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smdp
Santa Monica Daily Press

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Santa Monica's cost of doing business is the highest in the region according to new study



Thomas Leffler

BUSINESS: Santa Monica scored poorly in all categories of the recent study comparing how expensive it is to do business in 216 municipalities.

MATTHEW HALL
Daily Press Editor

The cost of doing business in Santa Monica is exorbitantly high compared to other cities according to a new study published by Claremont McKenna College's Rose Institute of State and Local Government.

Out of 216 municipalities ranked in the study, Santa Monica was the most expensive city to conduct business in. Researchers compared locations over a wide swath of Southern California and several out of state cities that are considered top destinations for businesses who leave California.

The report ranked cities into five tiers for business costs, including taxes, fees, wages, and rents. Santa Monica fell into the worst tier in every category for a composite score of 5. Close behind was Culver City which earned a "5" in most categories but achieved a "4" for Minimum Wage. Pasadena, Malibu, Arcadia, Huntington Park, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Burbank and South Pasadena rounded out the top 10.

Bellevue, WA, was the first non-Californian city on the list coming in at 25 with a score of 4.14.

Boise, ID, took the top spot as least costly with a composite score of 1.43. The lowest cost in California was Fontana with a score of 1.83.

Researchers said they used publicly available sources to rank each category.

Business License Fee: The fee was calculated based on a business with $500,000 in gross receipts and 10 employees. Administrative fees and gross receipts taxes were included, but specific location fees like fire marshal charges were excluded. Data for 50 cities was unavailable due to application requirements.

Utility Tax: California data was sourced

SEE **EXPENSIVE** PAGE 7



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Unexpected revenues push SMMUSD into sizable surplus

THOMAS LEFFLER
SMDP Staff Writer

Unexpected revenue flows and budget-conscious thinking have combined to create a strong financial picture for the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District.

In a presentation of the district's 2023-24 unaudited actuals, the district was able to add $20,430,865 to the year's surplus, which now totals $26,281,548. The surplus, the largest in over a decade for SMMUSD pending audit, was added to the ending fund balance, now up to $56,609,464.

The ending fund balance will act as a reserve for expected deficit spending through the 2026-27 school year, and will also meet a state-required 3% reserve for economic uncertainties. The balance also accounts for a reserve for up to two months of general fund expenditures.

In the Board of Education presentation on Sept.. 11, the SMMUSD fiscal services team explained that the district uses "conservatively estimated revenue and allocated expenditures" during the budget reporting process, which creates some differences between estimated actuals presented in June and the unaudited actuals.

Out of the $20,430,865 added between June and September, $12,642,677 is added revenues while the rest is made up through unspent monies. The top revenue stream was $7,724,355 into the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), noted as coming via Redevelopment Agency funds (RDA).

> The Board (and district staff) do a great job of making sure we have budget all year long of all the positions we could ever want, and that's board-approved by the FTE and the budget that we adopt every year
> - Gerardo Cruz

RDA, district Director of Fiscal Services Gerardo Cruz stated, is a component of property tax that is more volatile in projections, and was originally pegged at $15 million for 2023-24. In December, the district increased the RDA projection to $18 million, but the actual funds came in at $24 million. Some of the LCFF increase was also attributed to Delinquent Property Tax funds, property taxes that come in late to the LA County Assessor's office, and thus come in late to the school district.

Revenues were added in a number of areas outside of LCFF, such as $354,341 from a state Home to School Transportation Reimbursement Grant coming from the Board of Education's approved transportation

SEE **SMMUSD** PAGE 11

Unrestricted General Fund Balance Historical Differences

June Estimated vs. August Actuals & Net Increase(Decrease)

Fiscal Year	Estimated vs. Unaudited Actuals	Net Increase(Decrease)
2011-12	1,575,461	(2,280,283)
2012-13	9,756,047	7,184,608
2013-14	2,671,242	(2,975,908)
2014-15	8,414,916	9,759,555
2015-16	4,019,832	1,074,929
2016-17	3,092,853	(5,691,926)
2017-18	5,701,386	7,968,107
2018-19	2,935,860	(3,585,531)
2019-20	7,537,933	(222,497)
2020-21	10,371,248	9,361,029
2021-22	6,872,603	13,078,889
2022-23	7,230,758	(11,894,736)
2023-24	20,430,866	26,281,549

Courtesy Graphic

BUDGET: The Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District surplus in 2023-24 is the largest in over a decade, according to an unaudited actuals report.



Menu

FOOD 10

Arancini alla mozzarella
Crispy rice balls, mozzarella, San Marzano tomato purée (vegetarian)

Arancini di carne e mozzarella
Crispy rice balls, mozzarella, beef ragout San Marzano tomato purée

Crostini con burrata
Toasted ciabatta bread, burrata, honey almonds (vegetarian)

Truffle fries
Truffle frice, grated Parmigiano, truffle zest (vegetarian)

Crocchette di pollo
Chicken croquettes, parmigiano

Bruschetta
The classic, tomatoes, basil and garlic (vegan)

Calamari fritti
The classic, Calabrian chili aioli

COCKTAIL 10

Spicy Margarita
House tequila, agave, organic lime

Old fashioned
House bourbon, maraschino cherry, organic sugar

Classic Martini
House vodka or gin, twist or olives

WINE 10

Pinot Grigio Valdadige, Veneto
Dry and crisp white wine

Chardonnay Maddalena, Monterey
Oaky and aromatic white wine

Chianti Classico, Clemente VII
Dry and medium body red wine

Cabernet Sauvignon Scotto, California
Aromatic and full body red wine

Classic Spritz

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GUEST COMMENTARY

Send comments to editor@smdp.com

Gavin Newsom can't prove price gouging at the pump but wants new refinery law



AP Photo/Ryan Sun

GAS: A sign at a Sinclair gas station is seen next to an Arco gas station advertising gasoline prices, Monday, June 10, 2024, in Long Beach, Calif..

