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2 Gas Price

Democrats push relief measures.

3 \$500 Million Lesson

New plan for Highway 1.



4 Lawmakers Tackle

Student achievement gap accountability.

5 Poet Laureate

Santa Monica names Jay Baldwin.

Volume 25 Issue 87

THE WEEKENDER 3/20-3/22

smdp.com

Santa Monica-Malibu school district maintains positive financial outlook despite growing deficit

MAAZ ALIN

SMDP Staff Writer

meet all its financial obligations for the current fiscal year and the subsequent two fiscal years despite

The Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District expects to

SEE **SCHOOL** PAGE 6

Pacific Palisades Scout Troop rebuilds after fire, empowers young leaders

MAAZ ALIN

SMDP Staff Writer

At 13 years old, Emmett Haggemiller has already opened a bank account, managed a

professional budget, coordinated meals and logistics for camping trips, and led community service projects restoring monarch butterfly habitats.

He's not a business prodigy. He's

a patrol leader with Troop 223.

The Pacific Palisades-based scouting troop, one of the most storied in the nation with more than

SEE **SCOUT** PAGE 7

Santa Monica faith community to rally Sunday against hate crime

MATTHEW HALL

Daily Press Editor

The Church in Ocean Park will host a community gathering Sunday afternoon as neighbors, faith leaders and local officials respond to a hate crime targeting the longstanding LGBTQ-affirming congregation.

The event, scheduled from 1 to 4 p.m. at the church, 235 Hill Street, will bring together members of the public to paint over homophobic graffiti that was scrawled across the building's exterior walls and doorway while also creating space for reflection and conversation inside. The church's Queer Collective, Immigration Taskforce and other community groups are expected to participate.

"Hate does not have the last word here," church organizers said in announcing the gathering.

Church officials discovered the vandalism last month. The graffiti included homophobic slurs that misquoted the Bible in condemnation of the LGBTQ community and the church itself. Officials quickly moved to cover

the writing with makeshift paper barriers but attack came days after the church had received a similarly hateful email, suggesting the vandalism may have been premeditated.

Rather than retreat, church members responded with defiance. Several congregants said they were now considering expanding the church's existing LGBTQ-themed mural — which features rainbow flag colors across the entryway — to cover the entire building.

"We are not intimidated by cowards who destroy beauty in the middle of the night," said the Rev. Janet Gollery McKeithen, the church's pastor. "Your support strengthens creative spaces where people in the LGBTQIA+ community can share their stories, express grief and hope through art, and reclaim space together."

McKeithen launched a fundraising campaign to support recovery efforts, with donations directed toward repainting, hosting community circles and providing a renewed sense of safety for those directly affected. The campaign

is available at zeffy.com/en-US/donation-form/hate-crime-recovery.

The attack targeted a congregation with one of the longest records of LGBTQ advocacy in Santa Monica. McKeithen has performed same-sex marriages since 2008, at the time a direct violation of the United Methodist Church's governing rules, which penalized clergy who officiated such ceremonies with suspension or permanent expulsion. She also campaigned against California's Proposition 8, the 2008 ballot measure banning same-sex marriage, an effort that forged a lasting partnership with the Gay-Straight Alliance at Santa Monica High School.

That partnership produced the annual Queer Prom, a celebration for LGBTQIA+ youth ages 16 to 20, co-sponsored by the church, the school's Gender and Sexuality Alliance, Santa Monica Travel and Tourism and the City of Santa Monica. The church has also partnered with Black TAQ

SEE **CHURCH** PAGE 11



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Some California Democrats pitch gas price relief as prices at the pump soar

One candidate wants to suspend a host of state environmental policies that boost the price of gas. Another wants to suspend the 61 cent-a-gallon state gas tax.

Amid a spike in gas prices fueled by President Donald Trump's war in Iran, at least two Democratic contenders for California governor are capitalizing on the moment to push for policies they say would give drivers a break.

Recent proposals from former Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and San Jose Mayor Matt Mahan reflect how Democrats are trying to use rising gas prices, a potent election-year issue, to distinguish themselves as prioritizing the cost of living.

Their Republican opponents have been saying the same for months.

Villaraigosa is calling for a moratorium on a variety of state greenhouse-gas reduction rules that he called "failed policies." They include carbon emissions limits at refineries, standards to reduce carbon in fuels and other rules he blames for forcing refineries to close. Such policies collectively add about 50 cents to the price of each gallon of gas, state estimates show.

Villaraigosa has received several campaign donations from the fossil fuel industry, including from Chevron, Marathon, the state's largest oil and gas producer California Resources Corporation, and executives of two Kern County drilling companies.

Mahan supports temporarily suspending the state gas tax, but in an interview said he wouldn't rule out also curbing some of the state's refinery regulations.

Both candidates are lower-polling moderates, and their proposals are similar to ideas the two top-polling Republican candidates have been pushing.

Republican Steve Hilton has promised to lower the price of gas to \$3 a gallon statewide by cutting the gas tax in half and eliminating policies that reduce emissions. Chad Bianco would do away with the gas tax altogether. Both Republicans would expand in-state oil drilling and keep refineries open, a goal Villaraigosa and Mahan also share.

Top-polling Democratic candidates Katie Porter, Tom Steyer and Eric Swalwell have not weighed in on what they would do to mitigate gas prices. Steyer and Swalwell on Tuesday night both dismissed the proposals of Villaraigosa and Mahan as unserious. Steyer's spokesperson Danni Wang said he would rather focus on making "sure oil companies aren't reaping excess profits" while Swalwell's spokesperson Micah Beasley said he would prioritize keeping refineries' fuel inventories stable as the state transitions to clean energy. Porter's campaign did not respond to inquiries.

Democratic strategist Andrew Acosta

SEE GAS PAGE 6



Zin Chiang for CalMatters

ENCINO: Gas prices surpass \$5.99 per gallon at a station in Encino on March 9, 2026. Gas prices have recently surged in the state as the U.S. war with Iran intensifies.

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GUEST COMMENTARY

Send comments to editor@smdp.com

The \$500 Million Lesson: California needs a new plan to protect Highway 1



Ted Soqui for CalMatters

PCH: Damage along the Pacific Coast Highway on Feb. 14, 2025, following a mudslide from the previous day.

Highway 1 has stood as a global symbol of California's golden lifestyle for generations. But we can no longer take its survival for granted.

