On California immigration policy, Victorville will let state-federal showdown play out

By Shea Johnson
Staff Writer

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VICTORVILLE — There were heated moments, impassioned pleas and even personal attacks during a public debate late Tuesday on California’s controversial immigration policy.

The discussion was set inside City Hall. It drew far more people than normal sessions, so a conference room across from council chambers was equipped with a live video and audio feed from the meeting. It served to accommodate those who couldn’t find a seat amid the packed house.

It grew increasingly contentious, leading to Mayor Gloria Garcia calling for recess on two occasions. At least one person was escorted out by a San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department deputy.

But after public commentary from more than two dozen speakers, elected officials ultimately ended any speculation that they might follow the path of three other councils in the High Desert to formally oppose Senate Bill 54, the so-called “sanctuary state” law.

They would not.

In fact, officials instead deferred to the ongoing U.S. Department of Justice lawsuit challenging the law, believing that the courts — not a council chambers — were the most appropriate venue for the argument.

It might have acted as an anticlimactic conclusion for those who had come Tuesday to fiercely reject the bill, which limits local and state law enforcement cooperation with federal immigration authorities, and for those who came to defend it.
Councilman Eric Negrete, who requested the item be placed on the agenda, offered a harsh denunciation, but did not explicitly suggest the Council pursue any formal opposition to the law even if it was just a letter to Gov. Jerry Brown — as the Adelanto Council recently authorized.

“California is becoming a third-world country,” a clearly frustrated Negrete lamented as he compared the state’s “stupid ideologies” to “anti-American” sentiment.

Councilwoman Blanca Gomez resisted that SB 54 was a public safety issue and un-American, or that it promoted illegal immigration to flow into the country completely unchecked.

“It does not invite brown Nazis, foreign nationals or union thugs to intimidate American citizens,” she said.

Negrete and Gomez have positioned themselves as the two most vocal councilors on either side of the issue and, on Tuesday, the latter was chastised for it.

“It’s highly racist because no other group has come to this country and expected an extra set of rules ... and handouts,” John Willis, one speaker, said about the bill before turning his attention to Gomez, who he accused of busing “all these commies and lawyers” into the chambers. “Look at me when I’m talking to you, savage! You’re going to hell, lady. For sure.”

April Pinkston, who said she was a military veteran and her family immigrated legally from England, suggested that any elected official who did not oppose the bill be removed from office and be arrested for violating their oath to the U.S. Constitution.

“I’m not against anybody. I don’t care what color you are; we all bleed the same color,” Pinkston said. “But come here legally. I fought for this country. I fought for freedom and — what part of illegal don’t you get?”

Fernando Hernandez, who described himself as a Vietnam War veteran, questioned the logic behind law-and-order rhetoric when, in fact, SB 54 opponents were urging officials to reject state law. He also noted he knew several soldiers who were undocumented immigrants.
“These are human beings that are here serving this country, hoping to get a piece of this country to be prosperous and be an American,” Hernandez said. “But we decided all of a sudden that we’re just not going to follow the law.”

Natalie Brown, chairwoman of the High Desert Young Democrats, framed support of SB 54 as not only a moral standing, but also rooted in economics.

“The fact is that it’s just ensuring that cities and the state,” Brown said, “don’t take additional resources away from things they need like schools and infrastructure to assist with (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement).”

The emotionally and politically charged debate was reflective of the polarization on a state and nationwide level. Municipalities across California have begun to challenge the law since March, although there are questions about the effectiveness of such opposition beyond a symbolic gesture.

State Sen. Kevin de Leon, a Democrat from Los Angeles who authored the bill, has said the legislation only precludes state and local law enforcement from spending taxpayer dollars to enforce federal immigration laws that should fall exclusively within the purview of the U.S. government. Proponents and opponents have argued over whether it protects criminals who are undocumented residents.

Sheriff John McMahon said the major limitation of cooperation is in the department’s notification to ICE when inmates are being released. He said there were hundreds of crimes of which an inmate can be accused that allow the department to notify federal authorities, but others that do not.

Local and state authorities have been barred from asking people about their immigration status or participating in federal immigration enforcement activities since Jan. 1.

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Palm Springs supports state in sanctuary state policies

By:

Jeremy Chen (http://www.kesq.com/meet-the-team/jeremy-chen/87431108)

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PALM SPRINGS, Calif. - The Palm Springs city council voted unanimously Wednesday night to support the state's legal fight against the federal government on it's sanctuary state policies. The focus of the lawsuit is on Senate Bill 54.

The city council voted to have the city file an amicus brief in support of the sanctuary state policies, which places sharp limits on how state and local law enforcement agencies can cooperate with federal immigration authorities.

It means the city will help provide additional arguments for the state in its legal fight. Councilman Geoff Kors said Palm Springs is now the first city in Riverside or San Bernardino County to take such a stance.

The decision comes after President Trump held a roundtable discussion regarding the policy, with leaders from several cities and counties that opposed the sanctuary state policy.

No other desert city has weighed in legally regarding the state's policy so far.

Other cities that have sided with the federal government against the state include Beaumont, Huntington Beach, Hesperia, Mission Viejo, Escondido, San Diego and Orange Counties, Los Alamitos, Fountain Valley, San Juan Capistrano, Aliso Viejo, the City of Orange, Westminster, and Santa Clarita.

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Orange County, Inland Empire leaders talk immigration with Trump in White House
Mayors and council members, sheriffs and county supervisors – from small towns and big ones – went to the White House Wednesday to thank President Trump for his tough stance on immigration and to ask for additional support in fighting California’s sanctuary policies.

“We need help,” Barstow Mayor Julie Hackbarth-McIntyre from San Bernardino County told the president.

She was one of 15 California leaders invited to Washington D.C. after their communities took action against a new state law that limits cooperation between federal immigration agents and local law enforcement.

“There is a revolution going on in California,” Trump told them.

The president, calling immigration laws “the dumbest laws,” said he welcomes immigrants based on merit. His language to describe some criminal immigrants – which drew national criticism – didn’t draw a comment from anybody in the room: “You wouldn’t believe how bad these people are,” Trump said. “These aren’t people. These are animals.”

The meeting served a couple of different goals, said Assemblywoman Melissa Melendez, a Republican from Lake Elsinore who attended the meeting.

“The president needed to hear directly from the boots on the ground,” she said. (The group included the mayors of Los Alamitos, Barstow, Lake Elsinore, Laguna Niguel, San Jacinto and Escondido.)

“It’s also good for the nation to see that everybody is not on the same page as the liberal legislators who work in the (California) capital,” Melendez, who represents the 67th State Assembly district in Western Riverside County, said after the meeting.

Los Alamitos Councilman Warren Kusumoto got a round of applause when he told the group that Orange County’s second-smallest city was the first, and so far only, community to pass an ordinance to exempt itself from the state law.

“Anyone with common sense knows this California Values Act was put in place to protect those that are here breaking the law,” Kusumoto said.
The Los Alamitos council’s 4-1 vote was followed by moves from more than 35 cities and counties with either resolutions or legal action against the state law.

But “coming out first has a price to pay,” Los Alamitos Mayor Troy Edgar told Trump. Edgar asked for federal assistance against a lawsuit brought on by the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California.

Trump told Edgar, who wrote the president in May for assistance, that such help may be possible.

After the discussion, Edgar said he met with U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who was also at the event. Options include possibly having someone from Sessions' office assigned to help Los Alamitos or have the city's attorney, who is hired as outside counsel, contract with the attorney general's office, Edgar said after the meeting.

Some officials used the face time with Trump to raise non immigration issues. San Juan Capistrano Councilwoman Pam Patterson asked the president to look into the safety record of the San Onofre Nuclear Generation Station, which she feared could become a terrorist target. “We'll check it out,” Trump told her. “It doesn't sound too good.”

Laguna Niguel Mayor Elaine Gennawey told Trump that California needs his help in addressing problems arising from sober living homes in residential neighborhoods. Orange County has become known as the “Rehab Riviera,” she noted.

But the topic at hand was illegal immigration and, specifically, those who are living in the country illegally and have committed crimes but might not be deported because of California’s new law.

The California Values Act, or Senate Bill 54, prohibits local agencies from holding potentially deportable immigrants, who are already incarcerated, for immigration agents. The new law does allow for the transfer of inmates connected to hundreds of violent crimes and other serious offenses, but not lesser crimes.

California Sen. Kevin de León, who wrote the law, called the meeting “a cynical, political play on the part of Donald Trump” to stoke divisiveness and fear.

The elected officials who met with Trump “are turning their backs on California and the people they represent to become useless props in Trump's dangerous divisive political game,” de Leon said before the meeting.
“He’s pulling them in with the false promise that his message of hate and division will play in their favor. But they’re wasting their time because California has outgrown this brand of tired worn-out racist rhetoric. That’s why the Republican Party here keeps shrinking.”

Gov. Jerry Brown wrote on Twitter that the president is “lying on immigration, lying about crime and lying about the laws of CA…”

Jerry Brown @JerryBrownGov 😞 @realDonaldTrump is lying on immigration, lying about crime and lying about the laws of CA. Flying in a dozen Republican politicians to flatter him and praise his reckless policies changes nothing. We, the citizens of the fifth largest economy in the world, are not impressed.
1:14 PM - May 16, 2018
48.6K 20.5K people are talking about this

Trump said during the meeting that crime was going down across the nation but increasing in California. Actually, California and the U.S. as a whole had similar crime trends in the latest year reported and over the past decade, figures from the FBI and the state Justice Department show. Property crime has been dropping steadily over the past decade. And while violent crime rose from 2015 to 2016 (the most recent year reported), it’s down from 2007 in both the state and the nation.

Law enforcement officials meeting with the president, however, focused on echoing their association’s official position on the law: they don’t like it because it limits cooperation with immigration agents.

“We need to be able to talk,” said Ray Grangroff, an Orange County Sheriff’s Department spokesman who was at the meeting with sheriffs from Fresno and Stanislaus County.

In previous years, he said, deputies could screen inmates and “put them on ICE’s radar.”

Grangroff thanked Trump for filing a lawsuit in March against California for three laws that protect unauthorized immigrants, including the California Values Act.
The afternoon sit-down in the White House also included Department of Justice Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen, Thomas Homan, director of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, Lake Elsinore Mayor Natasha Johnson, San Jacinto Mayor Crystal Ruiz and Orange County Supervisor Michelle Steel.

*Staff writer Jeff Collins contributed to this report.*

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**Roxana Kopetman**

Roxana Kopetman is a staff writer at The Orange County Register.

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**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

PaperMugs

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LEONARD ORTIZ, THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

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The following people have been told to get their photos taken at 1pm at the studio. Simple clean white background. Must have full shoulders.

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https://www.ocregister.com/2018/05/16/trump-meeting-today-with-leaders-from-orange-county-inland-empire/
Trump and his California supporters

President meets with ‘sanctuary’ critics to talk immigration and has harsh words for Oakland’s mayor.

WASHINGTON — President Trump recommended an obstruction of justice investigation into Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf for impeding a federal roundup and criticized Mexico for doing “nothing” to help on its border with the United States as he expressed his...
sentiments about illegal immigration to a like-minded group of Californians on Wednesday.

Trump previously had insisted on a harsh penalty for Schaaf, but on Wednesday his remarks were aimed directly at Atty. Gen. Jeff Sessions, one of nearly two dozen opponents of illegal immigration gathered for a public meeting at the White House.

“You talk about obstruction of justice. I would recommend that you look at obstruction of justice for the mayor of Oakland,” Trump said, nodding in Sessions’ direction. “To me that’s obstruction of justice. Perhaps the Department of Justice can look into that.”

Schaaf has been unapologetic about her decision to warn Bay Area immigrants about pending arrests by Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents in February. The result, federal officials said at the time, was to reduce the number of arrests of those suspected of being in the country illegally.

Trump’s castigation of Mexico came after he rhetorically asked San Diego County Supervisor Kristin Gaspar whether Mexico “helps or it does nothing for us” in quelling the number of immigrants attempting to cross the border.

“Mexico does nothing for us,” he said, answering his own question. “Mexico talks but they do nothing for us, especially at the border.”

The session arranged by the White House included Californians who have fought against the state’s new “sanctuary” law, which limits communication between local law enforcement and federal immigration agents.

