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La Nueva Voz

The New Voice, a Bilingual (English/Spanish) Publication
Pomona's *only* community newspaper!



Pomona Chamber of Commerce



Member
Issue No. 198

Thursday, January 22, 2026

Frederick Douglass descendant says Dr. King's message matters now more than ever

Author and activist Kenneth B. Morris, Jr., keynote speaker at Sunday night's 44th annual Martin Luther King Jr. celebration in Pomona, told an audience of about 200 that King's "message is not just something to admire, it is something we must live, and it matters more than ever."

Speaking at the event at Pilgrim Congregational Church produced

by the non-profit Pomona Valley Martin Luther King, Jr., Project, Morris said "so many families right now, there's a real feeling of uneasiness in the air, people don't feel stable, people don't feel secure."

"In many communities, there's a growing fear that the rules can change overnight, that your dignity can be questioned, that your

rights can be tested, and that your very presence can be treated as a problem," he added. "Some people are living with anxiety of deportation rates. Some are living with anxiety of being targeted for what they believe, what they look like, where they come from, or simply for refusing to abandon their neighbors."

He said it can be tempting to re-

treat, "to get quiet, to mind their own business, to say let's just wait this one out."

"But Dr. King didn't believe in waiting on injustice," he said.

Quoting from King's speech at the "Prayer of Pilgrimage for Freedom" in 1957 at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., he said King told the crowd that "the civil rights issue is not an



Kenneth B. Morris, Jr.
Keynote speaker

ephemeral, evanescent domestic issue that can be kicked about by reactionary guardians of the status quo – it is rather an eternal moral issue which may well determine the destiny of our nation to the ideological struggle with communism."

"The hour is late, the clock of destiny is ticking out, we must act now before it is too late," he quoted King as saying.

Message matters more than ever...
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CAL POLY WINS ITS FIRST 'SWEEPSTAKES' AWARD

-- Visitors view the "Cal Poly Universities" float the day after this month's 137th Rose Parade in Pasadena at "Floatfest," a two-day event right where the parade ended at Sierra Madre Boulevard and Washington Boulevard. Cal Poly's float "Jungle Jumpstart" showcased nature and technology through the story of the rainforest community coming together to restore a 40-foot-long robot friend named "Lunchbox" who lifted



up a macaw 25 feet into the air, helping it take flight. It was the first time that Cal Poly Rose Float team students won the "Sweepstakes" award, the parade's top honor, awarded to the most beautiful entry encompassing float design, floral presentation and entertainment. The float, the only float in the parade designed and built by students, was Cal Poly's 77th entry in the parade since 1949, always a collaboration of student teams of designers and builders from both Cal Poly Pomona and Cal Poly San Luis Obispo working on the float for nearly a year at their home campuses before joining the two halves in the fall. This year's award was the 64th award for the Cal Poly Rose Float team. Theme of the parade this year was "The Magic in Teamwork." (See additional photos page 19.)

An inspiring career begins here

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Latino & Latina Roundtable
of the San Gabriel and Pomona Valley

Save the Date

March 27th, 2026
8 AM - 10 AM

22nd Annual Cesar Chavez Breakfast

Sheraton Fairplex Conference Center
601 W McKinley Ave, Pomona, CA 91768



Annual PEARLS of Service scholarship winners announced

A Pomona High School graduate and a Claremont High School graduate were this year's honorees at the seventh annual com-

ents – Taelen Cobb and Jaline Vencebi – were the keynote speakers at the event.

Cobb earned a bachelor's degree in film and media studies from UC Santa Barbara after graduating from Pomona High School. She is currently pursuing a master's degree in religion at Claremont Graduate University, where she also works as a graduate fellow for the Office of Black Student Affairs.

Cobb, who studied abroad in Ghana during her senior year in Santa Barbara, emphasized the importance of proactive searching for scholarships and using templates for additional scholarship opportunities.

And Vencebi is in her third year at UC Irvine studying public health science after graduating from Claremont High School. She hopes to one day become a doctor.

"When I was granted the \$4,000 scholarship, it motivated me to keep progressing in higher education," she said. "The scholarship from PEARLS of Service opened doors for me



Jaline Vencebi

munity and scholarship event hosted by PEARLS of Service, Inc., held last month at The Union in Pomona.

The two "renewable scholarship" recipi-

PEARLS of Service... pg. 9



Pomona Host Lions Club



When: Saturday, January 31, 2026 at 12:00-3:30 p.m.

Where: First Christian Church Pomona
1751 N. Park Ave., Pomona

Cost: \$35.00 Includes admission, lunch, dessert, bingo cards, cash bingo prizes

ACTIVITIES: •Bingo •Raffle Prizes •Silent Auction •50-50 Drawing

Purchase tickets online



pomonahostlions.org/events

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FEBRUARY IS BLACK HISTORY MONTH

This Black History Month, the PUSD community comes together to recognize the rich contributions of Black history and culture, inspiring our students to lead with resilience, compassion, and purpose in everything they do.



www.pusd.org

“
THE TIME IS ALWAYS
RIGHT TO DO
WHAT IS
RIGHT.”

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s words remind us that the time to do what is right is always present, especially when faced with uncertainty. In times when our values are tested, it is our responsibility to take action and lead with justice and fairness.



Los Angeles County Supervisor

HILDA L. SOLIS

First District • Chair

Memorial concert to honor the life of LizBeth Lucca

A memorial concert will be held next month to honor the life of Elizabeth Fraser, known professionally as LizBeth Abeyta Lucca, who died last month in Pomona.

Lucca, perhaps best known locally for her work with Pomona's Repertory Opera Company, a small, community-focused opera company, died Dec. 26 at Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center of heart failure due to various medical conditions.

Lucca was born June 12, 1960, and grew up in Reston, VA, where she graduated from Herndon High School in 1977. She attended Virginia Tech and graduated with a degree



LizBeth Lucca

in chemical engineering in 1981, where she was the first woman to both enroll in ROTC and become a member of a sorority. She joined the U.S. Air Force and was stationed as an officer in Ft. Walton Beach, FL, for six years. She served in the Air Force Reserve for several years before moving to California, where she lived with her mother, Maggie Fraser, until her death in 2023, according to a family spokesperson.

Life changed when Lucca developed an interest in opera, studied opera performance at Cal State University Long Beach, and in 2001 became the co-founder and artistic director of the Repertory Opera Company, partnering with pianist, Brian Farrell.

The group produced numerous full-length operas and gala concerts, ranging from fully-staged productions to weekly "Music At Noon" concerts, featuring singers and instrumentalists in intimate settings, and its "Manly Men of Opera" concerts.

It has received grants from the Los Angeles County Arts Commission and others.

As a vocal artist herself, she sang in performances of more than 25 roles, including Princess Eboli (once understudying Delora Zajick), Amneris (at the John Anson Ford Theater), Azucena, Santuzza, the Witch in Hansel and Gretel, Marcelina, Zita, and Lady Macbeth.

Her theatrical roles included Amanda in *The Glass Menagerie*, the Old Lady in *Candide*, Marquise de Merteuil in *Dangerous Liaisons*, Lucy in *Threepenny Opera*, Ayah in *The Secret Garden*, and Dorine in *Tartuffe*.

Reviewers described her as "a powerful and intriguing vocal presence as Amneris, singing with deep

passion and believable jealousy," "solidly dramatic," "outstanding in her role," and "her frisky demeanor and melodious voice brought thunderous applause."

Solo oratorio work included Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* and various Bach cantatas,

Vivaldi's *Gloria*, Mozart's *Requiem* and Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*.

Her musical colleagues described her as leaving a rich legacy of opera direction and performance. She mentored many young, upcoming singers in their first stage experiences, pairing them with well-established vocal artists.

Her influence and artistic reach went as far as the highest level of opera and symphonic performance organizations and venues in Southern California, with countless professionals learning from her, performing in her productions and honored to sing with her.