A series of landslides that began in January 2023 have buried the highway, isolating residents and severing the local economy for three years. Beacon Economics recently conducted an analysis that quantifies the disruption, finding the highway closure cost the region roughly \$13.5 million each month it was impassable.

The highway recently reopened after being closed for about 36 months. The total economic damage due to lost business and tourism is estimated to be close to \$500 million. That translates to roughly \$30 million in lost tax revenue for local governments.

The California Department of Transportation deserves great credit for their challenging and dangerous work to stabilize these slopes. However, it's inevitable there will be more landslides. Tectonic uplift constantly fractures the mountains, and increasingly volatile atmospheric rivers saturate unstable rock.

To protect the Central Coast's economy, state and local policymakers must confront this geological reality and shift from reactive repairs to proactive measures. Strategies that can help ensure the future of this iconic road include engineering to harden the hillside — and have robots on standby.

Currently, we fix the road after it breaks.

The state spent more than \$160 million on emergency repairs for just the three recent slides.

Policymakers should authorize and fund a preventative hardening campaign. We should identify high-risk slopes now and proactively deploy soil nailing, rock sheds, and cable-mesh attenuators, which are flexible, cable-based nets to stop rockslides.

These projects require significant upfront investment, but prevention is far less expensive than the combined cost of emergency repairs and a multi-year economic shutdown.

Beacon's analysis illustrates that speed is important for economic recovery, as it offers more certainty, allowing business owners to retain staff and giving tourists confidence to book return trips.

But repairs were stalled because human crews could not safely work on the active slide, so Caltrans had to deploy remote-controlled bulldozers and excavators, which took time. Now that we know this is a likely scenario in the future, Caltrans' maintenance contracts could require pre-qualified contractors to retain a fleet of these autonomous and remote-controlled units.

When the next slide happens — and the geology guarantees it will — these happy-to-help robots could be deployed to begin clearing debris immediately.

Sustainable infrastructure also requires



Surf report WATER TEMP: 63.3

FRIDAY
FAIR

SURF: 1-2ft
Knee to thigh

Modest S swell leftovers. Best on the early tide push just don't wait too long. Leftover S swell from the start of the week keeps things rideable and there's just a touch more NW energy. It's not much but with the size on the southerly surf it should be enough for a few little peaks/corners at the beachbreaks west of Dume. Summer points still offer best shape. The incoming tide helps the cause early but don't wait too long, as things will eventually slow down through the second half of the morning with the high tide. Wind could stay light most of the day.

SATURDAY
FAIR

SURF: 1-2ft
Knee to thigh

Fun day for the smaller wave gear. Clean tide push for the early to mid-AM window. A modest round of SSW swell mixes with old S swell leftovers for knee-waist high waves. Standouts west of Dume go chest-high and should have some corners as a little NW energy mixes in. A little drained out first thing in the morning, setting up a nice tide push through the first few hours of the day and conditions look cleanest then. Afternoon onshores look pretty mellow out of the W/WNW. Mangeable texture out west while the points stay pretty clean.

Weather

Friday: Sunny, with a high near 88. Calm wind becoming southwest around 5 mph in the afternoon.

Friday Night: Patchy fog after 11pm. Otherwise, mostly cloudy, with a low around 60.

Saturday: Patchy fog before 11am. Otherwise, partly sunny, with a high near 82.

Saturday Night: Mostly cloudy, with a low around 61.

| Date | Day | Time (LST/LDT) | Predicted (ft) | High/Low |
|------------|-----|----------------|----------------|----------|
| 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 |
| 2026/03/21 | Sat | 11:44 AM | 3.95 | H |
| 2026/03/21 | Sat | 5:10 PM | 0.99 | L |
| 2026/03/21 | Sat | 11:32 PM | 5.73 | H |
| 2026/03/22 | Sun | 06:32 AM | -0.39 | L |
| 2026/03/22 | Sun | 12:45 PM | 3.31 | H |
| 2026/03/22 | Sun | 5:39 PM | 1.53 | L |

Daily Lottery

Although every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the winning number information, mistakes can occur. In the event of any discrepancies, California State laws and California Lottery regulations will prevail. Complete game information and prize claiming instructions are available at California Lottery retailers. Visit the California State Lottery web site at <http://www.calottery.com>

POWERBALL
Draw Date: 3/18
14 18 19 21 69
Power#: 1
Jackpot: 120 M

Fantasy 5
Draw Date: 3/18
8 13 21 27 31

MEGA MILLIONS
Draw Date: 3/17
4 11 18 38 50
Mega#: 24
Jackpot: 50 M

Daily 3
Draw Date: 3/18
EVENING: 1 6 3
Draw Date: 3/18
MIDDAY: 2 5 4

SuperLotto
Draw Date: 3/18
1 26 35 40 46
Mega#: 26
Jackpot: 8 M

Daily Derby
Draw Date: 3/18
1st: 06 - Whirl Win
2nd: 01 - Gold Rush
3rd: 11 - Money Bags
Race Time: 1:45.44

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The Santa Monica Daily Press publishes Monday - Saturday with a circulation of 8,200 on weekdays and 8,000 on the weekend. The Daily Press is adjudicated as a newspaper of general circulation in the County of Los Angeles and covers news relevant to the City of Santa Monica. The Daily Press is a member of the California Newspaper Publisher's Association, the National Newspaper Association and the Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce. The paper you're reading this on is composed of 100% post consumer content and the ink used to print these words is soy based. We are proud recipients of multiple honors for outstanding news coverage from the California Newspaper Publishers Association as well as a Santa Monica Sustainable Quality Award.