Included were elected officials, most of them from conservative areas, and law enforcement officials, all outspoken about their allegiance to Trump.

Supporters of the law, including some law enforcement agencies, contend that it aids them by putting at ease residents who otherwise would not trust police and sheriff’s deputies. Opponents argue that it forces the release of criminals who pose a danger to other residents — even if the measure is limited in scope.

Over and over on Wednesday, speakers compared the sanctuary law to the relationship of different federal and local agencies before the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks — equating the potential threat of illegal immigration to the most damaging terrorist strike on U.S. soil. One speaker, San Juan Capistrano Councilwoman Pam Patterson, suggested that terrorists coming over the border would target the San Onofre nuclear power plant.

“We know that terrorists are coming in,” she said, saying the threat equals that of the nuclear disasters at Chernobyl, Russia, and Fukushima, Japan.

Trump did not make that argument, but he did cloak illegal immigration and immigrants in catastrophic rhetoric. He termed them “violent predators” and “sadistic criminals” and recounted “butchery” he said they had employed.

“These aren’t people, these are animals,” he said of criminal immigrants.
The president’s guests, to his seeming delight, cast California as a ruinous state and Gov. Jerry Brown as ignorant of the costs of the sanctuary law he signed.

“California is going down the drain,” said Escondido Mayor San Abed. “When Jerry Brown cares more about illegal criminals than cares about his community and American citizens, this is insanity.”

But Trump and his guests also exaggerated the breadth of the measure Brown signed last year after demanding changes from legislators that gave greater leeway for cooperation.

The law specifically allows local officials to alert ICE agents about people in jail whose crimes include serious or violent felonies, domestic violence or sex offenses. The measure also allows federal agents to question immigrants in county jails and to work with state prison officials on deportations, an element demanded by Brown.

The governor fired back at Trump immediately after the president’s televised event.

“@realDonaldTrump is lying on immigration, lying about crime and lying about the laws of CA. Flying in a dozen Republican politicians to flatter him and praise his reckless policies changes nothing. We, the citizens of the fifth largest economy in the world, are not impressed,” he said on Twitter.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein, the state’s senior Democratic elected official, likewise repudiated Trump, saying his administration “is once again attempting to divide Californians and all Americans.”

“Their decision to convene this meeting is about fueling fear of immigrants and scapegoating entire communities,” she said in a statement.

The issue of illegal immigration was a staple of Trump’s presidential campaign and has loomed larger as the administration heads into contentious 2018 congressional elections. Republicans see the issue as one that activates the president’s base, which party candidates need to turn out in order to avoid losing the House or Senate.

Trump has pounded Republican leaders in Congress for failing to pass stricter immigration laws — even as those same leaders have refused to allow votes on popular measures that would protect young immigrants brought to the country as children.

Trump also said he would push for full funding of his proposed border wall; House and Senate budget negotiators offered him only a minimal amount of money this year and sharply limited how it could be used.

Trump insisted that Californians had come over to his side of the immigration debate and wanted both the construction of a border wall and tougher enforcement — an argument belied by public polls.

“I think a lot of the Democrat politicians don’t understand what’s going on,” he said. “Because it’s actually good politically.”
Trump also repeatedly reminded his audience that illegal border crossing attempts had dropped during his time in office. That posed a messaging conflict as the president sought to fan fears of a swell of unwanted immigrants.

When one local official invoked the need for a border wall by citing thousands of illegal immigrants, Trump interrupted to insist that things were getting better.

“Now, it’s reversing,” he said, crediting his administration for positive change.

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San Bernardino County – San Bernardino County's Workforce Development Board along with the California Employers Association have been helping County businesses handle human resources issues at no cost through an HR Hotline. The service, which handles hundreds of calls, has been vital to many County small businesses helping guide them through complex HR issues and regulations.

The topics handled on the Hotline include: hiring, wage and hour claims, leave laws,
Interlock, a Redlands-based company specializing in alcohol ignition interlock devices is indicative of the County based businesses that have used the free service.

“I have probably called more than 10 times with multiple issues and always get immediate help. They are professional, knowledgeable and always willing to help.” said Michelle Gonzales of Low Cost Interlock, a Redlands-based company specializing in alcohol ignition interlock devices. The firm has approximately 50 employees. Gonzales handles the day-to-day HR issues for the firm.

Jon Novack, president, Patton Sales Corporation and Chair, Economic Development and Business Resources Committee for the San Bernardino County Workforce Development Board added that he also uses the Hotline, almost weekly for his company, which provides metal working solutions.

“The Hotline provides immediate access to great professionals. It’s imperative for all businesses to know how to implement new laws and regulations to both protect their businesses and its employees,” Novack said. “This service really benefits firms from 5 to 50 employees and that is the heart and soul of the County business community.”

He adds that the information received through the Hotline can save significant costs as the HR professionals are able to provide effective guidance on so many employee situations and the subsequent labor laws. The HR Hotline is available Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at 1-877-282-3763.

About the San Bernardino County Workforce Development Board

The San Bernardino County Workforce Development Board (WDB) is comprised of private business representatives and public partners appointed by the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors. The WDB strives to strengthen the skills of the County's workforce through partnerships with business, education and community-based organizations. The San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors is committed to providing county resources, which generate jobs and investment in line with the Countywide Vision.

The Workforce Development Board, through the San Bernardino County Economic Development Agency and Workforce Development Department, offers a variety of programs designed to help youth and adults identify career pathways and get the
Opportunity Act (WIOA) provide eligible youth, ages 16 to 24, access to a variety of career and educational services designed to help enhance job skills, develop leadership qualities, explore career options, participate in adult and peer mentoring opportunities, and take advantage of work experiences. In addition, the WDB operates San Bernardino County's three America's Job Centers of California (AJCC). The AJCCs provide individuals with job training, placement and the tools to strengthen their skills to achieve a higher quality of life. The AJCCs also support and provide services to the County's businesses, including employee recruitment and business retention programs.

Employers and job seekers who are interested in the Workforce Development Board programs may call: (800) 451-JOBS or visit [www.sbcounty.gov/workforce](http://www.sbcounty.gov/workforce).

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**INLAND EMPIRE EMPLOYMENT**

U.S. Department of Agriculture and Cal Poly Pomona Sign Internship Agreement

May 8, 2018

Amazon: In-Person Hiring Event in Eastvale Today

April 27, 2018

Cal Poly Pomona Spring Career Fair on April 26 will have Record Number of Employers

April 22, 2018

Partnership expands hands-on training for young workers

April 3, 2018
Her husband had his hand halfway around her waist when he was shot. Pressed up against her, Brad Powers moved with every whizzing bullet, but this time he flinched.

Really hard.

“Babe, I’ve been shot,” he whispered.

As a sergeant with the San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department in California, he knew how to act in such situations. Stay calm.

But his tan shorts were saturated in blood. The bullet had entered his left side, just above his pelvis.

The scene was described in detail by his wife, Kristin Powers, in a 46-page statement to Las Vegas police Oct. 3. The statement was among hundreds of documents released Wednesday, under court order, in connection with the mass shooting Oct. 1.

That night at the Route 91 Harvest festival, Kirstin Powers desperately tried to find her husband’s wound, but it was too dark.

Amid the sound of buzzing bullets, she undid his pants. Her hand felt slick with blood.

“Somebody give me their shirt!” she yelled.

Concertgoers crawled about 20 feet away, under the stage, out of direct fire. She dragged her 6-foot-3-inch, 310-pound man underneath the stage, where their friends had taken cover.

“I need you to stay with us,” she told them. “I can’t move him. He’s too big.”

The woman still needed to get her husband medical attention.
They scooped him up under his arms and pulled him backwards. His bald head dragged on the ground.

‘House of death’

“We made it to House of Blues,” Kristin Powers recounted to police. “And it was the house of death.”

Bodies. Everywhere. She had expected it to be a triage area.

She found a folding plastic table nearby and pulled her husband onto it.

“I’m wide awake. I’m fine,” he assured her. He turned clammy.

Everybody in the House of Blues had disappeared, and Kristin Powers still needed to get her husband help.

Their friends, one a sergeant and the other a detective, helped lift him up and run east out of the restaurant and onto a sidewalk.

“There was bodies in wheelbarrows,” Kristin Powers said.

She laid her husband in the street, over a metal piece on the folding table, but someone told her to give the table back.

Kirstin Powers grabbed a young medical professional by the arm and ripped open his bag to pick out whatever dressings she could find for her husband’s wound. Others grabbed at the young man’s arms to get his attention as he inserted an IV into Brad Powers’ arm.

People tried to flag down cars, and some drivers floored it as fast as they could around the corner.

“A lot of them were yelling, like ‘We don’t want the responsibility,’ ” she said.

When she saw a truck pull up, Kristen Powers opened the driver’s side door.

The driver, visibly upset, wanted to leave. “Get your hands off my truck.”

The two women made eye contact, and the driver said, “Throw him in the back. Let’s go.”

Fighting for help

They made it to the back of the truck, and so did a girl with a gaping, double chest wound.

Brad Powers looked back at his wife. “And she’s going with me, right?”
Around them, physical fights ensued to get victims help, into cars and straight to the hospital. Brad Powers’ IV ripped out, and blood squirted.

“There’s blood everywhere,” the driver said.

“I don’t give a s——, I will give you my brand new Tahoe,” Kristin Powers said. “I will buy you a brand new truck. I don’t care. I’ll buy you two trucks. Just get us there.”

When they pulled up to the Sunrise Hospital and Medical Center, the place was bumper to bumper with victims. When the back of the tailgate was pulled down, blood poured out. It was her husband’s.

The girl next to him lay completely unconscious.

“You need to go first,” Brad Powers told her repeatedly.

Within two seconds, the color lifted from his body. He was shaking with shock. In the emergency room, he had no pulse.

Today, the 19-year veteran of the San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department works in civil liabilities — traffic collisions involving sheriff’s vehicles — at the downtown station.

“It’s good. I’m back to work,” he told the Las Vegas Review-Journal on Wednesday. He declined to discuss the shooting further.

He and his wife were celebrating their 12-year anniversary that weekend and were eager to get home to their kids. Their 8-year-old has had four open-heart surgeries, and they didn’t want him to see his dad in the hospital.

His surgery saved his life, but he also credits his wife. But to Kristin Powers, her husband saved hers when he took a bullet for her at the concert.

“If it had been me at the angle, it would have gone completely through me and ripped me in half,” she said. “So it’s hard. It’s like, like you saved my life. No, you saved mine.”

Contact Briana Erickson at berickson@reviewjournal.com or 702-387-5244. Follow @brianarerick on Twitter.
A push to expand rent control in California is sending a chill through the state’s apartment industry, prompting more investors to sell properties or hold off on buying.

Ben Lamson, whose family owned just under 100 apartments in the Inland Empire area in southern California, said he has sold about 70 units and is in contract to sell the remaining ones. He is taking all the money and investing it in properties in the Las Vegas area, he said.

Mr. Lamson said he started reading news about the push for rent control a year ago and decided it was time to leave the state where he was born and has lived for five decades. He and his wife bought a home for themselves in Las Vegas, where they plan to retire in the next five years.

“These renter groups are starting to speak out and say, ‘These rents are ridiculous.’ They’ve gotten more organized than they ever have been,” he said. “I started getting a little freaked out or a little scared or concerned [that] this could really happen.”

In late April, a coalition of housing advocates said they submitted some 595,000 signatures, more than enough to get a measure on the ballot in November to repeal Costa Hawkins, state legislation that prevents cities and towns from imposing rent control on buildings constructed after 1995 and on single-family rentals.
Both sides are gearing up for a fight and are expected to spend tens of millions of dollars on campaigning.

In Santa Monica, the number of properties on the market is at the highest level in 20 years, according to Tony Solomon, a first vice president at Marcus & Millichap based in southern California. Mr. Solomon said there are 90 properties on the market, about 80% more than normal.

He said developers are also holding off on bidding on land to build new developments.

Many of the buildings on the market are a direct result of the fear that if “this were to pass, what this would do to the community again” in terms of prompting landlords to stop investing in their buildings and creating widespread disrepair, Mr. Solomon said.