Lucca brought high quality classical music to the Pomona Valley, inspiring not just fellow artists, but also other conductors and opera company founders to step up and expand the community.

She is survived by a brother, Robert Fraser, who lives in Korea.

To make a donation in her memory, please go to <https://gofund.me/d5f232bb0>. Funds raised will be used to cover expenses from the end of her life, as well as a memorial concert to be held in her honor at 4 p.m. on Feb. 15 at the First Christian Church of Pomona, 1751 N. Park Ave.

A reception in the Fellowship Hall following the concert will include food and drink, singing and sharing of memories.

IPoly High School earns 'All Blue' state achievement distinction, receives 'Golden Bell Award' for civic education

Pomona's IPoly High School has once again distinguished itself as one of California's top public high schools, achieving an "all blue" rating on this year's California School Dashboard – the highest performance level in every academic category measured.

The designation from the California Department of Education places the school among a small number of public high schools statewide to earn the distinction.

The Dashboard results, released last month, reflect very high performance across key academic indicators, highlighting sustained student achievement and strong instructional practices. This year's recognition also marks a repeat accomplishment for IPoly, which previously earned an "all-blue" designation in 2015.

"I am incredibly proud of the hard work and dedication our staff and students have demonstrated over the last three and a half years that have led to these accolades," said Principal William Wallace. "The entire IPoly community is devoted to academic success, and we are proud to be recognized as a truly unique and accomplished California public high school."

In addition to academic excellence, IPoly recently received a "Golden Bell Award" from the California School Boards Association (CSBA), a statewide

Claremont Symphony offers free concert for kids

A free concert for young people performed by members of the Claremont Symphony orchestra will be held this month at "Little Bridges" Hall of Music on the Pomona College campus in Claremont.

The concert, featuring highlights from "Frozen" and music from "Wicked," begins at 3:30 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 31 (doors open at 3 p.m.).

Also included will be Joseph Haydn's Cello Concerto No. 1 in C (first movement) and Ludwig van Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 37, first movement.

Little Bridges is located at 150 E. 4th St. at College Avenue.

For more information, visit the web site at www.claremontso.org or call (909) 596-5979.



Sophomore Giovanna Tessariol-Stanfield rings the Golden Bell as Principal William Wallace hosts a campus 'Blue Day' celebration this month of recent IPoly achievements.

sociation (CSBA), a statewide honor recognizing outstanding educational programs that address students' evolving needs and promote innovation in public education. Now in its 46th year, the Golden Bell Awards highlight programs that demonstrate measurable impact, sustainability, and leadership in student learning.

IPoly representatives traveled to Sacramento this month to accept the award for civic education on behalf of the school's senior project. The recognition honors the work of the senior team – Lorelei Ortega, Russell McKinney,

Joon Park, and Whitney Schiller – who have collaborated with students over the past three years to ensure that all graduating seniors earn the California Seal of Civic Engagement.

Through the culminating senior project, students engage directly with public officials, research community issues, and advocate for causes they care deeply about, gaining experience in democratic participation and civic responsibility. Educators say the program helps students understand how academic learning can translate into real-world impact.

Interested in who has been arrested by Pomona Police in Pomona?

Please check our weekly listing at <http://www.lanuevavoz.net> and click on "Arrest Logs" on our home page.

La Nueva Voz Newspaper in Pomona, CA

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Funeral services held for Al Villanueva

Funeral services were held this month for community activist and Indigenous Americans advocate Alfonso Thomas Villanueva who died on Dec. 31. He was 75.

Funeral Mass was held last week at Our Lady of the Assumption Church in Claremont, with burial following at Claremont's Oakpark Cemetery.

Villanueva grew up in Claremont's historic Latino neighborhood known as Arbol Verde, which local Spanish-speaking residents referred to as El Barrio.

During the era of racial covenants which restricted where minority families could live until the late 1960s, El Barrio was one of the only neighborhoods where Latinos could rent or buy homes.

And, according to a family spokesperson, as far back as Villanueva could remember, El Barrio residents wanted their own park.

"If we went to other parks in Claremont, the white families would go away," he said, recalling the pre-civil rights era. "We grew up with racism and discrimination and so we needed our own park."

Villanueva attended Chaffey College, where he helped found the United Mexican American Students, before transferring to Stanford University.

In 1969, when Villanueva was part of the Chicano movement and

a student at Stanford, he and local Chicano families established the El Barrio Park Committee and began to mobilize Mexican and white residents alike, many of them high school students.

They launched a petition drive and led supporters with more than 1,000 signatures to the local city council, where they made a strong case for a new community park.

Residents pitched in by clearing rocks and hosting taco sales to raise funds.

El Barrio Park opened to the public in 1971 and has been welcoming residents ever since.

"We all came together and made a dream come true," Villanueva said. "So, this is one of my legacies – to see kids playing in the park."

His last appearance in La Nueva Voz was on the front page of the April issue last year as a representative of the Pomona Valley Indigenous Native American community, performing a special drum ceremony honoring Jose and Rose Calderon at the annual Latino and Latina Roundtable Cesar Chavez breakfast in Pomona.

Villanueva's daughter, Magdalena Serrato, appeared with him in



Al Villanueva

the photo.

Jose Calderon called Villanueva's passing "another profound loss of an organizer and leader in our communities."

"As far back as when I started as a professor at Pitzer College in the 1990s, I joined along Al in his efforts to critically recover and preserve the history of the Arbol Verde barrio on the east side of Claremont," he said. "As he led the efforts to ensure the survival of Barrio Park, he would invite my students to the park and to his mother's house across the street to share the stories about how they fought gentrification through

the El Barrio Park Committee and the Arbol Verde Preservation Committee to ensure the survival of the park and the history of the citrus workers who lived in that barrio."

"And just last week Al had called me to share his excitement about how the city was moving ahead by providing resources for the painting of murals at Barrio Park that would ensure the recovery and preservation of that history," he said.

Calderon said in recent months Villanueva and his daughter joined him speaking at an interfaith service in

Claremont as part of churches making commitments to serve as sanctuaries for immigrant families.

"In his last days he was still organizing, and those of us who walked

common paths with him will ensure that his spirit will remain very much alive in our ongoing efforts," Calderon added. "Our deepest condolences to familia, friends and community."

Villanueva was active in Kiwanis Club of Claremont along with his daughter.

In 1971, he married Janet Coyle and, while the marriage ended in divorce, he never remarried. Together they raised three children – Serrato and Alfonso Villanueva, both of Claremont, and Ruben Villanueva of North Dakota. He had eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

He is survived by two brothers, Ronnie and Steven Villanueva.

His mother, Manuela "Nellie" Gutierrez Villanueva, died in 2024, and he was preceded in death by sisters Emilia and Yolanda Villanueva.

PVHMC named to 'Maternity Care Honor Roll' for 10th year

Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center was recognized for "superior performance" and has been named to the California Department of Healthcare Access and Information's 2025 Maternity Care Honor Roll for 10 consecutive years for providing high quality maternity care and continuous quality improvement.

The data collected is a collaboration with the California Maternal Quality Care Collaborative, CalHospitalCompare.org, and the Healthcare Access 2025 Maternity Care Honor Roll data visualization, which provides an overview of 82 California hospitals recognized. Of the hospitals recognized in 2025, 46 have made the honor roll for the past three years, and 18 have maintained honor roll status for 10 consecutive years.

"It is an honor to be recognized among the top hospitals in the state for 10 consecutive years for maternal patient safety," said M. Hellen Rodriguez, M.D., perinatologist

and medical director of maternal-fetal medicine at PVHMC. "As one of the busiest labor and delivery hospitals in the state, we're proud of our comprehensive program that is dedicated to helping mothers experience safe and healthy births. From pregnancy and delivery to postpartum, our entire team of maternal fetal experts compassionately guides our patients through complex conditions, reducing the need for cesarean births, which can increase complications."