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Santa Monica Daily Press

Santa Monica Daily Press

Classifieds

DBA

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT File No. 2026038423. The following person(s) is (are) doing business as: LOCK AND SECURITY and AV LOCK AND SECURITY DBA DR. LOCK, 40222 LA QUINTA LANE B101, Palmdale, CA 93551 in Los Angeles County. Registered Owner(s): AV LOCK AND SECURITY, 40222 LA QUINTA LANE B101, PALMDALE, CA 93551. 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/ JAMES ROBLES, PRESIDENT. This statement was filed with the County Clerk of Los Angeles County on 02/10/2026. 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: 02/27/2026, 03/06/2026, 03/13/2026, 03/20/2026

DBA

FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT File No. 2026030293. The following person(s) is (are) doing business as: SUNFLOWER EDUCATIONAL THERAPY, SUNFLOWER EDUCATIONAL SERVICES, 1437 HARVARD ST UNIT 6, SANTA MONICA, CA 90404, County of Los Angeles. Registered Owner(s): SUNFLOWER EDUCATIONAL SERVICES LLC, 1437 HARVARD ST UNIT 6, SANTA MONICA, CA 90404. 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 02/2026. 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/ Erika Redlinger, MANAGER. This statement was filed with the County Clerk of Los Angeles County on 2/9/2026. 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: 03/06/2026, 03/13/2026, 03/20/2026, 03/27/2026

Summons

SUMMONS (CITACION JUDICIAL) Case No. 25SMCV05353. NOTICE TO DEFENDANT: Richard Moran, and Does 1 to 10, Inclusive. YOU ARE BEING SUED BY PLAINTIFF: Alyssa Leigh Kluge and Christopher Alan Dietrick. NOTICE! You have been sued. The court may decide against you without your being heard unless you respond within 30 days. Read the information below. You have 30 CALENDAR DAYS after this summons and legal papers are served on you to file a written response at this court and have a copy served on the plaintiff. A letter or phone call will not protect you. Your written response must be in proper legal form if you want the court to hear your case. There may be a court form that you can use for your response. You can find these court forms and more information at the California Courts Online Self-Help Center, your county law library, or the courthouse nearest you. If you cannot pay the filing fee, ask the court clerk for a fee waiver form. If you do not file your response on time, you may lose the case by default, and your wages, money, and property may be taken without further warning from the court. The name and address of the court is: Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles, SANTA MONICA COURTHOUSE 1725 Main Street, Santa Monica, CA 90401. The name, address, and telephone number of plaintiff's attorney is: Eric V Traut, Esq., TRAUT INJURY LAW, 5 Hutton Centre Drive, Suite 700, Santa Ana, CA 92707, (714)947-7000. SANTA MONICA DAILY PRESS Publish: 02/27/2026, 03/06/2026, 03/13/2026, 03/20/2026

Name Change

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME Case No. 26STCP00562. Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles, 1725 Main Street, Santa Monica CA 90401, Santa Monica Courthouse. Petition of Leonardo Sebastian Sanchez for Change of Name. TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS: Petitioner Anthony Mendez filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows: Leonardo Sebastian Sanchez to Leonardo Sebastian Mendez-Sanchez. 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: 04/11/2026, Time: 8:30 AM, 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: 02/24/2026. LAWRENCE H. CHO, Judge of the Superior Court. SANTA MONICA DAILY PRESS Publish: 02/27/2026, 03/06/2026, 03/13/2026, 03/20/2026

Name Change

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME Case No. 26VECP00128. Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles, Northwest District - East Bldg, 6230 Sylmar Ave. Room 107, Van Nuys, CA 91401. Petition of Shannon Renee Fischer for Change of Name. TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS: Petitioner Shannon Renee Fischer filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows: Shannon Renee Fischer to Shannon Renee. 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: 05/01/2026, Time: 8:30 A.M., Dept: O, Room: 511. 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: 03/12/2026. Shirley K. Watkins, Judge of the Superior Court. SANTA MONICA DAILY PRESS Publish: 03/20/2026, 03/27/2026, 04/03/2026, 04/10/2026

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GUEST COMMENTARY

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California lawmakers weigh statewide plan to be accountable for closing student achievement gaps



Kyle Grillot for CalMatters

SCHOOL: A first-grade student looks at a phonetic alphabet at Peralta Elementary in Riverside, on Nov. 19, 2025.

California is not only the nation's most populous state; it's also the nation's most economically, ethnically, culturally and even geographically diverse state.

That uniqueness has its virtues, but it makes governing California uniquely difficult. Often competitive interests, each clamoring for political attention, tend to block the consensus that's vital for effective policymaking.

As a result, major issues go unresolved year after year, even decade after decade, despite promises by those seeking office to act boldly and effectively if elected. Obvious examples include homelessness, poverty, the water supply, housing shortages and — most importantly — the low levels of academic achievement in a public school system that purports to educate nearly 6 million children.

As we all should know by now, national achievement tests have revealed that California's students do poorly in comparison to those in other states. Reading comprehension among California's fourth-graders ranked 37th among the states in the 2024 National Assessment of Educational Progress testing, for instance, with just 29% showing proficiency, down 2 percentage points from 2022.

The ability to read and comprehend is a foundational skill without which students are doomed to fail in mathematics and other subject matters.

Doing something about low reading scores was a political football for years until, just recently, the state finally declared a preference for using phonics to teach reading — a rare bit of progress.

California's educators are working tirelessly to support students, but the state has never had a unified plan to help close achievement gaps

- Darshana Patel, Assemblymember

Nevertheless, the state still lacks a binding commitment to improving academic achievement, bolstered by accountability. Instead, we have many levels of partial authority, ranging from local school board members to the governor, and a debate that usually begins and ends with wrangling over money, rather than effective teaching.

As he prepares to vacate the governorship — and probably embark

COMMUNITY NEWS

Venice

Emma Chamberlain to Open First Standalone Chamberlain Coffee Café in Venice

Emma Chamberlain announced the first standalone café from Chamberlain Coffee will open on Abbot Kinney Boulevard in Venice this spring.

Chamberlain made the announcement during her appearance on “The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon,” marking a new chapter for the brand she founded six years ago.

The café’s design was developed by Chamberlain in collaboration with Marie Trohman and Ashley Drost of Proem Studio, who designed Chamberlain’s own kitchen. The space incorporates marble countertops, retro details, warm woods and soft greens alongside the brand’s signature blue.

“Coffee shops were such an important part of my life growing up, and creating a space where people can come together, hang out, and enjoy really good coffee feels incredibly special,” Chamberlain said. “We didn’t want to open just another coffee shop.”

Unlike the brand’s grab-and-go concept, the new café is designed for lingering. Guests can enjoy drinks in ceramic mugs and seasonal pastries from local makers alongside creative coffee drinks inspired by Chamberlain’s favorite flavors.

The café will feature location-exclusive merchandise and a retail area with hand-selected ceramics from local artists, collaborations with Los Angeles brands and a snack corner of Chamberlain’s personal favorites.