Data from property tracker Real Capital Analytics show a 22% increase in multifamily sales, to $4.5 billion in the first quarter of 2018, compared with the same quarter a year earlier. Prices have risen 8% during this time, which indicates demand is healthy.

Brokers and owners say they have become more spooked since the measure officially garnered enough signatures to be on the ballot, which won’t be reflected until the second-quarter data. The potential expansion of rent control is also having a bigger effect in places like Santa Monica and Santa Ana, where politicians and advocates are openly weighing expanding rent control.

Advocates are skeptical of owners’ complaints that the push for rent control is having a negative impact on the market. Stephen Barton, who has a doctorate in city and regional planning from the University of California at Berkeley and is a former deputy director of Berkeley’s rent stabilization program, noted that real-estate groups are pushing for loosening development regulations even though that can depress rents.

“It’s very self-contradictory to say we need an enormous increase in supply and then point to rent control and say this would be terrible,” Mr. Barton said.

Landlords said what is concerning to them is the uncertainty over how municipalities will react to the repeal of Costa Hawkins and how far they will go to limit their ability to raise rents.

A Santa Monica apartment owner with roughly 50 apartment buildings, who declined to be named because he said he was afraid of attracting additional scrutiny at a politically sensitive moment, said he was in contract to purchase two properties but decided to back out because he wasn’t confident the measure would be defeated.

Write to Laura Kusisto at laura.kusisto@wsj.com
Construction workers finishing some of the last homes in 118-unit Serrano at Glenrose Ranch development at the northeast corner of Boulder Avenue and Greenspot Road. It is a Richman American Homes project.
There’s a plan for almost every piece of vacant land in Highland, Community Development Director Larry Mainez told the Highland Kiwanis Club last week.

When or if those plans come to fruition are the tougher questions.

The largest one on the map, the Harmony Specific Plan, could be shot down by the voters in November.

The Golden Triangle, where plans have been dormant for so long some residents have forgotten about it, has a new spark of life.

The city has a plan for a sign on the northbound side of the Base Line Bridge celebrating the city’s citrus heritage.

And the city has been working “behind the scenes” to develop up to 10 million square feet of business north of the San Bernardino International Airport.

Mainez has a staff of 14. He called them “the best people in the world.” He is in charge of building safety, code enforcement, housing authority, economic development and more.
Harmony? We’ll see

The Harmony plan calls for 3,600 units — single-family homes and condos — on 1,650 acres north of the Mill Creek Wash, south and west of the San Bernardino National Forest and east of Greenspot Road after it turns south toward Mentone.
There would be a new elementary school, a park and extensive trails, Mainez said. Half of the project would be open space.

The property is owned by the flood control districts of Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties, which needed the land to construct the Seven Oaks Dam, the largest flood-control dam in the nation.

The Harmony project was challenged by environmentalists because it is just north of the Santa Ana River Wash Habitat Conservation Plan, which aims to protect the San Bernardino kangaroo rat and other endangered species.

“Another group challenged the project because they felt it was inappropriate for that area and petitioned to have this project go to the voters,” he said. “In November, you will have the chance to determine the fate of the project.”

As a city official, Mainez is not allowed to take a position on the measure, but he’s willing to provide facts.

Gilda Gularte, who has worked for the county for more than 30 years, is a vocal critic of the Harmony project.

“It's just not fiscally sound,” she said.

She said the developer’s plan to build just one elementary school is not adequate, especially since the Redlands Unified School District is already overcrowded. She’s concerned about traffic, since there are only two ways in and out of the project. And she says there’s no long-term plan to maintain the infrastructure.

Most troublesome is that the southern edge of the property is near the former site Lockheed Martin's Redlands Proving Ground where more than 10,000 rocket boosters were tested in the 1950s and ’60s. Some wells in the area remain unusable as they are contaminated by perchlorate.

Gularte plans to run against Highland Councilman John Timmer in District 4 in the Nov. 6 election.

**More houses**
Mainez’ talk traveled north with a brief stop at the Old Iron Bridge — a salute to city history that he’s quite proud of — then west to Mediterra, another housing project on 180 acres north of Greenspot Road and east of Santa Paula Street. The plan calls for six estate lots, 200 low-density homes, 100 medium-density homes, two parks, extensive landscaping and a water quality management basin.

Camille Bahri, president of Sunland Communities, said Mediterra was delayed by a lawsuit, which has been dismissed. He expects to begin construction by the end of this year or early next year.

Between 500 and 600 new homes are planned along Greenspot Road, such as the second phase of Blossom Trail, 137 homes planned on 25.5 acres south of Greenspot and west of Church Street. Bahri said protections for the tiny San Bernardino kangaroo rat need to be resolved before that project can start, possibly by this time next year.

The Santa Ana River Wash and a part of San Bernardino are the only places where the species still exists. The wash has been designated as a county habitat preservation area.

“It’s very expensive to protect them,” Mainez said. “We’re talking millions of dollars for developers to set aside land or to buy for them land elsewhere. All the easy stuff is done; it’s very difficult.”

Because of the environmental concerns, some of the projects might not happen right away, he said.

Longtime citrus farmer Charles Kiel plans to sell the 18-acre MacLean Ranch, which has been in his family since the 1800s. He doesn’t have a developer yet, but the city is working with him on tract map.

Reaching Boulder Avenue in his talk, Mainez described Serrano at Glenrose, a Richmond American Homes project that is nearly complete. Construction crews are finishing the last of 118 two-story condos except for two houses across from the sales office to close out the project.

Some Kiwanians bemoaned the lack of a yard for homes that cost nearly $400,000. Mainez said there’s a marketplace for this niche. Some seniors and others don’t want the effort or expense of maintaining a yard.
The area is where longhorn cattle used to graze.

**The Golden Triangle**

The largest and long-awaited commercial development is still on the horizon, Mainez said. Officially known as the Greenspot Village & Marketplace Specific Plan, it would contain 770,000 square feet of retail space and up to 800 residential units north of Greenspot, west of Boulder and east of SR-210.

A memorandum of understanding was approved in 2008, but not a spade of dirt has been turned in the past decade. The partnership that was leading the project broke up, Mainez said, but the specific plan remains intact.

The 2,000-acre project is across the street from the Highland Crossing, home of Lowe's, LA Fitness and the newest tenant, the Trendsetters Salon and Day Spa. The same developer who built that center opened escrow on Greenspot Village a few months ago, Mainez said.

The property is worth about $4.5 million, “So I'm excited about that,” he said.

Yes, the Golden Triangle still shimmers in the distance.

The west side of the property is owned by the Orange County Flood Control District.

“That’s where we want to concentrate our retail,” Mainez said.

Mainez observed that, as online shopping has knocked the slats out of local retail, developers are seeking a new approach to shopping centers known as “retail-attainment.”

“That’s where you shop but you also want to be entertained,” he said.

The concept includes street vendors and fun places to eat. The specific plan for The Village includes an icon that says, “Work, play, live, shop, learn.”

The project is divided into three planning areas. Area 1, closest to the freeway, is the Highland Marketplace. Area 3, the Village Center, is on the east side bordering Boulder Avenue and Webster Street. Area 2, to the north, is Residential Villages. A new street,
Village Paseo, divides the retail areas on the south and the residential areas on the north.

**The big circle**

In an earlier talk with the Kiwanis, Assistant Community Development Director Kim Stater said potential developers draw a target radius circle around Highland and find the unoccupied Santa Ana wash to the south and the San Bernardino National Forest to the north.

“From a retail perspective, all of these consultants from around the world who don’t really understand Highland but they sit in their office and do a what’s called a circular analysis and don’t understand the local market,” Mainez said. “You get a few miles away from the city and it’s like Mars. So we have to talk to the consultant.”

He pointed out that the local mountains, his home, are among the most populated in the nation. The drive down from Running Springs is only 14 miles and better shopping options could save residents extra miles to get to Redlands.

He said Highland is pro-growth, especially compared to Redlands.

**Industry**

The city foresees quite a few industrial projects west of the freeway to take advantage of the growing success of the San Bernardino International Airport.

Two warehouses with a total 155,044-square-foot are under construction on 12.95 acres on the northwest corner of Fifth Street and Church Avenue, led by a developer named Art Day of Blue Jay.

Continuing west, Mainez said that sometimes you don’t know when you’re in the city of Highland or in San Bernardino, and provided a hint: “If you’re driving your car and the road is smooth, you’re in Highland,” he said, drawing laughter from the Kiwanians.

He also is excited about the Fifth Street/Third Street Corridor between SR-210 and Sterling Avenue.
“While the airport is somewhat taking off — pun intended — you have to have some forethought, you have to set the infrastructure costs and you have to be able to figure out what the market will absorb,” he said.

The city has been working behind the scenes with consultants and various agencies to develop the Airport Gateway Specific Plan. This would include high-tech, small business, industrial or distribution centers.

“We’re talking 10 million square feet of potential businesses,” he said.

Partners include the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians, San Bernardino and the East Valley Water District, which is about to start work on the Sterling Natural Resources Center on Del Rosa Avenue between Fifth and Sixth streets. The plant will generate 10 million gallons of recycled water a day to recharge the Bunker Hill Basin.
From the staff report The Planning Commission has approved this senior-assisted living center on Base Line east of Sterling Avenue.

From the staff report

**West-side story**

More than 30 percent of Highland residents are 45 or older, so there's a lot of interest among developers in senior assisted-living projects.
The city already has the Brightwater Senior Living center on Base Line near East Highlands Ranch. The Planning Commission on Tuesday granted conditional approval of a 60-unit senior center north of Base Line and east of Sterling Avenue, pending design improvements suggested by Chairman Randall Hamerly.

Mainez said it will be a beautiful building.

Also on Base Line is the rebuilding of Pepitos Restaurant and a new O’Reilly Auto Parks store.

For 16 years, the city has been looking for a new tenant to take over the old Kmart building on Highland Avenue east of Victoria Avenue. It is finally being transformed into a joint campus for REAL Journey Academy's New Vision Middle School and Entrepreneur High School.

Executive Director Ray Culbertson says he plans to complete remodeling by July and be open for school in August.

The City Council approved a $690,000 contract for a new traffic signal at the entrance. The city will be reimbursed by the school and the San Manuel tribe, which operates its casino just to the north.

**New freeway sign**

Mainez also revealed a new sign the city plans to install on the Base Line Bridge over SR-210, although he asked the Highland Community News not to publish the image because it hasn't been approved by the City Council.

It's an attractive sign that features a huge orange slice with snow-capped blue mountains and orange groves on perforated steel. Bricks will line the base of the overpass and old-fashion-looking streetlights shine down.

“We want to remember this is where we came from,” Mainez said. “We want to honor the tradition of our orange groves and the hardworking men and women who were out there picking one orange at a time so we can have our orange juice.”
The sign will be on a retaining wall blocking a Class 1 bike lane on the bridge, which will be widened from 72 to 95, making room for more turn lanes and other improvements. Construction on the $26.7 million project is expected to begin in May 2019.

Tony Mauricio, club president and member of Highland's Historic and Cultural Preservation Commission, praised the design, calling it a snapshot of what Highland is all about.

“We had as many orange groves as Redlands did,” Mauricio observed.

**Historic district**

In January 2016, the historic Rohrer Building, which stood for more than 100 years at the southwest corner of Palm Avenue and Pacific Street, collapsed in a rainstorm. Neighboring buildings fell down shortly thereafter. The old bricks are still behind a green mesh.

Mainez announced that a new owner has agreed to rebuild new buildings to look like the old buildings, but with all the modern amenities. He said the city would like to include a museum in those plans, which club members applauded.

“We have plenty of stuff in Highland to fill that museum,” Mauricio said.

Ancestors of the Cram family pioneers, the Sunkist growers, Charles Kiel and Bill Calvert have plenty of artifacts.

**Roundabout?**

Mainez said a roundabout is planned at Pacific Street and Palm Avenue in the Highland Historic District, which drew a few groans from the Kiwanians.

“This one is going to function well,” he assured the club. An old-style clock will serve as a centerpiece — “So you see how long you’re in the circle,” cracked one Kiwanian.
Operation Broken Heart results in 294 sex offender compliance checks, 20 arrests

By Kevin Trudgeon
City Editor

A sex offender compliance operation resulted in 20 arrests and 294 compliance checks throughout the High Desert.

