a36-a168-11e8-846d-5fa76943fe65.html

Giant music festival in Fontana had both happiness and tragedy

By FONTANA HERALD NEWS Aug 16, 2018 Updated 23 hrs ago



Fans walk through an entrance at the HARD Summer Music Festival in Fontana.

The best of times, the worst of times ...

The 2018 HARD Summer Music Festival was at Fontana Race Speedway, and it was the biggest musical event in the area. Over 155,500 packed the venue over the two-day event. Attendees had a great time listening to the bands. The attendance surpassed the 146,000 total for the previous year.



the speedway in 2016. The fans (mostly young adults) were generally well-behaved, and no major incidents of violence were reported. The festival helped the local economy, bringing in money to local businesses. By all of these measures, it was a positive event.

And yet ...

HARD Summer turned tragic when a 19-year-old man, a resident of the northern California city of Tracy, died after attending the festival. He entered a medical tent at the location and was transported to a local area hospital, where he was pronounced deceased on Aug. 5 at 11:45 p.m. The cause of death is not yet known, pending an autopsy. Altogether, 23 people were taken to local hospitals for various medical issues, according to the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department.

Unfortunately, this type of heartbreaking news was reported both times that Fontana's speedway hosted HARD Summer. At the 2016 festival, three young people died, all of them because of drug overdoses, according to the San Bernardino County Sheriff Coroner's Division. (The 2017 event took place at the Glen Helen Amphitheater in Devore, and no deaths were reported.)

To their credit, the organizers of this year's festival made several improvements -- including more cooling areas and tents -- to help the attendees weather the very hot temperatures, which approached 100 degrees. But it still wasn't enough to prevent another person from dying.

Ad



"It looks amazing."



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So should the speedway hold the festival again in the future? If the event does return to Fontana, officials would be wise to move it to a different month of the year, perhaps May, when the temperatures might not be as severe. Even with the cooling areas, it can be dangerous for people to stay outdoors in the extreme heat for several hours, starting at 1 p.m.

In addition, attendees need to remember to avoid dangerous drugs (as well as alcohol) that can cause great harm to bodies that are already feeling the effects of heat. All preventative measures should be taken to ensure that HARD Summer will be a safe and pleasant event in the upcoming years.

https://www.highlandnews.net/news/public_safety/rusd-reinstates-police-officers-at-high-schools/article_cd7b8c30-a19b-11e8-85f8-ebfe3e9d6a7d.html

BREAKING

RUSD reinstates police officers at high schools

Hector Hernandez Jr., reporter, Highland Community News Aug 16, 2018 Updated 18 hrs ago

The Redlands Unified School District (RUSD) Board of Education approved on Wednesday, Aug. 15, contracts with Redlands Police and San Bernardino County Sheriff's departments for law enforcement officers dedicated to serving the district's high schools.

The school resource officer program was reinstated as part of the district's push to improve campus safety and security, a push reinvigorated since the Feb. 14 Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in Florida.

The agreements will place a full-time officer at each campus during school hours and at special events, such as sports games, for the purposes of improving safety for students and staff and reducing crimes committed by juveniles and young adults.

In line with the law enforcement agencies' jurisdictions, Citrus Valley and Redlands High School will each be served by a Redlands police officer while a sheriff's deputy will serve Redlands East Valley.

The district is paying \$169,222 per year for the services of each police officer and \$180,000 per year for the deputy.

School resource officers had been used in the past but were cut due to loss of funding during the state budget crisis coinciding with the Great Recession of 2008.

“It’s not because we want a gun on campus,” RUSD Superintendent Mauricio Arellano said.

“We want a connection with the agency so people feel free and comfortable building a relationship with a agency member when something serious has to be reported.

“It’s that relationship between the students, the staff, the parents and the SRO that’s going to be very important so we can sniff out things that may be happening that are not in the best interest of safety.”

The district has also recently raised campus fences, increased security controls at campus entrances, limited each campus with a single entrance and exit and is forming safety committees made up of parents and staff at each campus.

After \$400,000 redo, Morongo Valley islands are mostly finished

By Stacy Moore Hi-Desert Star | Posted: Wednesday, August 15, 2018 4:22 pm

MORONGO VALLEY — A construction crew under contract with Caltrans has installed, torn up and reinstalled medians on Twentynine Palms Highway in a project now eight months longer and \$400,000 more expensive than anticipated.

Approved in 2016, the median project was to be a permanent solution to a deadly problem. A string of fatal head-on collisions on Twentynine Palms Highway prompted Caltrans to place flexible posts through most of the Yucca Grade's journey toward downtown Morongo Valley in 2013. The posts were an emergency, temporary measure, Haissam Yahya, an operations chief with Caltrans, told residents.

The permanent solution would be a \$2.9 million raised center island with left-turn pockets between East Drive and Yucca Park Road. Caltrans also agreed to build a stoplight at Bella Vista Drive, bringing the total cost of the project to \$5.19 million, according to a planning memo.

Caltrans signed a contract with Highland Construction Inc., a company that had already completed more than 200 projects on state roads, and work began in July 2017. At a meeting for residents, Caltrans spokespeople said the project was budgeted to take 120 working days, but Highland hoped to have it finished in three months. Highland's vice president of operations said 95 percent of the company's jobs for Caltrans had been finished in half the expected time.

Instead, the job lasted just over a year.

A Highland Construction employee told the Hi-Desert Star it was mostly wrapped up by Wednesday of this week, although Caltrans may order some changes.

Commuters and residents watched as crews installed the center island, then took jackhammers to it and built a new median with different drainage gaps.

Terri Kasinga, chief of public affairs for Caltrans District 8, said engineers continued to change the design through construction, ordering the islands to be destroyed and rebuilt to widen the drains and curb inlets.

"The drains were too small and debris cleaning would have been difficult for the maintenance crews," Kasinga said. "The opening will allow better flow and easier access for cleaning."



After \$400,000 redo, Morongo Valley islands are mostly finished

A crew with Highland Construction puts the final touches on concrete work on Twentynine Palms Highway last week.

The work cost an extra \$400,000 in construction. The total construction cost of the project is now \$3.6 million, which includes the adjustments to the median drainage, according to Kasinga.

The spokeswoman said engineers also considered local concerns when ordering the redesigned islands, some of which now have flexible posts mounted in the center.

“In this case, Caltrans was attending the Morongo Valley CSD (Community Services District) meetings to receive feedback before, during and after the project for the raised curb median,” Kasinga said.

“Based on their input, Caltrans made adjustments to the median, which included permanent delineators, drainage adjustments and improved striping.”

The design of the island has provoked criticism from some locals. Rather than the perpendicular curb design that’s more familiar to drivers, it uses a sloping curb, called a mountable curb, that looks like it could be easily mounted by a speeding vehicle.

“The design is such that it is really a launching ramp with pockets that may catch the wheel of a vehicle,” wrote Allan Baird Sr., a Morongo Valley resident who authored a letter of criticisms of the project. “The only conveyance that will not launch may be a watercraft (a boat).”

Kasinga said the sloping curb is designed so vehicles won’t fly into the air if they hit the island.

“Per Caltrans design standards, typically if a vehicle hits the median, the vehicle tires will mount the median and not lose friction or connectivity with the pavement,” she said.

Warren Horton, a friend of Baird who helped him with his critique of the islands, said Baird sent the four-page letter to county Supervisor James Ramos, Assemblyman Chad Mayes and Congressman Paul Cook.

“It’s the unsafe design that seems to be the primary issue,” Horton said.

He pointed out that the 4-inch curbs for Yucca Valley’s center medians are vertical. The sloped curbs in Morongo Valley, he said, “look like a little launching ramp.”

“Things could be a lot safer and less expensive if they just left the channelizers in place,” Horton said.

https://www.highlandnews.net/news/ivda-seeks-bidders-for-tippecanoe-airport-entrance/article_1ff47ada-a19c-11e8-8694-231f4007b5b5.html

BREAKING

IVDA seeks bidders for Tippecanoe airport entrance

By Hector Hernandez Jr. Reporter Highland Community News Aug 16, 2018 Updated 1 hr ago

The Inland Valley Development Agency board authorized IVDA staff to obtain construction bids for improvements to the airport's Tippecanoe Avenue cargo truck entrance during its Aug. 8 meeting, after re-electing County Supervisor Josie Gonzales and Loma Linda Councilman Ovidiu Popescu as board co-chairs and San Bernardino Mayor R. Carey Davis as vice chair.

The project aims to provide trucks from the airport's cargo customers, including UPS and FedEx, improved access to the airport's cargo hangars in order to relieve traffic on the busy avenue.

The proposed improvements include creating dedicated access to specific security-controlled airport areas through a new airport access lane adjacent to northbound Tippecanoe as well as traffic signal, curb and signage improvements and utility realignment.

The main feature of the design, created by Hernandez, Kroone and Assoc. engineering, is a nine-truck two-lane right-turn dedicated to airport cargo traffic.

There is also a long queue lane to prevent trucks from stacking up into Tippecanoe Avenue.

The queue lanes and additional improvements will be constructed on IVDA property along the east side of Tippecanoe north of Central Avenue just south of the Stater Bros. facility.

“This significantly alleviates traffic impacts onto Tippecanoe and provides a dedicated secure access to our new air cargo customers, which they very much appreciate,” said IVDA Executive Director Michael Burrows.

The cargo companies will staff the security guard shacks with their own employees trained in airport regulations for the purpose.

IVDA has appropriated \$1 million for the project and San Bernardino International Airport an additional \$400,000.

Construction is expected to be substantially complete by October so training of the security staff can be completed in time for the fourth quarter uptick in cargo traffic, Burrows said.

The re-election of the board’s chairs and vice chair followed a lengthy nomination process in which Loma Linda Mayor Pro Tempore Phillip Dupper unsuccessfully attempted to nominate new officers to the positions and County Supervisor James Ramos nominated the reelection of the existing officers.

Dupper first nominated Gonzales and Davis as co-chairs and new board member Colton Councilman Isaac Suchil as vice chair stating that he would like to see Colton take a more active role on the board.

Following a comment from Colton Mayor Richard DeLaRosa that due to the continuing developments of the IVDA and the direction the agency is taking the board needs experienced members in the positions of co-chair and vice chair, Suchil declined the nomination.

Dupper, who said he feels it’s time for a change from leaders who invest “too much time and personal interest” in the agency’s issues, then amended his nomination moving down the board nominating DeLaRosa, then Ramos and then San Bernardino Councilman Fred Shorett for vice chair. Each declined their nomination.

DeLaRosa cited the nearing end of his term while Ramos noted that he already serves as vice president of the San Bernardino International Airport Authority.

Gonzales has served on the board since 2004 and as co-chair since 2008 while Popescu has served on the board since 2008 and as co-chair since 2015. Davis who was appointed to the board in 2014 has served as vice chair since 2015.

Ramos made his officer nominations after Popescu made the same nominations but was informed by legal counsel that he could not nominate himself.

