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**COLDWELL BANKER
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- 2 **Drug Concerns**
Banned opioid-like product resurfaces.
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Debate could last days or weeks.



- 4 **Wealth Exodus**
Billionaires flee blue states over taxes.
- 5 **Olympic Soccer**
Kicks off 4 days early.

Volume 25 Issue 85

WEDNESDAY 3/18/26

smdp.com

Suspect arrested after pointing a gun at 7-Eleven clerk

MATTHEW HALL
Daily Press Editor

A 26-year-old man was arrested after allegedly pointing a firearm at employees during a robbery attempt at a Santa Monica convenience store, police said.

David Ramirez was booked on suspicion of robbery after the incident at a 7-Eleven in the 1800 block of Lincoln Boulevard, which occurred at approximately 4:17 p.m. March 16, according to the Santa Monica Police Department.

Officers said Ramirez attempted to steal merchandise and was confronted by store employees. He then produced a firearm and pointed it at employees before fleeing the area, police said.

Officers responded quickly and, with assistance from the department's SMART Center, tracked the suspect's movements before locating Ramirez in the area of 6th Street and Grant Street. He was taken into custody following a brief detention. Officers recovered a firearm believed to have been used in the incident.

The arrest was part of a high intensity weekend for SMPD that included a shooting on the Santa Monica Pier and increased visitors to the city due to the regional heat wave. While the weather drove more foot traffic to Santa Monica, the department has been increasing

SEE ROBBERY PAGE 6

Former Santa Monica Mayor Judy Abdo named 2026 Assembly District 51 Woman of the Year



AWARD: Assemblymember Rick Chavez Zbur presents longtime activist and conservation champion Judy Abdo with a 2026 Woman of the Year Honoree Commendation on Monday, March 16, 2026. From Left: Assembly Minority Leader Heath Flora (R-Ripon), Assemblymember Rick Chavez Zbur (D-Hollywood), Former Santa Monica Mayor Judy Abdo, Assembly Majority Leader Cecilia Aguiar-Curry (D-Winters), and Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas (D-Hollister).

MATTHEW HALL
Daily Press Editor

California Assemblymember Rick Chavez Zbur has named former Santa Monica Mayor Judy Abdo as the 2026 Assembly District

51 Woman of the Year, recognizing her decades of public service and historic role as the city's first openly LGBTQ+ elected official.

Zbur, a Democrat who represents the local area as caucus chair of the Assembly Democratic Caucus,

announced the honor during Women's History Month.

"Judy Abdo has spent her life fighting to make Santa Monica a more just, inclusive, and

SEE ABDO PAGE 6

Regional leaders continue push to help LA wildfire survivors rebuild

MATTHEW HALL
Daily Press Editor

County leaders continued to advance wildfire recovery and prevention efforts in recent weeks, rolling out a series of programs aimed at helping Los Angeles County residents rebuild their homes, find employment and protect communities from future fires.

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors approved a motion to explore a new regional wildfire prevention authority, while county officials spotlighted job fair resources for fire survivors and a state assessor moved to protect homeowners from unexpected property tax increases during the rebuilding process.

REGIONAL WILDFIRE MITIGATION AUTHORITY

The Board of Supervisors approved a motion by Supervisor Lindsey P. Horvath to assess the feasibility of establishing a regional wildfire mitigation authority to better coordinate prevention efforts across the Santa Monica Mountains.

The 2025 fires burned more than 23,000 acres and damaged or destroyed thousands of homes, exposing the fragmented nature of land management across the region. Land in the Santa Monica

SEE WILDFIRE PAGE 7

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Once given out at USC, this banned, opioid-like product is still cropping up in California

California legislators are attempting to regulate products containing an addictive, opioid-like plant — one that, until recently, several universities including the University of Southern California marketed in a beverage as a wellness tonic and distributed at no cost.

Feel Free is a psychoactive tonic drink that can be consumed like a shot of tequila or Nyquil. The small, two-ounce blue bottles are available in places from smoke shops to health food stores in California. It is made from plants, kava root and kratom leaf, the latter of which contains organic compounds called alkaloids that act like drugs in the human body. These alkaloids — 7-hydroxymitragynine and mitragynine — are not technically opioids, but they interact with the same brain receptors as opioids to produce pleasure and relieve pain.

The California Public Health Department announced a campaign to remove kratom from stores last October and has since seized \$5 million in kratom products, justifying the enforcement using California's Sherman Law. This law lays out rules for selling and manufacturing food, drugs, cosmetics and supplements, and grants Public Health the authority to seize those types of products if they are not federally or state approved.

State lawmakers have moved to formally add kratom and the compound 7-OH to the Sherman Law, which they said would unlock additional resources for the health department's crackdown and protect their ability to conduct that enforcement if kratom's federal legality is unclear. One such bill will

be heard by a state Senate committee later this year. The priority, according to the bill's author, Assemblymember Jasmeet Bains, a Bakersfield Democrat and a physician, is to keep kratom out of the hands of children.

KRATOM GIVES A 'FLOATY,' 'SOFT FEELING'

Feel Free is earthy and aromatic, but customers don't drink it for the taste, according to the drink's manufacturer Botanic Tonics.

"It just made me feel a little bit floaty," said a 2024 University of Texas at Austin alumnus who requested anonymity in this story due to her public job. Botanic Tonics sponsored her university from 2022 to 2025. "It gives everything like a soft feeling."

Shortly after its founding, Botanic Tonics partnered with universities through athletic department sponsorships that required marketing Feel Free as medicinal. This included Florida State University, University of Texas at Austin, and USC. Botanic Tonics did not respond to multiple inquiries from CalMatters on whether they sought a college student consumer base.

Kratom leaves, which are plucked from coffee trees in Southeast Asia, are used and branded as alternatives to alcohol and to lessen symptoms of withdrawal from other substances like opioids. A small amount of kratom typically makes people feel alert and energetic. But high doses can produce opioid-like effects like nausea, itching, dry mouth, drowsiness, insomnia, or even psychosis, according to the Drug Enforcement Administration.

It can also lead to serious adverse effects like liver toxicity, seizures and addiction, according to the Food and Drug Administration, which has not approved the plant as a lawful dietary supplement or drug. The 7-OH compound, whose effects can be reversed with Narcan, is less prevalent than mitragynine in kratom, but binds much more strongly to opioid receptors and can cause fatal overdoses.

Thousands of Reddit users on the subreddits r/Quittingfeelfree and r/Quittingkratom report physical and emotional effects, as well as severe withdrawal symptoms from the product itself. Botanic Tonics states on its website that people with histories of substance abuse should not drink Feel Free, adding it can be "habit-forming and harmful" if used improperly.

California's Alcoholic Beverage Control department said in January it will enforce the health department's prohibition, ordering stores with liquor licenses to remove kratom from their shelves. Cities have enacted their own bans and limitations, including Anaheim, Oceanside, Jurupa Valley, Newport Beach and San Diego, along with the counties of Los Angeles and Riverside. Botanic Tonics still lists on its website locations throughout California where the products can be purchased.

Kava root, which can ease anxiety and insomnia, does not contain opioid-like alkaloids and is regulated by the FDA; some people have reported liver toxicity and skin ailments after consuming it.

Feel Free was founded in 2020 with

headquarters in Santa Monica and in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma. Within a few years, the Texas student said, the product was part of the college atmosphere, especially at parties, where she would see students chug multiple servings at once, leaving waves of empty blue bottles rolling around the floor.

The 2-ounce tonics, about \$10 each, could be bought in any gas station, bodega or convenience store in Texas, and she saw many students drinking them on and off campus. "It would mess people up. People would use it to pregame," she said. "Whenever people used it, they would shoot the entire thing."

"We were introduced to them as... a potential partner at the university," the Texas student said. "So I trusted it. That's the thing. I never thought twice about it."

TROJANS TRY NEW PRODUCT

The USC Trojans had a turbulent relationship with Botanic Tonics, according to Jose Eskenazi, former associate athletic director who was laid off due to budget cuts in August 2025 after 22 years on the job. He said that around the time of Feel Free's founding, PlayFly Sports, USC's sports marketing partner, approached him with a sponsorship contract. Eskenazi remembered the advertising materials he reviewed seemed innocuous, and that the product was described as "calming." So he signed a three-year contract.

"It was just a different category of business

SEE OPIOID PAGE 8



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Republicans are launching a voting bill debate that could last days or even weeks

Republicans are launching an unprecedented effort on Tuesday to hold the Senate floor and talk for days about a bill that they know won't pass — an attempt to capture public attention on legislation requiring stricter voter registration rules as President Donald Trump pressures Congress to act before November's midterm elections.