Conducted by members of the San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department, Probation Department and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Operation Broken Heart “targets those persons who exploit children,” according to authorities.

Held in conjunction with the United States Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Program, along with all 61 of the nation’s Internet Crimes Against Children task forces, Operation Broken Heart consisted of verifying home addresses for each registered sex offender in the area.

According to authorities, 36 deputies, six parole officers and 14 probation officers participated in the operation and conducted 294 compliance checks in the cities of Hesperia, Adelanto, Victorville, Barstow, Apple Valley Phelan, Pinon Hills and Helendale.

“As a result of these compliance checks, it was found that two registrants are deceased, 13 are in state prison and six have moved from their last registered address,” sheriff’s officials said. “A total of 20 subjects were arrested during the sweep for various charges.”

According to authorities, the Sheriff’s Department and corresponding law enforcement agencies will continue to monitor and conduct random compliance checks of all registered sex offenders within San Bernardino County.
Rancho Cucamonga to continue working with community on annexation proposal

Rancho Cucamonga will spend the next few months working with the community to further refine their vision for about 4,300 acres of land the city plans to annex into its northern limits.
The City Council on Wednesday, May 16, directed staff to continue their work with residents on a neighborhood and open space conservation plan which will outline the future development and amenities allowed on the land, known as the North Eastern Sphere Annexation Proposal, or NESAP, area.

“I think we would feel more comfortable heading into the annexation if we felt the community was really behind it,” said Councilwoman Diane Williams.

Over the past few months, city workers have been collecting input from residents on the type of development they would support in the annexation area, primarily focusing on 1,200 acres of developable land owned by the San Bernardino County Flood Control District.

The district no longer needs the property and is planning to sell it.

Annexing the land would mean any future development would fall under the city’s zoning laws and development standards, which would be outlined in the community-based plan. The city also would be able to collect tax revenue to help address the impact of any future development.

Most residents involved in the process were supportive of the city gaining local control over the property.

They identified low density housing; preservation of open space; equestrian uses; new trails that connect to existing trails and open space; safe and walkable streets; rich amenities; and avoiding new taxes on existing residents as their highest priorities for the land.

Members of the Alta Loma Riding Club attended Wednesday’s meeting to remind the council and community of their needs and presence in the area targeted for annexation.

The equestrians staged a horse rally outside a community workshop April 19 in Central Park.

Larry Henderson, liaison director for the club, said its members supports annexation. The club just wants it done right.

That means the plan would include preservation of open space and low density housing, such as half to 1 acre lots, and continued equestrian uses, he said.

“We want it to be done correctly and to the standards the community has had in place for years and years,” Henderson said.

The city will plan more workshops and engagement opportunities over the next few months to help draft a Specific Plan and Environmental Impact Report that is intended to go before the council in early 2019.
Flags line the route of the 2011 Run For The Wall along Front Street. This year, the Needles Chamber of Commerce will line the overpass at the West Park Road interchange where the riders will exit Interstate 40. They’ll travel down National Old Trails Road to Needles Highway on their way into downtown Needles.

JENNIFER DENEVAN/Needles Desert Star file

NEEDLES — A grateful nation begins turning out today for hundreds of motorcyclists riding 10 days across America for thousands of those who can't, including 83,000 listed as killed or missing in action.

Join the Needles Unified School District, the chamber of commerce, Fort Mojave Indian Tribe, local businesses, veterans organization and more to welcome the 30th Run For The Wall to Needles about 1:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 16, when several hundred of those riders visit Santa Fe Park for lunch. The lunch, of course, and the accompanying packets of swag are only for the riders; the gratitude, good feelings and healing are for everybody.
Riders on three routes have one mission: “To promote healing among all veterans and their families and friends, to call for an accounting of all Prisoners of War and those Missing in Action (POW/MIA), to honor the memory of those Killed in Action (KIA) from all wars, and to support our military personnel all over the world.”

The Needles Chamber of Commerce coordinates the Needles visit. Lyn Parker of the chamber board reported the event will feature youngsters Tatyana Medrano and Safina Yussupova singing the National Anthem. Proclamations will be offered by local liaison Phil LeJeune for Dist. 1 County Supervisor Robert Lovingood and by Isis Fuentes for Assemblyman Jay Obernolte.

A contingent from the Daughters of the American Revolution, led by Mona Daniels of the BLM Needles Field Office, will be present. The Reserve Officers’ Training Corps students from Mohave High School in Bullhead City will be on hand as will students from Needles’ Vista Colorado Elementary School with hand-colored flags and hand-written messages for the veterans.

Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 404 is to make a special presentation to the Hedrick family and the century-plus tradition of the Fort Mojave Indian Tribal Band will present their inspiring renditions of patriotism and pride to riders and well-wishers. The 19th Hole Bar and Grill at River’s Edge Golf Course is bending hundreds of tacos for the riders’ lunch; their friends at Erika Records have

Registration is up for the coast-to-coast run from the Los Angeles area to Washington, D.C. Estimates were the central route, the one of the three which stops in Needles, would see more than 500 riders. As of Sunday the run’s website: rftw.us, reports 672 registered for the central route. Visit rftw.us for lots more on the run, its history, mission and participants.
'It would likely dry up.' Rare desert spring imperiled by company's plan to pump groundwater, researchers say

Ian James, The Desert Sun  Published 4:28 p.m. PT April 14, 2018 | Updated 1:12 p.m. PT April 16, 2018

Below the rocky, sunbaked ridges of the Clipper Mountains in the Mojave Desert, a ribbon of green teems with life.

Cottonwoods, willows and reeds sway with the breeze. Crickets chirp. Bees buzz around shallow pools.

Clear water gushes from a hole in the ground, forming Bonanza Spring, the largest spring in the southeastern Mojave Desert.

This rare oasis is at the center of the fight over a company's plan to pump groundwater and sell it to California cities.

Cadiz Inc. is proposing to pump an average of 16.3 billion gallons of water each year for 50 years. The company says the project won't harm any of the springs in the area, and it recently presented a study in which researchers concluded Bonanza Spring wouldn't be affected by its groundwater pumping.

Now other researchers have come to the opposite conclusion, saying in a new study that Bonanza Spring is likely connected to the same aquifer where the company plans to draw water from wells, and that the project would put the spring at risk of drying up.
Andy Zdon, a hydrogeologist who led the study, analyzed water samples from the spring and determined that unlike other nearby springs, which are fed by rainfall that collects in relatively shallow underground sources, Bonanza Spring flows with water that comes from much deeper underground.

Zdon said the research points to a "hydraulic connection" between the spring and the aquifer that Cadiz intends to use, indicating the spring would probably be affected by the decline in the water table.

"The spring is going to be highly susceptible to drawdown from the pumping," Zdon said. "It would likely dry up."

The study, which was published Friday in the journal Environmental Forensics, involved a chemical analysis of water from Bonanza Spring and other springs in Mojave Trails National Monument. The research was conducted by consulting firm Partner Engineering and Science Inc. and funded by the Mojave Desert Land Trust, a nonprofit conservation group that opposes the Cadiz project.

Zdon and his team analyzed the oxygen and hydrogen isotopes in the water and said the water in Bonanza Spring has different characteristics than several other springs in this part of the desert. The stable isotopes in rainwater vary with latitude and elevation, and Zdon and his colleagues used those "signatures" to examine the sources of the spring water.

They determined that Hummingbird, Teresa, and Chuckwalla Springs are "perched" springs, which are relatively shallow and fed by local rainfall percolating into the ground, but that the water in Bonanza Spring differs from local rainfall and instead matches rain that falls well north of the Clipper Mountains in other mountains in the Mojave National Preserve.

The scientists also found that unlike other springs, the water in Bonanza Spring has similar characteristics to groundwater in the aquifer in the adjacent Fenner Valley — including the Fenner Gap, an area where Cadiz plans to pump groundwater.

Zdon coauthored the research with hydrogeologists M. Lee Davisson and Adam H. Love. They said in the study that Bonanza Spring "has generally been assumed to be a perched spring disconnected from the basin-fill aquifer system," but that their results indicate it's likely connected with that larger reserve of groundwater.
And if groundwater levels decline due to pumping, the researchers wrote, that “could result in an uncertain, but potentially substantial decrease in free-flowing water from the spring.”

Cadiz disputed the findings, and scientists who recently studied the spring for the company called the new research flawed.

“Zdon does not account for the existence of two observable geologic faults that fully insulate the Bonanza Spring from any impact from the Cadiz Water Project,” Cadiz President and CEO Scott Slater said in a statement.

In the earlier study (http://www.cadizwaterproject.com/2018-bonanza-spring-study/) commissioned by the Los Angeles-based company, researchers identified two faults that they said block groundwater flowing in fractured bedrock. They said those two “bounding faults” intersect at the spring, and groundwater spills over the faults to form the spring.

The study, which was released in January, was conducted by geologist Miles Kenney and hydrogeologist Terry Foreman, who said the effects of groundwater drawdown around the company’s wells wouldn’t reach the area of the spring due to a “hydraulic disconnect” and faults between the two areas.

The wellfield where the company intends to pump groundwater is located about 1,000 feet lower in elevation than the spring, and about 11 miles away.

In their assessment, Kenney and Foreman wrote that “the spring’s discharge is localized within a fractured rock system that is hydraulically separated from the alluvial regional groundwater system in Fenner Valley located three miles to the east.” They said their research “demonstrates that the perennial spring discharge is controlled by the existence of two bounding faults.”

As part of the research, Kenney mapped the faults and the geology around the spring. During six days of field work, Kenney inspected a tunnel uphill from the spring on the mountainside that was apparently excavated in the early 1900s by miners, and he found a portion of the fault exposed in the wall of the passage. The other intersecting fault zone was also visible.

“Essentially those faults act like dams,” Foreman said. “It’s effectively a subsurface dam that then causes the water to overspill, groundwater to spill over those faults.”
The researchers who prepared the study for Cadiz said the spring’s flow depends on recharge from precipitation in a catchment area that extends over four miles to the north.

“The spring is going to be controlled absolutely by climatic conditions, basically changes in long-term rainfall and recharge above where those faults occur,” Foreman said. “It’s going to be driven by that recharge as opposed to anything that happens in the valley.”

Kenney criticized Zdon’s research, saying “he basically didn’t look at the local geology.”

“We think it’s flawed and it needs to be corrected,” Foreman added.

**Arguing over the science**

Zdon said he disagreed with the conclusions of the study commissioned by Cadiz. He pointed out that Kenney and Foreman didn’t include a similar analysis of water samples.

“You can’t begin to source where water comes from without looking at the water itself, and they did not do that,” Zdon said.

Zdon previously conducted a survey of more than 300 springs and water holes across the Mojave Desert for the federal Bureau of Land Management during 2015 and 2016. He’s found that most of the springs in the desert rely on local precipitation and may increase or decrease in flow depending on whether it’s been wet or dry.
But Zdon said records from more than a century ago show that Bonanza Spring is different and that its flow has held steady at about 10 gallons a minute. It’s still putting out as much water as it did in the early 1900s, he said, when a pipeline carried water downhill to the railway stop in Danby to fill tanks aboard passing steam engines.

Zdon said other measurements provided additional clues. When a spring depends on shallow groundwater, the water temperature is usually close to the average annual air temperature. But the water in Bonanza Spring emerges from the ground more than 11 degrees warmer, indicating it’s warmed up by the earth deep underground. His team calculated the water must be coming up from more than 750 feet underground.

Zdon also analyzed the water to check for tritium, a radioactive isotope of hydrogen that was released into the atmosphere with nuclear weapons testing starting in the late 1940s. The water in nearby Teresa Spring contains tritium, showing the water fell as rain or snow sometime between the 40s and the present day. But the water in Bonanza Spring contains no tritium, indicating it’s been underground since before those atomic tests.

Zdon said other carbon-dating tests, which weren’t described in their study, have found that the water coming out of Bonanza Spring has been underground for approximately 15,000 years.
“So, between the groundwater ages, the temperatures and the chemistry, looking at it from three different directions, it’s all pointing to the same answer: that this is tied into more regional flow,” Zdon said. “That water has got to be moving towards the Clipper Mountains through the basin-fill aquifer… and seeping through the Clipper Mountains, probably along fractured rocks along the fault zones, and surfacing at the spring.”