[Education](#) [Politics](#)

Chaffey College Seeks Measure P to Repair, Upgrade Facilities

By **Press Release** - August 16, 2018

TAGS: [BOND](#) [CHAFFEY COLLEGE](#) [ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT](#) [RANCHO CUCAMONGA](#)



Chaffey College

[Rancho Cucamonga, CA](#) – Voters will decide in November whether to support a new [bond measure](#) that could raise as much as \$700 million to provide Chaffey College students with new classrooms, labs and modern technology.

The Chaffey College Governing Board adopted a resolution during a special meeting on July 9 that authorized the placement of a bond on the Nov. 6 ballot. The San Bernardino County Registrar of Voters certified Measure P on August 14.

“Chaffey College takes pride in offering quality academic and vocational programs for [^](#) students throughout the region so that they can seamlessly transfer to four-year colleges

and universities, or obtain technical career training. More funding is needed to improve and expand our facilities, which will help Chaffey continue its mission,” said Superintendent/President Dr. Henry D. Shannon.

Chaffey plans to use the funds for various initiatives outlined in its [Vision 2025](#), including:

- Upgrading classrooms, labs and technology
- Repairing deteriorating gas, electrical and sewer lines and fixing leaky roofs
- Upgrading job training facilities for manufacturing, skilled trades and health occupations
- Upgrading and expanding facilities for veterans’ services and job training

Projects slated for the Fontana campus under bond funding include a campus center building at the corner of Sierra and Merrill avenues, as well as two instructional buildings. The campus center will house the student services center, meeting spaces and administration. Classrooms, labs, faculty offices and collaboration spaces will be included in plans for the instructional buildings.

In Chino, improvements include two new instructional facilities, which will provide classroom space, an expanded library and learning resources center. The facilities will house faculty offices and space for faculty to receive professional development resources and support. Plans also include a new maintenance building.

Plans for the Rancho Cucamonga campus include the demolition of several 1950s-era buildings and the construction of new ones including four instructional buildings, a campus center, a parking structure and welcome center, as well as a new library. The bond will also fund projects to either renovate or repurpose several buildings including the automotive technology lab, the gymnasium and athletic fields.

The bond will require a citizens’ oversight committee and annual audits. It will allow Chaffey to qualify for state matching funds. With this bond and existing taxes authorized by voters in 2002 under Measure L, the average homeowner in the Chaffey Community College District will pay \$75 extra in annual property taxes, which is less than residents pay in other community college districts in the region.

Related Stories: Recent Inland Empire College Projects

- [MSJC Students Enjoy New Classes and Amenities](#)

Field of 10, possibly 11, to seek two seats on Victorville City Council



Shea Johnson Staff Writer @DP_Shea

Aug 16, 2018 at 3:31 PM

Aug 16, 2018 at 3:31 PM

VICTORVILLE — The race for two council seats in November will be contested by a field of 10, possibly 11, including incumbent Eric Negrete, who seeks a second term, according to the city clerk's office.

Councilman Jim Kennedy's decision not to seek a third term has opened the door for at least one new face to join the city's political leadership entering into 2019.

The candidate filing period for the Nov. 6 general election closed on Wednesday in Victorville. Here is the most updated list of candidates who qualified to run:

— Negrete, 46, a civilian project manager for the U.S. Army, was the top vote-getter four years ago, the preferred candidate of 28.5 percent of the electorate.

He holds a bachelor's degree in business administration from Loyola Marymount University and a master's degree in management from Troy State University. He is a delegate to the Victor Valley Economic Development Authority and an alternate to several other boards.

— Lizet Angulo, 61, is the CEO of the nonprofit Ladies Taking Key Opportunities (TKO), which frequently assists causes to aid veterans and women and is seeking to feed 500 veterans in Barstow this December.

Angulo holds a master's degree in business administration. She formerly served as a board trustee and personnel commissioner for Bassett Unified School District in La Puente Valley.

— Christine "Pepper" Blakeley could not be reached this week at the phone number provided by the city clerk's office. A Facebook page created to support her candidacy shows that she is chairperson of High Desert Equality, a nonprofit since 2009 to champion diversity and tolerance within the community.

Blakeley is also an advocate for cannabis and against domestic violence, human trafficking and animal abuse, according to the campaign's Facebook page.

— Lionel Dew is a retired 21-year medical manager in the U.S. Air Force and current planning commissioner in Victorville. Dew graduated from Victor Valley College and attended Southern Illinois University.

He has run for council during the previous two election cycles, falling short both times in narrow defeats. He has served under administrations of Gov. Gray Davis and Arnold Schwarzenegger and has experience on education boards, a law enforcement committee and the Mojave Desert Resource Conservation District.

— Valentin Godina, 54, is a retired diesel mechanic who first eyed a council seat in 2016, but found the process at the time "full of hurdles" that he said he has since overcome.

Godina has lived in Old Town since 1990 and is invested in its resurgence. He also has vocational training in diesel mechanics out of Arizona.

— Leslie Irving, 54, is a special education teacher with the San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools. She holds a master's degree in education administration from National University and is expecting to graduate with a master's degree in public administration next year.

Irving has previously served terms on the Compton Unified School District and Compton Community College Board of Trustees between 1998 and 2016.

— Debra Jones, 58, is serving in her eighth year as a board trustee with the Adelanto Elementary School District, which she notes has nearly half its schools within Victorville city limits. Her education studies lie principally in business management and applied mathematics.

Jones' professional experience includes executive management in the precious metals and commodities investment industries, small business owner and copywriter. She volunteers at her church and serves in a leadership capacity in several benevolent organizations.

— Manuel Musquiz, 27, the youngest candidate in the race, describes himself as a entrepreneur, event planner and activist. He is a self-educator who prefers time spent in the library and says although he has attended multiple schools, all were too expensive to finish.

Musquiz is a Green Party member who worked as a field coordinator for Presidential candidate Jill Stein and he says prior to that role he worked on the campaign of Presidential hopeful Bernie Sanders.

— Daniel Ramos, 38, is a Navy veteran and entrepreneur whose educational background includes attending Victor Valley College and Virginia Commonwealth University.

This is Ramos' first effort to win a seat on the council.

— Rita Ramirez, a former community college professor and board member at Copper Mountain College in Joshua Tree, has nearly 40 years of experience in the education sector.

Ramirez advanced to the November 2016 run-off against Rep. Paul Cook as she sought a trip to Congress and lost in the primary this year for the same seat.

— Jerry Laws, 78, has twice run for U.S. Senate, garnering 67,000 total votes in June yet falling far short of the tally (about 805,000) needed to advance to the general election.

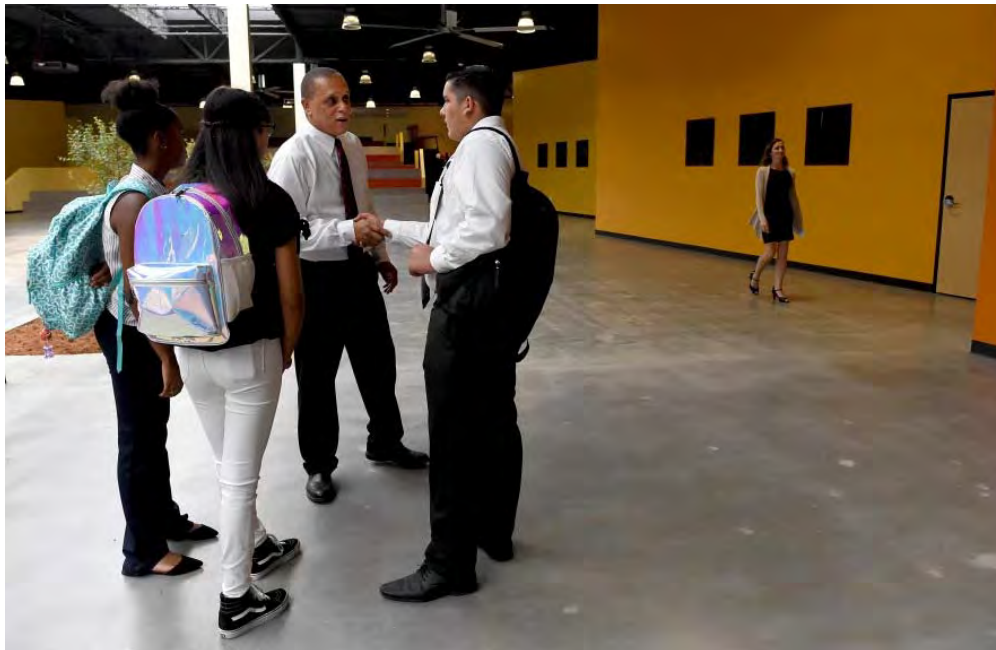
Laws is a Marine veteran and retired truck driver who is a strict "Constitutionalist," defender of limited government and admirer of President Ronald Reagan. His candidacy was pending verification as of Wednesday, but if qualified he would be the 11th candidate in the race.

Remember to follow the Daily Press for comprehensive stories on each candidate in every council race leading up to November.

Shea Johnson can be reached at 760-955-5368 or SJohnson@VVDailyPress.com. Follow him on Twitter at @DP_Shea.

LOCAL NEWS

This Inland Empire charter school is teaching students to be the boss



Executive Director Ray Culberson, center, speaks with students at Entrepreneur High School in Highland on Thursday, August 16, 2018. The former long-vacant Highland Kmart location is now home to the high school as well as New Vision Middle School. (Photo by Jennifer Cappuccio Maher, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin/SCNG)

By **BRIAN WHITEHEAD** | bwhitehead@scng.com | San Bernardino

Sun

PUBLISHED: August 16, 2018 at 3:48 pm | UPDATED: August 16, 2018 at 4:12 pm



HIGHLAND – Inside the building Kmart once used to sell clothes, electronics and toys to Inland Empire shoppers, a new charter school is teaching teenagers the finer points of business.

Vacant for more than 15 years, [the roughly 150,000-square-foot facility on Highland Avenue](#) now resembles the corporate headquarters of a Fortune 500 company. Between the modern furniture, spacious common areas and integrated technology, creative young minds have their mecca.

“Be a boss!” Entrepreneur High urges.

Chartered through San Bernardino City Unified, Entrepreneur High is one of four Southern California schools operated and managed by REAL Journey Academies, a nonprofit that also runs New Vision Middle School for sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders.

ADVERTISING



New Vision and Entrepreneur share the same location; both opening in their new digs this month.

“I don’t think you’ll find anything around the Inland Empire like this,” said Alex Lucero, REAL Journey founder.

Entrepreneur High's executive director, or principal, Ray Culberson, had a busy summer canvassing Highland and San Bernardino, pitching parents on a school near a Big Lots! and a Food 4 Less that hadn't yet been completed.

"I'm Ray Culberson," he'd say, "and I want your kid to be a boss."

Without a finished campus, the longtime San Bernardino City Unified youth services director instead sold REAL Journey's vision, its promise to provide soon-to-be ninth-graders a tuition-free school tailored for their entrepreneurial spirits.