The talkathon could last a week or longer, potentially through the weekend, as Senate Majority Leader John Thune tries to navigate Trump's insistence on the issue and Democrats' united opposition. Trump has urged Thune to scrap the legislative filibuster, which triggers a 60-vote threshold in the 100-member Senate, or find another workaround to pass the bill, but Thune has repeatedly said he doesn't have the votes to do that.

Instead, Republicans intend to make a long, noisy show of support for the legislation, which would require Americans to prove they are U.S. citizens before they register to vote and to show identification at the polls, among other things. It's a risky strategy, with no guarantee it will be enough for Trump, who has said he won't sign other bills until the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility Act — also known as the SAVE America Act or the SAVE Act — is passed.

The floor debate is expected to eventually end with a failed vote. Republicans need 60 votes to advance the bill to a final vote, but they hold 53 seats, and all 45 Democrats and both independents, who caucus with the Democrats, oppose it.

Still, the debate will "put Democrats on the record," Thune said last week.

In a social media post on Tuesday morning, Trump issued a warning to any Republican who doesn't vote for the bill: "I WILL NEVER (EVER!) ENDORSE ANYONE WHO VOTES AGAINST 'SAVE AMERICA!!'"

CREATING STRICT VOTER REGISTRATION RULES

Trump says, without evidence, that Democrats can only win in the midterms if they cheat and explicitly said Republicans need the SAVE America Act to win in November. The House passed the legislation earlier this year, but the Senate turned to other issues as it became clear that Republicans didn't have the votes to pass it.

But Trump made clear he wasn't satisfied and pushed the Senate to act. The Republican president has said he won't sign other legislation, including a bipartisan housing bill backed by the White House, until the voting bill passes.

The bill contains a slew of provisions that Trump and his most loyal supporters have pushed as part of a broad effort to assert federal control over elections. It would require voters nationwide to provide proof of citizenship when they register and to show accepted voter identification when casting a ballot.

It would also create new penalties for election workers who register voters without proof of citizenship and require states to hand voter data over to the Department of Homeland Security so federal officials could screen for voters who are in the country illegally.

Trump also wants new provisions added to the bill, including a ban on most mail-in ballots.

"It'll guarantee the midterms," Trump said of the bill last week. "If you don't get it, big trouble."

DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION TO THE BILL IS FIRM

Democrats and many groups that champion voter access say there is little evidence of noncitizens voting and say the bill would disenfranchise millions of voters — including Republicans — by creating new burdens to prove citizenship.

It is already illegal to vote if you are not a U.S. citizen, but the bill would lay out strict new rules for paperwork that people would have to present to register to vote. Opponents of the measure say those documents are not always readily available for many people.

"There is no new problem to solve here," said Janai Nelson, president and director-counsel of the Legal Defense Fund, a civil rights law advocacy group. "There is an apparatus already to ensure that elections are safe and secure and that only eligible voters are casting ballots in our elections."

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said that Democrats are not opposed to voter identification but "this is about purging the voter rolls in a massive way, so you never even get the chance to show a voter ID when you showed up to vote because you'd be knocked off the rolls."

EXPECT A SHOW ON THE SENATE FLOOR

Trump, backed by Republican Sen. Mike Lee of Utah, has pushed for a talking filibuster, which would force Democrats to talk for days or weeks to delay passage of the bill. But Thune and the larger GOP conference rejected that idea, arguing that it would end in failure after giving Democrats a stage and the opportunity to offer endless amendments, potentially adding their priorities to the bill.

Republicans are instead taking over the floor with their own speeches, proceeding under regular order but operating outside the normal time limits that are customary when debating legislation. Democrats are expected to answer with their own procedural hijinks, potentially forcing Republicans to come to the floor at all hours for votes, meaning they will need to stay close to the Senate for the duration.

Lee said last week that it's unclear how it will all play out. He said he thinks Trump "understands that we need to put in an aggressive effort here."

"And a lot of that," he said, "is going to have to be determined in real time as we go about it."

The extent of Trump's satisfaction with the process, Lee said, "will depend on whether, in his view, we gave it everything we have."

On Monday night, Lee was rallying Trump's base voters on X.

"Once we're on this bill," he wrote, "we must stay on it until it's passed into law."

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press. Associated Press writer Lisa Mascaro contributed to this report.



Surf report WATER TEMP: 61.9

WEDNESDAY | SURF: 3-4ft+
FAIR | Waist to shoulder

Lingering SSW swell has enough energy left for a few fun waves. Early tide push or let it drop. There's still enough Southern Hemisphere swell in the water for a few fun zone waves at the better summer exposures. There's a touch of NW swell in the mix but spots with some kind of structure are going to offer the best shape. Light wind early for a clean dawn patrol tide push. Wind stays light for the initial tide drop and should stay pretty manageable for the PM low tide at the points.

THURSDAY | SURF: 2-3ft+
FAIR | Thigh to stomach

Fun leftovers as S swell fades. Early tide push looks like the window to target. Knee-waist high surf should still be pretty easy to track down while standouts push chest+ on the morning tide push. A little bit of NW energy in the mix and the beachbreaks should be in play, but structured spots remain your best shot at a corner. Early tide push has the cleanest conditions of the day. A little bumpier on the other side of the high tide as onshore WNW/NW wind picks up.



Wednesday: Sunny, with a high near 88. East northeast wind 5 to 10 mph becoming southwest in the afternoon.
Wednesday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 63. West southwest wind 5 to 10 mph becoming east northeast after midnight.
Thursday: Sunny, with a high near 90. Calm wind becoming southwest around 5 mph in the afternoon.
Thursday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 63.

Date	Day	Time (LST/LDT)	Predicted (ft)High/Low
2026/03/18	Wed	03:26 AM	0.48 L
2026/03/18	Wed	09:29 AM	5.30 H
2026/03/18	Wed	3:49 PM	-0.32 L
2026/03/18	Wed	10:00 PM	5.14 H
2026/03/19	Thu	04:06 AM	0.05 L
2026/03/19	Thu	10:10 AM	5.01 H
2026/03/19	Thu	4:15 PM	0.02 L
2026/03/19	Thu	10:27 PM	5.46 H
2026/03/20	Fri	04:49 AM	-0.26 L
2026/03/20	Fri	10:54 AM	4.54 H
2026/03/20	Fri	4:42 PM	0.47 L
2026/03/20	Fri	10:57 PM	5.67 H
2026/03/21	Sat	05:37 AM	-0.41 L



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 Draw Date: 3/16 7 10 20 47 52 Power#: 20 Jackpot: 101 M	 Draw Date: 3/16 10 12 13 19 26
 Draw Date: 3/13 6 19 36 40 55 Mega#: 9 Jackpot: 60 M	 Draw Date: 3/16 EVENING: 3 9 4 Draw Date: 3/16 MIDDAY: 9 3 5
 Draw Date: 3/14 10 15 16 21 33 Mega#: 6 Jackpot: 7 M	 Draw Date: 3/16 1st: 10 - Solid Gold 2nd: 12 - Lucky Charms 3rd: 11 - Money Bags Race Time: 1:45.40

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Santa Monica Daily Press



CITY OF SANTA MONICA
ORDINANCE NUMBER 2849 (CCS)
(CITY COUNCIL SERIES)

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 2.24 OF THE SANTA MONICA MUNICIPAL CODE TO MODERNIZE THE CITY'S PROCUREMENT POLICIES, PRACTICES, AND PROCEDURES

The following is a summary of Ordinance Number 2849 (CCS) prepared by the Office of the City Attorney:

The Ordinance amends Chapter 2.24 of the Santa Monica Municipal Code to modernize the City's procurement system. The amended ordinance provides that a revised procurement policy which will be adopted by the City Council as a fiscal policy each year. The procurement policy would serve as the City's primary operation policy document and will include standards and guidelines for, among other things: procurement award thresholds; competitive bidding and source selection requirements; exceptions to competitive bidding; and standards for impartiality, conflict-of-interest avoidance, and rules relating to vendor communications during active solicitations.

The Ordinance will take effect thirty days after its adoption, but implementation will not occur until the City Council adopts a Procurement Policy as set forth in Chapter 2.25.

The full text of the above Ordinance is available upon request from the office of the City Clerk, located at 1685 Main Street, Room 102, Santa Monica. Phone: (310) 458-8211.