DAN WALTERS

It's time to blow the whistle on the farcical efforts of California's politicians — especially Gov. Gavin Newsom — to reduce the state's high gasoline prices.

Newsom's demand that the Legislature, which adjourned for the year in early September, reconvene in a special session on gas prices continues his crusade against the oil industry, charging it with price gouging.

However Newsom has never offered any persuasive evidence of such behavior, nor has it been confirmed by those who have seriously examined the factors that cause California gas prices to be the highest, or nearly the highest, of any state.

Severin Borenstein, a UC Berkeley economist regarded as the state's leading expert on the issue, parsed the differential in a 2023 paper, pointing out that California's direct and indirect taxes on fuel amount to nearly $1 per gallon — 70 cents higher than the national average of such taxes — and the state's unique fuel blend to battle smog adds another dime.

Borenstein's calculations leave what he calls the "mystery gasoline surcharge" of about 43 cents a gallon that cannot be directly attributed to crude oil prices, California's taxes or other obvious factors. However, at least some of it reflects the relatively high costs of doing any kind of business in California — rents, electricity and other utilities, wages and regulatory overhead, for example.

Newsom's latest foray is a demand that the Legislature order refineries to put more fuel into storage, as a buffer against price spikes caused by refinery outages or other factors.

Superficially that sounds plausible, but it assumes that refiners have storage capacity to comply with such a law or could easily expand storage. But storage is not without its costs, which could drive retail prices even higher.

The state Energy Commission declared in a recent analysis that Newsom's proposal has the potential to "artificially create shortages in downstream markets" and "increase average prices."

The commission says "there may be a case for additional storage as a matter of maintaining supply resiliency for the next two decades, but such investments do pose a stranded assets risk. More analysis is needed to determine whether the benefits of enhanced supply resiliency are worth the investment in the near term."

Newsom wants the Legislature to act immediately without "more analysis," which is the antithesis of prudent lawmaking. Republican legislators are

SEE **PRICE** PAGE 8



Surf report

WATER TEMP: **64.4**

WEDNESDAY
POOR TO FAIR
SURF: Knee to thigh 1-2FT

Little more SW swell in the mix. NW windswell energy lingers. Favorable early morning winds and tide push.

THURSDAY
FAIR
SURF: Knee to thigh 1-2FT

Modest scale SW swell lingers. Morning winds look light and there's a nice tide push for the dawn patrol.

Weather

Wednesday: Sunny, with a high near 72. East northeast wind 5 to 10 mph becoming southwest in the afternoon.
Wednesday Night: A 20 percent chance of rain after 11pm. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 58.
Thursday: A 40 percent chance of rain. Partly sunny, with a high near 65.
Thursday Night: Patchy fog after 11pm. Otherwise, mostly cloudy, with a low around 58.

Date	Day	Time (LST/LDT)	Predicted (ft)	High/Low
2024/09/18	Wed	03:53 AM	-0.26	L
2024/09/18	Wed	10:03 AM	5.84	H
2024/09/18	Wed	4:08 PM	0.27	L
2024/09/18	Wed	10:15 PM	5.89	H
2024/09/19	Thu	04:25 AM	0.21	L
2024/09/19	Thu	10:36 AM	6.15	H
2024/09/19	Thu	4:59 PM	0.01	L
2024/09/19	Thu	11:06 PM	5.25	H
2024/09/20	Fri	04:58 AM	0.82	L
2024/09/20	Fri	11:12 AM	6.29	H
2024/09/20	Fri	5:54 PM	-0.06	L
2024/09/21	Sat	12:04 AM	4.51	H
2024/09/21	Sat	05:30 AM	1.50	L
2024/09/21	Sat	11:52 AM	6.23	H
2024/09/21	Sat	6:55 PM	0.07	L
2024/09/22	Sun	01:14 AM	3.79	H
2024/09/22	Sun	06:04 AM	2.17	L
2024/09/22	Sun	12:37 PM	5.97	H

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: 9/16
8 9 11 27 31
Power#: 17
Jackpot: 176 M

MEGA MILLIONS
Draw Date: 9/13
21 55 56 57 66
Mega#: 1
Jackpot: 31 M

SuperLotto Plus
Draw Date: 9/14
8 13 28 30 47
Mega#: 2
Jackpot: 23 M

Fantasy 5
Draw Date: 9/16
2 14 20 21 25

Daily 3
Draw Date: 9/16
EVENING: 0 6 0
Draw Date: 9/16
MIDDAY: 5 7 7

Daily Derby
Draw Date: 9/16
1st: 12 - Lucky Charms
2nd: 10 - Solid Gold
3rd: 11 - Money Bags
Race Time: 1:46.73

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Santa Monica Daily Press

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GUEST COMMENTARY

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There are prison rehabilitation success stories across California. Prop. 36 puts future ones at risk



Photo by Jules Hotz for CalMatters

PRISON: Representatives from different organizations chat with inmates during the California Institution for Women (CIW) Reentry Fair on Feb. 15, 2024. The CIW Reentry Fair aims to make reentry resources, employment, education, and social services more accessible for an easier transition after leaving incarceration.