Culberson made himself omnipresent, handing out business cards in department stores and setting up banners around town.

A couple hundred parents bought in. School started Aug. 6.

"It's an amazing thing," Culberson said. "Parents giving us their most prized possession just on a card."

Built for about \$22 million, Entrepreneur High opened with just ninth-graders.

At full capacity, four years from now, the charter school expects to have 800 students from freshmen to seniors.

While conventional high schools offer math, science and history, Entrepreneur High offers financial algebra, media marketing and business innovation. Teachers – many of whom are in their first or second year of teaching – oversee no more than 30 students a class.

The school's daily schedule carves out blocks of time, or E-time, for students to collaborate on assignments and meet with faculty.

Between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m., Entrepreneur teens are developing real-world skills.

New Jersey-based Hertz Furniture has stocked classrooms with adaptable and movable seating intended to boost collaboration and creativity. Common areas and the cafeteria have brightly-colored furnishings to emulate a college-like environment. All rooms require key cards to open for additional security.

A vast quad with a lengthy skylight overhead offers students cocoon pods to study solo and a mezzanine to join forces.

"The furniture sets the tone. It's the atmosphere," said Gabriel Schwartz, Hertz Furniture vice president of sales for California. "We want students to feel they're in a special place where they can learn, collaborate and have productive time."

Entrepreneur High is 95 percent done, Lucero said.

Still to be completed is a room modeled after the popular television show “Shark Tank” and a room that will serve as a pop-up store for teens who want to sell something they’ve made.

Entrepreneur students this week created more than a dozen clubs: video gaming, music, volleyball, LGBT, Grupo de Espanol, to name a few. The student body will decide on a mascot shortly.

Rosalyn Reyes taught at Etiwanda and Alta Loma high schools before coming to Entrepreneur.

As a financial algebra teacher, she said she’s imploring students to see life through an entrepreneurial lens.

“We want students to understand they’re changing themselves,” Culberson said. “They’re becoming professionals, and professionals speak differently, talk differently, act differently. We always want kids to know what they’re learning and why.

“Every day, we’re establishing that culture.”

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

Brian Whitehead

Brian Whitehead covers San Bernardino for The Sun. Bred in Grand Terrace, he graduated from Riverside Notre Dame High and Cal State Fullerton. For seven years, he covered high school and college sports for The Orange County Register. Before landing at The Sun, he was the city beat reporter for Buena Park, Fullerton and La Palma.

 Follow Brian Whitehead [@bwhitehead3](#)

SPONSORED CONTENT

Crews quickly contain Mojave River bottom blaze to 5 acres; 1 arrested in connection to 'starting the fires'



Paola Baker Staff Writer @DP_PaolaBaker

Aug 16, 2018 at 12:01 AM

Aug 16, 2018 at 3:48 PM

SILVER LAKES — A 50-year-old man was arrested in connection to a vegetation fire that burned 5 acres in the Mojave River bottom here Wednesday evening.

Herbierto Rodriguez, described as a transient in Helendale, was arrested on suspicion of aggravated arson and booked at the High Desert Detention Center in lieu of \$250,000 bail, according to San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department spokeswoman Jodi Miller.

"Witnesses advised deputies that he was the subject they saw setting the fires," Miller said.

San Bernardino County Fire Department officials said they reached full containment of the blaze by 9 p.m. Wednesday, a little less than two hours after the fire first broke out in the river bottom just off Vista Road.

Dubbed the Vista Fire, the blaze was first reported at 7:25 p.m. in the river bottom area, according to County Fire Cpt. Jeremy Kern. It was initially reported to be a 300-by-300-foot brush fire, but quickly grew to consume over an acre of vegetation.

"Due to the heavy thick fuels burning, flame lengths reached upwards of 30 feet as firefighters initiated their attack," official said.

By 7:45 p.m., the blaze had spread further, with County Fire sending a full second-alarm response. Plumes of smoke were visible throughout the community and along National Trails Highway.

Kern said approximately 60 fire personnel, which included five engines, five brush engines, a water tender, a hand crew, a dozer and two chief officers, were dispatched to combat the blaze. Crews were assisted by the Apple Valley Fire Protection District and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

By 8:20 p.m., the crews managed to halt the fire's forward rate of spread, Kern said. No injuries were reported and no damage was reported to any structures due to the blaze.

"In this instance, County Fire was able to keep this fire small due to early identification by 911 callers and an aggressive initial attack," officials said.

County Fire crews remained on scene overnight and into Thursday morning for mop-up and mitigate any remaining hot spots.



FIRES

Trump administration promises teamwork - not more money - to reduce fire risk

BY EMILY CADEI

ecadei@mcclatchydc.com

August 16, 2018 04:47 PM

WASHINGTON — Trump administration officials unveiled a new plan Thursday to reduce the risk of forest fires, acknowledging “the urgent need to dramatically increase preventative forest treatment” that can keep fires from burning out of control.

The plan, which emphasizes state and local collaboration, was short on details, however. It does not address politically sensitive issues like climate change, which Democrats and scientists argue is at the root of the problem, or the role of environmental reviews for logging projects, which conservatives want to sidestep. And it did not address the possibility of additional funding, suggesting the burden to pay for the new efforts could fall to the states.

Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue just returned to Washington from a tour of California, including a stop in Redding to review the damage from the Carr Fire. He cited the state's raging wildfires in his argument for the new approach. "These horrible events ... are stark reminders of the immense forest fire health crisis in this country," Perdue said in remarks to reporters at the U.S. Capitol.

As he did in California, the former Georgia governor refused to address the role that climate change is playing in the worsening fire seasons across the West. "If you want to debate the cause you can do that, we're focusing on what we can do today in order to mitigate the impact," Perdue said Thursday.

Breaking News

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That, he said, includes increasing "the number and size of our projects, access larger landscapes and cross boundaries" between state and federal land. And "frankly, we cannot do this ourselves," said Perdue, whose agency oversees the U.S. Forest Service. "It's got to be done in shared stewardship with our states and local communities."

The agency didn't provide any goals or metrics for what the plan hopes to achieve, in terms of acres managed or projects completed. "What we're really announcing today is the beginning of a collaboration of forming those plans," Perdue explained. Asked how much the initiative will cost and who's paying, he replied, "sitting down and talking, we don't think has, necessarily, a quantitative figure associated with that." As The Bee has reported, the Trump administration proposed slashing forest management budgets in recent years, although Congress has ignored those requests and provided modest funding increases.

Congress also reached a bipartisan breakthrough in the spring to change the way the federal government budgets for firefighting. Beginning in fiscal year 2020, the Forest Service will no longer have to borrow from its regular budget for to cover firefighting costs, a practice that slowed the agency's ability to pursue forest management projects.

Perdue and a bipartisan group of senators from Oregon, Washington, Montana and Alaska touted the strategy as the “next step” from those reforms. And they suggested that greater collaboration is likely to save the government money down the road, or, at least, “get more done with the same cost that we’re expending today,” Perdue said.

As Democratic Sen. Maria Cantwell of Washington pointed out, fighting ever larger and more frequent wildfires is costing the taxpayers more and more money. “I think we’re spending somewhere over \$2 billion on fire suppression,” Cantwell noted, “and the point is, if you do some treatment in advance ... can you reduce that cost? We’ll have to see what this yields as far as savings.”

“Dramatically increasing” forest management projects, as Secretary Perdue called for, will still require investments on the front end, however.

He suggested, for example, that state foresters could provide “much of the manpower” needed to conduct prescribed burns and other types of programs designed to eliminate dead trees and overgrown trees and brush from the forests — vegetation that is particularly vulnerable to fires. But forestry experts in Northern California have told The Sacramento Bee that the state doesn’t have the specially trained personnel needed to manage such controlled burns on a large scale. “To do that you really need the people with the expertise,” said Scott Stephens, a professor of fire science at the University of California, Berkeley. “We have some, but not enough.”

Recruiting and training those people takes both time and money.

A coalition of stakeholders expressed support Thursday for the general concepts in the administration’s strategy, but as Western Governors’ Association Executive Director James Ogsbury noted, “the devil is in the details.”

The Nature Conservancy’s Director of U.S. Government Relations Karen Onley said in a statement that the group supported the focus on “reducing fuels and improving forest conditions,” which she called “the best strategies for lowering the threat of catastrophic wildfires.”

“We look forward to working with Congress on the next steps to support this work,” Onley continued, “including in its spending decisions.”

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Trump wants to clear more trees to halt fires. The feds need to spend more, experts say.

Sonoma County fire chiefs seek \$42 million cash infusion to bolster services, staffing

RANDI ROSSMANN

THE PRESS DEMOCRAT | August 11, 2018, 6:41PM



Fire officials on Tuesday will ask the Board of Supervisors to approve a \$42 million annual plan calling for more firefighters and new fire stations to plug response holes in the county — with a recommendation of a half-cent countywide sales tax hike to voters next year to fund it.

The plan would add about 175 paid firefighters, many of them paramedics, to bolster the county's current paid firefighting force of 400. It also calls for 10 new fire stations to house round-the-clock staff, some of those in rural areas now served by volunteers.

One new station would replace a small volunteer firehouse in the hills north of Santa Rosa where the Tubbs fire swept into the county in October. Another would go up in Jenner, improving response times to emergencies on Highway 1 and the coast communities. Others are slated for Bloomfield in the west county and Lakeville, south of Petaluma.

It also calls for two new stations in Santa Rosa and one each in Rohnert Park and Petaluma, either replacing small, outdated structures or adding stations in areas more suited for current needs.

Fire officials called the plan a road map, with many details still to be fixed if and when funding is available. But the sweeping plan marks the first time the county's historically fractured fire services community has come together on something to reshape the local firefighting landscape.

Santa Rosa Fire Chief Tony Gossner said the unified support for the plan is significant, involving many agencies whose representatives realized what it would mean for county residents.

"Not only will we have a higher level of service, we will have a better coordinated and managed response to emergencies in our county," Gossner said.

Last fall's firestorm that burned across huge portions of Santa Rosa and the county helped fuel efforts to form a plan to improve emergency response capabilities. It also solidified the Board of Supervisors' determination to make changes.

"We may not have been able to skip what happened last October," but with the plan in place, the county could have offered a stronger response, said Jim Colangelo, interim head of the county's Department of Fire and Emergency Services.

After past boards shortchanged funding for county fire services, current supervisors have stepped up funding, providing \$3.5 million for this year and nearly \$4 million during the two preceding years. That still falls well below what is needed to modernize and improve local services, fire chiefs say.

"It's really about increasing that ability to get enough people and equipment to the site," said Colangelo, who helped spearhead the plan. "In urban areas there is a good level of service, a lot of redundancy. But further away from the

urban core, the more the service level becomes more about one engine with a couple people on it. We want to expand that higher level of service to more incidents and handle simultaneous incidents better.”

Still, while many may agree on the benefits of having more firefighters, better station locations and updated equipment, selling the public on an ongoing countywide sales tax could be more difficult.