CITY OF SANTA MONICA
ORDINANCE NUMBER 2850 (CCS)
(CITY COUNCIL SERIES)

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SANTA MONICA: (1) PERMANENTLY ADOPTING ECONOMIC RECOVERY INTERIM ZONING ORDINANCE 2825 (CCS); AND (2) AMENDING THE TEXT OF ARTICLE 9 OF THE SANTA MONICA MUNICIPAL CODE TO PROMOTE ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND INCREASE LAND USE FLEXIBILITY IN THE CITY'S DOWNTOWN AND CITYWIDE AREAS BY: (A) STREAMLINING, SIMPLIFYING, AND MODIFYING LAND USES AND LIMITATIONS; (B) UPDATING STANDARDS FOR SPECIFIC USES AND ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, ALCOHOL PERMITS AND REVIEW; (C) MODIFYING DEFINITIONS; (D) ADJUSTING STANDARDS REGARDING THE APPLICABILITY OF RESOURCE RECOVERY AND RECYCLING REQUIREMENTS AND TRASH ENCLOSURE DIMENSIONAL STANDARDS; AND (E) MAKING OTHER MINOR CHANGES, CORRECTIONS, CLARIFICATIONS, AND CLERICAL AMENDMENTS

The following is a summary of Ordinance Number 2850 (CCS) prepared by the Office of the City Attorney:

Ordinance Number 2850 permanently adopts the standards in Downtown Economic Recovery Interim Zoning Ordinance (IZO) 2825 ("Downtown IZO"), which have been effective in establishing new businesses within the Downtown area. The Ordinance also makes other amendments to provide additional streamlining of land use limitations and expands current alcohol exemptions to the entire Downtown, including the Santa Monica Pier.

Ordinance Number 2850 also makes other zoning amendments that apply to non-residential commercial districts citywide outside of the Downtown area consistent with the approach taken with the Downtown IZO to: (1) simplify land use processing and operational standards that have demonstrated to be overly restrictive for new businesses; (2) simplify alcohol-related operating standards for new and existing businesses; and (3) adopt remaining Interim Zoning Ordinances and land use flexibility provided for schools, child care, and early educational facilities displaced by the Palisades fire pursuant to the City's 2025 Regional Fires Emergency Order and accompanying supplements. These amendments build on past successes of simplifying land use processing and standards of the current and prior economic recovery IZOs.

The Ordinance will take effect thirty days after its adoption.

The full text of the above Ordinance is available upon request from the office of the City Clerk, located at 1685 Main Street, Room 102, Santa Monica. Phone: (310) 458-8211.

GUEST COMMENTARY

Send comments to editor@smdp.com

Billionaires bolt from blue states amid tax fears, mirroring rebellion in 'Atlas Shrugged' novel

Ayn Rand was a Russian-born writer who immigrated to the United States in 1926, worked as a screenwriter and playwright and wrote several novels expressing an individualistic philosophy she called "objectivism."

Rand's novels and outspoken ideology were subjects of academic and media debate from the onset of her literary career, but controversy soared with the 1957 publication of her 1,168-page "Atlas Shrugged." The novel describes a revolt by business executives, inventors, artists and other accomplished Americans who opposed suffocating taxes and regulations.

family home prices in the state have stagnated here) and amplifying demand for nannies, private chefs, exclusive golf club memberships and private schools," the Los Angeles Times reported recently.

"They're trying to kill and eat the golden goose of technology startups in California," said Garry Tan, CEO of the startup incubator Y Combinator, in a posting on X describing wealth tax advocates.

A bigger concern, at least in the Capitol, is that if billionaires flee, California's budget would take a big hit on income tax revenues. The top 1% of California taxpayers now supplies nearly half of all income tax collections. Gov. Gavin Newsom opposes the wealth tax, calling it "really damaging to the state," saying it will "drive away affluent residents," and promising to work to defeat it.

As Silicon Valley's tech tycoons weigh whether to leave California, they are also pledging tens of millions of dollars to oppose the proposed measure and to qualify other measures that would hamstring its effects were it to pass.

"Of course they're going to oppose this," Jack Citrin, emeritus professor of political science at UC Berkeley, told the San Jose Mercury News. "They want to control what they do. They want to live a particular lifestyle. They want to give money to their heirs."

The exodus of billionaires isn't confined to California.

New York City's newly elected socialist mayor, Zohran Mamdani, wants that state's Legislature to enact a spate of new taxes, but Gov. Kathy Hochul is opposed, worrying it could accelerate a leakage of wealthy New Yorkers.

"I need people who are high net worth to support the generous social programs that we have in our state," she said at a Politico forum last week.

Meanwhile Washington, one of the few U.S. states that don't have an income tax, is on the verge of enacting one.

Last week, its Legislature gave final approval to a 9.9% tax on incomes of \$1 million or more, and Gov. Bob Ferguson says he will sign it. As the tax loomed, Howard Schultz, founder of the Starbucks coffee shop chain, announced he's relocating to Florida. Starbucks' headquarters is moving to Tennessee.

It may not be the massive exodus that Rand depicts in Atlas Shrugged, but what's happening certainly mirrors the novel's underlying tensions.

“They’re trying to kill and eat the golden goose of technology startups in California

- Garry Tan, CEO of the startup incubator Y Combinator

Rand likens the rebels to Atlas, a figure of Greek mythology who holds the world on his shoulders. But in Rand's book, the characters shrug off their burden and retreat to a remote and invisible valley in Colorado dubbed Galt's Gulch, named for the rebellion leader, John Galt.

This bit of literary history is offered because we're seeing a flight of wealthy entrepreneurs from California and other blue states, due to regulations and taxes aimed specifically at them.

The most obvious example is the relocation of a handful of California's 200 or so billionaires to such states as Florida, Nevada and Texas in response to a health care union's proposed 5% tax on their wealth via a ballot measure in November. The proposal, if passed, would generate an estimated \$100 billion over four years, mostly to support health care services.

"This extraordinary wealth migration is reshaping south Florida: spurring development, tripling real estate prices for trophy properties (even as single-

Dan Walters, CalMatters Opinion Columnist

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Los Angeles

LA 2028 Olympic soccer kicks off 4 days early, spreading matches across 7 US cities

Men's and women's soccer at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics will begin four days before the opening ceremony and be played in seven cities around the United States.

The early start, approved by the IOC, allows teams two extra rest days during the tournament compared to previous Olympics. The schedule also includes additional rest days after the group stage and quarterfinals, giving teams time to travel.

The matches will start on July 10, with the group stage and quarterfinals being played in New York, Columbus, Ohio, Nashville, Tennessee, and St. Louis.

The knockout rounds will move to California, taking place in San Jose, San Diego and Pasadena, with the gold medal matches at the historic Rose Bowl. The stadium hosted the 1994 men's World Cup final, the 1999 women's World Cup final and the 1984 Olympic gold-medal match.

New York and Columbus will host nine men's and women's matches on July 10-11, July 13-14 and July 16-17, as well as a men's quarterfinal on July 20. Nashville will also host nine matches, with group-stage games on the same dates and both men's and women's quarterfinals on July 20-21.

St. Louis will host eight matches on July 10-17, with a men's quarterfinal on July 20.

San Jose will host seven matches, including women's group-stage games on July 11, 14 and 17 and a quarterfinal on July 21.

San Diego will be the site of 11 matches, including women's group-stage games, a women's quarterfinal on July 21, men's and women's semifinals on July 24-25, and the bronze-medal matches on July 27-28.

The tournament ends at the Rose Bowl, which will host five matches, including a women's quarterfinal on July 21, men's and women's semifinals on July 24-25 and the gold-medal matches on July 28-29.

The complete schedule will be released later this year.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

California

E. coli linked to cheddar cheese made with raw milk sickens 7 in the US

At least seven people in three states, including young children, have been sickened by E. coli food poisoning linked to cheddar cheese made from raw milk, federal health officials said Monday.

California-based Raw Farm made the cheese that is the "likely source" of the outbreak, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, though no Raw Farm products have tested positive for E. coli during the outbreak period, the FDA noted.

Illnesses were reported between September 2025 and mid-February, the agency said. Five cases were reported in California and one each in Florida and Texas. More than half of the illnesses were in children aged 3 or younger. Two people were hospitalized.

The FDA recommended that Raw Farm voluntarily remove its raw cheese products from sale, but the company has declined.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention urged consumers to "consider not eating" the products.

Mark McAfee, owner of Raw Farm, said he refused to recall the products because investigators have not definitively linked them to any illnesses.

"They have found no pathogens in any of our products," McAfee said in an interview. He disputed the FDA's findings that the cases were genetically linked and said that the announcement of the outbreak was premature.

The FDA said interviews with three people who got sick found that all three reported eating Raw Farm brand raw milk cheddar cheese. Analysis of samples from sick patients showed that the E. coli isolates that caused their infections were closely genetically related, investigators found.

Officials are working to gather information from the additional four cases. The investigation is continuing to determine the source of contamination and whether additional products are linked to illnesses.