Historically, the Maternity Care Honor Roll program had only recognized hospitals that met the statewide C-section target rate of 23.6 percent. The new maternity care composite measure, which summarizes data from multiple sources, expands the performance evaluation to hospitals meeting or exceeding standards in five maternal health metrics: nulliparous term singleton vertex (NTSV) C-section, surgical site infection after a C-section, vaginal birth after a C-

section (VBAC), episiotomy, and early elective deliveries prior to 39 weeks gestational age.

Evidence suggests that the chance of having a C-section delivery largely depends on aspects such as where delivery occurs and the practice patterns of the obstetric care team. Even for low-risk, first-birth pregnancies, huge variations are noted in rates of C-sections at individual hospitals.

Overuse of C-sections can result in higher rates of complications like hemorrhage, transfusions, infection, and blood clots. The surgery also brings risks for babies, including higher rates of infection, respiratory complications, neonatal intensive care unit stays, and lower breastfeeding rates.

In the hospital and out in the community, Pomona Valley Hospital focuses on health education and has a maternal transport program with neighboring health facilities to reduce disparities and improve access to maternal-fetal services.

La Nueva Voz

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CITY OF POMONA

2026 CLEAN-UP & COMPOST EVENTS

EVENTOS DE LIMPIEZA Y COMPOSTAJE



Athens Services is offering **Pomona residents** a series of free compost giveaways and clean-up collection events for bulky items, electronic waste, and shredding services. These events will be held rain or shine and are for **Pomona residents only** (please bring ID, proof of residency, or a utility bill).

Athens Services ofrece a los **residentes de Pomona** una serie de eventos de repartición de compostaje gratuito y recolección de limpieza de artículos voluminosos y desechos electrónicos, y servicio de trituración de documentos. Estos eventos se llevarán a cabo independientemente de las condiciones climáticas y son **únicamente para residentes de Pomona** (traiga su identificación, una prueba de residencia, o una factura de servicios públicos).



PALOMARES PARK

499 E Arrow Hwy, Pomona, CA 91767

- April 25, 2026 (Clean-up, Shred Event & HHW Event)
- September 19, 2026 (Clean-up & Shred Event)



WASHINGTON PARK

865 E Grand Ave, Pomona, CA 91766

- March 7, 2026 (Clean-up & Shred)
- October 10, 2026 (Clean-up & Shred Event)



CITY YARD

636 W Monterey Ave, Pomona, CA 91768

- * March 28, 2026 (Compost Giveaway)
- May 2, 2026 (Compost Giveaway)

ALL EVENTS ARE 8:00 AM - 12:00 PM



Scan this QR code to learn more about Household Hazardous Waste (HHW), or visit CanIRecycleMy.com for more information



ACCEPTABLE ITEMS

Bulky items, carpet, electronic waste, broken furniture, mattresses, refrigerators, textiles, yard waste

ARTÍCULOS ACEPTABLES

Artículos voluminosos, alfombras, desechos electrónicos, muebles rotos, colchones, refrigeradores, textiles, desechos de jardín



NOT ACCEPTABLE

U-Haul trucks will not be accepted

Explosives, ammunition, radioactive materials, hazardous waste generated by commercial businesses, household trash, tires

NO ACEPTABLES

No se aceptarán camiones U-Haul

Explosivos, municiones, materiales radioactivos, desechos peligrosos generados por negocios comerciales, basura doméstica, neumáticos



COMPOST GIVEAWAY

Athens' compost is a blend of organic materials, including green waste, wood waste, and food scraps.

- **Pomona residents only**
- Bring sturdy container(s)
- While supplies last (30 gallon limit first hour)
- No plastic bags or containers larger than 32 gallons (due to safety & weight concerns)
- Drive up only (no walk-ins)

DOCUMENT SHREDDING

Here's how to prepare your documents to be shredded:

- No limit on the amount you can bring
- Please remove all plastic binders and binder clips

After the documents are thoroughly shredded, the paper is recycled.

Participation in the event and all items accepted are at your own risk. It is the attendees' responsibility to practice safe lifting and take all protective measures to guard against injury or any other loss.

La participación en el evento y todos los artículos aceptados son bajo su propio riesgo. Es responsabilidad de los asistentes ejercer seguridad para levantar objetos y tomar medidas de protección para evitar lesiones o pérdidas.



REPARTICIÓN DE COMPOSTAJE

El abono de Athens es una combinación de materiales orgánicos, que incluyen desechos vegetales, desechos de madera y restos de comida.

- **Solo para residentes de Pomona**
- Traiga contenedores resistentes
- Hasta agotar reservas (límite de 30 galones en la primera hora)
- No se permiten bolsas o contenedores que superen los 32 galones (debido a cuestiones de seguridad y peso)
- Solo acceso en vehículo (no se aceptan peatones)

TRITURACIÓN DE DOCUMENTOS

Le indicamos cómo preparar los documentos que desea triturar:

- No hay límite para la cantidad que puede traer
- Remover las carpetas de plástico y los clips

Una vez triturados los documentos completamente, el papel se recicla.

Young Pomona entrepreneur is rustling up customers, receives official safety vest from the experts for his efforts

Editor's Note: The following is based on an in-person interview by Renee Barbee.

Ryan Gregory Thorpe sounds like he's the kind of young man who is moving up in the world – a resident of North Pomona, he's already well into his neighborhood business start-up, he's making some serious spending money, and he's already getting the attention of both officials at Athens Services and his local Pomona city council member. Oh, and did we mention, he's 10.

The way it works is this – the business is what he calls a “trash transportation business.”

“I take out your trash cans every Sunday for a dollar per trash can,” he said. “And every Monday, I take them back in.”

Sounds simple, right? And a good idea at the same time? You'll never worry about trash day again!

In fact, he tells customers his business is simple, affordable and reliable and a service “that makes your life easier.”

Pomona City Councilmember Lorraine Canales, who lives right around the corner, thought so, as well. So, she got involved, con-

tacted Athens and officials were happy to come out, meet him, and present him with his own yellow safety vest.

Ryan's parents have been encouraging him along the way and, as he adds customers, he's even calling on his brothers to help with the cans when he needs it.

Richie, age 6, is one.

“He's super like energetic and helps me a lot,” he said. “And my big brother, Russell Thorpe . . . helps me take them back in.”

Russell is 14.

The growing business is only three months old and his dad is already suggesting he reach out to other communities.

That should help, since Ryan said he's saving up for an e-bike.

He also has a friend named “Ben” who is helping out.



Photo by Renee Barbee

BUSINESS IS ROLLING RIGHT ALONG -- Budding entrepreneur Ryan Thorpe, 10, has launched a new business -- rolling trash cans out to the curb on trash night for a buck. And it's taking off -- he's even attracting attention from Pomona City Councilmember Lorraine Canales and Athens Services. Pictured, from left, are his mom, Alisha Formica; Ryan (in the reflective vest); his brother, Russell Thorpe (at rear); dad Chris Formica (at rear); brothers Maddox Formica and Richmond Thorpe; and Athens driver Mario Lopez, the green / organics route driver for Ryan's neighborhood.

“He helps me like text the people and let them know that I'm going to be taking out the trash cans and contact them for my money,” Ryan

explained, describing what sounds like his accounts receivable department.

He was asked by La Nueva Voz how long he planned to continue doing this.

“Forever,” Ryan said.

Chris Formica, his dad, said the business has worked out well for Ryan.

“It's just been good for him to have something that he can work towards, and it gives him a little

bit of additional responsibility,” he said. “And then he gets a little taste of the fruit of his labor.”

He added that Ryan also is learning about checking and saving accounts and even tithing at church.

“I think it's setting up a good foundation,” he said, pointing out that while the amounts coming in are small, “it's easy to keep track of.”

He's even suggesting that Athens take the concept and make it available as a “great program for other like-minded kids.”

He added that it gives kids a chance to “take ownership of their community” and “actually get back to working . . . making their own money for buying the things that they want.”

Ryan said in the future he hopes to become a great sports player (probably basketball or football), “start a family and have a good life when I get older.”