On that point, too, the scientists who prepared the report for Cadiz said they disagree based on their observations and their work mapping the faults and reviewing scientific papers. They also studied documents concerning two old mines located about a mile northeast of the spring.

The groundwater levels in those inactive mines are about 150 feet lower than the elevation where water flows from Bonanza Spring, they wrote, suggesting that the faults in the area, which run from the northwest toward the southeast, act as barriers and “groundwater flow is effectively compartmentalized.”

“It’s physically impossible for groundwater to move from the north, across that area where those mines are, to Bonanza Spring,” Foreman said. “Groundwater levels to the north of Bonanza Spring are lower, so there’s no way that groundwater levels can go from a high to a low and then essentially go back uphill. It’s just physically not possible.”

Kenney also reviewed aerial images in mapping the faults and the geology. Cadiz’s research team said they found other geologic signs including an abundance of precipitated minerals along the fault zones, “indicating that the faults can be strong groundwater barriers.”

As part of the study commissioned by Cadiz, 10 hydrologists and geologists visited the spring in December with Foreman and Kenney, and five of them reviewed the report and agreed with the conclusion that the spring wouldn’t be affected by the water project.

Climate Point:  Sign up for USA TODAY’s climate change and energy newsletter (https://www.usatoday.com/featured-newsletter/climatepoint/)

Cadiz has proposed to pump groundwater on land surrounded by Mojave Trails National Monument. The company owns 34,000 acres in the desert along Route 66, and it plans to build a 43-mile pipeline to carry water from its property to the Colorado River Aqueduct.

In 2011 and 2012, Cadiz’s proposal went through an environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act. Orange County’s Santa Margarita Water District served as the lead agency in the review process and certified the environmental impact report. The document repeatedly states that “the physical evidence indicates” the aquifer isn’t connected to the springs and therefore the pumping would have no impact on the springs.

Conservation groups challenged the environmental review in court, but they lost.

Frazier Haney, land conservation director for the Mojave Desert Land Trust, said the new research shows those environmental review documents were based on incomplete science and that the water project poses a serious threat to the spring.
During a visit to Bonanza Spring, Haney walked past blooming brittlebush shrubs and wildflowers to the edge of the spring, where the thick vegetation rustled in the breeze. He said he's seen mountain lion tracks here. The spring is also frequented by bighorn sheep and bobcats that come to drink, and by migratory birds that forage among the trees.

Frogs and tadpoles swim in the ponds, and dozens of species of native plants grow in the wetland, which stretches a half-mile downhill from the spot where water pours out of the ground.

Walking to the top of a bluff, Haney looked out over the springs.

“It's a magical place,” Haney said. “Springs like this are one of the most important parts of the ecosystem.”

From the ridges above the spring, you can see the open desert of the Fenner Valley below. It stretches out in a plain between mountain ranges, covered with creosote bushes. Haney pointed out the patch of the desert where Cadiz is proposing to drill new wells.

“Intensive groundwater pumping out here could be devastating for the ecosystem,” Haney said.

Researchers recently prepared a study for Cadiz Inc. in which they concluded the company’s water project wouldn't harm Bonanza Spring, which is located 1 1/4 miles from an area where groundwater would be pumped. (Photo: Jay Calderon/The Desert Sun)

His group focuses on buying lands to protect parts of the desert for conservation. It has purchased more than 71,000 acres for conservation since 2006. Some of those lands have been transferred to the federal government and have become part of the Mojave Trails National Monument.

Cadiz’s managers have said they plan to use groundwater that would otherwise gradually flow downhill and evaporate from two dry lakes. On those dry lakebeds, other companies dig trenches in the cracked soil to extract salts left by the evaporating water.

The concept of using water that would otherwise evaporate from the lakebeds is reflected in the company’s formal name for its plan: the Cadiz Valley Water Conservation, Recovery and Storage Project.

“The Cadiz Water Project will stop the annual loss of more than 10 billion gallons per year to evaporation,” Courtney Degener, a vice president and spokesperson for the company, said in an email. “It cannot and will not impact area springs but it will make available new water for 400,000 people, create critical groundwater storage capacity for our region and support 5,900 new jobs in a safe and sustainable way.”

Degener said Zdon’s new study “fails to account for the most current field work and hydrogeological conclusions about area springs, and does not present any new credible findings.”

‘Cone of depression’

Cadiz’s proposal has been hotly debated for years. While pursuing the plan to sell water, the company has been pumping groundwater on its property to irrigate nearly 2,000 acres of farmland, growing lemons, grapes, raisins and other crops.
During President Barack Obama’s administration, federal officials had hindered the project by ruling that the company would need a new permit to build a water pipeline alongside a railroad.

But in October, President Donald Trump’s administration reversed that decision and gave the company a green light. The federal Bureau of Land Management told Cadiz it wouldn’t need a permit to build the pipeline along the railroad right-of-way.

Two environmental groups — the Center for Biological Diversity and the Center for Food Safety — are challenging that decision in a lawsuit. Another group, the National Parks Conservation Association, is suing to challenge a related policy change: a 2017 Interior Department legal opinion that said railroad companies are allowed to lease out portions of their rights-of-way for other purposes without going through a federal environmental review.

Cadiz has said it plans to move ahead with designing and building the water pipeline alongside the railroad.

That plan still could face obstacles, though, because some of the land where Cadiz wants to build the pipeline is owned by the state. And in September, California’s State Lands Commission told the company that any use of the state-owned lands under its jurisdiction would require a lease and its approval.

Opponents of the project seized on the new study, saying it reveals problems in the 2012 environmental review.

“Given this new information, I strongly believe Cadiz’s CEQA review must be reexamined,” Sen. Dianne Feinstein said in a statement Friday. “Cadiz needs to accept this new scientific study and abandon its goal of draining the Mojave Desert of its most precious resource: water. It’s time Cadiz and its investors give up on this desert boondoggle.”

Chris Clarke, California desert program manager for the National Parks Conservation Association, agreed and said the new research “demonstrates Cadiz has used a flawed hydrology model that produced flawed analysis” for the environmental review. He said that process “now must be corrected through additional environmental review.”

The company’s officials have defended the environmental review, pointing out that California’s environmental law is considered more stringent than any federal environmental law and that San Bernardino County in 2012 approved a groundwater management plan — formally titled the Groundwater Management, Monitoring and Mitigation Plan — which sets additional limits for the project.

Cadiz also points to the court decisions upholding the review.

“Peer-reviewed science, physical observations of the region and California’s courts all agree: The Cadiz Water Project will protect the desert environment including Bonanza Spring,” Degener said.

The groundwater management plan details the county’s oversight role for the project.
“It is not anticipated that the Project will have any impact on the springs,” the document says. “Nonetheless, this Management Plan provides for quarterly monitoring of the Bonanza Spring as an ‘indicator spring’ because it is the spring that is in closest proximity to the Project wellfield.”

The plan calls for “baseline and periodic visual observation and flow estimates” and says monitoring wells between the wellfield and the spring would be used to track groundwater levels.

According to the plan, if there’s a reduction in the spring’s flow and it’s determined to be due to the company’s wells, “corrective measures” would include reducing pumping, changing pumping locations in the wellfield or stopping groundwater extraction.


One of the concerns that Zdon and others raise about Cadiz’s plan is that the pumping would create a “cone of depression” in the aquifer as groundwater flows from surrounding areas toward the company’s wellfield.

The way groundwater drawdown occurs in the desert, Zdon said, “it’s very hard to control what happens once that cone of depression starts building.”

Once the pumping begins to lower the water table, that depressed area of the aquifer would continue to expand for years, even if the pumping were stopped.

Given that dynamic, Zdon said, the monitoring plan “is not sufficient to be protective of the spring.”

“When you lower the water table below a spring system like that, the first thing you would notice is a reduction in surface flow and maybe a complete cessation of any kind of surface water at the site,” Zdon said. “If you see an impact at the spring, it’s probably too late.”

Cadiz’s executives and researchers responded that the sort of monitoring Zdon is calling for is already part of the county’s plan.

Degener said the project “will be regulated by an extensive groundwater monitoring plan enforced by the County that includes the exact groundwater monitoring Zdon recommends and goes even further including monitoring features across the entire watershed.”

There are already two existing monitoring wells, one uphill from Fenner Valley and another close to Danby, Foreman said.

“It’s interesting that the water temperature in those wells is actually higher than the water temperature of the spring,” Foreman said. “And so that water has obviously moved over long distances and it’s 2 to 3 degrees higher in temperature than the spring, so we think that the spring is more local water, and those water temperatures show that separation.”

Kenney and Foreman said some of Zdon’s findings are consistent with their own but they disagree with the conclusions, including that the spring would be fed by recharge from an area far to the north.

“I’m wondering how much of his findings might change if he was to consider the watershed that we considered, not north of the Clippers but just simply the rocks in the western Clipper Mountains,” Kenney said.

Zdon and his colleagues stressed that if the pumping begins, more intensive monitoring would be necessary to protect the spring. They wrote that the groundwater monitoring “should be designed to obtain sufficient early warning of potentially damaging groundwater level decline.”

They said relying on observable changes at the spring would be ineffective, and that drilling monitoring wells close to Bonanza Spring would provide a way of spotting a decline quickly — before it’s too late for the spring.

Their research included not only data collected by Zdon and his colleagues, but also data from a study that researchers from the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory conducted in 2000 for Cadiz and the Metropolitan Water District, which were working together at the time on an earlier iteration of the project.

That earlier research focused on identifying the recharge area and estimating the amount of recharge. It included geochemical analyses of the water in Bonanza Spring and other springs and wells.

Davisson, who was one of Zdon’s coauthors, also helped carry out that research for Lawrence Livermore back in 2000, and the data was publicly released in August 2017.

Zdon said the data helped confirm his team’s findings.
“We were actually largely using the same analytical techniques in sampling that Lawrence Livermore used back in 2000 on behalf of Cadiz,” Zdon said. “What that did was essentially confirm our sampling, because basically our results 17 years later were nearly identical with what Lawrence Livermore came up with.”

Ian James writes about water and environmental issues for The Desert Sun. Reach him at ian.james@desertsun.com (mailto:ian.james@desertsun.com), (760) 778-4693 or @TDSIanJames (https://twitter.com/TDSIanJames).

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As a longtime advocate for a wide range of regional issues that impact our community’s future growth and success, I’m never surprised by the manufactured controversy that often surrounds big infrastructure projects. I also believe California has the country’s most aggressive environmental protection laws, so when a project has been fully vetted and approved, I am confident it is, in fact, safe for the environment.

That’s the reason I’ve supported the Cadiz Water Project for some time and why I was disappointed to read the shocking — but clearly biased — headline about a “study” paid for by a group opposed to the project and claiming it would harm a distant spring.

The Cadiz Water Project is safe for the environment and will not impact any springs. That’s not just my opinion, that’s a fact validated by independent hydrologists and geologists and confirmed by California’s courts.

Not only do scientists question the credibility of the model used by the opposition study, but they call the conclusions “impossible,” since the desert spring in question is 11 miles away, more than 1,000 feet above and separated from the project by faults in the ground that hydraulically disconnect the two areas.

The robust local controls built into the project’s groundwater management plan are also critical because they give San Bernardino County the power to stop the project should any unexpected impacts occur.

California struggles with persistent drought, and investing in new water supplies is critical to the livelihoods of millions of people, communities and businesses. Pursuing an environmentally sustainable project that conserves 10 billion gallons of water currently being lost to evaporation and creates a new, reliable water supply for more than 400,000 people in Southern California is not only good for the environment, it’s good for our state.

**Editor:** The author is a Simi Valley City Council member.

Glen Becerra, Simi Valley
Live Nation has a stranglehold on music ticketing

BY BILL PASCRELL JR.

When President Obama was deciding in 2009 whether to approve a merger between the world’s largest concert promoter, Live Nation, and the biggest ticket provider, Ticketmaster, a group of bipartisan lawmakers pleaded with his administration to block the deal. This coalition, which included me, understood that the joint company would strangle competition in live entertainment.