The Chamberlain Coffee Café opens spring 2026 at 1142 Abbot Kinney Blvd., Venice.

EDITED BY SMDP STAFF

Santa Monica

Santa Monica Names Jay Baldwin as Second Poet Laureate

The Santa Monica City Council has affirmed Jay Baldwin as the city’s second poet laureate for a two-year appointment.

Born and raised in Santa Monica, Baldwin serves as the school librarian at a Santa Monica elementary school and is completing a master’s degree in library science. Baldwin has competed in slam poetry events across the West Coast, performed in storytelling shows including The Moth and is a longtime participant in Pride Poets, a collective of LGBTQ+ poets who bring poetry into public spaces through custom typewriter-written poems.

Identifying as queer and nonbinary, Baldwin’s work is informed by an understanding of libraries and poetry as intersecting sites of activism and communal engagement. Baldwin succeeds inaugural poet laureate Anne Carmack, who served since 2024.

“Our city continues to build a vibrant cultural future, and welcoming our second poet laureate is an important part of that commitment,” Mayor Caroline Torosis said. “Poetry has the power to bring people together, spark meaningful conversations and highlight the many diverse voices that shape our community.”

The public can meet Baldwin at several National Poetry Month and Arts, Culture and Creativity Month events in April:

On April 11 from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., “The Opening Page, Meet Your Poet Laureate” reception will be held at the MLK Jr. Auditorium and Central Courtyard at the Main Library, 601 Santa Monica Blvd. On April 14 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., Baldwin will read a proclamation at the City Council meeting at City Hall, 1685 Main St. On April 25 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Baldwin will appear at the 12th Annual Arts and Literacy Festival at Virginia Avenue Park, 2200 Virginia Ave.

The poet laureate receives a \$10,000 honorarium for the two-year appointment. For more information, visit [santamonica.gov/library](https://www.santamonica.gov/library). For more information about the Poet Laureate program, visit <https://www.santamonica.gov/programs/poet-laureate>



Courtesy Image

POET: Santa Monica names Jay Baldwin as its second poet laureate.

EDITED BY SMDP STAFF

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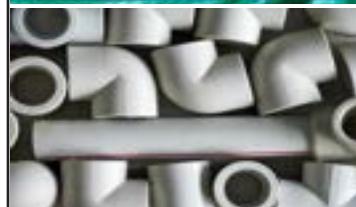
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SCHOOL

FROM PAGE 1

a widening structural deficit, according to a budget report reviewed by the Board of Education last week.

The district's Second Interim Budget, presented at a special board meeting March 11, projects approximately \$153.3 million in total general fund revenue for the 2025-2026 fiscal year. The report earned a positive certification from district officials, signaling the district can cover its expenses for the current fiscal year and the subsequent two fiscal years.

But the financial picture is not without concern. The district's structural deficit has grown from \$6.3 million at the first interim report to \$9.5 million, a \$3 million increase driven largely by the decision to retain about 10 positions and rising healthcare costs projected to increase from 7% to 9% in coming years.

"We have an ongoing structural deficit that will need to be addressed by the Board of Education for future budgets," said Gerardo Cruz, assistant superintendent of business services and chief financial officer. "The district will need to make adjustments as financial conditions evolve and to ensure we continue supporting students and schools responsibly."

The budget snapshot, taken as of Jan. 31, comes as the district enters what officials described as a new financial phase. Pandemic-era relief funds and other one-time resources that helped stabilize school budgets in recent years have now expired, forcing the district to align pre-pandemic revenue levels with ongoing expenses.

Despite the challenges, the district maintains a healthy financial cushion. Reserves stand at approximately 21%, or roughly \$52 million — well above the state-required minimum of 3% and in line with the Financial Oversight Committee's recommendation to maintain reserves equal to two months of general fund expenditures.

The reserve buffer is intended to protect against economic uncertainties, including potential wildfire recovery costs and cash flow gaps.

The district's status as a Basic Aid district continues to provide financial advantages. Local property taxes push funding

approximately \$19 million above what the district would receive under the state's Local Control Funding Formula. Revenue is supported by stable funding sources including property taxes, parcel tax revenue and community partnerships.

Enrollment figures also offered encouraging news. After years of significant declines — historically 300 to 400 students per year — enrollment dropped by only 80 students this year. Officials attributed the stabilization to the expansion of Transitional Kindergarten programs and new residents moving into the district.

In a Basic Aid district, higher enrollment actually dilutes per-pupil funding, but the leveling off suggests the district may be approaching a more predictable student population.

The budget report also detailed several mid-year adjustments. Health and welfare benefit costs were revised downward after open enrollment revealed that several vacant or newly filled positions did not require the more expensive family plans initially budgeted. The general fund's contribution to special education decreased by more than \$700,000, primarily due to lower legal costs and fewer settlements.

However, operating costs increased by roughly \$670,000 to account for updated maintenance agreements and new charges for recently acquired district properties on Colorado Avenue.

Salaries and benefits continue to dominate spending, accounting for 78% of the total budget and 85% of the unrestricted general operating fund.

Federal Title funding, which makes up about 2% of the budget, remains intact.

District staff said they are actively reviewing expenditure trends and identifying cost-saving measures to ensure revenues and expenses align over the long term. Additional budget updates are scheduled for May and June, when financial activity and planning adjustments will be incorporated.

The positive certification submitted to the Los Angeles County Office of Education represents the district's official declaration that it possesses the financial health and reserves necessary to meet all obligations, even amid deficit spending.

maaz@smdp.com

GAS

FROM PAGE 2

said the ideas from Villaraigosa and Mahan could help the moderate Democrats boost their campaigns' affordability bona fides, but he questioned whether they will make a difference in a crowded race in which voters are not yet paying much attention.

The latest polling shows Mahan and Villaraigosa tied with just 3% of likely voters' support, but a quarter of those surveyed remain undecided on a candidate. Both have been dwarfed in ad spending by self-funding billionaire candidate Steyer, and Acosta said the gas proposals won't gain traction if the candidates don't spend big to promote them on TV.

"It could be a ploy, or good politics. Will anyone hear it? I don't know," Acosta said of the gas proposals. "It's a little harder to get anyone's attention just on the race itself, let alone this issue."

WHY ARE CALIFORNIA'S GAS PRICES SO HIGH?