And not surprisingly, his favorite subject in school is math (he's a student at Glen Oak Elementary School in Covina – the family recently moved to Pomona from Glendora).

Interested in learning more? He has his own new web site at www.ryansttb.com where residents can learn more about Ryan and even sign up for the service.

Hey, maybe he'll even want to join the Pomona Chamber of Commerce!

Good job, Ryan, and keep up the good work.

Social Security Workshop!! Saturday, February 21, 2026

Are you retiring soon? Are you already retired but have questions? Come to Pilgrim Congregational Church, at 600 N Garey Ave, Pomona, CA 91767, for a free workshop given by Bill Parnell, former Social Security Administration employee, on February 21, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. until noon. There will be informational handouts available. This is a free event open to the public.

If you have questions, please call the church office at (909) 622-1373.

Website: pilgrimchurchpomona.com

First baby of 2026!



Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center welcomed Baby Serafina, the hospital's first baby of the new year, at 2:06 a.m. on Thursday, Jan. 1.

Serafina weighed in at 7 lbs., 6 oz.

According to hospital officials, she was born to proud parents Vanessa and Brett Richards of Alta Loma, continuing a special family tradition -- both Brett and big brother Hendrix also were born at the hospital.

PEARLS of Service... from pg. 2

and allowed me to be in a position where I don't have to limit myself. I can engage in my institution to the fullest capacity."

"On the Spot" and Pomona "CDBG" essay participants were Christyna Armstrong, Christopher Armstrong, Jasmine Carrillo, Maylene Carrillo, Genesis Castillo, Titus Gladney, Reigne Holloway, Londyn January, Nardine Johnson, Christian Lewis, Casia Lottie, Patrick McKinnie, Aniyah Moore, Kaleigh Rojas, Matthew Sosa, Keilana Taylor, Dakotah Totress-Clemmons, and Davonis Totress.

Each student received a certificate of participation and a \$50 scholarship award.

For more information on the PEARLS of Service non-profit, contact info.pearlsofservice@gmail.com.



Taelen Cobb

County's hate crimes data shows second highest total in 44 years

The Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission released its annual Hate Crimes Report last month, revealing the second highest total number of hate crimes in the county in 44 years.

Key findings identified in the report show high levels of victimization across multiple groups, with record levels of reported hate crimes targeting African Americans, LGBTQ+ individuals, Jewish residents, Latinos, Middle Easterners,

women, Israelis, Muslims and Scientologists.

The numbers, based on data reported throughout the county during the 2024 calendar year, include hate crime information reported by more than 100 law enforcement agencies, educational institutions, and community-based organizations.

A total of 1,355 hate crimes were re-

Hate crimes data... pg. 11

Come Celebrate

2026 Historical Society of Pomona Valley
Annual Meeting

Sunday, February 22 • 5:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Ebell Museum of Pomona History



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Southern California artist to exhibit 60 years of work in Pomona

"The Fine Art Work of Mr. Ernest Bland," a show being curated by local artists Lisha and Gary Lett, will open next month with a reception to meet and greet the artist at African American Advisory Alliance in Downtown Pomona.

Featured will be work from the 92-year-old artist going back to the 1960s and throughout his career.

The show opens Feb. 14 with a reception from 6 to 8 p.m. at 406 W. Second St. in Downtown Pomona. It continues through March 28.

It is his first "solo" exhibition of his work.

Bland was a neighbor and family friend when Lisha lived in Compton as a child.

A native of San Antonio, Texas, Bland was introduced to art by an older cousin at the age of 5. His cousin was self-taught during a time there were few opportunities for African Americans to receive formal art training. His first art training came later in junior high school and continued in high school.

A U.S. Air Force veteran who was stationed in Germany, Bland returned from the service, moved to Southern California, settled in Compton and majored in public administration at Compton College.

He continued his art studies there before going to work for the U.S. Postal Service. His first portrait on canvas was for a co-worker working from a wallet-sized photograph. He said it took him about a month to complete and when he presented it to her

she said it didn't look like her and declined it. He still has that portrait in his home.

Bland earned a bachelor's degree in public administration from Cal State University Dominguez Hills, training that allowed him to advance to a position of safety



"Venessa" by artist Ernest Bland

specialist at the Postal Service, where he worked until his retirement in 1996.

His work over more than 60 years has included an oil painting of Isaac Hayes, a pencil drawing incorporating the text of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s final speech, portraits of Wilt Chamberlain, Louis Armstrong, Nat King Cole and others.

Hate crimes data... from pg. 9

ported in the latest year of available data, down 1 percent from 1,367 in 2023.

"Now more than ever, Los Angeles County stands firm in supporting victims of hate and confronting the divisiveness that fuels these crimes," said Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Chair Hilda Solis. "While our communities continue to navigate and recover from an unprecedented year, the commitment and resilience with which we take care of one another continue to light our way forward."

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Photos by Renee Barbee
Santa, who had his own photo booth,
and The Grinch made a special appear-
ance at a free event last month at the
Pomona Public Library to have a little
chat with the kids. Library officials
estimated based on automated door
counters and “give-aways” that some
500 children and parents attended the
event.



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Message matters more than ever... from pg. 1

"In that speech, Dr. King gave the nation a warning that still lands with urgency today," Morris said. "What Dr. King reminded the nation is that justice is not something we can keep postponing, justice is not something we can keep rescheduling."

"Justice is not something we deal with only when it's comfortable, only when it's popular, only when it's safe," he said. "Justice is a moral issue."

"Dr. King knew something we still have to wrestle with today – the greatest danger isn't always open hatred, sometimes the most significant threat is comfortable hesitation."

He said when families are living in fear, "slow up is not a harmless suggestion."

Morris referred to the eight students who were being honored with "social justice" awards at the event.

"Tonight, we are honoring students who refuse to slow up, students who made a different choice, students who looked in their communities and decided to show up," he said. "This is what social justice really is – it is the decision to care when it would be easier not to, it is the courage to speak when it would be safer to stay silent, it is a discipline to serve even when you are not being applauded."

"What I want you young people to know tonight is this – you are not just receiving an award, you are showing all of us what leadership looks like, real leadership, moral leadership," he said. "Because Dr. King's vision was never just about changing laws, it was about transforming hearts, transforming systems, transforming the moral direction of this country."

He urged the students to "keep going, keep learning, keep building, keep organizing, keep serving, and whatever you do, honor your compassion."

Morris is the great-great-grandson of American abolitionist Frederick Douglass and the great-great-grandson of civil rights leader Booker T. Washington. He is co-founder and president of Frederick Douglass Family Initiatives, based in Rochester, NY, which is a leader in human trafficking prevention, education, training of educators and combating racism.

The organization's mission is "to build strong children and to end systems of exploitation and oppression."

This year's top honor, the Zennie Cummings award, was presented to Gary and Lisha Lett for their work through their non-profit "Lett's Do Art" and their "continuous commitment and recognition of our youth and their work in



YOUTH SOCIAL JUSTICE HONOREES -- This year's Martin Luther King, Jr., Project 'Youth Social Justice' award winners, from left, are Rosa Loretto Navarro, Emiley Gaspar and Evelyn Aguilar-Perez, of Garey High School; Brooklyn Brown of Eleanor Roosevelt High School, Carlos Pina-Martinez of Montclair High School, Jazlyn Topete of Garey High School, and Cole Coats of Los Osos High School. Not pictured is Krista Sofia Sanchez, of Diamond Ranch High School.



Gary and Lisha Lett
Zennie Cummings award winners

social justice."

"Youth Social Justice" honorees were Cole Coats, Los Osos High School, Carlos Pina-Martinez, Montclair High School, Krista Sofia Sanchez, Diamond

Ranch High School, and Brooklyn Brown, Eleanor Roosevelt High School, all 12th graders, and Jazlyn Topete, Evelyn Aguilar-Perez, Emiley Gaspar and Rosa Loretto Navarro, all 10th graders at Garey

High School.