Obama’s top antitrust regulator at the time, then-assistant Atty. Gen. Christine A. Varney, reassured critics that “there will be enough air and sunlight in the space for strong competitors to take root, grow, and thrive.” The merger was waved through and became final in 2010.

Eight years later, there are no strong competitors taking root, growing or thriving. The online ticketing market, now a $9-billion business, is still dominated by Live Nation-Ticketmaster. In 2008, the two companies held more than 80% of the market share. Combined, the new company, Live Nation Entertainment, has grown even larger, acquiring other ticket companies, promoters and festivals, including Lollapalooza and Bonnaroo.

Live Nation Entertainment controls “nearly every aspect” of the ticket business, producing record-high ticket prices and onerous fees, according to an investigation published last month by the New York Times. The Department of Justice is now looking into complaints that the company, which also manages hundreds of top artists, tried to coerce venues into using Ticketmaster.

I requested an evaluation of the ticket market from the Government Accountability Office last year. The GAO’s findings, made public this week, confirm that the sprawling and opaque Live Nation system is squeezing consumers.

The GAO found that the ticket market as a whole is rife with practices that are “not fully transparent,” and that Live Nation, which claims more than half of ticket sales in the United States, engages in questionable gimmicks to conceal its extra costs.

Service fees, processing fees, facility fees, promoting fees: Americans know all about these add-ons, hidden until just before they click to buy those Taylor Swift tickets. Live Nation
refers to these charges as an “extension of the ticket price,” an Orwellian construct if there ever were one.

These fees make it difficult for consumers to know the true value of concert tickets. Primary ticketing companies — the box office or ticket booth at the venue itself, say — impose fees that, on average, amount to 27% of the original ticket price. Secondary ticketing companies, such as the eBay subsidiary StubHub, charge an average of 31% of the ticket price. Because Live Nation controls a significant portion of both markets, the extra fees give the company an enormous competitive edge.

Moreover, if the GAO report is correct, Ticketmaster is not abiding by earlier promises to stop some of its deceptive tactics.

In 2009, when tickets went on sale for a series of Bruce Springsteen concerts, the company displayed a “No Tickets Found” message on its website, steering customers to its affiliate in the secondary market, TicketsNow, where tickets were offered at much higher prices. Although Ticketmaster settled the case with the Federal Trade Commission in 2010, the GAO found that the company continues to engage in similarly manipulative practices.

Not all of the problems identified by the GAO can be attributed solely to Live Nation, and many of them predate the merger. But there is no question that Live Nation is exploiting the system to its advantage. The company has sway over nearly every facet of the live-event business: recording, record sales, licensing, talent management, venue ownership, ticketing services and even concessions.

Its dominance is reminiscent of the old Hollywood studio system, in which men like Jack Warner and Louis B. Mayer exerted near total power: writing and producing all their movies, holding exclusive contracts with actors, colluding to control how films were distributed and owning the theaters in which they were shown. That system of vertical integration stifled independent producers until the Supreme Court forced studios to sell their theaters.

The ticket marketplace is mammoth, nontransparent and wildly speculative, and federal regulation is nonexistent. After the Springsteen tickets fiasco, I introduced the BOSS Act (Better Oversight of Secondary Sales and Accountability in Concert Ticketing) to create better transparency in the ticketing market. Following the GAO’s report, I will be reintroducing that legislation soon.

But regulation alone won’t solve the Live Nation problem. The company should be broken up.

When the merger was under consideration, Live Nation’s lobbyists, led by former executive chairman Irving Azoff, displayed a sense of entitlement and dismissiveness toward their customers — a preview of how the company would wield its monopolistic power. Without action from Congress and more stringent enforcement from the Department of Justice, there is no reason to believe Live Nation Entertainment will behave any differently now.
SCIENCE FILE

Did drugmakers’ gifts fuel crisis?

Research says doctors who got freebies tended to prescribe more opioid pills.

The more free meals and payments a doctor got from pharmaceutical companies in 2014, the more opioid prescriptions he or she wrote in 2015, a study found. (Getty Images)

Karen Kaplan

Health officials hoping to stem the opioid crisis might want to pay attention to what doctors eat for lunch.

A new research letter reports that doctors who received free meals and other kinds of payments from pharmaceutical companies tended to prescribe more opioid painkillers to their patients over the course of a year. Meanwhile, doctors who didn’t get such freebies cut back on their opioid prescriptions.
The finding was reported Monday in the journal JAMA Internal Medicine.

A team led by Dr. Scott E. Hadland of Boston Medical Center’s Grayken Center for Addiction examined Medicare data and found that 369,139 physicians prescribed an opioid painkiller at least 10 times in 2015 under one of the insurance program’s Part D plans.

Then they consulted the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services’ Open Payments database and found that 25,767 (or 7%) of these same doctors received “opioid-related payments” from drug companies in 2014.

The payments added up to just over $9 million, according to the report.

For doctors on the receiving end of this largesse, payments most often came in the form of food. The companies bought 97,020 meals at a total cost of $1.8 million, and the median value of these breakfasts, lunches and dinners was $13. (That means half of the meals cost more than this amount, and half cost less.)

The most expensive category for the drug companies was “speaking fees and/or honoraria.” These funds went to only 3,115 recipients, but the payments were worth a combined $6.2 million, Hadland and his colleagues found.

In addition, 1,862 physicians received $730,824 worth of travel, 360 doctors were paid $290,395 in consulting fees, and 3,011 clinicians got $79,660 in funds related to education.

None of the $9 million was used to fund medical research, the study authors noted.

The physicians who received these payments prescribed opioid painkillers an average of 539 times in 2015. That figure was higher than the average for 2014.

By contrast, the doctors who did not receive payments from pharmaceutical companies prescribed opioids an average of 134 times in 2015. That figure was lower than in 2014.

The more meals a doctor was treated to in 2014, the more opioid prescriptions he or she wrote in 2015. After controlling for other factors, the researchers calculated that for each additional meal over the course of the year, the number of opioid prescriptions rose by 0.7%.

The findings don’t prove that payments to doctors prompted them to write more prescriptions for painkillers at a time when most of their colleagues were cutting back. It’s possible that doctors who were more inclined to prescribe opioid painkillers in the first place were also more likely to be hired by drugmakers to give speeches, consult on medical issues or perform other services.

Still, the link between drug company payments and opioid prescriptions deserves further scrutiny in light of the nation’s opioid epidemic, the study authors wrote. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that 115 Americans die each day as a result of an opioid overdose, and the road to addiction typically starts with a legitimately prescribed painkiller.
“Our findings suggest that manufacturers should consider a voluntary decrease or complete cessation of marketing to physicians,” they concluded. “Federal and state governments should also consider legal limits on the number and amount of payments.”

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Developer faces federal bribery case  Developer arrested in bribery case

Man offered to buy a home for L.A. County worker in exchange for a government lease, officials say.

BY DAVID ZAHNISER AND ADAM ELMAHREK

A Beverly Hills real estate developer was arrested Wednesday on a felony charge of bribing a Los Angeles County employee in exchange for a government lease worth $45 million, federal law enforcement officials said.

Arman Gabaee, 57, provided the employee about $1,000 a month over a six-year period in exchange for leases, nonpublic information and other benefits, according to the criminal complaint filed last week.

Prosecutors also say Gabaee, known professionally as Arman Gabay, made offers to purchase the county employee a residence in Santa Rosa for nearly $1.1 million. Those offers were aimed at persuading the employee to sign off on a 10-year lease for the county’s Department of Public Social Services at a Gabaee property in Hawthorne, the complaint said.

Gabaee viewed the Northern California property as “leverage to get the employee’s assistance obtaining the $45-million county lease,” prosecutors said.

Sachi A. Hamai, the county’s chief executive, said in a statement that she and other officials are “deeply troubled” by the allegations.

“While we cannot comment on the specifics of this pending case, we can say emphatically that we expect our employees to adhere to the highest standards of ethical behavior as they conduct the public’s business,” she said. “Anything less is a betrayal of the public trust and will not be tolerated.”

Gabaee appeared in federal court Wednesday and was released after posting $1-million bail. His attorney, Thomas O’Brien, said he had not received any evidence from the government that would allow him to “analyze the truth of these allegations.”

“At this point, I have no further comment,” he said.
Arraignment is set for June 12. If convicted, Gabaee faces up to 10 years in prison, prosecutors said.

Gabaee is co-founder and managing partner of Charles Co., a Hollywood real estate firm that develops projects across the region. In addition, one of his companies, M & A Gabaee, has leases with the county for offices in Pasadena, El Monte and elsewhere.

Investigators say Gabaee began giving cash payments to the county employee, who handled leases and other real estate matters, in about 2010 or 2011. Prosecutors contend that after the bribe payments began, the employee began running “interference” between Gabaee and county departments that leased space from him, helping out with such issues as building repairs.

Prosecutors said Gabaee had been seeking a new lease at 12000 Hawthorne Blvd. in Hawthorne, a property that the county had leased for more than a decade.

In 2011, the county Board of Supervisors signed off on a five-year lease renewal for the site, extending the rental agreement to 2017. At the time, county officials were using the location for welfare fraud investigations and other purposes.

In 2016, the county employee began cooperating with the FBI, agreeing to record conversations with Gabaee and others, the complaint says.

The employee acknowledged accepting “numerous bribe payments from Gabaee and others,” as well as committing — or attempting to commit — tax fraud and bankruptcy fraud, the document says. The employee also wants federal officials to consider that cooperation when they address “certain illegal acts” the witness has committed.

FBI agents secretly recorded at least nine phone calls between Gabaee and the county employee, who is not named in the complaint and is identified only as “Cooperating Witness 1.” Agents also recorded at least eight in-person meetings between the two and intercepted several phone calls by Gabaee to other people.

At one breakfast meeting, Gabaee expressed concern that there were cameras “all over the ... place,” according to the complaint. At another, he warned the county employee that he might have to speak with a high-ranking elected official about securing the long-term lease in Hawthorne, the document says.

The complaint did not identify the elected official.

FBI agents also recorded Gabaee discussing efforts to purchase a home in Northern California for the county employee. In April 2017, prosecutors said, Gabaee identified a 3,000-square-foot house in Santa Rosa wine country, making an offer for $1,065,000.

That same month, federal agents intercepted a call in which the county worker told Gabaee “Hawthorne can move forward,” according to the complaint.

“I’m gonna move forward with the 10-year” — a reference to the duration of the lease, the document says.
According to investigators, Gabaee was grateful to hear the news, telling the county employee, “I can’t thank you enough.”

The lease drawn up by the employee called for the county to pay a base monthly rent of $324,120, with the potential for yearly increases. After telling the employee he had signed an offer on the Santa Rosa property, Gabaee began asking about more favorable terms for the rental agreement, including a commitment from the county to cover janitorial and utility costs.

Not long after Gabaee received a copy of the proposed lease, FBI agents approached him and told him they were aware of the alleged bribe, according to the complaint. Gabaee’s offer on the Santa Rosa property was withdrawn “within hours,” the document says.

County Supervisor Janice Hahn said the allegations, if true, are “a reprehensible case of corruption and a betrayal of public trust.”

At the county, “we have no room for individuals only looking to enrich themselves on the public’s dime,” she said in a statement.

Hamai, the county CEO, said that before learning of the federal investigation, county officials had launched “extensive reviews” of leasing practices, which have resulted in new policies. The county initially held off on taking any personnel actions, she said, to avoid interfering with the federal investigation.

“Eventually, based on the county’s own investigation, the county moved to terminate one employee, who resigned in lieu of termination in August 2017,” she said.

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A transformed LAPD reflects the city it polices  Building trust in L.A.’s policing

In Trump era, diversity is a matter of civic trust

NEW OFFICERS stand for inspection during a Los Angeles Police Academy graduation last month. Since the 1992 riots, the LAPD has created a more diverse police force: 48% Latino, 10% Asian and 10% black. (Al Seib Los Angeles Times)
Al Labrada recalls the terror he felt as a young boy each time he rode from Los Angeles to San Diego on a Greyhound bus and passed through an immigration checkpoint.

Born in Mexico City, he had crossed the border illegally when he was 5 while pretending to be asleep in the back seat of a Ford station wagon.

