



# NEWS



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## Assemblymember Reyes Holds Town Hall on New Inmate Firefighter Law

Megan Jamerson, KVCR News

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Asm. Eloise Gomez Reyes and San Bernardino County Interim Public Defender Thomas Stone.

A law that will allow inmate firefighters to have their records expunged, so they can pursue firefighting jobs after release, goes into effect in January. State Assemblymember Eloise Reyes hosted a virtual town hall on Thursday about the law she authored.

Thomas Stone, Interim Public Defender told the virtual audience his office is ready for an expected surge of applications from people who have been released for years but were not previously eligible to apply.

“But it’s going to plateau down the road,” said Stone. “Once we get through those, I think the number of individuals who get released from fire camp on a yearly basis isn’t that much.”

There are between 1500 and 3000 people yearly in the inmate firefighter program. These inmates have been through a careful selection process which excludes people with convictions for certain violent and sex crimes.

Assemblymember Reyes believes this record-cleaning law gives these highly trained inmates, who have risked their lives fighting fires, a second chance. After release, it allows them to pursue firefighting or other careers that typically exclude people with criminal records.

“I think that if we look long term, the individuals who have completed the program are going to go on to find a career,” said Reyes. “They will be paying taxes, contributing to the local economy. When we look at it now, it’s a lost loss because we spend and we spend and we spend on incarceration and prisons, only to release people with no hope for employment and creating more societal costs.”

There are still some limitations. Inmates who apply for teaching and law enforcement jobs will still have to disclose their conviction on their job application.

<https://www.kvcrnews.org/post/assemblymember-reyes-holds-town-hall-new-inmate-firefighter-law>

## Local Family's Meaning of Christmas

Elena Macias, Grand Terrace City News

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Even though the family was not able to go out to the fire department like previous years, their favorite local restaurant provided an outlet for them.

With many worried and pessimistic that Christmas this year would be different and possibly not as special as years pre-COVID, the true meaning of Christmas is never lost. One family was still able to pull together and exemplify the season of giving.

Last Friday night, a family walked into local restaurant, Woody's Classic Grill with arms filled with new unwrapped toys for the families in need this Christmas. Jennifer Pacheco, mother of two, first learned about the toy donation box at Woody's one night when she was picking up an order for the family one night and from then, she made it a plan to give back.

"We like to be able to provide to those who may not have as much," Pacheco said. "We wanted to try to do as much as we can to try to make someone else's Christmas and show our kids the feeling of giving to others."

Every year, the family goes out and purchases a couple of toys to donate to the fire department's toy drive, however, this year, due to the COVID pandemic, the department wasn't able to hold the event. Although, the family wasn't able to give toys at the fire department as they usually do, one of their favorite restaurants was able to provide an outlet.

Woody's Classic Grill partnered with the Community in Unity organization and became a toy donation drop-off location and since the beginning of December, community members began dropping of donated toys that would go to families in need on December 19.

Pacheco grew up in Grand Terrace and now her own family lives right outside of the city, her sister lives in Highland and her mother lives in Yucaipa, but her and her entire family try to go to Woody's as much as they can. Pacheco mentioned that in years prior, her mother would come from Yucaipa and pick up her grandchildren after sporting events and the place that they went to gather together for a meal was Woody's. It is the meeting spot that her and the entire family will try to all get-together.

"We love Woody's," Pacheco said. "We love the food, the atmosphere, we love the way we're treated and the owner is always checking in and we feel welcome there."

Despite the hard times we all now face; Pacheco and her family did not let this stop their optimistic spirit and Pacheco and her husband took the COVID pandemic and tried to make it a lesson for their children.

“We are all lucky and blessed to still have jobs,” Pacheco said. “It’s hard with the kids not going to school and not being social with friends, but we just use that time as family time together by going on family walks.”

From these family walks, Pacheco mentions that they have probably even seen every part of their city. Even though these are unprecedented times Pacheco and her family still count their blessings and are truly grateful to be able to still all be together.

“We are still trying to get together and still make it through this with the best attitude,” Pacheco said. “We just think, what lessons can we make out of it?” Pacheco and her husband take these difficult times to show their children that they are in a blessed position and show them the meaning of giving back to those in need.

<https://grandterrace.citynewsgroup.com/articles/local-familys-meaning-of-christmas#Gallery>