FELIX VALDEZ

In November, California voters will decide whether to reclassify certain theft and drug penalties and unwind a 2014 criminal justice reform, Proposition 47. Below, a formerly incarcerated Californian worries that the type of rehabilitation programs that changed his life will be lost will be lost if resources are spent filling prisons. The opposing view: A formerly homeless man believes Proposition 36 will create both accountability and compassion to address the fentanyl crisis.

In March 2022, at the age of 34, I was paroled after spending 13 years behind bars.

The crime that put me in prison was a serious one. As a young man, I ran with gangs and was involved with drugs. I participated in activities that today I am not proud of. I make no excuses for my actions, and I realize that, having at one point faced the possibility of a life without parole, I am extremely lucky to have been given a second chance.

Like many other inmates, prison changed me. I focused on educating myself, and ultimately graduated from a community college program with an associate's degree in general business studies.

For obvious reasons, I had a sparse resume when I exited prison. Despite my education and despite spending several seasons on inmate firefighting teams — which helped me qualify for early parole — I was hardly an employer's dream candidate.

That's where Project Impact kicked in.

Funded by savings from Proposition 47, a 2014 criminal justice reform measure which has saved nearly $1 billion since voters approved it, Project Impact is one of dozens of programs created across California that perform vital work with recently released prisoners. By partnering with organizations on the ground with the closest ties to the community, Project Impact helps break the cycle of release-and-recidivism and makes it far more likely that people such as myself can permanently stay out of prison and contribute to our communities.

Tragically, these programs are at risk, with their funding stream vulnerable to shifting political winds. If in November voters pass Proposition 36 , the Prop. 47 era of diverting low-level offenders either into jail instead of prison, or into alternatives, will be replaced by another go-around with mass incarceration.

That will ultimately cost California billions of dollars — incarcerating

SEE **REHABILITATION** PAGE 8

GUEST COMMENTARY

Send comments to editor@smdp.com

California needs Prop. 36 to help bring accountability to the fentanyl crisis

TOM WOLF

In November, California voters will decide whether to reclassify certain theft and drug penalties and unwind a 2014 criminal justice reform, Proposition 47. Below, a formerly homeless man believes Proposition 36 will create both accountability and compassion to address the fentanyl crisis. The opposing view: A formerly incarcerated Californian worries that the type of rehabilitation programs that changed his life will be lost if resources are spent filling prisons.

Proposition 36 qualified for the November ballot in California with over 900,000 signatures.

Simply put, this ballot initiative will reform aspects of Proposition 47 that in 2014 reclassified several "quality of life" crimes as misdemeanors instead of felonies. The most obvious was shoplifting — where the threshold for misdemeanor theft was raised to $950 per offense — and drug possession.

The impact of these changes was meant to reduce incarceration rates and create a more equitable response toward people of color who have been historically overrepresented in jails and prisons.

Did these changes work? If you look at the data, the answer is not only no but shoplifting of less than $950 increased 28% over the past five years. Did these changes work regarding drug possession? While arrests weren't necessarily down, referrals to diversion programs were up. In 2021, 55% of people released into diversion programs in San Francisco re-offended, according to the California Policy Lab, a University of California research institute.

While this experiment was happening, something else happened: Fentanyl started showing up in our communities. It replaced heroin on the streets and began an unabated overdose and poisoning crisis that helped contribute to roughly 11,000 deaths in California two years ago and 107,000 overdose deaths in the U.S. last year.

In cities like San Francisco the drug crisis has exploded, with an estimated 8,300 people are homeless and 51% experiencing drug or alcohol addiction. Overall, in 2023, California saw one of most rapid surges in drug deaths in the country.

In one 12-month period, San Francisco police seized over 80 kilos of fentanyl in just one neighborhood. Mind you, that's the amount seized, not the amount that's out there. Since Prop. 47 reclassified certain drug possession offenses, organized drug dealers arrested with small amounts of drugs avoided stiffer penalties. Instead, they can be charged with misdemeanor drug possession and could have been released or referred to a diversion program which, as data shows, often results in another crime.

This has led to an explosion of drug dealers on the street. For every dealer arrested, a new one will replace them. But since the ones who get arrested often end up back on the street, you now have two dealers where you only had one.

Like cancer cells, they divide and multiply.

For me, the big reason we need Prop. 36 is the fentanyl crisis. I'm a formerly homeless heroin and fentanyl addict in recovery. I experienced homelessness on the streets of San Francisco in 2018 and witnessed firsthand the arrival of fentanyl and its impact.

Fifteen people I once knew are now dead from drug overdose. Yet, when

SEE **FENTANYL** PAGE 6

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FENTANYL

FROM PAGE 5

I walk the streets of San Francisco today, I still recognize drug dealers I knew six years ago. Have they been arrested numerous times? Yes. But, due to Prop. 47 and potential diversion and plea deals, they are still there. Despite multiple convictions for dealing drugs, they have no remorse, no regrets and people continue to die at alarming rates.

Prop. 36 will restore accountability. It will not only hold fentanyl dealers accountable, but it will also give them an admonishment or a warning upon conviction that if they continue to sell fentanyl and someone dies of an overdose or poisoning, they can be charged with murder. This is called "Alexandra's Law" which is embedded in Prop. 36 and named after Alexandra Capeluto who tragically died of drug poisoning after taking what she thought was an Oxycodone pill but was fentanyl.

The dealer knew it, didn't tell her what was in it and, now, she is no longer with us.