His experience, the Los Angeles police captain says, serves as a way for him to connect with residents who express fear about being caught up in immigration sweeps. It’s a tale that the 47-year-old, who became an American citizen while serving in the Marine Corps, has shared in one-on-one conversations and at public gatherings.

“I want them to understand that my sympathy and my intent to build trust with the undocumented is more on a personal level, as well as a professional level,” Labrada said after a recent meeting at Santa Teresita Catholic Church, across from a Boyle Heights public housing project.

Connecting with those in the country illegally has emerged as a major goal for the Los Angeles Police Department in the era of President Trump, whose vow to ramp up deportations has stoked fear in immigrant communities. But it’s part of a policing strategy that has been employed by the department for decades.
Nearly 40 years ago, the LAPD prohibited officers from questioning residents solely to determine their immigration status, in hopes of fostering trust and cooperation.

In more recent years, a dramatic shift in the department’s demographic makeup has deepened its relationship with the diverse community it serves.

An LAPD that looks more like L.A.

Since the racial unrest of the 1992 riots, the LAPD has created a force that, once almost all white, now nearly mirrors the city: Forty-eight percent of sworn officers are Latino, 10% are Asian and 10% are black. About 15% of the department’s officers are foreign-born.

Though police use of force and in-custody deaths remain polarizing issues — particularly in the black community — experts say the department has made significant strides in forming a partnership with residents.

“They have not just reformed what they look like and whom they hire, they’ve reformed how they think, they’ve reformed their entire outlook of these communities,” said Connie Rice, a civil-rights attorney whose advice has been sought by police commissioners and elected officials for more than three decades. “And they couldn’t have done that with an all-white-dominated force — they couldn’t have done that with the old LAPD.”

Deputy Chief Robert Arcos, head of the LAPD’s Central Bureau and one of three finalists to be the department’s next chief, said the shift to a diverse police force has been a long time coming.

While growing up in northeast L.A., the third-generation Mexican American said, the popular 1960s TV show “Adam-12” “was really ... what I knew to be LAPD.”

“These two handsome-looking male whites,” Arcos said, referring to fictional officers Pete Malloy and Jim Reed. “When I saw police officers in my neighborhood, it was very typical of watching ‘Adam-12.’ I never really saw anybody who looked like me.”

Added pressure for new policies

The transformation of the LAPD created opportunity, but also a new set of pressures and expectations.

After Trump took office, the department found itself grappling with a drop in crimes being reported by Latinos.

From January to April 2017, Latinos reported 23% fewer sexual assaults and 8% fewer domestic-violence incidents, according to the LAPD.

That prompted officers to hold more than 100 forums to remind people that the department’s stance on supporting the estimated 375,000 Los Angeles residents who are in the country illegally remained the same.

The department issued an 11-page update on immigration procedures in late December, expanding upon its Special Order 40 from 1979 that tells officers not to “initiate police
actions with the objective of discovering the alien status of a person.” The notice also expands upon L.A. Mayor Eric Garcetti’s Executive Directive 20 from March 2017, which reaffirmed existing policy about immigration and barred city employees from granting immigration agents access to facilities that are not expressly open to the general public.

Under the new procedures, police no longer record a place of birth when interviewing victims, witnesses or people who are temporarily detained. Officers still ask anyone who is arrested for their place of birth. That information is taken during fingerprinting and sent to an FBI database, which immigration authorities can access.

The LAPD also has stopped engaging in joint operations with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement or Customs and Border Protection that directly involve civil immigration enforcement. Other cities, including San Gabriel and Santa Cruz, have stopped engaging in joint operations altogether.

And the department no longer transfers people with certain minor criminal convictions to ICE custody. Officers continue to detain and transfer immigrants sought through a judicial warrant or those previously convicted in the United States of a serious or violent felony — a classification that includes more than 60 crimes, including murder, rape, criminal threats, carjacking and arson.

Immigrants used to be transferred to ICE custody for aggravated felonies, of which there are hundreds.

In a memo last month to the L.A. Police Commission — the civilian panel that oversees the department — Chief Charlie Beck noted that crime statistics at the end of 2017 showed a “significant improvement” in sexual assault and domestic violence reporting among Latinos.

But immigration activists, in a recent meeting with a City Council committee, said the LAPD’s changes don’t go far enough.

“The order introduced by Chief Beck still allows for information sharing with ICE. It still collects the place of birth information for all those who are arrested, whether they are convicted or not,” said Crissel Rodriguez of the California Immigrant Youth Justice Alliance. “To me, this is unsafe and it further undermines trust between the community and police.”

Beck, however, said police need to comply with the law.

“I think that our order ... keeps my obligations as chief of police, but also recognizes that the police draw their most significant authority through the public that they serve,” Beck said in an interview. “And the reality is in Los Angeles that a very strong percentage of that population is undocumented.”

The LAPD plans to submit reports to the Police Commission that detail joint operations, including criminal immigration enforcement, transfers of immigrants to ICE custody and federal requests to interview detainees and be notified of their release.
Ingrid Eagly, an immigration-law professor at UCLA, said the LAPD is among a handful of departments leading the way in generating policies that protect immigrant residents.

“We are in a moment of heightened immigration enforcement that is heavily dependent on local police decisions to trigger deportations,” she said. “This makes policing policy — both on the street and inside local jails — an important part of how immigration is actually enforced on the ground.”

Officers who are part of a community

The fact that some in the LAPD know what it’s like to be in the country without legal status is an advantage in community outreach.

Jorge Villegas crossed into California illegally as a toddler with his mother and his younger brother in order to join his father. The family ended up in Pico-Union in the 1960s.

His father worked construction during the day and at night in a factory. Villegas’ mother worked as a seamstress, unable to use the architectural degree she had studied for in Guadalajara, Mexico.

“We lived in fear of ... la migra,” Villegas said. “I remember not being allowed to be out on the sidewalks or the parks. I had to be picked up from school and made sure that we weren’t seen, so to speak.”

His parents became legal residents in 1970 but did not get their citizenship until the early ’80s.

Villegas enlisted in the Army, where he was able to expedite his citizenship process. Now he is an assistant chief with the LAPD — one of the highest ranks in the 10,000-officer department.

“One of the best ways to provide calm to the community is to say that you are the community,” Villegas said. “When you can genuinely say it, it eases into the opportunity to have meaningful dialogue and to have relationships.”

On a recent evening at the LAPD’s Hollenbeck station in Boyle Heights, Labrada gathered with organizers and other officials for a forum on immigration fraud.

For years, his mother would travel between Mexico and the United States, working to save enough money to bring the family of five to a one-bedroom house in Rosemead in 1975.

While trying to gain residency, his family would wait hours in the cold on Olvera Street — where the Mexican consulate was once located — having an atole, a hot drink made from corn, and churro for breakfast.

“We knew there was a process we had to go through to become legal residents without having that fear of deportation,” said Labrada, who joined the LAPD in 1993.
“I think there’s a lot more anxiety now than when I was a child,” Labrada said, adding that the politics of immigration is not the issue for him. “This is the human side of it, and the human side of it is people are still living in this community, and they’re in fear.”

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San Francisco is fed up with Big Tech, and residents are begging the next mayor to do something about it

Melia Robinson
May. 15, 2018, 3:53 PM

San Francisco is in trouble. The streets are filthy. Housing prices are out-of-control. The city is host to 1.23% of all homeless Americans.

Some San Franciscans are fed up with the tech industry, which they blame for gentrification and the still-painful housing crisis. They want a reckoning to come for Big Tech — courtesy of the next mayor.

San Francisco elects a new mayor in less than three weeks, and the candidates are battling over the best path to regulate the tech industry and its presence in the city. The top contenders are expected to take a harder line with the tech companies that have sprouted throughout the city, thanks to generous tax breaks and other favorable policies. The era of tech-friendly civic policy in San Francisco may be coming to an end.

Seven mayoral candidates met for one final debate on Monday evening at the Commonwealth Club. During the last portion of the debate, the moderator read questions from the audience, ranging in topic from the city's homelessness epidemic to the onslaught of electric scooters.

"Why is the rent so damn high?" the moderator read from a card. The room broke out in laughter that quickly subsided, as an audience of about 200 people waited to hear how their next mayor plans to reckon with out-of-control housing prices.

San Francisco is in the thralls of a housing emergency. The median two-bedroom rent of $3,060 is more than double the national average of $1,170, and only 12% of families can afford to buy a home in the city. Lower-income residents are leaving in droves, as tech and finance professionals migrate into the city for high-paying jobs, driving housing prices even higher.

Audience questions during the debate made it clear, if it weren't before: Some residents are fed up with what they see as the tech industry leeching off their city, and they want the next mayor to force Big Tech to pay up.

Candidate Mark Leno, a former California state senator, called on tech companies to hire more residents for jobs in administrative offices and sales. He cited the number of college-educated San Franciscans driving taxis to suggest that underemployment is something tech can solve.
"We need to make sure that [the tech industry's] success is our success," Leno said.
Supervisor Jane Kim, who's also running for mayor, came down on the tech industry for "their role in exacerbating the income gap," which she called the fastest-growing in the country. San Francisco’s middle class shrank from about half the population in the 1990s to about 33% in 2012.

She suggested that local government work together with the tech industry to address how these companies "treat their lowest-paid workers." She asked, "What benefits do they provide them?"

Kim went on, "Can they stop contracting out [...] so that our janitors, our cafeteria workers, our security guards have security to live in the Bay Area and be able to raise their families here?"

Candidate Ellen Lee Zhou, a public health worker and union representative considered to be an underdog, asked that the tech industry considered "supplying their own apartments for their own employees." As mayor, she said she would ask tech companies to donate buildings for developing affordable housing.

People from the audience asked the candidates to address the insane traffic jams that residents face downtown, where some 6,500 Uber and Lyft cars roam the streets during peak hours.

Richie Greenberg, a small business adviser and the only Republican in the race, and San Francisco Board of Supervisors President London Breed — who served as acting mayor briefly after the sudden death of previous mayor Ed Lee — both said they would place a cap on the number of ride-hailing cars permitted on the road at any time. Breed went a step further, saying she would curb some vehicles with on-demand startups like Postmates and Caviar to reduce congestion.

San Francisco will vote on June 5 — the same day as the statewide California elections.
SOME CANDIDATES FOR STATE BOARD OF EQUALIZATION ARE RUNNING TO ABOLISH THE OBSCURE AGENCY

By Gary Walker
Some lawmakers want to abolish the State Board of Equalization. Others believe it’s still a viable governing body. Whatever its ultimate fate, Gov. Jerry Brown and the Legislature have already stripped much of the tax-collection board’s authority and duties in the wake of a 2017 audit that uncovered rampant nepotism and the mishandling of tens of millions of dollars.

Campaigns for geography-bound seats on the board get little voter attention, overshadowed by a glut of advertising and news coverage for higher-profile statewide contests. Although board members received a salary of $146,000 last year for overseeing the collection of about $60 billion in sales and use taxes on jet fuel, marijuana and hazardous waste, the agency is practically invisible to the average voter.

“There are so many offices up for election it is tough for voters to keep track of them all,” said Robert Stern, vice president of Californians Aware, a nonprofit government watchdog and free speech advocacy group.

This year might be a little different, if only due to public outrage over the findings of the audit — like a $130,000 expenditure on designer office furniture by Board Chairman Jerome Horton, who currently represents Los Angeles, Ventura and San Bernardino counties on the board but terms out this year.

Five hopefuls are vying to replace Horton in June 5’s nonpartisan “jungle primary” free-for-all: Santa Monica City Councilman Tony Vazquez, former Culver City Councilman Micheál “Mehaul” O’Leary, Los Angeles Community College District
Board President Scott Svonkin, tax attorney Cheryl Turner, and retired economist and television reporter Doug Kriegel. The top two vote getters will move on to a November runoff.

Meanwhile, former members of the board and some major newspapers are calling for a constitutional amendment that, with voter approval, would abolish the agency — a plan O’Leary and Kriegel support.

“It’s time to get rid of the board. I want to continue that fight once I’m elected,” said O’Leary, former owner of the pub Joxer’s Daly. “It’s been a lovely landing spot for termed-out elected officials, but not [good] for government efficiency.”

“It needs to be reformed. The story about the scandal didn’t get much coverage. I want to run to get the story about the corruption out to the public,” said Kriegel. “I think [the Legislature] should let the people decide whether they should get rid of it.”