BY JONEL ALECCIA AP HEALTH WRITER

Los Angeles

Caltrans Announces I-405 Sepulveda Pass Lane Reductions Through March 23

Caltrans will reduce lanes on Interstate 405 through the Sepulveda Pass beginning Monday for K-rail installation and electrical work as part of a pavement rehabilitation project.

Overnight lane reductions run from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. Monday through Friday, affecting up to two lanes in both directions between Wilshire Boulevard and U.S. 101. The northbound Getty Center Drive off-ramp will be closed during overnight work hours.

Extended weekend closures begin at 10 p.m. Friday, March 20, through 5 a.m. Monday, March 23. Northbound I-405 will be reduced to three lanes between Getty Center Drive and Bel Air Crest Road, with Getty Center Drive on- and off-ramps closed. Southbound lanes will be reduced to three between Skirball Center Drive and Getty Center Drive.

The work is part of the \$143.7 million I-405 Pavement Rehabilitation Project between Van Nuys and Westwood, which aims to improve safety and mobility while extending pavement life.

Schedules are subject to change due to weather or operational reasons. Residents near construction may experience noise, vibrations and dust. Current road conditions are available at Quickmap.

Caltrans reminds drivers to "Be Work Zone Alert" and "Slow for the Cone Zone."

EDITED BY SMDP STAFF

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Average gasoline prices in Los Angeles have risen 38.3 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$5.56/g today, according to GasBuddy's survey of 2,135 stations in Los Angeles. Prices in Los Angeles are 99.4 cents per gallon higher than a month ago and stand 96.2 cents per gallon higher than a year ago. The national average price of diesel has increased 34.0 cents compared to a week ago and stands at \$4.951 per gallon.

According to GasBuddy price reports, the cheapest station in Los Angeles was priced at \$4.69/g yesterday while the most expensive was \$8.71/g, a difference of \$4.02/g. The lowest price in the state yesterday was \$4.09/g while the highest was \$8.71/g, a difference of \$4.62/g.

The national average price of gasoline has risen 23.2 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$3.68/g today. The national average is up 80.0 cents per gallon from a month ago and stands 66.1 cents per gallon higher than a year ago, according to GasBuddy data compiled from more than 11 million weekly price reports covering over 150,000 gas stations across the country.

Santa Monica Daily Press

ABDO

FROM PAGE 1

compassionate community," Zbur said. "As Santa Monica's first openly LGBTQ+ mayor, she helped break barriers and expand representation at a time when that visibility mattered deeply. Her years of advocacy and grassroots leadership helped shape Santa Monica into the progressive and caring community it is today. I am incredibly proud to honor her as Assembly District 51's 2026 Woman of the Year."

Abdo, now in her early 80s, said the recognition reflects a lifetime of work rooted first in the classroom before expanding into civic life.

"I am deeply honored to receive this recognition from Assemblymember Rick Chavez Zbur," she said. "My commitment to service began in the classroom, where I spent 13 years as a teacher and later served as Director of Child Development Services for the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District. Those experiences shaped my belief that strong communities are built by investing in people — especially children and families. From organizing in Ocean Park to advocating for renters' rights, equality, and social services, I have always tried to help make Santa Monica a more compassionate and inclusive place where everyone can thrive."

Born Inglewood, Abdo grew up in West Hollywood and graduated from Hollywood High School before earning a degree in early childhood education from UC Santa Barbara. After teaching elementary school through the 1960s and early 1970s, she entered the political arena during the fight against the Briggs Initiative, which would have barred gay and lesbian teachers from California public schools.

Her path into politics grew from community organizing through the Church in Ocean Park, a progressive congregation led by the Rev. Jim Conn where she helped to pass rent control — an issue that would define much of her public career.

Abdo won a seat on the Santa Monica City Council in November 1988 on the Santa Monicans for Renters' Rights slate, running

as the first openly lesbian candidate to ensure the Ocean Park neighborhood had a strong voice in city government. Her election gave progressives a council majority. She served two full terms through 1996, and her council colleagues selected her as mayor twice, with Abdo serving roughly three years as mayor between 1990 and 1994 — making her one of fewer than a dozen openly LGBTQ+ mayors in the nation at the time.

A significant moment of her tenure came on Jan. 17, 1994, when a 6.7-magnitude earthquake centered in Northridge damaged more than 1,600 housing units in Santa Monica along with the city's main library, two hospitals and Saint Monica Catholic Church. Abdo lobbied the Clinton administration directly and worked alongside U.S. Sens. Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer to secure a dedicated FEMA field office and millions in federal aid. She met President Clinton at Santa Monica Airport that May.

Beyond earthquake recovery, Abdo's council tenure produced an environmental task force that became the city's Sustainability Commission, expanded nonprofit funding, strengthened rent control protections and established an anti-discrimination ordinance protecting people with HIV/AIDS.

After leaving the council, Abdo served as Santa Monica's representative on the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California board for approximately 28 years, rising to vice chair. When she retired from that role in 2024, the MWD named the Wildflower Trail at Diamond Valley Lake in her honor.

She also helped found Sojourn Shelter for domestic violence survivors in 1977 — now the second-oldest such program in California — and co-founded the Santa Monica AIDS Project.

Abdo served as Grand Marshal of Santa Monica's 2024 Fourth of July Parade and continues to sit on the steering committee of Climate Action Santa Monica. She remains a resident of the Ocean Park neighborhood, where she has lived since the 1970s.

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ROBBERY

FROM PAGE 1

arrests regardless of the temperature.

According to the most recent Blue Notebook update from the department, all areas of the city have seen police activity in the recent weeks.

In Beat 1, covering the pier, beach and Promenade, officers responded to 2,698 calls for service and conducted 114 arrests during the reporting period. Officers also arrested a suspect following a foot pursuit after he allegedly struck a convenience store employee with a stick. In a separate incident, SMART Center operators helped officers locate a stolen U-Haul truck, leading to the arrest of two suspects on charges of operating a stolen vehicle.

In Beat 3, homeless outreach and enforcement officers responded to 262 radio calls, conducted 221 self-initiated contacts, addressed 12 encampments, made 23 arrests and issued 31 citations. Officers also assisted a Santa Monica native experiencing homelessness with placement into Samuel Shell temporary housing, where he is working

toward a permanent housing situation.

Beat 2 officers conducted 486 traffic stops and issued 353 citations as part of ongoing traffic safety efforts. During a traffic stop near the Main Street area, officers discovered a concealed, loaded ghost gun inside a vehicle. The owner admitted the weapon was his and was arrested without incident.

Officers also conducted a grant-funded distracted driving operation that resulted in 38 citations, 24 of which were for cell phone use.

In Beat 4, community engagement officers met with neighborhood and business groups and conducted security assessments. Officers also played soccer with the Autobon Soccer Club at Lincoln Middle School and kickball with students from Franklin Elementary as part of youth outreach efforts.

The department's next community event is scheduled for Douglas Park on March 25 at 6 p.m.

The investigation into Sunday's robbery remains active, police said.

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Santa Monica Daily Press

office (310) 458-7737

WILDFIRE

FROM PAGE 1

Mountains is managed by a patchwork of federal, state, county and local agencies, as well as private landowners, each operating under different policies despite facing the same fire risk.

“Keeping our communities in the Santa Monica Mountains safe means staying prepared, strengthening prevention, and working together across agencies,” Horvath said. “Following the Franklin and Palisades Fires, we have a clearer understanding of the need for stronger, more coordinated mitigation efforts.”

The motion directs the Department of Regional Planning and the Los Angeles County Fire Department, working alongside federal and state agencies, nonprofits, environmental groups, academics and homeowners, to evaluate whether a Regional Wildfire Mitigation Joint Powers Authority should be created for the Santa Monica Mountains. The departments will analyze existing vegetation management practices, develop potential governance and implementation strategies, and identify funding sources to support a coordinated regional approach.

The departments are expected to report back to the Board within 90 days with findings and recommendations.

FIRE RECOVERY AFTER-ACTION SURVEY

The county has also launched a public survey to gather feedback from residents impacted by the January 2025 Eaton and Palisades fires as part of an independent After-Action Review of recovery and repopulation efforts conducted by the McChrystal Group.

The survey seeks input from residents who evacuated, experienced property damage, used disaster shelters, accessed debris removal or recovery services, have access and functional needs, sought information about someone in county custody, were unhoused at the start of the fires, or attempted to volunteer or donate. Residents who were not directly impacted are also encouraged to share observations about the county’s response.