Many Californians don't realize this, but the street drug markets have changed. Dealers with foreign supply chains are no longer viewed as exploitative, and the overdose deaths and poisonings tied to their product are basically met with "thoughts and prayers" by Sacramento lawmakers — instead of substantive actions that help level the playing field between accountability and compassion.

This is possible, too. If you are a drug user on the street and you are stealing to support your addiction, you should be held accountable for theft. But, because you are addicted to drugs, you should be able to avoid prison or a lengthy jail sentence by accepting an opportunity to receive treatment. If you complete treatment, your record will be expunged and charges dropped. That is literally the definition of restorative justice.

Take it from me as someone who was offered a choice very similar to this: most will choose treatment and a pathway off the street. It's what most of us who are or were homeless and addicted really want.

Prop. 36 offers real off-ramps for people struggling with addiction who become justice involved. That offramp is recovery. Under Prop. 47, too often, the offramp is a straight line back to the street.

It doesn't have to be one or the other as critics try to frighten you into believing, there is a third alternative, and that alternative is treatment. Let's give people a chance because I needed that chance once.

Under the Prop. 47 criminal justice system, it took six arrests — yes, six — before I was held in jail for three months, which was long enough to detox and start making better decisions. That was the beginning of my road to recovery. Prop. 36 would make it three arrests for similar charges.

If Prop. 36 was in place six years ago, that could've meant less time for me on the street, less time addicted to drugs and less time away from my family. Is it hard? Absolutely. But misusing drugs and having to steal every day to support your addiction is harder.

Are treatment and recovery worth it? Ask my wife and children who have their husband and father back. Accountability and compassion together saved my life. We can have both.



Photo by Marcio Jose Sanchez, AP Photo

DRUGS: Officials walk past images of illegal drugs outside the Edward R. Roybal Federal Building, Thursday, May 13, 2021, in Los Angeles. Federal authorities say they have arrested at least 10 suspected drug dealers accused of selling fentanyl and other opioids that led to overdose deaths.

Tom Wolf is the director of West Coast initiatives for the Foundation for Drug Policy Solutions and founder of the Pacific Alliance for Prevention and Recovery. This article was originally published by CalMatters.

Eric Uller sexually abused hundreds of children over almost 30 years while masquerading as a police officer at Santa Monica PAL.



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EXPENSIVE

FROM PAGE 1

from a 2021-22 state report, while non-California data came from city websites. Utility taxes cover electric, gas, and telecommunications, excluding special tax districts.

Sales Tax: Local sales tax rates as of April 2024 were sourced from state tax authorities and local research for non-California cities.

Minimum Wage: The survey calculated minimum wages for all cities as of January 1, 2024, with local adjustments above federal levels. Data was sourced from the Economic Policy Institute and UC Berkeley.

Average Commercial Rent: Office rent data for 145 cities was sourced from Commercial Cafe, based on properties over 25,000 square feet and spanning January to December 2023.

Crime Index: Crime data for 210 cities was sourced from Neighborhood Scout and includes seven crime categories. The data reflects 2022 crime rates.

Housing Affordability Index (HAI): The HAI quantifies a resident's ability to afford a home based on income and local housing costs. Data from ESRI's 2022 report provided city-level HAI scores.

"Our analysis indicates that cities in Los Angeles County are collectively more expensive places to do business than cities in other parts of the region and also more expensive than the top destination cities in other states," said the report.

The authors said there are still good reasons to do business in Southern California but that high costs are a reason for relocation.

"The Kosmont-Rose Institute 2024 Cost of Doing Business Survey confirms the widespread belief that Southern California—and especially cities in Los Angeles County—face serious competitive challenges," said the report. "In these places, basic costs are greater than in many cities in other western states where California businesses have been most likely to move. A number of countervailing factors help make Los Angeles County and other parts of Southern California attractive places for businesses to operate. But the high costs documented in this Survey place considerable stress on businesses in the region and understandably cause many to consider relocation."

Santa Monica has long had a reputation as a difficult place to do business. Councilmembers and candidates for office have frequently mentioned the need to streamline the City's permitting process.

The city recently approved a $3.8 million, five-year contract with Speridian Technologies to adopt the Clariti permitting system. This online platform aims to simplify the building permit process for businesses, home renovators, and property owners. Implementation will take more than a year, with the goal of easing the burden on both applicants and city staff.

The City will also be asking voters in November to revise the business license system in Santa Monica.