“This is no small mission ahead of us if it’s going to be successful,” said Doug Williams, chairman of the county’s fire advisory committee and former chief of Rincon Valley and Windsor fire agencies.

All nine cities in Sonoma County would need to endorse the tax hike before the county could place it on the ballot. In addition, advocates also would need to obtain a waiver from the Legislature to allow Cotati and Sebastopol to increase their sales taxes above the 9.25 percent state-imposed cap.

If supervisors proceed with a sales tax measure in 2019, it could go to voters in March, June or November. This November, county voters will decide on a proposed eighth-cent countywide sales tax to support county parks. Separately, Santa Rosa has two tax measures on its ballot — a \$124 million housing bond measure and a quarter-cent sales tax increase that would raise \$9 million for the city.

Countywide tax measures have had mixed success in the past. Unincorporated voters rejected a half-cent sales tax outside city limits for county parks in 2016, but the same year voters approved an eighth-cent sales tax countywide to increase library system funding. The previous year, a quarter-cent sales tax for general purposes — but touted by supervisors as a road-funding measure — failed in a countywide election.

Meanwhile, five fire agencies are seeking more money from residents in their districts with ballot measures this November. Those agencies are Monte Rio, Graton, Schell-Vista, Glen Ellen and Rancho Adobe.

An ongoing half-cent tax on sales throughout the county would generate nearly \$42 million a year, Colangelo said.

Fire officials said that as the plan includes new fire stations and firefighters inside cities and in unincorporated areas, it includes benefits for all parts of the county. Key components also include 10 more paramedic-firefighters countywide each shift, extending advanced medical aid to rural areas.

Other details include round-the-clock staffing at the Sebastopol and Graton fire stations, where volunteers are now relied on to keep watch during some off-hours periods.

More than half of the \$42 million annual price tag — or \$25 million — would be used to add staff and supervising battalion chiefs.

While the Board of Supervisors has been asking for such a comprehensive plan, supervisors have also indicated there isn’t enough cash in county coffers to cover such needs without wiping out funding for numerous other county priorities, such as road repair and housing development. Supervisors have signaled they aren’t willing to do that.

Without more money, fire officials have warned of a further decline in emergency response services as bigger agencies become strained by requests for help from rural neighbors. Financial constraints and dwindling volunteers for most of the rural agencies are common.

Sonoma County’s current patchwork of firefighting services reaches back to the 1800s, when volunteer companies emerged. At its peak there were more than 50 agencies. Now there are 39, including city, fire district and volunteer

companies, a landscape that nevertheless remains an anomaly among some neighboring counties where fire service has been consolidated.

The current plan to bolster fire services has been evolving since 2014, when the county launched a cumbersome effort to get ideas and consensus from various fire departments on ways to streamline the system. The effort labored for a few years, with many chiefs entrenched in protecting their boundaries. In 2016, supervisors set up a fire advisory council to move things along.

Two years later, the council has its plan. But it's backed by a fragile coalition, with fire officials agreeing on the big idea but differing over details.

The Board of Supervisors' discussion on the issue is set to begin sometime after 8:45 a.m. Tuesday.

You can reach Staff Writer Randi Rossmann at 707-521-5412 or randi.rossmann@pressdemocrat.com. On Twitter@rossmannreport.

Trending Now

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SACRAMENTO WATCH

150 bills are rejected in Capitol frenzy

Proposals for state-run pot bank, hotel panic buttons and more fail to move forward.

JOHN MYERS

SACRAMENTO — Facing a key deadline for legislation to move forward, California lawmakers on Thursday rejected dozens of bills, including a state-run bank for marijuana growers, government healthcare services for those in the U.S. illegally and hotel panic buttons for cleaning crews who fear sexual assault.

Lawmakers on the appropriations committees in both houses of the California Legislature acted on more than 600 bills, rejecting about 150 of them. The Legislature will adjourn for the year at the end of the month and the bills that moved forward will head to final votes in the Assembly and Senate.

One of the rejected bills, Senate Bill 930, would have allowed the state to license private banks to handle the billions of dollars expected to be generated by California's legal marijuana industry. Newly licensed pot shops and farms say they can't put their money in federally chartered banks because cannabis remains illegal under federal law.

Sen. Bob Hertzberg (D-Van Nuys) proposed that the state could license privately financed banks that would issue checks to the businesses to pay rent and state and local taxes and fees. But a legislative analysis said the proposal faced "significant obstacles," including no protection from federal law enforcement.

"The evolving cannabis industry has sales in the billions, yet the industry has been consistently shut out of the banking system leading to unavoidable issues in business management, but more importantly, public safety," said Amy Jenkins, a spokeswoman for the California Cannabis Industry Assn.

Lawmakers also rejected two sweeping proposals that would have removed a person's immigration status from the rules governing Medi-Cal, the state's healthcare program for the poor. Currently, only children without legal residency status are eligible for full Medi-Cal services. One of the bills that lawmakers rejected would also have raised the age threshold to obtain Medi-Cal to 26, and the other would have granted expanded access to those 65 and older.

In both instances, a legislative analysis flagged the significant cost to the state budget — between \$200 million and \$336 million a year. Similar efforts by legislative Democrats failed earlier this year during budget negotiations with Gov. Jerry Brown.

A bill targeted for defeat by powerful business groups and shelved by lawmakers, Assembly Bill 1761, would have required hotels to provide employees who work alone in guest rooms with a panic button in case of emergency. Supporters said it would have been a first-in-the-nation law and was introduced after a string of high-profile sexual assault accusations during the last year.

Business groups were successful in defeating a bill designed to force more transparency on salary equity. Senate Bill 1284 would have required employers with 100 or more workers to submit a report on how employees are compensated in each job category, broken down by race, ethnicity or sex. The bill failed to pass in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

Lawmakers also rejected a plan to require warnings on all sugar-sweetened beverages sold in California. And they refused to lower the fines assessed against drivers who don't come to a complete stop before making a right-hand turn.

Thursday's decisions on state legislation, though announced in public, had been crafted in private and marked the culmination of one of the state Capitol's most opaque operations. For more than a quarter-century, legislators have placed bills with a projected cost to the state of more than \$150,000 into what's known in Sacramento as the "suspense file."

In theory, the action allows lawmakers to carefully prioritize new laws in a way that doesn't place an undue burden on state government finances. But in reality, the "suspense file" also allows lawmakers and interest groups to lobby their colleagues in private.

And when a bill is killed — when it is "held" by the committee and not sent to the floor — no roll call vote is taken. That means the public has no idea why a piece of legislation was rejected or who was responsible.

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Times staff writers Patrick McGreevy, Melanie Mason, Liam Dillon and Mini Racker contributed to this report.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT

All Eyes on Pension Litigation

POSTED BY : PUBLICCEO AUGUST 15, 2018

Cases Before the California Supreme Court Could Upend 70 Years of Pension Precedent

By Isabel Safie, Best Best & Krieger LLP

It's a big litigation year for California pensions.

The California Supreme Court ruled last month that San Diego's landmark pension cutback legislation, Proposition B, was illegally placed on the 2012 ballot because city officials failed to meet and confer with labor unions before pursuing the measure's changes.

The Court did not rule, however, on the legality of Proposition B's actual pension changes that terminated pensions for most new city employees and opted instead for a 401(k)-style program.

The legality of pension changes is at the heart of four other cases currently before the Court.

Due to the "California Rule," or vested-rights doctrine, agencies statewide have long been tied to hefty pension obligations with little-to-no ability to make changes to the accrual of future pension benefits of current employee without having to provide an equal or greater level of benefit in lieu of such changes.

The doctrine, built on 70 years of case law protecting California's public-employee pension benefits, could soon be weakened by the state Supreme Court, allowing agencies to cut ballooning pension liabilities by modifying the future accrual of retirement benefits of active employees.

With split opinions regarding the scope and application of the California Rule to evaluate the permissibility of reducing future accruals of pension benefits of current employees in cases from

Marin and Alameda counties, the California Supreme Court agreed to hear appeals of both cases.

These two cases, and another pending before the Court involving Cal Fire, center on changes made by Assembly Bills 340 and 197 — the state's retirement-benefit overhaul known as the Public Employees' Pension Reform Act, or PEPRA. A fourth case challenges the application of PEPRA to judges who were elected in 2012 but took office in 2013. All come from California's First District Court of Appeal.

The lawsuits carry significant implications for counties, cities, school and fire districts facing sharp increases in pension costs.

Right to a Reasonable Pension

Lower state courts have often interpreted the California Rule to prohibit any change in benefits, or at a minimum set a very high bar for changes, leaving the state and local governments with limited flexibility.

However, the state Supreme Court has held that prior to retirement, employees do not obtain an absolute "right to any fixed or definite benefits but only to a substantial or reasonable pension." The concept is at the heart of *Marin Association of Public Employees v. Marin County Employees' Retirement Association*.

The retirement board for the Marin County Employees Retirement Association adopted a policy in 2013 to exclude specified items from the retirement payment calculation consistent with changes made to the County Employees Retirement Law by PEPRA. This change in policy affected all members of the system, including existing members referred to as legacy members. The move was made to combat "pension spiking," a practice where employees increase their final salaries for bigger pension payouts in retirement.

The legacy members sued, arguing they had a vested right to the continued inclusion of payments formerly included under Gov. Code Section 31461 in the calculation of their pension benefits. The trial court concluded the modifications made by the retirement board were permissible and did not unconstitutionally impair an employee's contract. The appellate court affirmed that public employees only have a right to "reasonable" pensions.

The California Supreme Court granted review in November 2016, before granting review of the Alameda case, but deferred the matter pending disposition of the latter case.

High Level of Burden to Bear

The appellate court declined to follow the *Marin* holding in *Alameda County Deputy Sheriff's Association v. Alameda County Employees' Retirement Association* involving the labor unions from Alameda, Contra Costa and Merced counties.

Rather, the court recognized that while changes to a legacy employee's pension benefits did not require a comparable new advantage be provided, it said retirement pension boards have a higher level of burden to justify a detrimental elimination or change to an employee benefit when such comparable new advantages are not extended in exchange.

The plaintiffs, who argued against retirement board changes to benefit calculations (Gov. Code Section 31461) that excluded payments previously included in compensation earnable, came out on top.

They, however, petitioned the California Supreme Court for review because, "the appellate court flatly refused to follow this Court's longstanding precedent requiring that any detrimental changes to pension rights 'must' be offset by new advantages."

The state Supreme Court granted review in March 2018.

The question before the Court: Did amendments to Gov. Code Section 31461 reduce the scope of the preexisting definition of “compensation earnable,” and thereby impair employees’ vested rights protected by the contracts clauses of the federal and state Constitutions?

In a surprise move, the Court made *Alameda* the lead case — its decision will come before the others.

Airtime Not a Vested Right

Decided after the *Marin* case, Governor Jerry Brown’s office took over defending *Cal Fire Local 2881 v. California Public Employees’ Retirement System* from the Office of the Attorney General — a move marking its importance on the governor’s tenure.