Theme of this year's MLK Jr. Project event was "Where do we go from here?"

For more information, visit the web site at pivmlkproject.org.

California child care providers slam Trump threat to freeze funding

By Suzanne Potter
Public News Service

Home-based child care providers in California are slamming the Trump administration's threat to freeze billions in federal funding.

Citing allegations of day-care center fraud in Minnesota, the administration is threatening to withhold funding from multiple programs. They include the Child Care Development Fund, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, and Social Services Block Grants.

"These funding freezes, even if it's temporary, will result in families losing care," said Alexa Frankenberg, executive director of Child Care Providers United, a union representing 70,000 home-based family child care providers in the Golden State. "And it also has the potential to really rav-

age our economy, with employers facing unpredictable workforce shortages if families need to deal with these child care emergencies."

Department of Health and Human Services spokesperson Andrew Nixon said in a statement to the New York Post that the administration is targeting California, Colorado, Illinois, Minnesota and New York. In his words, "For too long, Democrat-led states and governors have been complicit in allowing



A recent study from UCLA found the child care industry in California is already unable to accommodate the massive need for care. Data show fewer than half of the state's 2.6 million children under age five have regular child care arrangements.

massive amounts of fraud to occur under their watch."

Frankenberg said the rhetoric from the Trump administration

has unfairly targeted certain ethnic groups, alleging federal funds are being used to help "non-citizens."

She added that several home day-care centers in the San Diego area have received recent in-person and online threats that she called "completely unacceptable."

"And unfortunately, a lot of this has been directed at Black and immigrant-population providers," she said, "which is leading some extremists to show up in front of their houses and threaten the safety and well-being of children in their child care."

President Trump said in a Truth Social post that "the fraud investigation of California has begun," without providing any proof of wrongdoing. California officials have vowed to fight the administration's latest attempt to withhold federal funds from "blue" states.

Governor Gavin Newsom State of the State Address

Remarks as Prepared (Complete text)

January 8, 2026

I have spent my entire life — nearly six decades — along the rivers of this remarkable state, from my youthful days on the upper American River with my dad, to my time with my own children, downriver not too far from here.

These rivers shaped the story of California — a sense of place — from the Native peoples shaped by these rivers to the men who extracted riches from the silt. When the shout of “Eureka! Eureka!” began, madness ensued, fortunes were made and lost, many times over. Farmers worked the soil, nourished by those rivers. Settlements turned into towns, towns turned into thriving American port cities. Industry flourished. Through two world wars, a Great Depression, and social upheaval, booms and busts, California endured. Thrived.

And the rivers kept flowing.

For 175 years, California has been a marvel of invention and reinvention, disaster and recovery, grit and ingenuity. We have found a way to build the future, over and over. But today, that California spirit is being tested. We face an assault on our values unlike anything I have seen in my lifetime.

The federal government is unrecognizable, protecting the powerful, at the expense of the vulnerable. Their credo is fear — fear of the future, fear of the stranger, fear of change.

In Washington, the President believes that might makes right, that the courts are simply speed bumps, not stop signs — that democracy is a nuisance to be circumvented. Secret police, businesses raided, windows smashed, citizens detained, masked men snatching people in broad daylight, using American cities as training grounds for the US military — purposeful chaos emanating from the White House.

Shifting the tax burden from the wealthy — from billionaires to small businesses, farmers, the middle class. Lining the pockets of the rich; crony capitalism at an unimaginable scale. State capitalism. Self-dealing. Profit-making, not policy-making. Rolling back rights — attacking marginalized communities, rewriting history, censoring historical facts. Theirs is a politics of twisted nostalgia

about restoring the dynamics of a bygone era.

This is not normal.

It’s important to remember at moments like these, the greatest tragedy is not, as King said, the clamor of bad people, but the appalling silence of good people.

In California, we are not silent. We are not hunkering down. We are not retreating. We are a beacon. This state is providing a different narrative. An operational model, a policy blueprint for others to follow.

This state, this people, this experiment in democracy, belongs not to the past, but to the future. Expanding civil rights for all, opening doors for more people to pursue their dreams. A dream that’s not exclusive, not to any one race, not to any one religion, or class. Standing up for traditional virtues — compassion, courage, and commitment to something larger than our own self-interest — and asserting that no one, particularly the President of the United States, stands above the law. We’ve gone to court to protect our people, pushing back against executive overreach — 52 lawsuits filed, all funded by you, by the special session that you led.

And as a consequence, California has preserved \$168 billion in illegally frozen federal resources that belong to our schools, our hospitals, our elders; resources that belong to the people of this state. We won requests for emergency relief and affirmed the Constitution as the supreme law of the land.

Mr. President: You cannot cut off critical food assistance for millions. You cannot send the military into American cities without justification. You cannot cruelly and illegally cut off funding for medical research, homeland security, or disaster response.

But, if we are going to keep faith with the California spirit, we must do more than just resist what is wrong. We must keep building what is right. We are not defined by what we’re against; we’re defined by what we’re for. Opportunity, dignity, responsibility. The future.

Every year, the declinists, the pundits, and critics suffering from California Derangement Syn-



Gov. Newsom greets legislators at his State of the State address this month in Sacramento.

drome look at this state and try to tear down our progress. But we know the truth: California’s success is not by chance — it’s by design.

We created the conditions where the dreamers and the doers, the misfits and the marvels, with grit and ingenuity, come to build the impossible. We became the destination for the world’s first-round draft choices. The best and the brightest, who come from all over for riches and new beginnings.

It’s not just the tech founders in Silicon Valley or the producers and writers in Hollywood. I’m talking about the mechanics in Modesto, farmworkers in Salinas, and the police officers in El Centro. No state in America contributes more — none — to American greatness. No state builds more ladders to success or sees around more corners.

The biggest manufacturing economy: constructed here. The most productive agricultural economy: grown here. Eighteen percent of the world’s R&D: invested here. Half of our nation’s unicorns — \$1 billion startups: headquartered here. The happiest cities in America: right here. Fremont, San Jose, Irvine, San Francisco, and San Diego. And by the way, those cities have something else in common: proximity to the finest research institutions in the

world, the greatest system of public higher education anywhere. A conveyor belt for talent.

A proof point: just last year, UC added five new Nobel Laureates to its roster. One out of every three laureates in America, right here in California. 13,700 active patents at the UC System, more than any other system in the world. We simply have no peers.

This is the California we’ve created and nurtured through steps big and small, emanating from this very chamber. You’ve kept our state stable and reliable by investing in the California Dream.

Just last year, we unveiled the state’s first concrete economic development blueprint. Not top-down, but bottom-up, region by region, over 10,000 people participated in the development of this plan. We call it Jobs First.

Thirteen economic and workforce development strategies, aligned with universities and trade schools. A plan that reconciles the macroeconomic story of the world’s fourth-largest economy, \$4-plus trillion, and the microeconomic reality of 40 million people living here. An economic plan that is nourishing and family-supporting.

For the Central San Joaquin, that means jobs in manufacturing and clean energy, and of course, agriculture. For the Redwood re-

gion, jobs in tourism, health, forestry, and fisheries. For San Diego and Imperial counties, new jobs in high tech, biotechnology, advanced manufacturing, and hospitality. And for the Central Coast, new jobs in aerospace and defense, semiconductors, quantum, and ag-tech.

We’re doing all of this in conjunction with our wildly successful CalCompetes tax credits. Helping businesses hire more Californians, expanding innovation in this state: aerospace engineering in Torrance; hydrogen fuel manufacturing in Lancaster; fusion R&D in San Leandro; and in Mojave, in Kern County, the first steel mill built in California in 50 years. Building on the success of these regional efforts, in tomorrow’s budget, I’ll be asking all of you to reauthorize our tax credit program for another five years.