The survey takes less than 10 minutes to complete. Responses will be anonymized and used solely to inform improvements to the county’s disaster recovery and repopulation operations. The survey remains open through April 24, 2026, and can be accessed at selfserve.decipherinc.com/survey/selfserve/2a8c/260109. For information on prior After-Action Reviews, visit lacounty.gov/aar.

FIRE RECOVERY THURSDAYS

Supervisor Kathryn Barger highlighted a weekly job fair program that connects wildfire survivors with employment resources and career support.

Fire Recovery Thursdays are weekly recruitment events held every Thursday from 1 to 4 p.m. at America’s Job Centers of California locations countywide. Organized by the LA County Department of Economic Opportunity, the pop-up events connect workers and job seekers impacted by the January 2025 wildfires with immediate job opportunities, career training and supportive services.

The events are held at all 18 AJCC locations across Los Angeles County. In Altadena, the local AJCC is located at 464 West Woodbury Road, Suite 210. Job seekers can find their nearest center at ajcc.lacounty.gov/ajcc or by calling (888) 226-6300.

“Eaton Fire survivors are facing challenges that most of us can hardly imagine,” Barger said. “They’ve lost homes, livelihoods, and a sense of stability all while navigating one of the most difficult economic climates in recent memory.”

At each event, AJCC staff provide one-on-one support to help job seekers explore career pathways and access hiring and training services, including eligibility screening for the Fire Recovery and Resilience Workforce Program. Eligible participants may access temporary job opportunities lasting three to five months starting at \$20 per hour, no-cost job training in high-demand industries and a range of supportive services.

Attendees should bring a valid photo ID along with work authorization documents. A resume is helpful but not required. Job seekers are encouraged to create a profile on CalJOBS at caljobs.ca.gov in advance.

PROPERTY TAX REASSESSMENT PROTECTIONS

Los Angeles County Assessor Jeff Prang announced his office is sponsoring new state legislation to provide clarity for homeowners rebuilding after the 2025 wildfires, shielding them from potential property tax reassessments triggered by reconstruction.

Under existing California law, property owners whose homes are damaged or destroyed by misfortune or calamity may rebuild without losing their original property tax base value, so long as the replacement home is considered “substantially equivalent” to the structure that was lost.

However, local governments adopted expedited rebuilding policies in the aftermath of the Eaton and Palisades fires that in many cases allowed homeowners to rebuild up to 110 percent of their home’s original size to comply with modern building codes and safety requirements. That flexibility exposed a gap in state tax law — current statutes do not clearly define whether a home rebuilt at up to 110 percent of its original size qualifies as “substantially equivalent,” creating uncertainty for homeowners already navigating a difficult recovery.

Senate Bill 1352, authored by Sen. Suzette Valladares and sponsored by Prang, would explicitly clarify that a rebuilt home may be up to 110 percent of its original size and still retain its existing property tax base value without triggering reassessment as new construction. The bill would apply statewide to properties damaged or destroyed by misfortune or calamity on or after Jan. 1, 2025.

“Homeowners should not have to worry that following local rebuilding standards could unintentionally lead to higher property taxes,” Prang said. “That kind of uncertainty is unacceptable — especially after a disaster.”

SB 1352 was introduced in the State Senate last week and will proceed through the legislative committee process.

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SEND YOUR NEWS TO THE EDITOR

OPIOID

FROM PAGE 2

that we had never been involved in," he said. "It all seemed legitimate." The product was already being sold in the area at the time, at health food stores and USC Village, the nearby shopping mall where students hang out, he added.

"In retrospect, I mean, could we have dug a little deeper? Maybe," Eskenazi said. "But from what I recall, the research that was done, there was nothing negative that came up at the time.

"I think they probably could have done a better job explaining what their product is," he said.

To fulfill their role in the partnership, the Trojans agreed to display digital rotating signage in sports stadiums, promote Feel Free on social media, and advertise the product on football game radio broadcasts.

Another requisite, Eskenazi said, was giving out free samples of the product. The Trojans' corporate partners would set up booths at the annual Fan Fest, including Botanic Tonics, which gave out samples, he said.

Things went south a few years into the partnership, Eskenazi said. USC officials would not comment on why the partnership ended, but Eskenazi said people complained to the university that though the drink was marketed to addicts in sobriety, people were using it to get high.

In response, the college administration asked the athletic department to end the sponsorship, so the department terminated the contract after about 1.5 years, Eskenazi said.

"We've never really had a situation like that before, where we cancelled the sponsorship based on some feedback that we had gotten," Eskenazi said. "It wasn't the right brand to align with our brand, based on the complaints that occurred."

David Wright, the vice president of USC Administration since 2019, deferred CalMatters inquiries about the sponsorship to the USC media relations director, who deferred the inquiries to Cody Worsham, USC athletics media relations director. Worsham told CalMatters that they reached out to "previous" USC and athletics leaders and received no response.

CalMatters attempted to contact USC athletes from 2021 and 2022, who did not respond to questions about the Feel Free sponsorship.

USC, a private university, is not beholden to California public record laws. The Florida and Texas universities, both public, released their sponsorship contracts with Botanic Tonics through public record requests.

“

We've never really had a situation like that before, where we cancelled the sponsorship based on some feedback that we had gotten

- Jose Eskenazi

”

The contracts required the universities to make Feel Free their "official tonic," and refuse any other partnerships with medicinal tonics "taken to give a feeling of vigor or well-being."

Florida State and the University of Texas at Austin agreed to market Feel Free through social media campaigns, arena-level LED signage, intercom announcements and "on-court promotion." Florida's agreement required the university to distribute samples of the drink to students, including at games and at the block parties held beforehand, and the company gained the right to use the college's name and logo in their advertising. Texas gave Botanic Tonics the right to distribute free samples at college games and events.

The Texas contract expired in June 2025. Florida State terminated the contract in early 2024, the university's deputy athletics director, Douglas Walker, told CalMatters, without stating why.

Kratom is legal for those ages 18 and up in Texas and 21 and older in Florida. Laws passed in 2023 in both states require kratom product labels to have use directions and serving sizes; Florida also banned selling kratom products that claim to be medicinal. In 2025, Texas

and Florida legislators proposed bills to set higher standards for kratom product testing and further regulate its distribution, but the bills have not progressed.

WELLNESS EMPHASIS

The Texas student worked at a health food store near campus while she attended college. The store sought to appeal to health-conscious people like university athletes and students, and specialized in products that were clean and natural. Her managers told her to market Feel Free to customers as an energizing alcohol alternative that could help with mental clarity and studying.

Since she was paid on commission, the student said, she recommended the drink to hundreds of customers. The drink was natural, healthy and would offer five hours of pure energy, without cops ever having a reason to pull you over, she would say.

"Makes you feel good. Go on for it. Just take it," she said. "Oh yeah, they sold. They sold fast." She began to notice repeat customers.

The student, her manager, and a couple of coworkers decided to try it themselves one day. She said the drink made her feel detached and she didn't like it. But her coworker, in his 20s, took to it immediately. "The effect was quick," she said. "He went from doing one maybe every other day to... buying three to four, four to five bottles at a time. And these are expensive little bottles."

Eventually, she said, the coworker developed a tolerance. Feel Free bottles contain two servings, but he would drink three bottles and say they had no effect. He turned to kratom supplement pills, which he would buy and consume in bulk. Witnessing the effect of the substance, she said, was like watching someone smoke too much weed. "It had altered his mood and it had altered his mental state and his behavior," she said.

In October 2025, a U.S. District Court judge in Northern California approved a settlement for over 40,000 plaintiffs in a class action lawsuit against Botanic Tonics, which alleged the product was sold without disclosing the health risks of kratom. According to the plaintiffs' complaint, the company directly targeted college students because they were "vulnerable" and could recommend it to family and friends. The suit also alleged that Feel Free served free samples to students on the USC campus, including a study center, during finals week, telling students it would fix their stress.

The Texas student said she searched the product online one day, read about the side effects, and immediately stopped recommending the product after that. "It was marketed as a healthy thing, it was like a study thing. I had no idea," she said. "It's frustrating

whenever you take a substance and you put it in your body and you have no idea the side effects that it could cause."

California legislators concerned for children

In February 2024, San Francisco Democratic Assemblymember Matt Haney proposed a law to add kratom products to the Sherman Law, ban the sale of products containing kratom that is synthetic, inhalable or appealing to young people, and prohibit selling kratom to people under age 21, a restriction that Botanic Tonics adopted in May 2024. Since it was estimated to cost over \$50,000 annually to uphold, the Senate Appropriations Committee assigned the bill to the suspense file, where it never left and ultimately failed.