Plaintiffs in the case challenged changes made by PEPRA that ended public employees’ ability to purchase Additional Retirement Service Credits — known as “airtime” credits for extra years the employee did not actually work — and sought to force CalPERS to continue airtime purchases for “classic” members or those who are not new.

The state intervened to defend PEPRA.

The appellate court held that classic members have no vested right to purchase airtime service credits, on a prospective basis, under PEPRA. As in *Marin*, the appellate court said lawmakers can alter benefits so long as they are reasonable.

The California Supreme Court granted review of the case in April 2017. The case has been fully briefed, but a hearing has not been scheduled.

PEPRA Application Based on Entry to System

The most recent of the four cases before the California Supreme Court, *McGlynn v. State of California* takes a fresh look at when employment commences for purposes of pension benefit accruals.

Judges elected in November 2012, but who did not take office until after Jan. 1, 2013, argued that PEPRA was not applicable to them because they had accrued a vested right to the benefit formulas in effect at the time of their election.

The appellate court was unpersuaded arguing that PEPRA specifically provided that its application depended on when a member first entered the system, not when the member was first elected.

It also found that an estoppel claim could not be made against the retirement board even though pre-PEPRA benefits were extended to the affected judges for up to a year after the implementation of PEPRA because the board was entitled to correct a mistake of fact.

The California Supreme Court granted review of the case in June 2018 but like *Marin*, the Court has deferred a decision on *McGlynn* pending disposition of the *Alameda* case.

For a look at what public agencies may be permitted to do (modify, freeze or even terminate a defined-benefit plan — like CalPERS) if the California Supreme Court weakens the vested rights doctrine, check out the recent article: [The Anticipated Demise of the Vested-Rights Doctrine](#).

Isabel Safie, a Riverside-based partner with Best Best & Krieger LLP, advises public and private-sector clients on employee benefit and retirement programs. She works extensively with public employers, many of which are CalPERS member agencies, to modify and reduce the costs of pension and retiree health benefits under California’s “vested rights” doctrine. Isabel can be reached at isabel.safie@bbklaw.com.

Bill to end money bail advances in Legislature

Some groups who pushed for reform aren't happy about amendments granting more local control.

BY JAZMINE ULLOA

SACRAMENTO — California could soon end money bail, but some of the criminal justice groups who worked toward that goal aren't celebrating.

A closely watched bill to overhaul the state's bail system advanced out of a key fiscal committee Thursday with broad changes that would virtually eliminate the payment of money as a condition for release from jail.

That should have been a roaring victory for legislators and supporters who have long decried a system that they say unfairly punishes the poor. But the amendments also hand over more control to local courts and probation offices to decide who should remain incarcerated, a move former sponsors of the legislation contend could lead to indefinite detention.

State Sen. Bob Hertzberg (D-Van Nuys), coauthor of Senate Bill 10, hailed the measure at a news conference Thursday, calling it a success years in the making. He pointed to support from Gov. Jerry Brown, state Supreme Court Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye and Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom, the Democratic front-runner for governor.

"I have worked on a lot of issues over the decades and I don't remember one taking more time than this," Hertzberg said. "It has been really challenging making this fundamental sea change in the criminal justice system in California."

Hertzberg later pushed back against criticism of the bill, saying it would dramatically transform a pretrial system that hurts poor defendants.

"We have a form of pretrial detention now; it is called bail," he said. "And guess what pretrial detention is? If you don't have any money, you don't get out."

Some bail reform advocates have continued to support the bill, hoping to play a major role in implementation.

“The momentum behind SB 10 is strong, and we can’t miss the chance to move justice forward this year while continuing to press for further reforms,” said Laphonza Butler, president of the Service Employees International Union Local 2015.

But some sponsors dropped their support amid [See Bail, B4]



Capitol Alert

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CAPITOL ALERT

Tax on California water revived to clean up drinking water – but it's voluntary

BY TARYN LUNA
tluna@sacbee.com

August 17, 2018 12:01 AM
Updated 1 hour 50 minutes ago

Gov. Jerry Brown and state lawmakers are rebooting an effort to pass a new tax to attack unsafe drinking water in California.

But there's a twist: The proposed tax on water bills would be voluntary, increasing its chances of success among skittish lawmakers in an election year.

After calling off a plan in June to apply a mandatory tax on water bills, the governor is backing a new pair of bills that would apply a voluntary levy on ratepayers to fund safe drinking water projects. Senate Bill 844 and 845, introduced by Sen. Bill Monning, would also raise taxes on dairies and fertilizer manufacturers.

Supporters expect the bills to generate as much as \$100 million per year and cost most homeowners no more 95 cents per month, money that would be prioritized to areas with the highest risk.

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“These bills are now the Legislature’s best opportunity to bring clean and safe drinking water to the nearly 1 million Californians who cannot drink the water that comes out of their faucets,” said Monning, a Carmel Democrat.

The state has reported that more than 1 million residents face potential exposure to unsafe water, largely in low-income communities without the funding to fix the problems. A 2018 McClatchy investigation similarly found that 360,000 Californians are served by water systems that violate state standards for nitrates, arsenic, uranium and other pollutants.



These five common contaminants are most likely to be found in California’s drinking water. See what they are and how they impact the health of the people that consume the water that they contaminate.

By Sharon Okada

“Safe, clean drinking water is a necessity for all California families, but many lack this essential, human need,” said Ali Bay, deputy press secretary for Brown. She said Brown supports the current language in the bills, which “reflects the conversations our office and stakeholders have had in recent months to reach consensus on this issue.”

Brown and members of the Legislature paused a years-long efforts to pass the mandatory tax during budget negotiations earlier this summer. At the time, they settled for \$5 million from the general fund for drinking water projects at child care centers, planned to allocate another \$23.5 million for safe drinking water projects this session and continue conversations.

State lawmakers are hesitant to support any new tax increase after Republicans successfully recalled Sen. Josh Newman in June, linking the Fullerton Democrat to the \$52 billion gas tax to fund road repairs from 2017.

SB 845 establishes the voluntary tax on water bills and would only require support from a majority of state lawmakers. The mandatory tax on dairy producers and fertilizer manufacturers in SB 844 must meet a higher two-thirds vote threshold.

SB 845 would require community water systems to apply a “voluntary remittance to provide safe drinking water to disadvantaged communities” on each customer’s bill by July 1, 2019. Customers would have to opt-out of the fee, a concept criticized for unfairly taxing uninformed ratepayers.

“The whole point of this effort is to guarantee that all Californians, but particularly low-income communities and communities of color that have been disproportionately impacted by unsafe drinking water, can finally have their basic human right to water met in the richest country in the world,” said Jonathan Nelson, policy director for the Community Water Center.

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360,000 Californians have unsafe drinking water. Are you one of them?



California vs. Trump ‘will be a giant case’ over air rules, could end up in Supreme Court

The state water board would develop best practices on how to collect the money.

The center is among a coalition of more than 100 supporters that includes labor icon Dolores Huerta, the Silicon Valley Leadership Group, California Water Service, the Environmental Defense Fund, the Agricultural Council of California and Western United Dairymen.

The Association of California Water Agencies opposes the measures.

With two weeks left in the legislative session, Democratic leaders in the Senate and Assembly are taking a low-key approach to the proposals.

Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon’s Office said they are reviewing the bills and did not have a position. A spokeswoman for Senate President Pro Tem Toni Atkins did not provide a comment.

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Is it global warming or old patterns? Experts say both Heat waves hitting a warmer world



SEA SURFACE temperatures set records this month at San Diego's Scripps Pier. (Mario Tama Getty Images)

BY BETTINA BOXALL

California suffered through its hottest July on record, while August has pushed sea surface temperatures off the San Diego coast to all-time highs.

Are these punishing summer heat waves the consequences of global warming or the result of familiar weather patterns?

The answer, scientists say, is both.

Climate change is amplifying natural variations in the weather. So when California roasts under a stubborn high-pressure system, the thermometer climbs higher than it would have in the past.

“What we’re seeing now is the atmosphere doing what it has always done. But it’s doing it in a warmer world, so the heat waves occurring today are hotter,” said Park Williams, an associate research professor at Columbia University’s Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory. “We can expect that to continue.”

Though a weak-to-moderate El Niño, marked by warming ocean temperatures, may develop this fall and winter, scientists say it’s not at play now.

Art Miller, a research oceanographer at Scripps Institution of Oceanography, pointed to the high-pressure system as the immediate cause of the record-shattering sea surface temperatures recorded this month off Scripps Pier, where researchers have been taking daily temperature measurements since 1916.

On Aug. 1, a thermometer plunged into a bucket of seawater hit 78.6 degrees, breaking a 1931 record. On Aug. 9, the water temperature was 79.5 degrees.

The massive high-pressure dome hanging around the West shut down the northerly winds that typically cause an upwelling of colder, deeper water off the Southern California coast, Miller said.

The layer of warm water is relatively thin, 30 to 60 feet deep, and tapers out along the Central Coast. North of Santa Barbara, surface waters are actually cooler than normal.

Underlying the regional conditions is the past century’s roughly 1.8-degree increase in global ocean temperatures.

“This is the type of activity we expect to occur when you run together natural variations in the system with a long-term trend” of warming, Miller said, referring to the record-busting at Scripps Pier. “I’m not surprised.”

Global warming is expressed “in fits and spurts,” Williams said. From 1999 to 2014, the planet’s oceans stored much of the extra warmth generated by heat-trapping greenhouse gases. Global air temperatures were relatively stable. Then in 2015-16, strong El Niño conditions unleashed that extra heat.

The planet is feeling the effects.

“We’re in one of those hot clusters of years,” Williams said.

It could be followed by a period of stable temperatures that in turn is trailed by another period of rapid warming.

“In a few years we’ll be used to the type of heat waves we’re seeing this year” only to be shocked when continued climate change makes them even hotter, Williams predicted.

On July 6, all-time temperature records were set at UCLA (111), Burbank and Santa Ana (114), and Van Nuys (117). Chino hit 120 degrees. Scorching temperatures in Northern California helped fuel raging wildfires, including the Mendocino Complex, which has seared its way into the record books as the largest wildfire in the state's modern history.

"This is not all about climate change. But climate change is having an influence and exacerbating the conditions," said Kevin Trenberth, a senior scientist at the National Center for Atmospheric Research.

Some climate scientists have suggested that global warming is promoting atmospheric changes that favor the formation of the kind of persistent high-pressure system that has driven up temperatures this summer.

But Williams said climate change models have yet to confirm that. Researchers have also failed to detect a global trend of more prolonged ridging patterns, he added.

"I personally don't think the current ridge is a function of climate change," Williams said. "The atmosphere has a mind of its own."

The federal Climate Prediction Center last week forecast a 60% chance of El Niño developing this fall and a 70% chance by winter.

El Niño is characterized by warming surface waters in the east-central tropical Pacific and often warmer-than-average air temperatures in the West. But across most of the Pacific, the temperature of equatorial surface waters is near average, according to the climate center's Aug. 13 report.