And speaking of tax credits, ever since the first moving image was taken of a horse named Sallie in Palo Alto to the early silent film studios in Fremont and Los Angeles, Hollywood has been the most “California” of industries. That’s why we have doubled down on funding California’s Film and Television Tax Credit Program, to not only keep our iconic industry here, but all the unionized camera operators, stunt performers, ward-

State of the State Address... pg. 15

IPoly seniors tackle local infrastructure challenges through civic action projects

This year's senior project at Pomona's IPoly High School challenged students to step beyond the classroom and engage directly with real-world issues affecting their communities, including water quality, transportation, energy use, and air pollution.

As part of the project, students attended local city council meetings, observing civic decision-making first-hand before identifying community needs that could be addressed through engineering-based solutions. The

goal was to encourage students to think like socially responsible engineers by connecting technical knowledge with public policy and civic engagement.

Working in teams, students researched and developed proposals directed at local, state, and federal levels of government. Project topics reflected pressing public concerns and included bike lane improvements to support safer transportation, water filtration systems to increase ac-

cess to clean drinking water, solar energy installations for hospitals, and landscape-based solutions designed to reduce harmful particulate matter in the air.

The senior team also partnered with Teach Democracy, a national, nonpartisan organization dedicated to strengthening civic participation. Through this collaboration, students organized and hosted a Civic Action Expo this month on the Cal Poly Pomona campus, creating a platform to

share their work with the broader community.

The event drew a diverse audience, including city council members from neighboring communities and a delegation of students and educators from San Pedro High School. Students had the opportunity to present their ideas to real stakeholders and receive meaningful feedback.

According to teacher Lorelei Ortega, the senior team hopes the partnership with Teach Democracy will continue to grow.

"We're hoping to increase relationships with local city governments," Ortega said, "so that the study of real-world issues can lead to real-world action."

IPoly High School emphasizes collaborative, project-based learn-

ing throughout all four years of study, with students working in semester-long teams and regularly developing presentation and communication skills. The college preparatory high school offers concurrent college courses beginning in 10th grade, is tuition-free, and open to students from all cities. Applications for the fall are currently available.



Pomona City Councilmember Debra Martin joins IPoly Senior Teachers Lorelei Ortega, Joon Park, Russell McKinney, and Rachel Wampler at this month's Pomona Valley Civic Action Project Expo held at Cal Poly Pomona to watch senior presentations.



Seniors Christopher Carpio, Andrew Pendon, Leah Smith, and Leilani Bautista present on cyclist safety in Azusa.

State of the State Address... from pg. 14

robe, and set designers.

As we support our proud past, we're also making investments in our economic future. We are defining the next decade and beyond — through robotics, fusion, space, quantum, and artificial intelligence.

Speaking of which, it goes without saying that no technology holds more promise and more peril, to jobs, to our economy, to our way of life than artificial intelligence. The tech genie, it's out of the bottle. So the question is not whether change is happening; it is. The question is: What values will guide us into this new frontier?

And that's a question we're answering. Last year, we worked together on landmark legislation to create the nation's first rules for responsible, ethical, and safe use of AI, regulations that provide guardrails that balance risk and opportunity. A consensus effort and a template for the nation, where just recently, New York State adopted our approach and made it their

own.

It's an example of California's leadership — of how we're shaping the future. A unique combination of conscience and capital, an entrepreneurial and innovative spirit that encourages risk-taking, not recklessness. Policy that creates predictability, so investors have confidence, and innovators have space to dream, and to do.

Compare this to the carnival of chaos on the national stage. The administration's mini-dramas and vapid day trading, all with real-world consequences, none more striking than the Big Beautiful Bill. That bill is putting 1.8 million Californians at risk of losing their health insurance, and 2 million facing premium increases. Cuts to food aid — poised to impact 375,000 Californians.

And for what? All to benefit the top 10% of this country — people who already own two-thirds of the household wealth. Plutarch was right when he warned us 2,000

State of the State Address... pg. 16



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State of the State Address... from pg. 15

years ago that this imbalance of the rich and the poor “is the oldest and most fatal ailment of all republics.”

Understanding the lessons of the past, in California, we proudly built one of the most progressive tax systems in the nation. One that asks the highest-income residents to pay a little bit more, without punishing people who are making a little bit less. Think about this: 11 states tax their middle class more than California does, and 16 states tax their low-wage earners more than California taxes its high-wage earners.

So the question is, who are the high-tax states?

Take Texas and Florida. With the most regressive taxes in the nation hammering low-income earners more than the rich. In California, we stand for fairness — and in more ways than one. That’s why I was proud to work with the Legislature to raise the minimum wage for fast-food workers to \$20, and health care workers to \$25 an hour.

Compare that to workers in Alabama, South Carolina, or Tennessee, and in 17 other states, working full-time at just \$7.25 an hour, a minimum wage that hasn’t been raised in nearly two decades. Try to pay the rent, raise a family, and pay for an education on that.

It comes down to a simple question: Who do you stand for? The rich and the powerful, the most well-connected? Or the bus driver, the janitor, the special education teacher, working overtime to support their families?

And speaking of supporting our educators, I’m proud to submit a budget tomorrow with the most significant investments in public education in California’s history, backed by the state’s General Fund of \$248.3 billion, including revenues that are \$42.3 billion higher than forecasted last year.

Why? Because our economy is growing. Because our population is growing. Because of the energy and daring of entrepreneurs, who are dominating the industries of the future.

As a result of this windfall, mindful of the erratic nature of our state revenue and our long-term structural challenges, we’re rebuilding our reserves, adding \$7.3 billion. And paying down long-term pension obligations to the tune of \$11.8 billion, over the

next few years, including \$3 billion alone in next year’s budget.

And speaking of obligations, we all know, there is no greater obligation than to our kids, and their education. That’s why tomorrow’s budget includes a record-breaking \$27,418 per student. This budget will fully fund our universal TK program — and maintains our commitment to reduce class sizes to improve the quality of education for our youngest learners.

It’s also a budget that continues our nation-leading investments in school meals, nearly one billion breakfasts, lunches and snacks last year alone, and advances the nation’s most expansive and audacious plan to eliminate ultra-processed foods from our cafeterias. Contrast that with what Donald Trump just announced this week, that he will illegally cut all federal funding for TANF and child care, in curiously, just five blue states, including California. Cuts that have the potential of throwing parents into disarray, forcing them to choose between going to work or taking care of their children. Putting at risk the most significant expansion of child care in America — our state already supporting 487,000 children, saving families thousands of dollars a year.

When we talk about saving families money, let’s consider the bold commitment that we made just a few years ago to bolster before and after-school programs, providing nine hours a day of enrichment, and 30 days of summer school each year. I’m proud to say that this budget will finish the job and make that pledge universal, at every elementary school in the state. More hours of enrichment, more literacy coaches, more reading specialists, healthy meals for all, and an entire new grade for everyone.

It’s not any one of these initiatives on their own; it’s also the complete transformation of our campuses through rigorous, relevant, and engaging community schools, one of our most significant achievements. To date, California has invested \$4.1 billion in these life-changing, enriching community schools to support nearly 2,500 campuses. And, we’re not done. The budget I am proposing includes an additional \$1 billion to expand to thousands of additional high-need schools.

These multi-year investments in education, they are paying off. Just this year, we’ve seen improved academic achievement in every subject area, in every grade level, in every student group. With greater gains in test scores for Black and Latino kids.

These gains are particularly pronounced in Los Angeles, the nation’s second-largest school district. To the teachers, classified employees, and the parents of LAUSD: you should be proud of the progress you’re making, and particularly proud of the leadership of Superintendent Alberto Carvalho, who is here today. Under his stewardship, the district is outpacing statewide progress, exceeding pre-pandemic levels in every category, and reaching the highest levels recorded since the current state assessments were

launched a decade ago. And yes, the Superintendent would be the first to acknowledge, we have a lot more work to do.

Speaking of which, it’s long overdue that we modernize the management of our educational system — and so in the budget I’ll be submitting tomorrow, I’m proposing that we unify the policy-making by the State Board of Education and the Department of Education, allowing the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to align our education policies from early childhood through college.