Bains, the lawmaker from Bakersfield, introduced a bill in February 2025 with similar kratom regulations that the Senate health committee will consider later this year. A spokesperson for Bains told CalMatters that while kratom and 7-OH are currently not legal to sell as food or drugs under California's Sherman Law, the goal of her new law is to keep it that way. Bains said she is particularly concerned about the impact of kratom on young brains, adding that kratom marketing uses bright colors and mimics candy packaging in order to appeal to young people.

"The neuroscience is unambiguous. The human brain continues developing into the early 20s," Bains said at a committee hearing. "Exposure to substances with central nervous system effects during this critical period can interfere with proper development and increase the risk of substance use disorders later in life."

A California State University, San Bernardino researcher found in a 2025 study on online kratom beverage marketing that most kratom drinks are described as either all-natural or good for well-being — and that a person would be better off consuming them, researcher and assistant economics professor Dr. Teresa Perry said. In another 2025 study, Perry analyzed online posts about kratom and found that kratom drinkers often don't know about the side effects, because product labels don't mention them.

"There's a lot of people who were taking kratom without realizing what kratom was, and who became dependent on it, who then had to figure out how to quit it on their own," Perry said.

Phoebe Huss is a contributor with the College Journalism Network, a collaboration between CalMatters and student journalists from across California. CalMatters higher education coverage is supported by a grant from the College Futures Foundation.



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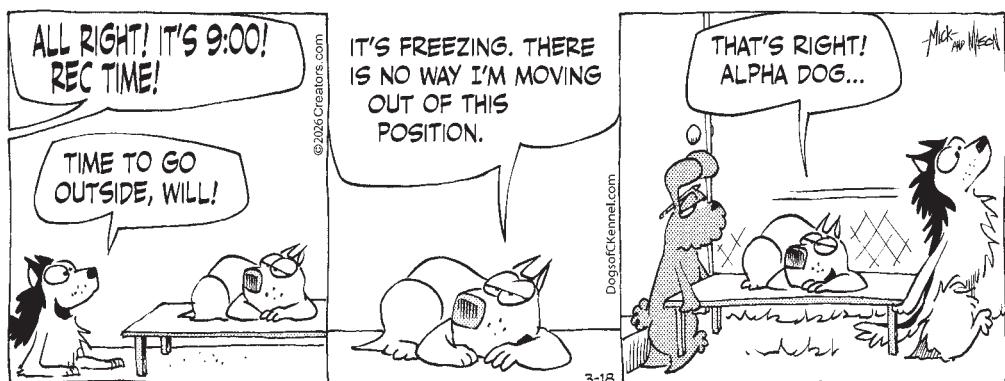
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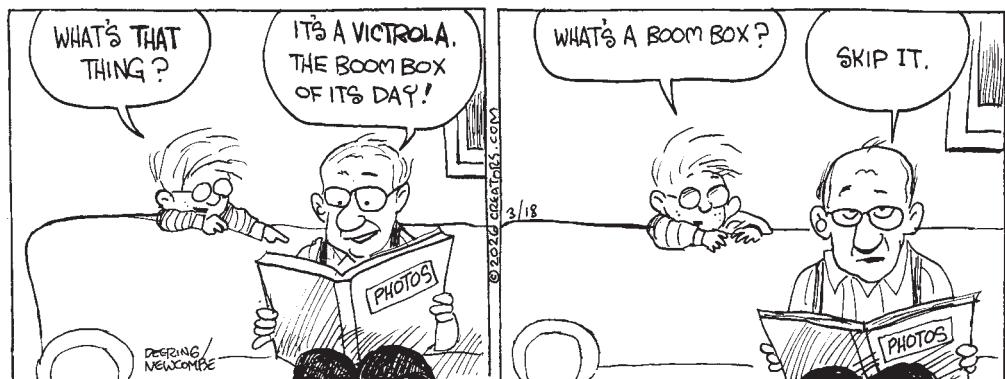
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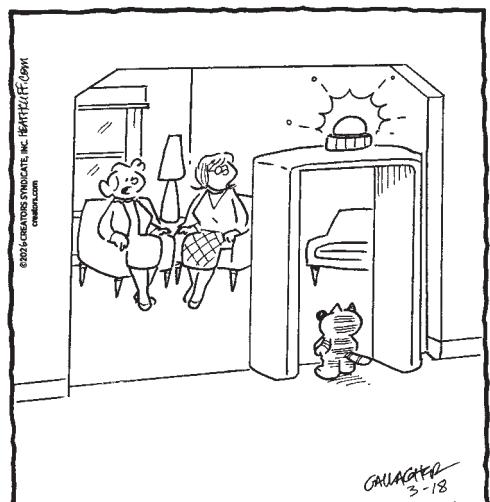
Zack Hill

By JOHN DEERING & JOHN NEWCOMBE



Heathcliff

By PETER GALLAGHER



Strange Brew

By JOHN DEERING



FIND THE WORDS

This is a theme puzzle with the subject stated below. Find the listed words in the grid. (They may run in any direction but always in a straight line. Some letters are used more than once.) Ring each word as you find it and when you have completed the puzzle, there will be 19 letters left over. They spell out the alternative theme of the puzzle.

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- | | | |
|---------------|---------|-------------|
| Aida | Drama | Piano |
| Alto | Drinks | Pits |
| Architecture | Duet | Restaurants |
| Aria | Elation | Rock bands |
| Awards | Encore | Saga |
| Bass | Famous | Seats |
| Black tie | Harbour | Song |
| Champagne | Horns | Steps |
| Clap | Lift | Sydney |
| Controversial | Melba | Tenor |
| Costumes | Mozart | Tragedy |
| Curtain call | Music | Wonder |
| Dining | Notes | |

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S WORDS PUZZLE.

Sixteen days of unity



TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (March 18)

Welcome to your Friendliest Year, when your social circles expand in wit and warmth. Your inner sight sharpens your amazing people skills. That and impeccable timing will lead to deals, fun and personal victories. More highlights: A practical decision multiplies income. A lateral career move proves visionary. Love grows playful and profound. Sagittarius and Taurus adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 7, 36, 10, 23 and 42.

HOROSCOPES

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Just as you can't tell what kind of charge is in a battery until you hook it up to something that uses the power, you don't know what capabilities are inside you until you're in a position to use them. The challenge teaches you what you're made of.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Whether it's a person or a sandwich, the truth lives in the middle, in the texture between extremes. Depth requires exposure to the unremarkable - the complicated middle parts that really give you the experience.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). The reward for excellence is often that you're expected to do more excellence - only faster and cheaper. This hardly seems fair or logical, but somehow, you'll find a way to turn it all in your favor. Excellence wins.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). A hundred rainfalls may not seem to make the ocean appear any deeper, but there's no question that the ocean is made in drops. This is one of those days when you might not feel your progress, but trust that it's happening little by little.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Love will occur like the wind - an unseen force more known by what it moves than what it is. Love will come to you in many forms - congenial, romantic and platonic - sometimes all in the same relationship.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). You will work better when you know why the work is necessary and what it accomplishes for you and for others. Delving into your "why" will lead to ideas that make hard work feel lighter and all work seem rooted to your purpose.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Finding new inspiration is a form of adding to your team. You'll be guided by the ideas a person or work embodies, and these ideas can fuel and inform what you do like a colleague working alongside you would.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). You cannot step in the same river twice, nor can you witness the same sky or live through the same day. You'll find splendor in the commonplace things you know so well and at the same time recognize as impossible to know fully.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). The beginning can be a tedious place to start. What's in the middle? Doing things out of order will be lucky. Can you start with your finishing touches? It will motivate you to at least have them in mind.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). You're easy to open up to. You sometimes learn more about people than you wanted to know. Still, it's better to know more than not enough. What you hear today helps you anticipate moves and choose yours carefully.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). People genuinely want to please you. Instead of hoping they'll guess how, tell them. Share your preferences. State your boundaries. Clear expectations make everything easier.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You know what's expected of you, but that doesn't mean you have to do it. You'll defy expectation, creating a dynamic of fascination. This isn't about delivering beyond what they want. It's about bravely doing what you want.