"There is little indication El Niño will be more than weak or modest," said Nick Bond, a research scientist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the University of Washington.

El Niño can deliver a wet winter to Southern California, but Bond said this year's would probably be too meek to do that.

The climate center's three-month forecast predicts above-average temperatures for most of the country, including California. The Southland has gotten a break from blistering temperatures this week, but a high-pressure ridge is expected to return.

"It looks like August is going to be a hot month," Bond said.

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A bid to open secret police records Police files bill still faces hurdles

Proposal to increase the public's access to some misconduct files of officers advances in the California Senate.

BY LIAM DILLON

SACRAMENTO — An effort to make some internal law enforcement investigations open to the public cleared a key hurdle in the Legislature on Thursday, marking the first time in four decades that lawmakers could vote to meaningfully increase transparency surrounding police misconduct.

Senate Bill 1421 would open records from investigations of officer shootings and other major force incidents, along with confirmed cases of sexual assault and lying while on duty. The bill's author, Sen. Nancy Skinner (D-Berkeley), said Thursday's decision to send the measure through a legislative fiscal committee is a major step toward building trust between police and the communities they serve.

The committee, Skinner said, “did the right thing in moving to bring California in line with other states and give access to law enforcement records where the public truly has a right to know.”

California [has the strictest laws in the country](#) protecting the confidentiality of police misconduct records. The rules not only prohibit the public from seeing them, but also deny prosecutors direct access.

[A Times investigation](#) found that past misconduct by law enforcement officers who testify in court is [routinely kept hidden](#) by California's police privacy laws, which were first passed in 1978.

Police unions have long argued that the rules protect officer safety and privacy and have successfully lobbied to crush past efforts to change the laws. Skinner's bill would mark the first significant unwinding of the confidentiality rules.

The bill was changed Thursday in the Assembly Appropriations Committee to allow police departments to withhold records if they determine disclosure would be against the public

interest. In addition, disclosure of investigative reports on incidents in which officers used Tasers was dropped from the bill.

Robert Harris, a director for the union that represents the Los Angeles Police Department's rank-and-file officers, said law enforcement groups would continue their efforts to defeat the legislation.

"It's still incumbent upon us to educate lawmakers on what we feel are some of the harmful effects of the bill," Harris said.

Should Senate Bill 1421 become law, California's disclosure rules would still fall short of 21 other states that provide public access to records of all types of misconduct resulting in suspensions and other significant discipline.

Still, leaders of activist groups said they were encouraged by the bill's progress, noting that it had advanced further than earlier efforts to unwind the state's police confidentiality laws.

"It's a reflection of the demand and pressure from our communities that shows this bill is needed," said George Galvis, executive director of Communities United For Restorative Youth Justice, an Oakland group that's a principal backer of the legislation. "We need to hold law enforcement accountable."

Thursday marked a busy day for lawmakers debating major bills affecting police issues. In a setback for law enforcement groups, none of the three principal efforts they opposed were defeated.

High-profile legislation aiming to [make it easier to prosecute police officers who kill civilians](#), however, was put on hold. That measure, Assembly Bill 931 by Assemblywoman Shirley Weber (D-San Diego), has been the subject of intense lobbying by civil rights organizations that believe it's necessary to hold officers accountable and law enforcement groups who argue that the effort is an existential threat.

State senators did not advance Weber's bill but instead voted to move it out of a fiscal committee, where it faced a deadline to pass by the end of the week. Now, lawmakers have more time to debate the issue, Weber said.

"This is good news," Weber said in a statement. "This is a critically important discussion that is long overdue in California."

Lawmakers also advanced legislation that would lead to the release of police body camera footage of major incidents statewide.

[That bill](#), written by Assemblyman Phil Ting (D-San Francisco), would require police departments to release footage of most shootings by officers and other serious uses of force within 45 days unless it would interfere with an ongoing investigation. Supporters of the bill said they modeled the measure after the LAPD's [new policy to release such videos within a similar time frame](#).

Should Ting's bill pass, it would also go against historical precedent. In recent years, lawmakers have failed to advance [major bills regulating the use of body cameras](#) as their use has proliferated up and down the state. In the statewide vacuum, departments have developed their own policies on disclosing footage that include keeping them private and releasing excerpts of incidents.

Despite Thursday's decision to move forward the proposal to open some police personnel records, it still faces a difficult road to passage. The largest remaining hurdle is a vote by the full state Assembly, which has numerous members with strong ties to law enforcement among the ruling Democratic Party. Skinner said she expects strong pushback from police unions.

"Of course law enforcement, since they've had the ability to deny access to records, they're not going to want to give that up," she said. "That's a fundamental challenge here."

The bill faces a deadline of the end of the month to pass both houses of the Legislature. To become law, Gov. Jerry Brown would then have to sign it. Brown approved the law that first enshrined the strict confidentiality protections for police records in 1978 during his first term in office. The governor has not taken a position on Skinner's bill.

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Pot taxes pick up in California but still far off target



By Michael R. Blood Associated Press

Aug 16, 2018 at 11:32 AM

Aug 16, 2018 at 11:32 AM

LOS ANGELES — When it comes to the taxman, California's legal pot market is off to a sluggish start.

Marijuana cultivation and excise tax collections hit \$48 million between April and June, state officials announced Wednesday. That's a jump from the prior three months but well below the windfall envisioned by the state.

Finance officials had estimated California would bank \$185 million from excise and cultivation taxes in the first six months of broad legal sales, which kicked off Jan. 1.

But collections by midyear hit only \$82 million.

"After six months of legal cannabis sales there is a staggering ... gap between today's tax revenue numbers and what voters were promised," said state Assemblyman Evan Low, a Democrat from Campbell who heads the Business and Professions Committee. "Regulators must adapt before California's lawful cannabis businesses are obliterated by the black market."

The slower than expected flow of cash underscores the bumpy roll-out of the nation's largest legal market.

Illicit sales continue to flourish, luring consumers away from legal shops. Meanwhile, many areas have banned commercial pot activity, limiting the number of places adults can buy legal cannabis. Businesses say hefty tax rates that can approach 50 percent in some areas are also driving business underground.

"The situation is pretty severe," said Hezekiah Allen, executive director of the California Growers Association, an advocacy group for farmers and businesses.

Californians are buying plenty of cannabis, Allen says, they are just not buying it from licensed shops.

"Most of the state doesn't have access to it," Allen added. "The California marketplace needs significant change if it's going to function ... primarily at the local level."

On Tuesday, state regulators meeting in Los Angeles heard a long list of complaints and concerns about California's pot economy, once estimated to grow to \$7 billion.

They included a shaky supply chain, a shortage of licenses, testing problems and a contested proposal to allow home marijuana deliveries in cities that have banned pot sales.

The state's top marijuana regulator, Lori Ajax, said after the hearing that the state remains in a challenging transition period as it attempts to transform what was once a largely illegal market into a multibillion-dollar, regulated economy.

"Unfortunately, there is confusion out there," Ajax said.



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LOCAL GOVERNMENT



Poverty in California is Getting Better —Except Where It Isn't

POSTED BY : PUBLICCEO AUGUST 15, 2018

By Matt Levin.

California still has the nation's highest poverty rate when you take into account the state's high cost of living. But the number of people living in poverty here has dropped since the beginning of the decade.

There were nearly 600,000 fewer impoverished Californians in 2016 than in 2011, according to the [Public Policy Institute of California](#).

That's unequivocally positive. The state's economic recovery took a long time to touch lower-income households, but a booming labor market and long overdue wage gains—as well as a strong safety net that kept things from getting worse—have finally benefited people living near the bottom of the income scale.

Even as housing prices have risen dramatically over the same period, the poverty rate dropped from nearly 22 percent in 2011 to about 19 percent in 2016, the most recent year poverty data is available.



That may not sound like much of a decline. But the sheer size of California means any movement in the poverty rate is going to affect a huge number of people. And poverty rates don't see a lot of movement year-to-year anyway.

"Small changes in the poverty rate can be pretty meaningful," said Sarah Bohn, research director at the Public Policy Institute of California. "Even like half of a percentage point can be really powerful in terms of the number of people who are poor."

That's the good news. But the decline in California's overall poverty rate masks considerable geographic differences within the state. Some major swaths of California haven't seen any decline in poverty at all.

San Diego County has not seen a statistically significant change in its poverty rate since 2011. About 1 in 5 residents of the county struggle to make ends meet, according to the institute's poverty measure, which unlike the federal poverty metric takes into account housing costs and the benefits of government social programs. Out of the nine geographic regions the institute carves the state into for its analysis, the San Diego region is the second poorest, trailing only Los Angeles County.

The greater Sacramento area has similarly seen no real movement in its poverty rate since the early years of the decade. Of regions analyzed, only Sacramento and its neighboring counties saw an increase in the number of people living below the poverty line due to population growth, not an increase in the poverty rate.



Why have these areas lagged other parts of the state in reducing poverty?

Researchers don't fully know yet. Part of the explanation is simply methodological—a large margin of error on these estimates minimizes year-over-year changes.

But another reason could be how the Great Recession of the late 2000s impacted different parts of the state. Bohn says that San Diego wasn't hit as hard as other regions by the economic downturn, which ironically meant that an economic recovery wouldn't lift local families as much.

Compare that to the Central Valley, which was ravaged by the foreclosure crisis. Over 100,000 fewer Central Valley residents are living in poverty now than in 2011. The only other region to see an equivalent drop over the same period was Los Angeles County, which is much larger.

The poverty improvements in certain areas could be obscuring a broader trend: Low-income Californians leaving the state entirely. A recent [report](#) by Beacon Economics found that the state lost more than 500,000 households making less than \$50,000 a year since 2000.

[Originally posted at Calmatters.](#)

Comments

comments

A pileup of mixed messages about scooter use in L.A. L.A. grapples with how to regulate scooters



A SCOOTER rider on the boardwalk in Venice. Riding the vehicles on the sidewalk is illegal in California. (Christina House Los Angeles Times)

BY LAURA J. NELSON

A proposal in July to [temporarily ban rental scooters](#) in Los Angeles sparked an outcry from transportation advocates and some lawmakers, who said the zippy devices were a transportation innovation that should be regulated, not banished.

During that debate, though, a crucial point went unmentioned: L.A. lawmakers had already backed a temporary scooter ban.

Five months ago, the Los Angeles City Council unanimously approved a motion to place a moratorium on “dockless transportation systems” until officials could approve rules governing their use.

The motion was drafted to apply to the shared bicycles that can be rented and dropped off anywhere. Some City Hall officials realized only last week that the language was broad enough to apply to the hundreds of Bird and Lime scooters that have appeared in Venice Beach, Playa del Rey and other L.A. neighborhoods.

The moratorium vote has been referenced in city documents, including a cease-and-desist letter that the Transportation Department sent to the scooter company Bird in June. But whether it is enforceable is a matter of interpretation at City Hall.