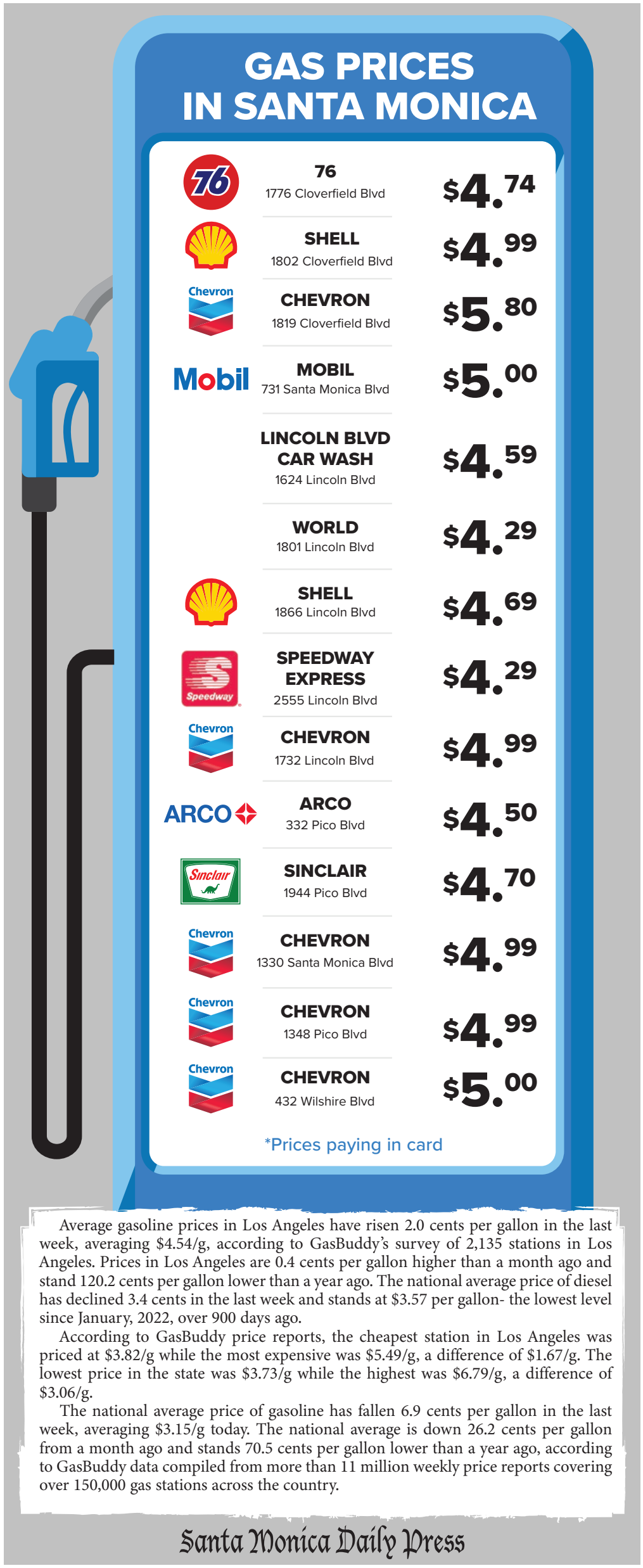
Measure F, if approved by voters, would impact small businesses, retailers, restaurants, auto dealers, corporate headquarters, and small property owners in Santa Monica. The gross revenue exemption for the business license tax would rise from $40,000 to $100,000. Businesses earning less than $5 million in annual gross receipts would see a tax rate reduction. Those renting out three or fewer residential units would pay a lower tax rate. Tax burdens for businesses in their first year of operation would be reduced. Late tax penalties would be capped at 50%, down from 100%. The $25,000 tax cap for auto dealers would be eliminated. Their tax rate would double from $1.25 to $2.50 per $1,000 of operational costs. A $40 fee would be reinstated, with the possibility of increasing it to $100.

In a statement, Communications and Public Information Manager Lauren G. Howland said Santa Monica's taxes, commercial rents and business fees are in line with similar cities.

"Businesses, investors and consumers continue to choose Santa Monica because of the city's universal appeal and community values, such as ensuring a living wage for local workers, prioritizing sustainability, and supporting innovation and entrepreneurship," she said. "In addition, public safety is a key priority for Santa Monica. The city has dedicated increased resources toward enhancing public safety, including expanding our police force, using new technology to combat crime, and implementing proactive strategies and best practices to support our 90,000 residents and the thousands of visitors and employees who contribute to Santa Monica's local economy every day."

The Rose Institute of State and Local Government, founded in 1973 at Claremont McKenna College, describes itself as a premier resource on California's government, focusing on demographic, economic, and political data, especially in Southern California. It specializes in survey research, fiscal analysis, demographic studies, and legal and regulatory analysis.

editor@smdp.com



Average gasoline prices in Los Angeles have risen 2.0 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging $4.54/g, according to GasBuddy's survey of 2,135 stations in Los Angeles. Prices in Los Angeles are 0.4 cents per gallon higher than a month ago and stand 120.2 cents per gallon lower than a year ago. The national average price of diesel has declined 3.4 cents in the last week and stands at $3.57 per gallon- the lowest level since January, 2022, over 900 days ago.

According to GasBuddy price reports, the cheapest station in Los Angeles was priced at $3.82/g while the most expensive was $5.49/g, a difference of $1.67/g. The lowest price in the state was $3.73/g while the highest was $6.79/g, a difference of $3.06/g.

The national average price of gasoline has fallen 6.9 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging $3.15/g today. The national average is down 26.2 cents per gallon from a month ago and stands 70.5 cents per gallon lower 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

City of Santa Monica

CITY OF SANTA MONICA
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the City of Santa Monica invites sealed proposals for

- **RFP #412 LEAD PROGRAM MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK CONSULTATION SERVICES**
- **Submission Deadline Is September 30, 2024 at 3:00 PM Pacific Time.**

Proposals must include forms furnished by the City of Santa Monica. Request for Proposals may be obtained on the **CITY'S ONLINE VENDOR PORTAL.** The website for this Request for Proposals and related documents is OpenGov (https://secure.procurenow.com/portal/santa-monica-ca). There is no charge for the RFP package.

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PRICE

FROM PAGE 3

being semi-complicit by agreeing with Newsom that there is a gasoline price crisis. But they imprudently propose to lower or eliminate gas taxes, which are vital to the restoration of California's much-neglected highway system.

California refineries not only supply the state with a unique formula of fuel designed to battle smog, which is expensive unto itself, but they provide large shares of fuel consumed in Nevada and Arizona. Those governors sent Newsom a letter citing the Energy Commission analysis of potential cost effects.