Stern agrees, in part because the five-member board (four district representatives and the state controller) isn’t what it used to be.

“The power of that office has been so seriously depleted by the Legislature that the office probably should be abolished,” Stern said.

Others running for Horton’s seat say they’re running to restore the board’s viability.

“This is an agency that was created by the state constitution. Why would we abolish something that
was created to provide protection to taxpayers?” said Turner. “We need to reform it, but not abolish it.”

“The Board of Equalization is a constitutionally created office designed to help California taxpayers and to ensure that corporations pay their taxes. It’s clear that these two candidates don’t understand how the board works or its authority,” Svonkin said of O’Leary and Kriegel.

Vazquez says his budgeting experience on the Santa Monica City Council and a number of other local governing boards proves he knows how to “get things done,” but he and his wife are also under investigation by the L.A. County District Attorney’s Office for alleged conflicts of interest due to his Santa Monica school board member wife voting in support of contracts benefitting companies that Vazquez represented.

State lawmakers will ultimately decide whether to consolidate the functions of the board with other state departments, “but at this point the department exists and it should be run efficiently,” said Vazquez. “I believe that the Board of Equalization can perform an important role in providing services to taxpayers and small businesses.”

In an unusual move for a state race, Svonkin has challenged the other candidates, especially Vazquez, to publicly release their tax returns, as he has chosen to do.

“I believe that in order to restore the public trust we have to be open and share our plans and our taxes with the public. That goes double for my opponent
Tony Vazquez, who is running for an office that should be about ethics and transparency, yet refused to be transparent on his personal financial disclosure forms, and is under investigation for conflicts of interest,” Svonkin said.

Elected officials and candidates for office in California are not required to release tax documents but must disclose their personal holdings by filing a Statement of Economic Interests with the Fair Political Practices Commission.

Vazquez and Turner called Svonkin’s focus on taxes records a distraction.

“The financial disclosure forms that every candidate and office holder files is the best mechanism for preventing conflicts of interest. Asking candidates to release tax records is a campaign stunt,” Vazquez said.

Turner said candidates without a background in finance or tax policy should raise red flags, and that she’s not about to let Svonkin force her to behave in a way that isn’t customary for the office.

“The tax return issue is a red herring. The real issue is Scott Svonkin’s fitness to serve on the Board of Equalization when he has repeatedly demonstrated a propensity to bully others whenever and wherever he has served as an elected official," she said.

Svonkin said he’s running for the board primarily to ensure that taxes owed becomes taxes paid.

“If I can work to collect taxes from corporations that don’t pay their fair share, we will be able to afford to
make public education stronger and keep our neighborhoods safe,” he said.

O’Leary and Kriegel said they would make their returns public if they won, even as they worked to abolish the agency.

“There’s nothing that I need to hide from the public. It would be disingenuous to get on a tax board and not open the doors to your books,” O’Leary said.

“You can say that I’m running to get rid of the board, but if I am elected I could certainly do the job,” said Kriegel. “But even if I don’t get the job, I’m going to continue to push for [abolishing it].”
ACLU faults county’s legal aid for poor  Public defender criticized

Public defender’s office lacks resources to serve immigrants in L.A., report says.

BY MARISA GERBER

The pregnant woman on the other end of the call sounded despondent. It was about her partner, she said. He was a permanent resident, but the government wanted to deport him.

Keli Reynolds, an immigration attorney, agreed to take the case and began studying the 2013 joyriding charge that triggered the deportation order. The man had recently pleaded guilty and accepted a 365-day sentence, but Reynolds knew that if she could get the punishment reduced to 364 days, it would no longer be considered an aggravated felony and wouldn’t require mandatory deportation.

She had spotted the workaround in a heartbeat, but the man’s first attorney — an L.A. County deputy public defender — had missed it.

Christian, whom Reynolds identified only by his first name to protect client confidentiality, is one of several immigrants highlighted in an American Civil Liberties Union report released Wednesday that criticizes the public defender’s office for its handling of cases involving clients who aren’t U.S. citizens.

“There is a crisis today in our county’s public defender system,” the report reads, arguing that the office “underserves a large and vital segment of the Los Angeles population: the immigrant community.” The report credits the diligence of many attorneys in the office and acknowledges the “enormous complexity” at the intersection of federal immigration law and state criminal law, adding that the problem stems from being “grossly under-resourced.”

The 61-page report, which relied on confidential interviews with dozens of attorneys in the public defender’s office, ultimately makes an appeal to the L.A. County Board of Supervisors to fund 15 more attorneys in the office’s immigration unit. The report says that the office of roughly 700 lawyers has only two designated immigration law experts.

Because individuals in immigration court don’t have the right to free representation, it’s crucial they get a vital defense from their court-appointed lawyers in criminal cases, said
attorney Andrés Dae Keun Kwon, who wrote the report. In Los Angeles County, he said, public defenders “are the first line of defense against Trump’s deportation machine.”

In a statement to The Times, Interim Public Defender Nicole Davis Tinkham defended the office, saying it has “always been committed to providing strong representation to all of our clients, including immigrants, who are facing some unique challenges in this difficult period.”

“We are still reviewing the ACLU report but our initial assessment is that it is based on incomplete information about our practices,” Tinkham said, adding that employees from the office recently met with immigration advocates. The office understands the importance of the issue, she said, noting that they’re already in budget discussions with the county’s chief executive and Board of Supervisors.

L.A. County Supervisor Hilda Solis said in a statement that the board plans to beef up the office’s immigration unit. They’re working to add eight lawyers to the unit this year, she wrote, “with the goal of adding more next year depending on need.”

“The county and the public defender’s office is moving forward to ensure everyone, regardless of citizenship status, has access to high-quality legal representation,” she wrote. “Increasing immigration law training across county departments is essential.”

The ACLU report argues that the office should require attorneys to receive foundational training about the intersection of criminal and immigration law. Currently, the report says, only new hires have to get that type of training.

California law requires judges to offer a blanket warning to defendants before accepting a guilty or no contest plea in a criminal case. If you’re not a U.S. citizen, the judge advises, a conviction could lead to deportation, exclusion from the U.S. or denial of naturalization.

L.A. County Superior Court Judge Sergio C. Tapia said he pays careful attention to how defendants respond to his advisement. Their answers, he said, can serve as hints.

“There have been times where I suspect that, perhaps, a defendant is not getting adequate advice,” said Tapia, a former L.A. County deputy public defender. When that happens, he gives the defendant a chance to talk to their attorney about any concerns. Defense lawyers sometimes then ask for more time to research an immigration issue, the judge said, noting that he has granted the requests in the past.

The judge said he’s had concerns in cases involving both public defenders and private defense lawyers, adding that it seems to happen more frequently among private lawyers. Still, he said, he supports the ACLU’s call for more immigration personnel and training within his former office.

“It’s long overdue,” Tapia said. “For the immigrant community, it’s critical that the office addresses this issue.”

For Christian, whose family moved to the U.S. when he was a toddler, his partner’s dejected phone call to Reynolds a few years ago shifted the trajectory of his life. After
noticing the 365-versus-364 issue, Reynolds asked her client about the discrepancy.

“He had no idea the difference between that day,” she recalled. Reynolds then contacted the public defender’s office and eventually spoke to one of the office’s two immigration experts, who asked, “What needs to be done?”

“He needs a 364-day sentence, which he should’ve gotten from the beginning,” Reynolds recalled saying. The public defender’s office acted immediately, she said, and helped secure the lowered sentence.

By that time, an immigration judge had already ordered Christian’s removal and the case had gone to the Board of Immigration Appeals, a panel that interprets and applies immigration law. After Reynolds provided paperwork showing the new sentence, the case was returned to immigration court, where a judge terminated the removal proceedings.

Another of Reynolds’ clients, Norberto, also faced the possibility of deportation after taking an ill-advised plea.

In 2015, Norberto, who was initially represented by the public defender’s office, pleaded guilty to possession for sale of methamphetamine. Although it sounds counterintuitive, he would have been better off pleading up to the more serious, but not deportable, offense of transporting methamphetamine, so Reynolds filed a motion asking the trial judge to amend the plea. The judge granted the request and the removal proceedings were stopped.

Both of her clients, Reynolds said, ultimately got to keep their green cards.

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Report Calls LA County Public Defenders Ill-Equipped for Noncitizen Clients

MARTIN MACIAS JR  May 16, 2018

LOS ANGELES (CN) – The Los Angeles County Public Defender’s Office lacks expert support in handling cases involving noncitizens, increasing their danger of deportation and other immigration-related consequences, a report released Wednesday says.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California report, “Defend L.A.: Transforming Public Defense in the Era of Mass Deportation,” said only two of 700 attorneys in the county’s public defender’s office are experts in immigration law. Yet the office handles about 26,000 cases involving noncitizen clients per year.

“Providing an adequate number of immigration law experts is not only humane, it’s the law,” Andrés Kwon, an ACLU attorney and author of the 80-page report, said in a statement.

In a 2010 Supreme Court ruling, Padilla v. Kentucky, the Court held that noncitizens’ Sixth Amendment right to effective counsel includes receiving accurate advice about the immigration consequences of criminal dispositions.

“Such informed legal defense could not be more paramount today, as the Trump administration expands the federal government’s reliance on local criminal justice systems to advance its deportation agenda,” Kwon said.

Both the U.S. Constitution and the California Constitution guarantee the accused the right to effective assistance of counsel.

Federal and state constitutional law, along with recent California statutes, mandate that counsel for noncitizen clients provide accurate advice about the immigration-related consequences of a contemplated disposition, as well as the pursuit of all available dispositions that avoid or mitigate those consequences.

LACPD has been “grossly under-resourced” as measured against recommended staffing ratios for offices in California and compared to other public defender offices.

“As a result, LACPD underserves a large and vital segment of the Los Angeles population: the immigrant community,” the report said.

Even minor misdemeanor offenses — such as shoplifting, turnstile jumping, or public urination — can trigger deportation without the support of an immigration law expert.

California is home to 10 million immigrant residents, according to the Pew Research Center.
Of the 3.5 million immigrants in Los Angeles County, Pew estimates that 1.5 million are undocumented.

With the rise of mass incarceration and a surge in immigration in the early 2000s, criminal charges and convictions “raised the stakes of criminal proceedings,” the report said. Noncitizens increasingly face deportation and permanent separation from their families, communities and homes.

“In this context, quality legal representation at the front end during criminal proceedings—can usually make all the difference,” the report said.

The report documented cases in which LACPD’s noncitizen clients pleaded to criminal dispositions that triggered severe consequences when more favorable alternatives existed.

Christian P., a lawful permanent resident, pleaded guilty in 2013 to driving a vehicle without the owner’s consent and received a sentence of 365 days in jail. The sentence made the conviction an aggravated felony, subjecting Christian to mandatory deportation.

“Luckily, an immigration law expert stepped in and got the sentence reduced to 364 days, putting Christian out of danger of deportation,” the report said.

Norberto S., also a lawful permanent resident, pleaded guilty in 2015 to possession for sale of methamphetamine, which put him in line for mandatory deportation. An immigration law expert intervened and convinced Noberto to plead guilty to a more serious offense.

“That move, called pleading upward, might seem counterintuitive, but the more serious offense didn’t carry mandatory deportation,” the report said.

According to the report, other California counties do a better job of staffing immigration law experts in their public defender offices. For example, five of the 108 public defenders in Alameda County specialize in immigration law.

“That’s a ratio of one immigration law expert for 22 public defenders,” the report said.

Contra Costa County’s ratio is 1 to 75, and San Bernardino County’s is 1 to 96. But LA County employs only one immigration law expert for every 350 public defenders.

The ACLU recommends that 15 additional immigration experts be added to LACPD’s staff. The estimated cost for this would be “no more than $3 million,” or about one-hundredth of 1 percent of the county budget.

“It’s a relatively small price to pay for the county to provide constitutionally mandated representation for noncitizens in criminal court,” Kwon said.

Established in 1914, the LACPD was the first public defender office in the United States and remains the largest to this day with 39 locations across LA County. The office handles about 300,000 cases a year.

A call made to LACPD requesting comment was not returned by press time.

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