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

S	O	O	N	S	P	I	T	G	R	I	T		
S	C	I	F	I	O	A	T	H	R	E	D	O	
G	O	L	F	C	O	U	R	S	E	A	N	O	N
T	O	E	H	U	R	T	M	A	N	T	L	E	
S	T	R	E	E	T	S	F	E	R	N			
	M	S	G	M	O	S	E	Y	I	N	G		
A	C	R	E	O	V	A	L	A	S	P	I	E	
V	E	E	R	S	O	L	D	S	M	A	L	L	
I	D	E	A	L	L	E	S	I	D	E	S		
D	E	F	L	E	C	T	S	P	O	T			
	D	E	E	S	W	A	R	H	E	R	O		
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K	I	W	I	L	E	P	R	E	C	H	A	U	N
I	N	I	T	O	W	E	S	A	M	I	S	S	
D	E	N	Y	N	E	W	T	R	O	L	E		

Newsday Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Hollywood headliner
- 5 Cowboy boot attachment
- 9 Door knocks
- 13 Chauffeur-driven auto
- 14 Capital of Vietnam
- 16 Actor Baldwin
- 17 Scandinavian furniture chain
- 18 Give as a bonus
- 19 12-month period
- 20 Restaurant snack served with butter
- 22 Predatory marine mammal
- 23 Two-finger victory sign
- 24 Dorothy's *Wizard of Oz* relative
- 26 Squanders
- 30 Aluminum beer containers
- 32 Run up, as debt
- 33 Holder for a frankfurter
- 38 Wild guess
- 39 Historical period
- 40 Bart Simpson's sister
- 41 Greek sandwich holder with a pocket
- 44 Exterior
- 45 Satisfy, as a mail order
- 46 Rapid
- 47 Metal container for a crusty dessert
- 51 Pub serving
- 52 Assert confidently
- 53 "Tied" Italian restaurant snack

- 60 A sight for ___ eyes
- 61 Join together
- 62 Not any
- 63 Vacation excursion
- 64 Mexican coins
- 65 Make level
- 66 Votes of assent
- 67 Left, on a map
- 68 Right, on a map

DOWN

- 1 Lost traction
- 2 Hawaiian figurine
- 3 Prayer-ending word
- 4 Reddish-brown horse
- 5 Divides up with others
- 6 Military priest
- 7 Remove, as a necktie

- 8 Stir up
- 9 Synthetic shirt fabric
- 10 Fully attentive
- 11 Nobel Prize category
- 12 "Get outta here!"
- 15 Far from the coast
- 21 At any time
- 25 GI show venue
- 26 Thin lock of hair
- 27 Prefix for freeze
- 28 Cat-chasing cry
- 29 Big brass horn
- 30 Reef material
- 31 Just slightly
- 33 Achilles' weak spot
- 34 Scrapbooker's adhesive
- 35 Mosquito attack
- 36 Pre-owned

WHAT YOU KNEAD by Steve Faiella
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- 37 ___ a soul (nobody)
- 42 Curator's deg.
- 43 Register on a cash register
- 44 Fuel cartel
- 46 Most cunning
- 47 Spaghetti or macaroni
- 48 Elephant tusk material
- 49 Spooky
- 50 Gets ready, for short
- 51 Choir section
- 54 All over again
- 55 Stand up
- 56 Middle leg joint
- 57 Halifax, ___ Scotia
- 58 Change for a \$5 bill
- 59 Camper's shelter

Sudoku

Fill in the blank cells using numbers 1 to 9. Each number can appear only once in each row, column, and 3x3 block. Use logic and process of elimination to solve the puzzle.

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S SUDOKU

8	7	1	6	3	4	5	2	9
9	6	3	2	5	7	1	4	8
4	2	5	9	1	8	3	7	6
3	9	6	1	7	2	8	5	4
7	8	4	3	6	5	9	1	2
1	5	2	8	4	9	6	3	7
2	3	7	5	9	6	4	8	1
6	1	8	4	2	3	7	9	5
5	4	9	7	8	1	2	6	3

	2		3		9			
6					3			7
	5		6				9	
1		7		9	2			5
2								6
3			4	1		7		9
	3				5		6	
9		6						2
			2		8			7

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8		9	10	11	12
13					14			15		16			
17					18					19			
20				21						22			
				23				24	25				
26	27	28	29				30	31					
32						33				34	35	36	37
38						39				40			
41				42	43					44			
				45					46				
47	48	49	50					51					
52					53	54	55			56	57	58	59
60					61					62			
63					64					65			
66						67				68			

CREATORS SYNDICATE ©2026 STANLEY NEWMAN STANXWORDS@AOL.COM 03/18/26

MORE OF STAN'S CROSSWORDS! Play FREE from Stan's archives of Easy, Hard and Sunday puzzles at: tinyurl.com/stan-newman-crosswords

Classifieds

FOR QUOTES PLEASE CALL 310-573-8074

or email legal@smdp.com

DBA

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT File No. 2026045741. The following person(s) is (are) doing business as: ANA INTL, 112 MONTANA AVE STE 626, SANTA MONICA, CA 90403, COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES. Registered Owner(s): ANA INTL LLC, 1112 MONTANA AVE STE 626, SANTA MONICA, CA 90403, COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES. This business is conducted by: an Individual. The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name or names listed above on N/A. I declare that all information in this statement is true and correct. (A registrant who declares as true any material matter pursuant to Section 17913 of the Business and Professions Code that the registrant knows to be false is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by a fine not to exceed one thousand dollars (\$1,000)). /s/ ANA INTL LLC, Owner. This statement was filed with the County Clerk of Los Angeles County on 02/18/2026. NOTICE: This Fictitious Name Statement expires five years from the date it was filed in the office of the County Clerk. A new Fictitious Business Name Statement must be filed before that time. The filing of this statement does not of itself authorize the use in this state of a Fictitious Business Name in violation of the rights of another under Federal, State, or Common Law (See Section 14411 et seq., Business and Professions Code). SANTA MONICA DAILY PRESS Publish: 03/04/2026, 03/11/2026, 03/18/2026, 03/25/2026

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT File No. 2026022538. The following person(s) is (are) doing business as: PAPERMACHETA, 3003 W OLYMPIC BLVD STE 16 PMB #14, LOS ANGELES, CA 90006, County of Los Angeles. Registered Owner(s): PAIGE WI, 3003 W OLYMPIC BLVD STE 106 PMB# 14, LOS ANGELES, CA 90006. This business is conducted by: an Individual. The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name or names listed above on 01/2026. I declare that all information in this statement is true and correct. (A registrant who declares as true any material matter pursuant to Section 17913 of the Business and Professions Code that the registrant knows to be false is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by a fine not to exceed one thousand dollars (\$1,000)). /s/ Paige Wi, OWNER. This statement was filed with the County Clerk of Los Angeles County on 01/30/2026. NOTICE: This Fictitious Name Statement expires five years from the date it was filed in the office of the County Clerk. A new Fictitious Business Name Statement must be filed before that time. The filing of this statement does not of itself authorize the use in this state of a Fictitious Business Name in violation of the rights of another under Federal, State, or Common Law (See Section 14411 et seq., Business and Professions Code). SANTA MONICA DAILY PRESS Publish: 03/11/2026, 03/18/2026, 03/25/2026, 04/01/2026

DBA

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT File No. 2026051936. The following person(s) is (are) doing business as: EMPATHY SYSTEM, EMPATHYSYSTEM.AI, EMPATHYSYSTEM, MPT. SOCIAL, EMPATHY SYSTEMS, 1014 BROADWAY SUITE 36, SANTA MONICA, CA 90401, County of Los Angeles. AI #ON 20260010389. Registered Owner(s): LUIS BARRERA CASTANON, 1014 BROADWAY SUITE 36, SANTA MONICA, CA 90401. This business is conducted by: a Corporation. The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name or names listed above on N/A. I declare that all information in this statement is true and correct. (A registrant who declares as true any material matter pursuant to Section 17913 of the Business and Professions Code that the registrant knows to be false is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by a fine not to exceed one thousand dollars (\$1,000)). /s/ LUIS BARRERA CASTANON, CEO. This statement was filed with the County Clerk of Los Angeles County on 03/09/2026. NOTICE: This Fictitious Name Statement expires five years from the date it was filed in the office of the County Clerk. A new Fictitious Business Name Statement must be filed before that time. The filing of this statement does not of itself authorize the use in this state of a Fictitious Business Name in violation of the rights of another under Federal, State, or Common Law (See Section 14411 et seq., Business and Professions Code). SANTA MONICA DAILY PRESS Publish: 03/18/2026, 03/25/2026, 04/01/2026, 04/08/2026