We did the right thing last year, when we got cell phones out of our public schools. Every parent understands this. Our kids are increasingly more anxious, addicted, less free, and less happy because so much of their lives is lived on-

line. So much of their life has become performative, measured by external validation — likes and followers. We’re watching the spiritual health of our young people erode in real time.

This vital conversation of what to do about it has played out in these chambers for well over a decade. I’m proud that California leads the nation in kids’ online safety, thanks to laws you’ve passed, including many I signed just last year, on age verification, on chatbot safety, on parental controls.

But recently, Australia generated a lot of headlines for taking even bolder steps. The question is, what more should we do? The consequences of getting this wrong are all too apparent: depression; social isolation; and in some

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cases, radicalization, particularly with our young men and boys, on-line and offline.

Consider this, and forgive me. You walk into a morgue — of every five young people dead by suicide, four are boys or young men.

Young men: 14 times more likely to be incarcerated, three times as likely to die from a drug overdose, and more than twice as likely to be homeless. One out of seven men has no friends. And half of young men have not even asked a woman out on a date in person. Our young men and boys are struggling — and California is responding.

We recently issued an Executive Order that, among many concrete actions, created the Men's Service Challenge, calling on 10,000 young men to step up as tutors, mentors, coaches, and leaders in their communities. That service extends not just to our men and boys, but also to everyone through the California Service Corps, now larger than the Peace Corps. And through our College Corps program alone, 3,500 students earn up to \$10,000 in return for completing 450 hours of service.

"Service is the heart and soul that binds us together," helping build personal character, friendships, as well as careers.

Speaking of careers, I want to thank this legislature for helping fund our state's first master plan for career education. This three-year process, just recently completed, creates seamless, debt-free pathways from school to high-paying jobs, with or without college experience. We're integrating career training, strengthening regional partnerships, and building a new digital "career passport" so people can track their skills.

We set a goal together: producing 500,000 apprenticeships by 2029. I'm proud to announce today that we've surpassed that goal, adding 600,000 earn-and-learn opportunities, more than anywhere else in the country. And many of those apprentices — in skilled trades, electricians, laborers, carpenters — are already at work strengthening and building the physical foundations of our state.

Right now, we're building more infrastructure projects than at any time since Governor Pat Brown — \$109 billion currently underway, more than 28,000 separate projects, over 200,000 people working to

strengthen this state. Environmental restoration and energy projects, roads and bridges, water and power, rail and ports, broadband for rural communities. Sites Reservoir, the first above-ground water storage in 50 years, as well as the world's largest battery solar storage project — 2,300 megawatts in Fresno County — all moving forward under California's new fast-track permitting authority.

Speaking of tracks, we're finally laying the tracks of the nation's first High-Speed Rail system, building the transportation network of the 21st century. Full environmental clearance. We've built 50 major structures. More than 60 miles of guideway have been completed, ready for immediate track-laying in the Central Valley. 2,270 parcels for right-of-way, procured. Full electrification of 51 miles of track for Caltrain, allowing us to move more people, more efficiently. Connecting some of the fastest-growing places in our state — Fresno, Madera, and Bakersfield — making commute times shorter and making life more affordable for people in the Central Valley.

Affordability — that's not a word we just discovered, and it's certainly not a hoax. Here's the way we think about it. It's not just one issue; it's a stacking of many issues, one on top of another. But the one issue that impacts more things, in more ways, on more days, is the cost of housing, California's original sin. For decades, the story of California housing reforms was one of delay and denial.

That said, we got to work in 2019, passing the strongest statewide renter protections in America. And the past few years, we have enshrined the most consequential housing reforms in our state's history. Just last year alone, I was proud to sign 61 housing reform bills, clearing regulatory thickets, forcing local governments — often resistant — to get in the game, and modernizing environmental review.

But we have more work to do. And I look forward to working with the Legislature this year, particularly to reduce the cost of construction, utilizing new building methods and technol-

ogy — worker-centered reforms that bring our brothers and sisters in labor along with us.

And there is another urgent area

requiring our attention. That's institutional investors snatching up homes by the hundreds and thousands at a time, crushing the dream

of home ownership, and forcing rents too damn high for everyone else. It's shameful that we allow

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private equity firms in Manhattan to become the biggest landlords in many of our cities.

Over the next few weeks, we will work with the Legislature to combat this monopolistic behavior, strengthen accountability, and level the playing field for working families. That means more oversight and enforcement, and potentially changing the state tax code to make this work.

But housing is just one component of the stack of affordability challenges facing California families.

And that's why our stack of solutions has included more than tripling the Earned Income Tax Credit, delivering \$7.6 billion back into the pockets of working families since 2019. Together, we created the Young Child Tax Credit and the Foster Youth Tax Credit. We have increased Paid Sick Leave and Paid Family Leave, allowing eligible workers to receive up to 90% of their wages while raising and supporting their families. Through all these targeted tax credits, rebates, and program expansions, the average California family now saves \$18,000.

But I recognize that the new "cost of eggs" is now your energy bill.

The number one driver of increased energy bills over the last decade has been the cost of hardening our infrastructure and other related wildfire costs, significantly driven by climate change. That's why I was proud to work with all of you last year to extend our nation-leading Cap-and-Invest program for another two decades, providing close to \$60 billion in rebates on your monthly energy bill. This year, we also worked across our differences to enable a new regional energy market that will increase reliability and lower energy bills.

By the way, one of the things that is not high in California is our uninsured rate — 6.4%, one of the lowest in the nation. In addition to the largest health care expansion in America, we subsidized some 370,000 people to help bring down the cost of their health insurance through Covered California.

But it's not good enough to just subsidize health care costs; we need to lower them. And we are doing just that through our CalRX program, launching our own ge-

neric drug label. Just last week, we launched insulin at \$11 a pen, just as we did with life-saving naloxone last year.

In that same spirit, we also fundamentally overhauled our state's mental health system and homelessness response. When I began as Governor, there was no homeless plan, no mental health plan, and certainly no housing plan. There was no accountability and little investment. The responsibility fell to cities and counties, with little interest from Sacramento.

But that changed when we crafted new statewide programs. Homekey and Project Roomkey — which together has taken more than 72,000 people off the streets, converting hotels, motels, and other properties into longer-term housing. And, we are seeing results.

Early data, just compiled, shows that the number of unsheltered homeless people in California dropped 9% in 2025. We have not seen a drop like this in a decade and a half in California. Los Angeles, down 10.3%; Riverside, down 19%; Contra Costa County, down 34.8%. And I'll remind you that last year, the nation saw an 18.1% overall increase in homelessness. Our investments are paying off.

And of course, it's not good enough, particularly for those living on the streets, self-medicating with drugs or alcohol, suffering from bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, or paranoia. But today, because of your leadership, we have new tools to address these issues. We modernized California's landmark conservatorship laws for the first time in more than 50 years. We created CARE Court, a new legal framework to connect people with untreated psychosis to court-ordered services and housing.

And the California voters spoke, with the passage of Prop 1 in 2024, a \$6.38 billion bond to build more mental health housing. In just 18 months, we have already approved nearly 70% of the new treatment beds and slots we promised under Prop 1 — the fastest distribution of bond money in our state's history. 4,236 new locked and unlocked mental health beds, and 18,875 new outpatient treatment slots.

And on July 1 of this year, we will implement the second phase of Proposition 1 by redirecting over \$1 billion in annual mental health funding to housing and treatment

for people living on the streets, providing counties what they've been asking for: the predictable funding for housing and substance abuse treatment. No more excuses — it's time to bring people off the streets, out of encampments, into housing, into treatment. Counties need to do their job!

That doesn't mean our hands are clean. And that's why, since 2021, the state has removed more than 19,000 encampments and worked with providers to help more than 61,000 people get services. We're seeing results, making streets safer for everyone, and fully recognizing that quality of life is at the core of people's frustrations in this state.