Scooters “should fall under the umbrella” of the moratorium, said Oliver Hou, a Transportation Department spokesman. The City Council never took the final step to turn the motion into a law, but in some parts of City Hall, lawmakers’ wishes seemed clear: For the time being, the scooters weren’t welcome.

The confusion underscores the mixed messages from Los Angeles officials as they debate how to regulate companies that already are operating, expanding and winning support across the city. Taking a page from Uber’s playbook, Bird and Lime have placed hundreds of scooters on sidewalks across the city without approval from lawmakers, and with few repercussions.

Enforcing a blanket ban on scooters would be difficult, if not impossible, without more instruction from the City Council, City Hall officials said. Employees would have no instructions on how to handle a wide range of potential problems, from a rider without a helmet to an errant scooter in a tree, they said.

“This is typical of how Los Angeles operates,” said Robert Chernow, a land-use consultant who lives in the Fairfax district. “These companies were bold enough to go out there, and how many scooters did they put out there? And where was the city? Nowhere.”

Lime spokeswoman Mary Caroline Pruitt said the company was “aware of the moratorium, and remain[s] committed to working closely” with city leaders to pass regulations. Bird did not return a request for comment.

To ride, users must sign up through the scooter company apps, providing a driver’s license number and credit card information.

Riders use the interactive maps to find a scooter nearby, and scan a code on the scooter to unlock it. Rentals cost \$1, plus 15 cents per minute.

The City Council [is drafting rules](#) that would limit the number of scooters per company to 5,000 during the first formal year of operation and would impose other requirements on speed, payment, parking and data-sharing with the city.

Westside residents have complained that scooting on sidewalks poses a safety risk to pedestrians and that parked scooters blocking doorways and wheelchair ramps violate the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Earlier this month, City Council members proposed requiring a device in each scooter that would limit its operating speed to 12 mph — an acknowledgment that, even though riding

scooters on the sidewalk is illegal in California, it's where many riders end up.

The City Council's public works committee Wednesday recommended a 15-mph speed limit. Lawmakers will probably vote on the bundle of rules and regulations next week, officials said.

"It's been something that people have loved," Mayor Eric Garcetti told reporters last week. "But we're also seeing a lot more emergency room visits, and it's unsafe."

In June, just months after the City Council had passed the ban on the dockless systems, Bird deposited a few dozen scooters in the Arts District downtown.

The area's councilman, Jose Huizar, supports scooters "in theory," said spokesman Rick Coca, but "just wants to make sure everything makes sense in practice."

Seleta Reynolds, general manager of the city's Transportation Department, sent a rare cease-and-desist letter after the scooters appeared, demanding that Bird "remove any and all vehicles" in Los Angeles immediately. If the company didn't comply, she wrote, city officials would impound the scooters, even if people were riding them.

The letter referenced the City Council's March vote, saying: "Since Bird has no existing pilot in the city of Los Angeles, you are in violation of the citywide moratorium." But the Transportation Department, which installs bike lanes and issues parking violations, doesn't "have the ability to impound the vehicles," its chief sustainability officer, Marcel Porras, said at a City Hall meeting last week.

The Bureau of Sanitation, which owns dump trucks and handles bulky item pickups, had not received instructions to start impounding, spokeswoman Elena Stern said.

The cease-and-desist letter, officials said, was less a hard-and-fast legal demand and more of a request that the firm stay out of downtown, where sidewalk space is at a premium. (City officials "reached out via cease-and-desist," Porras said.)

The message, Garcetti told reporters last week, was: "Hey, we're actually at the table together right now — don't ... cause problems before we can resolve them." Bird removed the scooters in the Arts District, but nowhere else.

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A new welfare trap for immigrants



A CITIZENSHIP and Immigration Services office in New York that processes thousands of green card applications each year. (John Moore Getty Images)

BY ALEX NOWRASTEH

The Trump administration will soon place new limits on legal immigration with a regulatory change that will penalize newcomers just because they could use public benefits in the U.S. The point, according to a spokesman for the president, is “to ensure that the government takes the responsibility of being good stewards of taxpayer funds.”

In the long run, however, the proposed rule will amount to the opposite of good stewardship: It will cost the government, and taxpayers, much more than it will save.

The Department of Homeland Security and the State Department already consider whether immigrants are likely to become “a public charge” before issuing visas to them, or

granting them permanent resident status (green cards). The administration's modified rule would codify that process, setting new, stricter standards.

Leaked drafts of the regulation show that immigrants could be at risk if the government thinks they might consume, over a year, as little as \$1 a day (for primary immigrants), or 50 cents a day (for each person in a family of four), in public benefits. Even the welfare consumption of an immigrant's citizen children — their use of food stamps, say, or Medicaid — would count in the calculation.

Under the new rule, many lawful migrants already in the United States would no longer qualify for green cards. It could put their livelihoods at risk, turn some of them into illegal immigrants or force them to leave the country. Their wages and their families' fortunes would drop, but their U.S.-born citizen children would still have access to welfare. Those children would become a bigger burden to U.S. taxpayers.

The new rule would also tend to target younger immigrants because they generally have lower incomes than their older counterparts. However, a recent National Academy of Sciences report found that younger immigrants in particular pay more into the system than they take out over the course of their lives. They are also likely to have children in the future and, as the report said, although second-generation immigrants as children "absorb slightly more [public] benefits," they also contribute "considerably more in taxes during working ages" than other immigrants and American citizens.

In the draft of the rule, the Trump administration explicitly rejects crafting a regulation based on its long-term fiscal impact because, according to the administration, "there is a lack of academic literature or economic research examining the link between immigration and public benefits." On the contrary: There is a vast archive of peer-reviewed studies that analyze the costs and benefits of immigrants to taxpayers. Like the National Academy of Sciences report, most of this research shows that immigrants overall pay more in taxes than they receive in benefits, or that they at least pay enough taxes to cover the benefits they consume.

For example, a report in the journal *Health Affairs* found that from 2002 to 2009, immigrants paid \$115.2 billion more into Medicare than they took out in benefits, which has helped forestall the program's rush toward insolvency. Similarly, Social Security data show that immigrant contributions are reducing that program's deficits. According to the *New York Times*, Trump's own Department of Health and Human Services delivered a report in 2017 that showed that refugees "brought in \$63 billion more in government revenues over the past decade than they cost." The White House promptly buried the study.

Based on the results in the National Academy of Sciences report and the terms of the new rule in the leaked draft, I calculated my own cost-benefit analysis of the Trump administration's regulation: It will cost \$1.46 for every dollar it saves.

To justify the new policy, the administration not only ignores the research, it rigs the regulation to make sure it produces a negative result for immigrants. For instance, under the new rule, the welfare an immigrant's U.S. citizen children consume as dependents

counts in considering his or her status, but not the taxes they pay once they are no longer dependents.

I applaud the administration's stated goal — protecting taxpayer money. And I agree with its implied goal — a reduction in immigrant welfare use. But denying green cards to immigrants is not the way to fix the welfare system. That would require cutting benefits and access across the board for non-citizens, but also for citizens who are the system's primary beneficiaries.

Instead, the government is proposing a complicated new regulation that will block immigrants from their shot at the American Dream. It's inhumane, and it will backfire, increasing deficits and entitlement shortfalls. That's no one's definition of good stewardship.

Alex Nowrasteh is the senior immigration policy analyst at the Cato Institute. He is coauthor of its policy report "Building a Wall Around the Welfare State, Instead of the Country."

https://santamariatimes.com/news/local/attorney-emails-between-former-guadalupe-officials-wrongly-allowed-as-evidence/article_29c452dc-f98f-5b82-85ca-232c3020900f.html

EDITOR'S PICK

Attorney: Emails between former Guadalupe officials wrongly allowed as evidence

Gina Kim gkim@leecentralcoastnews.com Aug 13, 2018 Updated Aug 13, 2018

In her July 30 appeal of a 2017 verdict finding the city of Guadalupe guilty of violating the constitutional rights of an apartment owner, attorney Molly Thurmond said that emails between former Mayor Frances Romero and former City Manager Andrew Carter were wrongly allowed as evidence.

The emails, Thurmond stated, were solely responsible for Guadalupe's defeat in the 2017 civil trial because attorneys for plaintiff Olivera St. LLC used the emails as evidence that racial bias motivated the city's 2014 enactment of an urgency ordinance banning boardinghouses in parts of the city.

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On Mon, Sep 22, 2014 at 8:42 AM, Andrew Carter <ACarter@ci.guadalupe.ca.us> wrote:

Frances,

So I ran into an old acquaintance of mine at Home Depot on Sunday. He's spent years as an attorney for California Rural Legal Assistance, representing farm workers in their disputes with employers, landlords, and the like. I talked to him about the La Plaza Villa project. This was his first reaction after I mentioned the size of the complex and the number of potential tenants. "Andrew, you do realize you're going to have a problem with prostitution, don't you?"

Andrew Carter

City Administrator

City of Guadalupe/ 918 Obispo Street/ Guadalupe, CA 93434/ 805-356-3892

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FRANCES

Frances A. Romero/ Mayor/ City of Guadalupe/ 918 Obispo Street/ Guadalupe CA 93434/
805.356.3891/ mayorfromero@gmail.com

"A government big enough to give you everything you want, is strong enough to take everything you have."
- Thomas Jefferson, 1803

10/12/2015

Exhibit 31
Page 2 of 2

6-2

Both Carter and Romero left their positions with the city in late 2014. Carter has moved out of the area, and Romero declined to comment citing pending litigation.

The email exchange, according to court records, occurred after grower Steve Scaroni's plans to purchase the La Plaza Villa Apartments for H-2A farmworker housing came to light in early September 2014.

Dennis Law, representing Olivera St. LLC, argued in 2017 that the emails between Carter and Romero, specifically an exchange on Sept. 22, 2014, showed the city's discriminatory intent, noted that officials planned to draft the urgency ban a day after learning of Scaroni's plans and agendized City Council discussion of the ban for the following day, Sept. 23.

Thurmond, Guadalupe's attorney, tried to bar the emails from trial testimony, arguing that they were irrelevant unless there was objective evidence of bias against a protected class, according to the appeal.

It was improper of the court to examine Romero's email as the motivation for the city's decision. Instead the court should have focused on objective facts, such as the city wanting to reasonably regulate safe housing, Thurmond wrote in her appeal.

Carter's email to Romero on Sept. 22, 2014, which was included in court documents, told her that he ran into an "old acquaintance" who spent years as an attorney for California Rural Legal Assistance representing farmworkers in labor disputes, landlord issues and other matters.

“I talked to him about the La Plaza Villa project,” Carter wrote in the email, sent at 8:42 a.m. Sept. 22. “This was his first reaction after I mentioned the size of the complex and number of potential tenants.

“Andrew, you do realize you’re going to have a problem with prostitution, don’t you?”” the email read.

In response, Romero emailed back at 8:59 a.m. Sept. 22, “Well, I’m glad he said it. I’d assume that there will be other undesired activities as well.”