As candidates blame taxes and climate rules for high gas prices, experts point to a more complicated, less politically convenient reality: The recent spike is largely driven by a global oil shock tied to the war with Iran, not state policy.

Nevertheless the war increases a deeper vulnerability for California, where gas prices climbed above \$5.50 a gallon Tuesday compared to nearly \$3.80 nationally: As refinery capacity declines and reliance on imports grows, global disruptions can trigger higher prices in California than anywhere else.

"The current increase is almost entirely due to global oil markets," said Paasha Mahdavi, a UC Santa Barbara political science professor and energy policy expert. "The problem, though ... is that our starting point is so much higher than nationally."

State analyses show California's higher gas prices come not only from taxes and climate programs but also a large remaining "mystery surcharge," an unexplained markup oil companies add to gasoline prices.

That unexplained premium averaged about 41 cents per gallon between 2015 and 2024, costing drivers an estimated \$59 billion, according to the state's petroleum market watchdog.

"Gas prices are much higher in California for reasons that have to do with the market for refined gasoline," said Michael Wara, a Stanford legal scholar who focuses on climate. "It's something that is in the control of the industry."

The oil industry blames California policies.

Prices "are higher in California because of taxes and compliance costs, but also because state policies have driven refineries and crude production out," said Jim Stanley, a spokesman for the Western States Petroleum Association, in a written statement.

Stanley declined to comment on Villaraigosa's proposal for a regulatory moratorium.

Villaraigosa's call to "overhaul" the state's air resources board and for "an immediate moratorium on costly regulations overburdening California refineries" is a familiar refrain.

The air board's climate programs — including the low carbon fuel standard and

the state's cap-and-trade program, recently rebranded as cap-and-invest — have faced repeated political and industry pushback, especially as regulators consider updates that could affect refinery costs.

Those climate policies raise fuel costs but have also generated billions for clean energy and transportation programs.

California's air board has faced mounting criticism over both programs — the fuel standard drew opposition from Republicans, the oil industry, and even environmental justice advocates when it was revised in 2024, and this year oil companies, some Democratic lawmakers and Villaraigosa have warned that tightening cap-and-trade rules could accelerate refinery closures.

A TOUCHY POLITICAL ISSUE

An even easier target in campaign promises is the gas tax, which lawmakers voted to raise in 2017.

It has risen by 20 cents per gallon since then, to 61 cents, and generates nearly \$8 billion a year — the vast majority of state funding for highway and road repairs.

It's also been a touchy issue for Democrats, especially in swing districts.

Porter, running as a Democrat to flip a GOP-held Orange County congressional seat in 2018, backed a failed Republican-led ballot measure to repeal that gas tax increase and ran ads declaring that "I oppose higher gas taxes."

The move cost her a labor endorsement — unions generally support the tax because the revenue pays for projects their members work on — but it helped her head off claims that she supported the hike as she ran as an economic progressive.

Two Democratic lawmakers have lost their seats to Republicans in recent years after criticism about the gas tax.

Now Mahan, a Democrat, is pitching a gas tax holiday. He suggested that it last for the "duration of the war," with a ballpark goal of keeping average prices below \$5 a gallon.

"I would leave it to the experts in Sacramento to set that limit, but I think something around \$5 is reasonable," he said.

Asked how he would pay for road and highway repairs in the meantime, Mahan said he would find other funding elsewhere in the state budget.

Ryan Cummings, chief of staff at the Stanford Institute of Economic Policy Research, said he's skeptical a suspension would save drivers because it's possible gas companies would pocket some of the savings.

But he also warned against any governor removing the tax without providing alternative funding for road maintenance; reinstating a tax in the future would be seen as raising the price of gas by 60 cents a gallon at once.

If history is any guide, voters would likely balk at that: In 2003, facing a recall, then-Gov. Gray Davis tried to reinstate a vehicle license fee that the state had lowered for years. Opponent Arnold Schwarzenegger leapt to attack him for tripling the "car tax," a move that observers agree helped him oust Davis.

"Taking the gas tax off is an easy thing to do," Cummings said. "Putting it back on is extraordinarily difficult — and essential."

Jeanne Kuang, CalMatters Capitol Reporter, Alejandro Lazo, CalMatters Climate Reporter

**CITY OF SANTA MONICA
NOTICE INVITING BIDS**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that bids will be received by the City of Santa Monica until 3:00 p.m. on the date indicated at which time they will be opened and posted for:

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Bids must be submitted on forms supplied by the City of Santa Monica. Bid packages containing all forms, specifications, terms and conditions may be obtained on the **City's Online Vendor Portal**. The website for this Notice of Inviting Bids and related documents is: OpenGov (<https://secure.procurow.com/portal/santa-monica-ca>). There is no charge for bid package and specifications.

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SCOUT

FROM PAGE 1

1,000 Eagle Scouts to its name, has spent the months since the Palisades fire regrouping, relocating and refocusing on its core mission: developing young people into capable leaders.

Emmett, a third-year Scout, earned the role of Patrol Leader for the Vikings patrol earlier this year. During his six-month term, he has managed finances, planned meals and shopped for monthly campouts, organized recreational outings and coordinated volunteer service projects — all while balancing school and the typical demands of adolescence.

“Scouting is a great way to learn how to be a leader and to gain responsibility and maturity,” Emmett said. “It is a big investment of time and effort but if you see it through and become an Eagle, it will really pay off.”

The troop operates under a youth-led model, where Scouts like Emmett take ownership of planning and execution while adult volunteers provide guidance and mentorship. By the time a Scout reaches the rank of Eagle, they have typically mastered real-world skills in communication, budgeting and project management.

Guiding that development is Scoutmaster Mike Lanning, who at 93 years old has been with Troop 223 since 1953 — a remarkable 72-year tenure during which he has led more than 1,000 young people to scouting’s highest rank.

The troop faced significant upheaval following the Palisades fire in January. Dedicated volunteers quickly banded together to find a new meeting location, temporarily relocating to Calvary Christian School in Pacific Palisades until space at St. Matthew’s School and Church becomes available. They assembled a revised calendar that gave



MUSEUM: Troop 223 scouts met with retired rocket scientist Adrienne Russo at Santa Monica’s Museum of Flying for their Space Exploration merit badge.