"This conclusion alone is deeply troubling and warrants bipartisan, regional communication on this legislation before proceeding," wrote Katie Hobbs, an Arizona Democrat, and Republican Joe Lombardo of Nevada.

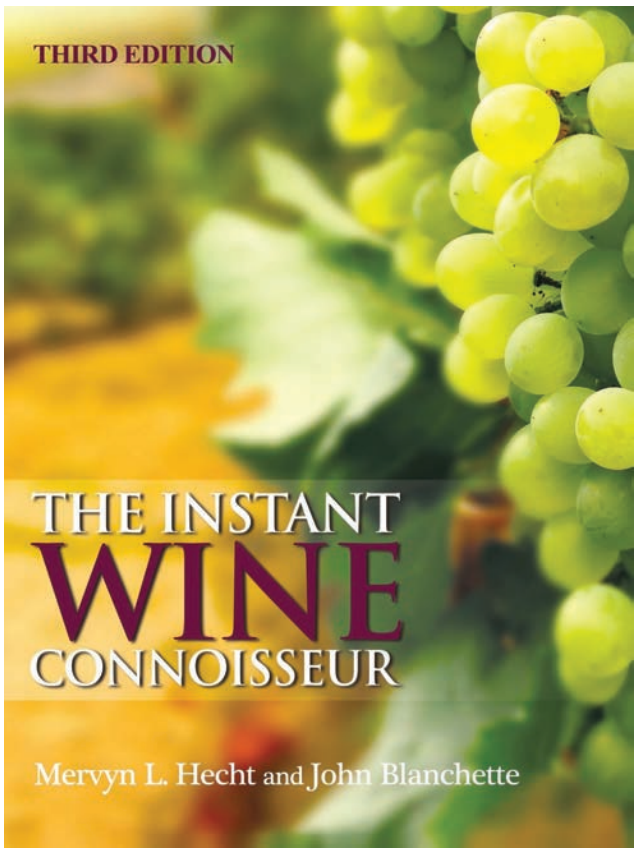
There is no gas price crisis that demands immediate action. A far more serious issue is whether California can manage its conversion of transportation and other economic sectors from carbon fuels to electricity without major economic disruptions. The state wants its dwindling number of refineries to stop producing gasoline and diesel fuel over the next two decades.

Moreover, there are genuine crises that Newsom and legislators have been unwilling or unable to resolve, such as California children's abysmally low scores on tests of reading and mathematics skills, an ever-rising number of homeless people, the nation's highest level of poverty and the state's uncertain water supply.

> "This conclusion alone is deeply troubling and warrants bipartisan, regional communication on this legislation before proceeding"
>
> - Katie Hobbs

This article was originally published by CalMatters.

★★★★★ A light-hearted fun read.
★★★★★ Well written, particularly useful, instantly accessible.
★★★★★ ...Hecht has a joyful eye and fabulous taste



Daily Press Food &Wine Columnist Merv Hecht takes you on an delightful tour of the world of wine. A fun way to increase your appreciation and knowledge of wine.

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REHABILITATION

FROM PAGE 4

someone costs California taxpayers more than $132,000 annually — at a time when the state is already burdened by huge budget deficits. It will also significantly curtail the pool of funds available for the types of programs that changed my life and help so many others.

That would be counterproductive.

In my case, I had heard about a Los Angeles County organization called El Proyecto while I was still on the inside. When I was released, I found the office, walked in and asked for help. They had psychologists on call to help ex-inmates adjust to life on the outside. They had resources to link clients up with educational opportunities. Since my parents were willing to house me, I didn't need help with housing accommodations — but if I did, the organization would have stepped in to assist.

I had a goal: I wanted to drive trucks. And what I needed was a leg-up in my efforts to get a commercial drivers license. El Proyecto provided $5,000 for me to go to school to get my license. It was a life-changing action, and one that I will never forget.

While I was going to school, however, I also needed employment. And, again, the organization was there for me, helping me to apply for a job in the Monster Energy drink factory. I worked there for a while before utilizing my background as an inmate firefighter to get a job with Cal Fire.

Additionally, El Proyecto also has an amazing legal team that worked pro bono to expunge my record so I could fully move forward in my life, without the web of legal restrictions that come with having an old conviction record permanently hanging over my head.

To this day, the program's director still follows up with me just to make sure I'm doing OK. Without this kind of support, I wouldn't have made it. The same is true for the thousands of others who come out of prisons in this state every year. Far too many don't get that kind of help.

These days, my life is heading in the right direction. I live in the Central Valley and used my newfound commercial driver qualifications to get a job with Caltrans.

You might consider me a success story: I took responsibility for my actions as a young man and I remade myself as a worker, a taxpayer, a productive member of society. That's good for me, but it's also good for the broader community.