The email also referenced Scaroni’s "representative" Kevin Teixeira and Teixeira's efforts to house H-2A workers at the Laz-e Daze retirement home in northern Santa Maria.

Romero said in the email that she worked with Teixeira for two years trying to redesign the Laz-e Daze site, improve it and convert it “to the use that was occurring on the site, which is primarily people on assistance with some level of diminished capacity.

"One of the only sites that truly kept me looking over my shoulder," Romero wrote. “They now have a code enforcement issue because they are doing H-2A on site.

"If we do not do an urgency ordinance," she wrote, "they’ll close escrow and do whatever they want, hiding behind their federal program. It’ll be nearly impossible to get them to move people out. They are banking on our financial status.

"Just so there is no confusion about where I stand, if we bankrupt the city over this it is worth it. If he gets his way, more will come and the community will suffer," Romero wrote.

The judge in 2017 allowed the email to be shown to the jury, despite the fact that it didn't constitute “much evidence of [discrimination] on the basis of the [La Plaza residents] being Mexican nationals.” The judge maintained that there could be more to Romero’s statements and that the jury should know the contents of the email.

In her appeal, Thurmond notes that laws adopted by municipalities cannot look at an individual's intent or motive, as the individuals are not the only ones making the laws. She maintains that the court erred when it allowed the emails to be admitted as evidence.

“It cannot be ignored that [the email] had a powerful impact on the jury,” stated Thurmond, adding the subjective viewpoint of a government official, however, shouldn't be in question but rather whether the laws concerning proper land-use regulation were legitimate, and were only enacted in a rational, logical manner after taking consideration of infrastructure concerns.

Gina Kim covers crime and courts for Santa Maria Times. Follow her on Twitter @gina_k210

Gina Kim

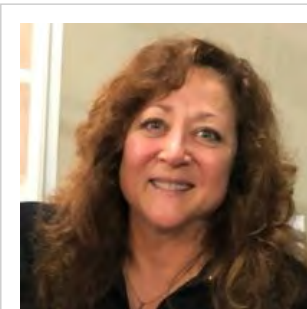
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Did Grover Beach waive rules for 1 public official's candidacy?

August 13, 2018



Liz Doukas

Grover Beach residents will have three candidates to choose from for mayor this year, including a city council member who was permitted to forgo some election requirements. [Cal Coast Times]

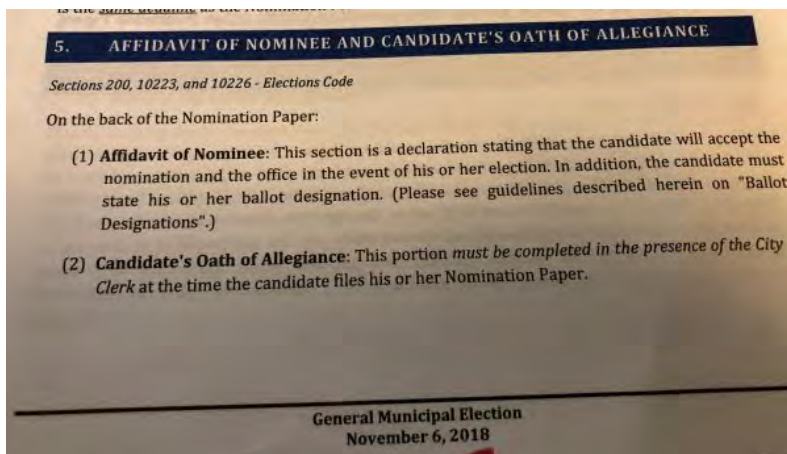
The mayor candidates are:

Jeff Lee has served on the city council for six years. Lee has worked hand in hand with Mayor John Shoals in promoting marijuana businesses as an answer to the city's financial issues.

Elizabeth "Liz" Doukas works as a court reporter. She is running for office to stop what she sees as preferential treatment for public officials and their select business interests.

Debbie Peterson, a current council member, served as mayor from 2012 through 2014. While visiting Hawaii, Peterson had another resident take out nomination papers, gather the signatures and send the information to Peterson who swore her oath in front of a notary in Hawaii.

Grover Beach nomination papers require the candidate's oath of allegiance "be completed in the presence of the city clerk at the time the candidate files his or her nomination paper."



From the Grover Beach nomination papers.

City Clerk Donna McMahon said the city attorney told her to "waive" several requirements for Peterson.

California Election Code 202 allows a person who is deployed on active military service outside of the state, to file through a power of attorney, but does not waive the rules for any other class of candidate.

"Part of the thinking was that someone else can pick up and file my papers," Peterson said. "If it turns out this is not legitimate, of course I would pull out."

City Attorney David Hale does not believe the elections code requires "the oath to be administered by the elections officer of the candidate's city," he said in an email.

It is possible one of the other candidates will contest Peterson's eligibility.

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JUSTICE SYSTEM

County names new head of public defender's office



A DEPUTY public defender holds a poster of Interim Public Defender Nicole Davis Tinkham at a protest in February. Ricardo Garcia will replace Tinkham. (Al Seib Los Angeles Times)

NINA AGRAWAL

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors has selected criminal defense attorney Ricardo Garcia as the county's new public defender.

Garcia will take over as head of the oldest and largest public defender's office in the nation, with 700 attorneys who provide criminal defense services for adults and juveniles

who cannot afford their own lawyers. The office has been without a permanent head since Ronald Brown retired in 2016.

Garcia is a supervising attorney in the San Diego County public defender's office. He started there as a trial attorney in 1995 and was later recruited to the Department of the Alternate Public Defender, which defends cases where the public defender may have a conflict of interest, often because multiple people have been charged in a single case.

From 2004 to 2006 Garcia served as the criminal justice director at the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California, according to the news release. In that position he monitored the Los Angeles Police Department's compliance with a federal civil rights consent decree and conditions in L.A. County jails.

Garcia later returned to the San Diego County public defender's office, most recently supervising in the multiple conflicts office/major cases section.

Garcia will take over the office from Interim Public Defender Nicole Davis Tinkham, a former deputy county counsel who has defended sheriff's deputies in lawsuits against the county.

Deputy public defenders [protested Tinkham's appointment](#) at a rally in February, saying that she lacked the necessary experience representing indigent clients and that her history with the Sheriff's Department represented a conflict of interest.

Tiffany Blacknell, a veteran attorney who helped organize that rally, said she is "more than excited" about Garcia's appointment.

"We are impressed with the caliber of attorney the board has selected to run our office and optimistic about the era of criminal justice reform we are poised to lead," Blacknell said. "All we ever wanted was quality leadership to further our great cause and we believe Ricardo Garcia to be such a leader."

The Board of Supervisors voted unanimously for Garcia in closed session Tuesday. His salary and start date are expected to be finalized by the board at its next public meeting on Sept. 4.

nina.agrawal@latimes.com

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LA County Releases Results of Independent Review on Primary Election Voting Errors

By Natalie Welles / The Malibu Times Aug 11, 2018



Seal of Los Angeles County

Primary elections in Los Angeles County were marred in June, resulting in voters' names being left off of the printed voting rosters. Independent reviews led by IBM Security Services identified software configurations as the root for the exclusion of 118,509 names from printed voter rosters in areas of LA County for the June 5 primary election.

Voters' rights were never at stake, and the roster error didn't interfere with voting rolls. However, the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk, in a statement provided by the county, said the roster print issue affected about 12,000 voters who went to the polls according to a report published by county officials last week. Their votes were processed immediately and counted for the official election.

With speculations of a cyberattack cleared, other incidents of prejudice regarding the voter exclusion were proven inaccurate by the independent review. It was verified that no pattern of exclusion based on demographics or geographic characteristics existed.

Regarding the software, the review found that the county's technology used to generate the printed lists for polling places was incompatible with the statewide format of the voter database, because it had not been updated. This resulted in the system generating voter records with empty birthdates of 118,509 voters.

As a result of the missing birthdates, the county's system incorrectly classified these voters as "underage," leaving them off of the printed voting rosters.

IBM ran multiple scenarios to pinpoint the cause of this until it was finally figured out. Initially, the incompatible data of the state was used to develop the printed voting rosters. The original report stopped after 118,509 records were processed without birthdates. After this incident, the county used its own database to export the voting rosters, which used correct information. The investigation led to the conclusion that incorrect and correct data merged, leading to the ultimate error of the printed rosters.

After its review, IBM recommended strategies to the county to correct its past incidents, such as updating the software code so local and state voter databases are compatible, resolving deficiencies in the system used to create the printed roster and increasing capacity, and changing configurations on lavote.net (<http://lavote.net>) to accommodate periods of high demand.

In the shared statement, Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk Dean Logan said the county has already placed measures to ensure the accuracy of printed voter rosters for the upcoming general election on Nov. 6.

Is L.A. on a tax break spree?

Since 2005, the Los Angeles City Council has approved about \$1 billion in tax breaks for developers of seven hotels in downtown L.A. and a mall in the San Fernando Valley. Yet a [new report](#) from city Controller Ron Galperin found that city leaders have done little to make sure that developers [truly needed the tax breaks](#) or studied whether the money was well spent.

Among the report's disturbing findings: The city doesn't have a comprehensive strategy for doling out incentives. It doesn't have the expertise to negotiate such deals. And it doesn't challenge developers' assertions that they can't afford to build without a tax break.

Have these incentive agreements been a good deal for taxpayers? Sadly, Galperin didn't answer that question, and neither can city officials. The city doesn't regularly evaluate which kinds of projects merit help or what taxpayers should expect in return.

That's a striking dereliction of duty by Mayor Eric Garcetti and the council, who have a responsibility to use taxpayer dollars wisely. In theory, tax breaks can boost economic activity and generate tax revenue that the city wouldn't have otherwise. But if a tax break goes to a project that would have been built even without a subsidy, or to a project that doesn't deliver the promised benefits, then the city has traded away money that could have been spent on police, sidewalks, libraries and other public services.

The justification for most of the incentives awarded is that the city needs more hotel rooms downtown to serve the convention center. But downtown is booming, and there has been little discussion of whether tax breaks are still needed to entice hotel developers to build there.

Galperin's report outlines several basic, common-sense policies to ensure that tax breaks are necessary and that developers deliver on promised jobs and economic benefits. He recommends that the city enact an economic development strategy and align tax breaks with it. The city should hire experts to scrutinize the projects' financial assumptions and to negotiate the deals. And the city should evaluate the projects after they are built to determine whether the subsidies were justified.

These are non-controversial, good-government reforms. The question is whether the council and Garcetti will enact them.

So far, council members have been loath to limit their power to grant tax breaks to favored projects. City staff drew up a policy in 2015 for when to grant incentives to hotels, but the council never adopted it. The process today remains a political one: The developer

— in some cases a big donor to local campaigns — goes to the local council member, who decides whether the project should be considered for a tax break.

This is far too much money to be handed out with so little scrutiny and accountability. Developers of four more hotel projects have asked for incentives as well. Without clear rules on when to offer tax breaks, city leaders run the risk of making them the norm, whether they are needed or not.