Matt Haggemiller

families time to regroup while maintaining the community bonds that define the program.

Volunteers also coordinated donations of gear and uniforms for scouts who lost everything in the fire. Some families have temporarily relocated as far as Thousand Oaks and the Conejo Valley but continue commuting to the Westside for weekly meetings and scout-led activities.

Those activities reflect the program’s

emphasis on experiential learning. Emmett recently led his patrol on a “Good Turn” volunteer trip, pulling invasive plants with the Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains to help restore a monarch overwintering habitat in lower Topanga State Park — part of the Palisades fire burn zone.

For a “Career Trip,” Emmett coordinated a visit with recently retired rocket scientist Adrienne Russo, who shared her aerospace

engineering expertise with the Vikings patrol outside Santa Monica’s Museum of Flying on Feb. 28. The meeting provided real-world context as the Scouts work toward their Space Exploration merit badge.

And for pure fun, Emmett organized an outing to Maze Room Escape Games in West Los Angeles, preceded by a stop at Beard Papa’s on Sawtelle for cream puffs. The patrol escaped successfully.

When asked about his favorite scouting experience, Emmett pointed to last summer’s High Adventure trip in Montana.

“We went rafting and camping along a river for a week,” he said. “The second week, we backpacked along the Hobnail Tom trail in the Scapegoat Wilderness, the highlight being summit Mt. Bugle with my crew. It was an amazing experience that helped me to better realize the importance of protecting nature.”

This summer, Troop 223 will travel to Denmark for the Nordic Jamboree, where 30,000 participants from around the world will gather.

Spring marks the start of the scouting calendar year, and Troop 223 is welcoming new members. Boys and girls ages 10 to 12 in fifth and sixth grade are invited to attend weekly meetings — girls meet Monday nights and boys meet Tuesday nights. The troop, which officially operates under the newly rebranded Scouting America (formerly Boy Scouts of America), draws members from across Los Angeles, including Westwood, Santa Monica, Venice, the South Bay and Orange County.

Families interested in learning more can visit scouts223.org or contact Greg Frost at frostfamily@frostinvestigations.com.

maaz@smdp.com

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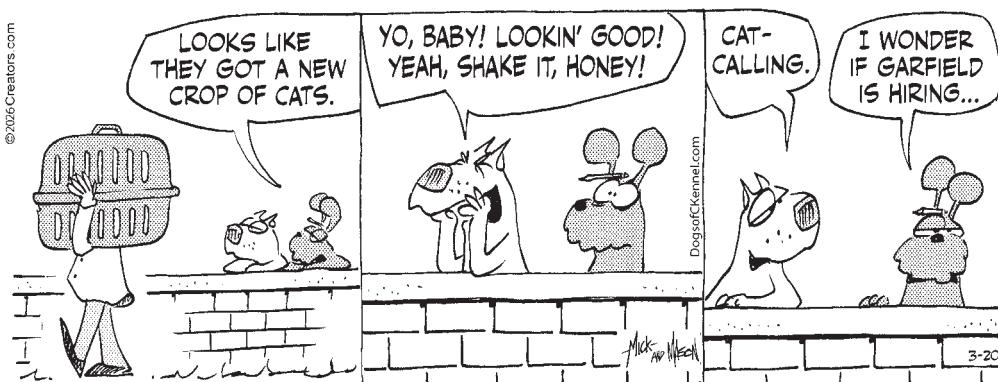
Agnes

By TONY COCHRAN



Dogs of C-Kennel

By MICK & MASON MASTROIANNI & JOHNNY HART



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 15 letters left over. They spell out the alternative theme of the puzzle.

© australianwordgames.com.au 6885

Music to my ears

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

- | | | | |
|----------|------------|----------|-----------|
| Anvil | Drone | Lute | Slow |
| Arpeggio | Fife | Melodeon | Song |
| Band | Four | Minuet | Stop |
| Baton | Guitar | Mistake | Teamwork |
| Bugle | Harmony | Mozart | Tenor |
| Cello | Haydn | Notes | Time |
| Chang | Hear | Oboe | Trio |
| Crwth | Horn | Ocarina | Tuba |
| Deagan | Jazz | Rock | Tune |
| Double | Kettledrum | Romantic | Ukulele |
| bassoon | Key | Score | Woodwinds |

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TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (March 20)

Welcome to the Year Playfulness Wins Out. There's a heightened energy to your day. Whatever doesn't seem like fun also becomes easy to reconfigure or work around until your days are more delight-filled than they have ever been. More highlights: There's a symbolic purchase or ceremony. Professional savvy has you rising, making the moves that give you more to help others with. A dear one pays tribute to you. Taurus and Cancer adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 43, 2, 6, 45 and 8.

HOROSCOPES

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Happy with your own company, everything else is just a bonus - and there will be so many bonuses in the weeks to come. It all starts with accepting every little thing about yourself as a trait you can work with.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). When you're in logical, uncluttered surroundings, you really do think better. So clearing and cleaning is as much about your environment as it is your interior. Today brings orderliness and inner calm.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). If your focus is too narrow, you'll feel trapped even when you are free. It will be good to get an outsider's view on your scene today. They can point out freedoms and routes that are invisible to you because you're too close.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Time is more precious than money, and that's why you give it to your loved ones. You show up for the long conversation, help someone sort out a problem, sit through the game or the rehearsal. The payoff lasts longer than anything you could buy.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Your expectation of others doesn't stretch too far beyond common decency, but you expect much, much more from yourself. Go easier! Being hard on yourself yields nothing good. Even if you produce like gangbusters, you risk burnout later.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). "Fake it till you make it" works best in situations where you actually want the transformation in question. But there are certain things that will just never be you and no amount of faking makes the role worthwhile. Drop the effort and be free.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). You invested. You showed up. You earned a place in the inner rotation of a complicated person. That feels good. But the healthier metric is: Is this dynamic reciprocal? Is it respectful of your time? Is it sustainable?