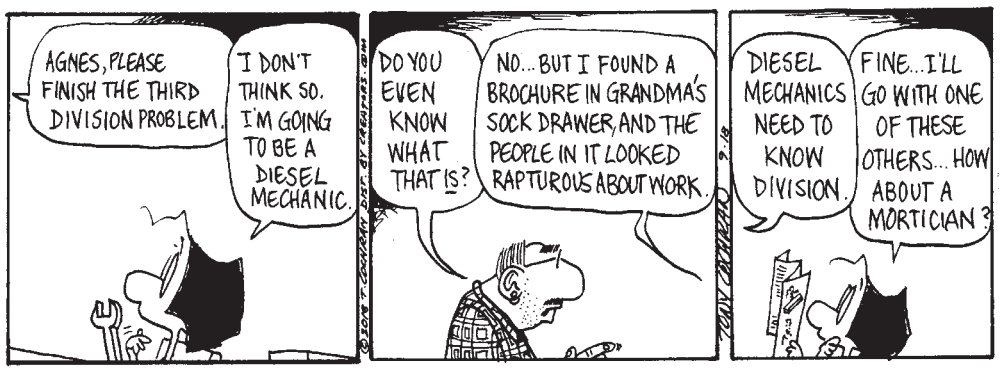
Around California, thousands of men and women have been helped by Prop. 47-funded programs in remaking their lives. State data shows these programs are successfully reducing recidivism by more than twice the rate reported by the California Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections. They also help reduce unemployment and homelessness.

Instead of shuttering these programs and putting their funding at risk through Prop. 36, the state ought to be doing everything it can to assist people on their journeys to remake their lives. That's how we'll achieve the safety we all deserve.

Felix Valdez is an equipment operator for Caltrans. This article was originally published by CalMatters.

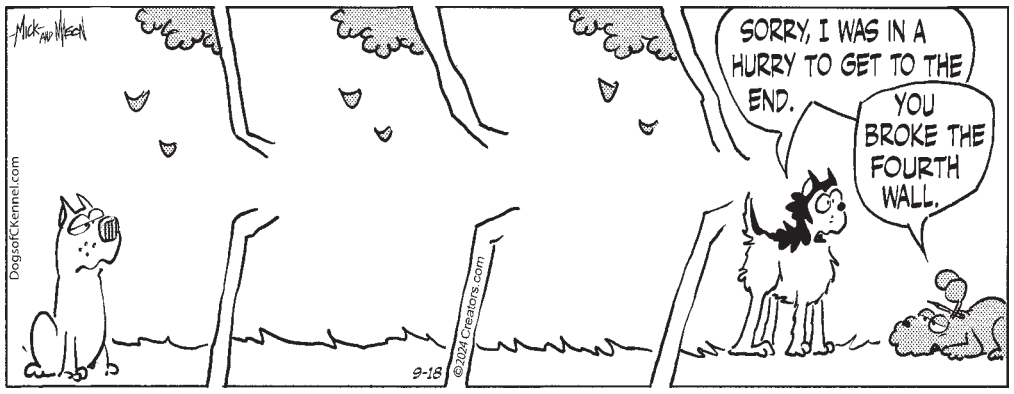
Agnes

By TONY COCHRAN



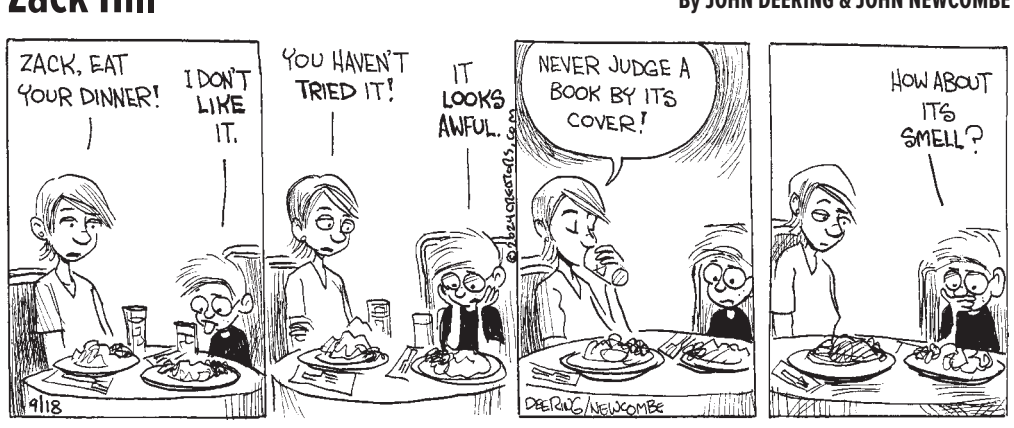
Dogs of C-Kennel

By MICK & MASON MASTROIANNI & JOHNNY HART



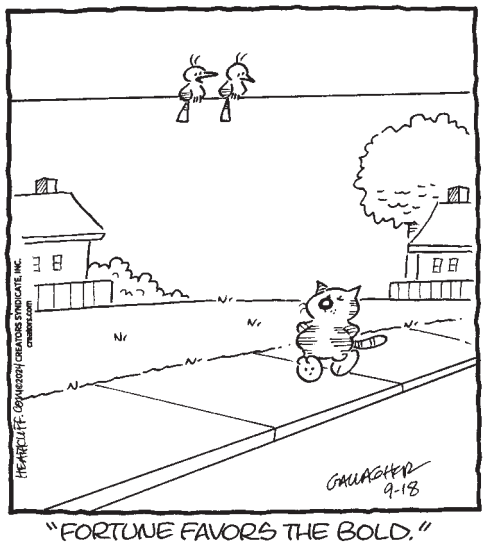
Zack Hill

By JOHN DEERING & JOHN NEWCOMBE



Heathcliff

By PETER GALLAGHER



"FORTUNE FAVORS THE BOLD."