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT File No. 2026036144. The following person(s) is (are) doing business as: AMLI MARINA DEL REY, 4242 VIA MARINA, MARINA DEL REY, CA 90292, County of Los Angeles. Registered Owner(s): PPF AMLI 4242 VIA MARINA GP, LLC, 141 W JACKSON BLVD STE 300, CHICAGO, IL 60604. This business is conducted by: a Limited Liability Company. The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name or names listed above on 12/2018. I declare that all information in this statement is true and correct. (A registrant who declares as true any material matter pursuant to Section 17913 of the Business and Professions Code that the registrant knows to be false is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by a fine not to exceed one thousand dollars (\$1,000)). /s/ ALINA EVANGELOU, GENERAL PARTNER. This statement was filed with the County Clerk of Los Angeles County on 2/17/2026. NOTICE: This Fictitious Name Statement expires five years from the date it was filed in the office of the County Clerk. A new Fictitious Business Name Statement must be filed before that time. The filing of this statement does not of itself authorize the use in this state of a Fictitious Business Name in violation of the rights of another under Federal, State, or Common Law (See Section 14411 et seq., Business and Professions Code). SANTA MONICA DAILY PRESS Publish: 03/18/2026, 03/25/2026, 04/01/2026, 04/08/2026

Name Change

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME Case No. 26SMCP00089. Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles, 1725 Main Street, Santa Monica CA 90401. Petition of PENG DENG for Change of Name. TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS: Petitioner PENG DENG filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows: PENG DENG to LIAM PENG DENG. THE COURT ORDERS that all persons interested in this matter appear before this court at the hearing indicated below to show cause, if any, why the petition for change of name should not be granted. NOTICE OF HEARING: Date: 04/10/2026, Time: 8:30AM, Dept: K. The address of the court is same as noted above. A copy of this Order to Show Cause shall be published at least once each week for four successive weeks prior to the date set for hearing on the petition in the following newspaper of general circulation, printed in this county: SANTA MONICA DAILY PRESS. Date: 02/23/2026. LAWRENCE H. CHO, Judge of the Superior Court. SANTA MONICA DAILY PRESS Publish: 02/25/2026, 03/04/2026, 03/11/2026, 03/18/2026

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME Case No. 26NWCP00101. Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles, 12720 Norwalk Blvd., Room 101, Norwalk, CA 90650. Petition of Jacob Daniel Diaz for Change of Name. TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS: Petitioner Jacob Daniel Diaz filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows: Jacob Daniel Diaz to Jacob Daniel Marin. THE COURT ORDERS that all persons interested in this matter appear before this court at the hearing indicated below to show cause, if any, why the petition for change of name should not be granted. NOTICE OF HEARING: Date: 05/11/2026, Time: 8:30, Dept: C, Room: 312. The address of the court is same as noted above. A copy of this Order to Show Cause shall be published at least once each week for four successive weeks prior to the date set for hearing on the petition in the following newspaper of general circulation, printed in this county: SANTA MONICA DAILY PRESS. Date: 03/09/2026. David W. Slayton, Executive Officer/Clerk of Court. SANTA MONICA DAILY PRESS Publish: 03/18/2026, 03/25/2026, 04/01/2026, 04/08/2026

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WEDNESDAY | MARCH 18

BEACH WALK MEDITATION

8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. Santa Monica Lifeguard Tower 24 2400 Ocean Front Walk Los Angeles. Walking meditation is and has always been a significant alternative to sitting meditation, especially for those starting a new practice. The goal of meditation is to be able to practice in all positions, conditions and activities whether sitting, standing, walking, lying down, or whenever awake. Developing mindfulness doesn't have to happen in a quiet room without any distracting sights or sounds. In fact we can develop our mindfulness while out in nature; feeling the warmth of the sun on our backs and the cool ocean splashing around our feet.. Let's practice meditation in motion while creating a potent wellness experience that enhances mental clarity, alertness, and overall well-being. We'll meet Wednesdays and Fridays at 8 am at lifeguard tower 24 -see a red, yellow, blue, orange, white FLAG. After some basic instructions we'll walk silently together for approximately 45 minutes on the shoreline at a natural pace from tower 24 towards the Santa Monica Pier and back. Free—Donations are accepted. Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/beach-walk-meditation/16206460/2026-03-04T08>

DOWNTOWN FARMERS MARKET - WEDNESDAY MARKET

8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Downtown Santa Monica Arizona Avenue (Between 4th & Ocean) Santa Monica. One of the largest grower-only Certified Farmers Market in Southern California and a favorite for local chefs! Enjoy one of Santa Monica's farmers markets, widely considered to be among the best on the west coast and featuring field-fresh produce, hundreds of kinds of vegetables, brilliant cut flowers, breads, cheeses, and more. Downtown Farmers Market Locations: Wednesdays at Arizona Ave & 2nd St and Saturdays at Arizona & 3rd St. Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/downtown-farmers-market-wednesday-market/12382446/2026-03-04T08>

BIZ@SUNSET MIXER

5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. Lunetta 2420 Pico Blvd Santa Monica. Get ready for a fantastic evening at this month's Biz@Sunset Mixer at Lunetta! Join us for an unforgettable night of networking. Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/biz-sunset-mixer/16613817/2026-03-18T17>

COUPLES SCRAMBLE

7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. Four Wood Golf 828 Pico Blvd, Suite 5 Santa Monica. Get ready for a date night with a twist—join us for our Couples Night Two-Person Scramble! Whether you've been together for years or just matched last week, this event is all about spending quality time with your partner, side by side on the course—showing them who's really got the best drive... sign up for our next Couples Night, March 18th. \$30.00 —Free for members. Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/couples-scramble/18270197/2026-03-18T19>

WINE WEDNESDAY AT THE WHALER

101 Broadway CA 90401 Contact Info (424) 330-0166 info@venicewhaler.com Does not apply on holidays Santa Monica. \$15 wine flights & half off bottles of wine all day every Wednesday. Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/wine-wednesday-at-the-whaler/16952883/2026-03-04T00>

[smdp.com/calendar/#/details/wine-wednesday-at-the-whaler/16952883/2026-03-04T00](https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/wine-wednesday-at-the-whaler/16952883/2026-03-04T00)

THURSDAY | MARCH 19

CLUB LATINO PARA ADULTOS MAYORES

11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Virginia Avenue Park 2200 Virginia Ave. Santa Monica. Venga, aprenda, y diviertase cada jueves de 11 AM a 1 PM en el salón 3 del parque Virginia. Cada semana será algo nuevo: Ejercicio, Hablando con amigos, Aprendizaje, Presentadores Invitados, Salud y Bienestar. Hay comida para los adultos mayores que participan durante las dos horas. Para más información llame al (310) 458-8688. Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/club-latino-para-adultos-mayores/13943928/2026-03-05T11>

SANTA MONICA PIER'S 'LOCALS' NIGHT' CELEBRATES L.A. HIP-HOP CULTURE

3:30 p.m. - 10:00 p.m. Santa Monica Pier 200 Santa Monica Pier. The Santa Monica Pier turns up the volume on Thursday, March 19, as "Locals' Night" returns with a powerful celebration of Los Angeles hip-hop culture, live music, art, classic cars, and community energy—all free and open to the public from 3:30 to 10 p.m. Presented by Pacific Park on the Santa Monica Pier, March's edition highlights the diversity and legacy of L.A.'s independent hip-hop scene with a curated lineup by Top to Bottom LA on the Main Stage with additional entertainment and activities, and Route 66 salute. Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/santa-monica-pier-s-locals-night-celebrates-l-a-hip-hop-culture/18309844/2026-03-19T15>

STAND-UP JESUS! BLESSED BE THE PUNCHLINES

7:30 p.m. Santa Monica Pier 200 Santa Monica Pier, Ste A Santa Monica. Come bear witness to a truth that hurts and a truth that's funny with STAND-UP JESUS! Thy kingdom come, thy will be done; and it will be done with divine satire. In Robert Dubac's latest solo show, our lord and savior is back and this time he's no longer a carpenter. He's a stand-up comedian hell-bent on preaching what God created on the 8th day. Comedy. Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/stand-up-jesus-blessed-be-the-punchlines/17904425/2026-03-19T19>

THE UNTEACHABLES COMEDY TOUR

8:00 p.m. The Crow 2525 Michigan Ave Unit F4 Santa Monica. Stand-up Comedy featuring nationally touring comedians and teachers Stephen Taylor, Lou Pharis, and Miss Redacted. \$23.11. Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/the-unteachables-comedy-tour/18171494/2026-03-19T20>

"HONOUR" AT RUSKIN GROUP THEATRE

8:00 p.m. Ruskin Group Theatre 3000 Airport Ave Santa Monica. A sharp and authentic examination of love, betrayal, and the fragile agreements that hold marriages together. When a celebrated writer can't seem to "do the right thing," decades of loyalty, intimacy, and compromise unravel in a single evening. With wit and emotional precision, "Honour" explores the personal cost of truth and the reverberations of a single, life-altering choice - asking whether honesty is always an act of courage, or sometimes one of cruelty. Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/honour-at-ruskin-group-theatre/18119524/2026-03-19T20>

HOURS MONDAY - FRIDAY 9:00am - 5:00pm
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