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). If you feel like you made an awkward choice, or didn't quite fit the scene with smoothness or adequately meet people where they were... well, at least you were memorable, and that's more important than you think today.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Love is an art form. Just as writing, painting, acting and other artistic disciplines call for imagination, so does love. You conjure an idea of who the other person is and what the relationship could be, and it's, to some extent, a creation.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Every time you keep your word, you earn trust. The trust that matters most will be the trust you give yourself. Because when you trust yourself, you can do anything. You just decide and then execute the necessary work.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Maybe someone brings up emotional subjects because they are trying to get closer to you. If you love it, that's a tender emotion. If it bothers you, that's an emotion too - and oddly enough, both create a bond if you connect instead of avoiding the connection.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). It's not just what you choose to do but what you choose not to do that makes this an interesting day. You'll change it up. You'll lose something you suspect was holding you back.

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

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

Newsday Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 On the job
- 7 Forest males
- 12 Water in a Florida state song
- 13 Carved stone
- 14 Start of a movie frat brother's lament
- 16 Requisite
- 17 Sweeping camera shot
- 18 Brought back
- 22 Single-piece Apple
- 24 Four-liter purchase
- 26 Movie with the lament
- 30 Ballad's conclusion
- 31 Quality judge
- 32 Apple designation
- 33 Jazz band participant
- 34 Dubious, these days
- 35 Middle of lament
- 39 Heir homophone
- 40 Project completion datum
- 41 Steamed Chinese bun
- 42 Brewery supply
- 44 Penpoint
- 45 Speaker of the lament
- 48 Lager variety
- 50 Pringles alternative
- 51 Provide the spread
- 52 DC-based alliance
- 53 Donut shapes
- 57 End of lament
- 61 NASCAR Hall of Fame designer
- 62 Liverpoolian, for

DOWN

- 1 YMCA section
- 2 Bird sound
- 3 Acknowledge the crowd
- 4 Phrase on a nickel/copper coin
- 5 ___ Faire
- 6 Frequent online message exchanger
- 7 Digitized image
- 8 Organic sealant
- 9 PGA Tour's pro-___
- 10 Name of three

presidents

- 11 RAF, to Churchill
- 15 Adverb on grocery flyers
- 19 Many buses
- 20 Dredge up
- 21 Unsuccessful Persian invader
- 23 Avenger of Julius
- 24 When the longest day is
- 25 SOS responder
- 26 As for Einstein
- 27 Hilfiger rival
- 28 "You're on!"
- 29 Pour ___ troubled waters
- 36 Slim instrument

SUPER SENIOR by S.N.
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- 37 He has two ... Oz solos
- 38 *David Copperfield* girl
- 43 Mozart's birthplace
- 45 Janet's successor as Fed head
- 46 Totally unexciting
- 47 Pass carefully
- 49 Lower, as lighting
- 52 Moving walkway maker
- 54 Mare fare
- 55 Quite the comedian
- 56 Room renters
- 58 Typist's stat.
- 59 Archaeo- opposite
- 60 Dr. of music

Sudoku

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S SUDOKU

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

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.

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

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|----|----|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 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 | | | | | |

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

CHURCH

FROM PAGE 1

(Transgender and Queer) to hold candlelight vigils for murdered transgender people and has worked with the city to establish name change grants for transgender individuals.

In recent years, the UMC General Conference voted to remove all LGBTQ restrictions from its governing rules, effectively vindicating practices McKeithen had championed for decades.

The vandalism has also drawn a broader call for solidarity from the Santa Monica Area Interfaith Council, which issued a public statement rejecting the attack and affirming the LGBTQ community's place in local religious life. The council is inviting congregations and houses of worship to add their names as co-signers.

"We, the Santa Monica Area Interfaith Council, stand in solidarity with the Church in Ocean Park and with all churches, synagogues, mosques, temples, and sacred

spaces as places of worship for everyone in our community. We reject every form of bigotry, harassment, and intimidation directed at any faith community, house of worship, or group of people. We stand in support of the LGBTQIA+ community, LGBTQIA+ allied religious spaces, and celebrate the diversity of human expression. We honor each individual as a reflection of the Divine. There is no place for hate in Santa Monica or anywhere in our wider community," reads the statement. "We affirm the dignity, safety, and belonging of all who seek spiritual connection, justice, and peace. We call on our neighbors, civic leaders, and faith partners to join us in protecting spaces of worship, confronting hate in all its forms, and embodying a courageous love that welcomes all."

The council said a list of co-signers will be made public in the coming weeks and to join, contact Kathleen Benjamin at yourpytchef@aol.com.

editor@smdp.com

HIGHWAY

FROM PAGE 3

sustainable financing. We must create dedicated funding mechanisms to finance road repairs.

First, local governments should explore Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts. While typically used for urban development, these districts could be a useful tool for the coast.

The districts would not increase taxes on residents. Instead, they would capture the future growth in property tax revenue generated by high-value real estate turnover and the tourism economy, to back bonds for infrastructure. This ensures that the wealth generated by the Big Sur coast is reinvested directly into the road that makes that wealth possible.

Second, while a traditional toll on an existing highway is legally difficult, due to right-to-travel issues, we may be able to achieve similar results by instituting a virtual parking reservation system at high-

traffic vistas like Bixby Bridge. Similar to the Muir Woods system already in place, travelers would pay for a parking spot ahead of time online, raising funds for road hardening while discouraging the dangerous roadside congestion that currently clogs the highway.

It would ensure that those who use the coast's resources would help pay to protect them.

Work remains to refine these ideas, but it is certain that the geological hazards to Highway 1 will continue. City and county governments lost \$10 million in tax revenue per year from the last closure. Spending part of that on preventative solutions to keep the road open would be a net positive.

If we aren't proactive about protecting this celebrated route, we'll find ourselves traveling down a dangerous road.

Stafford Nichols is an economist and research manager at Beacon Economics LLC.

LAWMAKERS

FROM PAGE 4

on a presidential campaign — Gavin Newsom is proposing to downgrade the elected state superintendent of schools to an advisory role and give his successor as governor the leading role in public education.

Whether that would improve educational governance and accountability or merely rearrange the organizational boxes is uncertain.

Meanwhile, the California School Boards Association is proposing that the state make the binding commitment to academic improvement that has been lacking.

"California's educators are working tirelessly to support students, but the state has never had a unified plan to help close achievement gaps," Assembly member Darshana Patel, a San Diego Democrat who chairs the Assembly Education Committee, said as a four-bill package was unveiled Tuesday.

She is authoring Assembly Bill 2225, which requires the creation of a "comprehensive statewide strategy with clear goals, measurable benchmarks and annual performance targets so the state

can provide local school districts the support needed for student success."