When it comes to quality of life and public safety specifically, let's talk facts. We provided \$267 million in grants to police departments and prosecutors to combat organized crime, retail theft, and hold criminals accountable. We deployed Crime Suppression Teams in Bakersfield, San Francisco, San Bernardino, Oakland, and recently, Stockton, supporting local law enforcement with the help of the CHP — a force bolstered by the addition of over 1,000 new officers. Through these efforts, we've seen double-digit decreases in crime overall: property crime, down; aggravated assault, down; car theft, down; burglary, down; robbery, down; violent crime, down. California cities are seeing record-low homicide rates: Oakland, the lowest since 1967; LA, the lowest since 1966; and San Francisco, the lowest since 1954. Again, we have more work to do.

To those with California Derangement Syndrome, it's time to update your talking points. California remains the most blessed and often the most cursed place on Earth: profound natural beauty and prosperity; profound natural disasters, testing our spirits and resources.

I was recently down in Belém, Brazil, at the COP 30 climate conference. The US was nowhere to be found. The United States, a footnote. China sent close to 800 delegates.

Today, China manufactures 70% of the world's electric vehicles, flooding the global market with high-quality, inexpensive cars. This is not about green power; it's about economic power.

They are dominating this space. They're locking in markets, locking in supply chains, locking in their influence across the globe. They're cleaning our clock.

But in California, we refuse to be bystanders. Already, we have seven times as many clean energy jobs as fossil fuel jobs. Last year, we ran the fourth-largest economy in the world, using 100% clean energy for at least part of 9 out of every 10 days. Today, two-thirds of our energy comes from clean sources, such as solar, hydro, wind, geothermal, and nuclear power. And just last year, California finally ended its use of any coal-fired power.

We are in the "how" business.

And we also understand how climate risk is financial risk, and that climate risk is becoming uninsurable. That's why we're making our homes and communities more resilient to heat and fire, and working with our Insurance Commissioner, we're stabilizing and protecting homeowners from unpredictable rate increases and cancellations. We became the first state in the country to require insurers to lower insurance for home hardening upgrades. In the last few months, six insurance companies announced their commitment to remain in, or expand their coverage, here in California.

We have a lot more work to do to fully implement our sustainable insurance strategy and for holding insurance companies accountable for meeting their obligation to insure in high-risk areas of our state.

Those insurance stories were front and center when I met yesterday with survivors of the LA wildfires. Let me remind everybody what occurred one year ago. Between January 7 and January 22, 48,000 acres burned, the size of three Manhattans. Communities torn asunder: Palisades, Altadena, Malibu, Pasadena. The fires took the lives of 31 people, destroyed more than 16,000 structures.

On this sober anniversary, we not only honor the lives lost, we also honor the firefighters and first responders who faced unimaginable conditions — a firestorm in the middle of winter, with hurricane-force winds. What they did was miraculous and heroic. They went to battle against impossible conditions, in the wind and in the dark, flying dangerous night missions

over the firestorm.

Today, many members of Cal FIRE are in the audience, along with community groups, business owners, and, most importantly, survivors of the Eaton and Palisades fires. Can you all stand up? I want everyone to give you a big round of applause for your resiliency, your courage, your strength.

Look, Los Angeles just finished the fastest debris removal in American history. We provided mortgage relief. We committed \$2.5 billion for recovery efforts. I've signed 27 executive orders. You've passed a dozen-plus bills to remove time-wasting red tape, allowing survivors to begin rebuilding. And it's true, the city and county have issued over 2,500 building permits.

But it's not good enough. Not nearly enough. We need to turbocharge our efforts to rebuild these communities. That's why we're working to create a new rebuilding fund to close the gap between insurance payouts and the cost of rebuilding — helping survivors get back in their homes even faster.

Contrast these efforts with Donald Trump's complete failure to act. He is refusing to even send a disaster recovery request to Congress for \$33.9 billion, supported by our entire California delegation, Democrats and Republicans, to support the victims in Los Angeles. It's time for the President of the United States to act like a President for ALL the United States. It's time to fulfill the promises he made and deliver for the people in LA.

There is no doubt — this has been a challenging year, not only because of these fires, the federalization of the National Guard, the assault on our democratic norms and institutions. And yet, one of our finest.

Because hardship does not merely wound us; it reveals us.

The story of California has never been the story of ease. It has been the story of effort, strengthened by trial and enlarged by the people who refuse to give up on one another. We have built something that is not perfect, not finished, but real; always moving forward — like the rivers that define our landscape, our people are unstoppable.

We're home to more Americans
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Spectators line up and millions more tune in for Pasadena's Rose Parade

Nearly 40 floats made their way down Colorado Boulevard on New Year's Day this year in the 5.5-mile-long 137th Rose Parade, accompanied by marching bands, equestrian units and more, in a holiday tradition with nearly 800,000 spectators lining the streets and millions more watching on television or live streaming online.

Theme of the parade this year was "The Magic in Teamwork" and Earvin "Magic" Johnson was grand marshal of the 2026 parade.

The Cal Poly Universities (Pomona and San Luis Obispo) won their first-ever "Sweepstakes" award for its "Jungle Jumpstart" float – their 77th entry in the parade since 1949 and their 64th award for the float team.

Each year, more than 80,000 hours of volunteer work are contributed by 935 volunteer members of the Tournament of Roses Association in their iconic white uniforms and countless hours contributed by volunteers and professionals working on the floats.

The earliest Tournament of Roses parade welcomed 3,000 spectators to an event featuring horse-drawn carriages decorated with orange blossoms.

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than any other state. Culture, food, music, movies, AI, biotech, quantum computing, agriculture — it all happens here first.

We don't run from change, we drive it. We are proving that inclusive democracy works. We are proving that expanding human rights works. We are proving that legal immigration works. And we're proving that a progressive tax structure works.

California has never been about perfection. It's about persistence. The courage of our convictions and the strength to embody them. That's the California Way.

And it lights the path for the rest of the world.

The work we do, building a California where every person can see themselves, is never-ending. So we continue on because, years from now, we can tell our children we did not settle for the world as it was. We can say with pride: we built something worthy of them. We built the future.

Thank you, California.



Photos by La Nueva Voz
The 107th Rose Queen, Arcadia High School senior Serena Guo, and her Rose Court rode in the parade on the Rose Court float as what traditionally is their grand finale.



The Rose Parade entry America250, "Soaring Onward Together for 250 Years," celebrated 250 years of the American spirit and the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. America250 is a bipartisan organization charged by Congress to lead the anniversary celebrations. The float won the Leishman Public Spirit Award.



San Francisco's first Rose Parade float in 50 years received the "Extraordinaire" award for most extraordinary float. Theme of the float was "Believe in San Francisco" and featured the Golden Gate Bridge, a cable car and the "painted ladies," replicas of the famous colorful Victorian houses at San Francisco's Alamo Square.



Princess Cruises created a float that, well, pretty much rolled an entire cruise ship down Colorado Boulevard in the Rose Parade. The float, on the theme "Together in the Magic of Alaska," depicted Star Princess sailing through Alaska's natural breath-taking beauty, marking the highly anticipated inaugural 2026 Alaska season for the cruise line's newest ship. The float, complete with animation bringing Alaska's wildlife to life, was about 55 feet long and 21 feet high and adorned with more than 300,000 flowers and natural materials. It won the President's Award for the most outstanding use and presentation of flowers. Hey, maybe we should all get on board once it warms up a bit. Tell them La Nueva Voz sent you.



The San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance float "Giant Strides Together" won the parade's Grand Marshal Award. Featuring elephants as the "architects of the earth," the float transported viewers to the all-new Denny Sanford Elephant Valley, the largest and most transformative project in the organization's 109-year history, which will open on March 5 at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park in Escondido.



This year's "Founder Award" at the Rose Parade, recognizing the most outstanding float built by volunteers, went to the Downey Rose Float Association for their entry, "The Glow of Achievement," highlighting community dedication and volunteerism.

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