The other bills would have the Legislative Analyst's Office study how the plan aligns with the state budget (AB 2149), devise a dashboard to inform the public about progress (AB 2514) and empower a new commission to oversee the plan (AB 2202).

"School districts and county offices of education are expected to deliver results for students every day," Debra Schade, president of the school boards organization, said in a statement. "The SOS for Student Achievement legislative package recognizes that the state must also be accountable for ensuring its own policies, programs and funding are aligned to support local efforts. Every student deserves an education system designed for their success."

The package may not be the answer to the wheel-spinning that has marked public education reform for so many years. But it's at least an attempt to gain traction on an issue that is central to the state's economic and societal prosperity — and to the futures of its children.

There's nothing more important.

Don Walters, CalMatters Opinion Columnist

**FRIDAY | MARCH 20****ALL ABOUT THE NEWS WITH JUDY**

10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. West Los Angeles Regional Library 11360 Santa Monica Boulevard Los Angeles. All About the News With Judy Learn English by discussing today's headlines. The class includes reading, writing, and speaking. Build reading comprehension and learn to express yourself verbally. Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/all-about-the-news-with-judy/17428017/2026-03-20T10>

THE NIGHT SKY SHOW

6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. (MSB 126 Planetarium) Math & Science Building, 1900 Pico Blvd Santa Monica. The Night Sky Show - Using SMC's 4K Digistar projection system, Planetarium Lecturer Sarah Vincent will talk about the latest news in astronomy and space exploration, and present a virtual tour of constellations and other night-sky celebrities making their appearance in the evenings ahead. The Night Sky Show is followed by the Feature Program. General Admission: \$10. Children (3-12): \$7. Show Combo (Include the Feature Program at 7 p.m.): \$16 adults, \$10 children (3-12) (A \$1 per ticket service fee will be charged by the ticketing company.) There will be a short intermission prior the start of the Feature Program. No children under age 3 at Friday evening shows. Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/the-night-sky-show/18045435/2026-03-20T18>

LIVE MUSIC FRIDAYS AT THE SURFING FOX

6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. 120 Colorado Ave CA. Erinn Alissa performs acoustic folk pop with her guitar Friday nights at The Surfing Fox. Enjoy a night of live music, tasty bites, and Foxtails! Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/live-music-fridays-at-the-surfing-fox/14385252/2026-03-20T18>

SHOWTIMES & TICKETS

7:30 p.m. Santa Monica College Performing Arts Center
1310 11th St Santa Monica. Keeping Score is Jacob Jonas' first post stage IV cancer battle work. This trilogy, inspired by Bessel van der Kolk book "The Body Keeps The Score", is a journey to understanding his illness; before, during, and after. The first work Product of Divorce explores childhood and precancer trauma. Nature Sounds While the IV Drips is about the endurance and survival of the battle itself including sustained stays in a hospital room alone with your thoughts while connected to chemotherapy. And the trilogy ends with Restart. The psychological effects of understanding life, death, light and darkness all while reacquainting back into a normal life. Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/showtimes-tickets/16668726/2026-03-20T19>

DJ SET FRIDAYS AT THE WHALER

101 Broadway CA. Special guest DJ Jack Schwartz & Friends spinning every Friday Night! Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/dj-set-fridays-at-the-whaler/17408732/2026-03-20T00>

SATURDAY | MARCH 21**SANTA MONICA FARMERS MARKET - VIRGINIA AVENUE PARK/PICO BOULEVARD**

8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Virginia Avenue Park 2200 Virginia Ave Santa Monica. The family market in the heart of the Pico neighborhood's Virginia Avenue Park! 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, delicious foods, live music and more. Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/santa-monica-farmers-market-virginia-avenue-park-pico-boulevard/12382447/2026-03-21T08>

DADTIME

9:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Virginia Avenue Park (fitness room inside the Park Center) 2200 Virginia Avenue Santa Monica. Every Saturday morning dads come together to let their young children (0-3) explore, socialize, and learn from uninterrupted play. StrongStart Facilitator on hand to answer questions. Free coffee, and the Pico Boulevard Farmer's Market is just outside! Provided FREE by Early Engagement & SMMUSD. Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/dadtime/17327106/2026-03-21T09>

UC MASTER GARDENERS AT PICO FARMERS MARKET

10:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Visit with the UC Master Gardeners at the Saturday Pico Farmers Market. The booth is filled with free advice on how to care for plants, how to troubleshoot a gardening problem, and much more. Free seeds and seedlings are available on a limited basis. Market attendance is subject to change based on weather and holiday. Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/uc-master-gardeners-at-pico-farmers-market/16518251/2026-03-21T10>

MPA WATCH COMMUNITY SCIENCE TRAINING

2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. Do you like science AND long walks on the beach? Then join Heal the Bay's community science program, MPA Watch! Volunteers will be trained on how to collect data while walking along the most beautiful beaches of Rancho Palos Verdes. Monitoring done by MPA Watchers helps encourage enforcement and regulation around marine protected areas (MPAs), also known as "underwater Yosemite." Become a volunteer by attending the two-part training program, which includes one virtual classroom training and one field training session. All training materials will be provided. Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/mpa-watch-community-science-training/15056490/2026-03-21T14>

SUNDAY | MARCH 22**SANTA MONICA FARMERS MARKET - SUNDAY MAIN STREET**

8:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. Main Street Farmers Market 2640 Main Street Santa Monica. The Sunday Main Street Farmers Market features some of California's freshest produce plus prepared foods from local Main Street restaurants as well as artisanal foods prepared with ingredients sourced from California farmers. Enjoy musical entertainment, prepared and pre-packaged foods, kids activities as well a local artisan crafts. Market is open Sundays from 8:30-1:30, year-round, rain or shine. Some closures due to holidays. Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/santa-monica-farmers-market-sunday-main-street/12382445/2026-03-22T08>

SANTA MONICA COLLEGE

Campus Events

20 26



Photo by Amy Williams

SPRING & SUMMER

Exciting events happening at SMC!

Santa Monica College has a lively lineup of events scheduled, so mark your calendar!

- Art Shows
- Dance Performances & Master Classes
- Intercollegiate Athletic Competitions
- Music Concerts
- Planetarium Shows
- *Santa Monica Review* Issue Launch Party
- Theatre Arts Performances
- And Much More!

Visit smc.edu/events for more information.



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