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

© australianwordgames.com.au 6337

Literary community

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

Adams
Amis
Anh Do
Antagonist
Astley
Base
Byatt
Carey
Check
Crime
Dawe
Drama
Editor
Grisham
Hazzard
Hero
Hines
Involving
Johns
Kent
Lette
Lurie
Marr
Modjeska
Moorhouse
Morgan
Moss
Nunn
Pages
Park
Plot
Reilly
Rodda
Rowe
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Slow
Stendhal
Tale
Thiele
Tolstoy
White
Wood
Wright

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TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (Sept. 18)

The hand of destiny guides you to the most auspicious path, and you'll finally either gain the position you've been working toward or accept one that was unknown to you, though a vast improvement, nonetheless. More highlights: Help with admin and adulting so you can have more fun, a conflict resolved, and several small plans converging into a huge deal. Gemini and Capricorn adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 2, 24, 3, 14 and 6.

HOROSCOPES

ARIES (March 21-April 19). The question of when to stop is bound to arise. "Quit while you're ahead" is the saying, but how far ahead? If you pull back too soon, you'll never discover the true limits of what's possible.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). You have many ways of keeping the kingdom of your own mind in a beautiful balance. However, you could still use a few more tools and strategies to keep trouble out and a lovely peace within. You'll pick one up today.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). You're preparing for something important, and mindset will make the event a winner. The right ritual will help you get into the spirit of this. Take an experimental approach to find what works best for you.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Change in any direction because they all go to the same place today. You're like the water of your sign. Water always finds the way. Whether you fall soft as rain or crash like a mighty wave, you'll eventually be at the sea.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). When you're displeased with what you get, you usually adjust what you give. Today, you're not so sure. It seems like the unpreferred result is a fluke. If you don't change a thing except in the timing it takes to try again, things improve.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Broaden your scope and stay aware of a wider array of options because it's the ideas on the outer edge that have the potential to really delight you. You'll be offered something unique and you'll be in just the position to run with it.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). The road that feels right for you will actually be right. Unfortunately, it won't be the shortcut. That easy road would get you to the destination, but without the requisite skills to be as effective as you want to be upon arrival.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). It seems like it should be easy to get to know people, but it's a little trickier than it seems sometimes and requires curiosity, awareness and the ability to retain and correlate the information you glean. Today, it's a bit of a project, really.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). As much as you try to make sense of contradictions and inconsistencies, it's not always possible. To accept the disparate pieces of reality without attempting to close the gaps will bring deep peace.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). The invitation seems casual enough, but it holds the key to a transformative opportunity. This is the gateway to a new and significant chapter. With a little preparation, you'll enter with grace and intention.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). A dream can never be fully finished, as it keeps dreaming itself into the unreachable horizon. If you're satisfied and want to flit like a butterfly to the next dream, it will be waiting for you like an open blossom.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). It's not the win or the loss that makes a champion; it's the heart you put into the game. Today's plays will include pushing forward as a team, regrouping to fortify one another and taking a few crucial shots, too.

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

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

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

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

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

Newsday Crossword

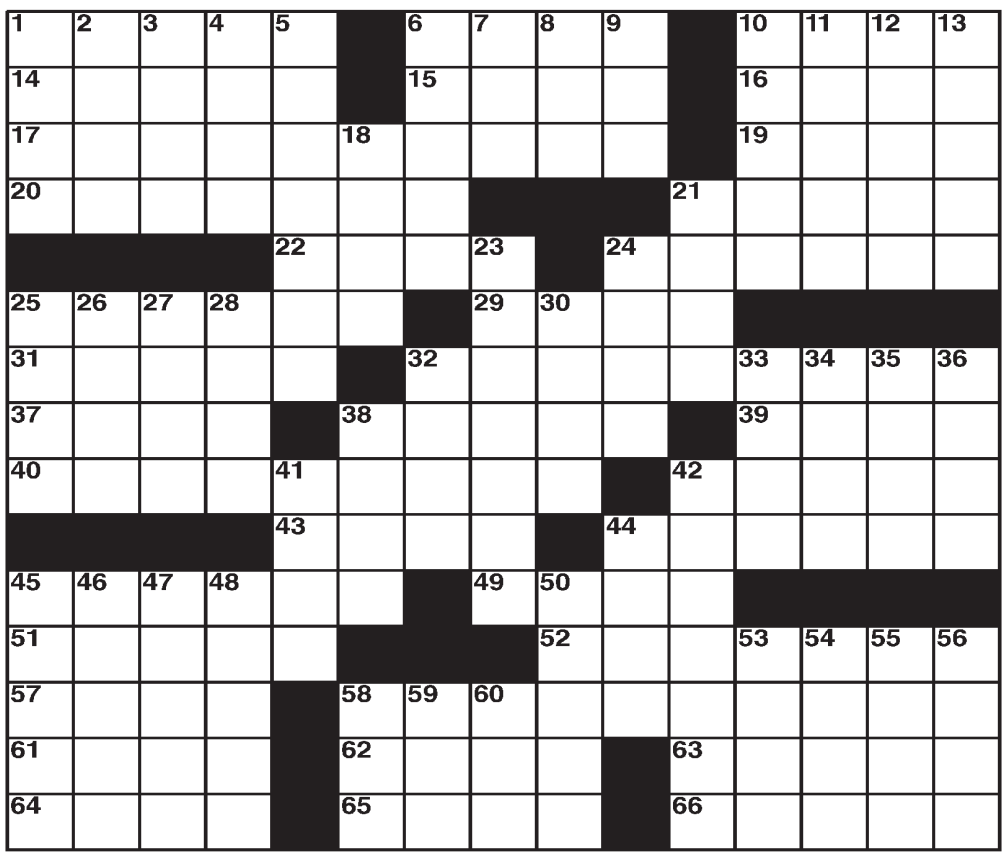
ALLOY OOP by Fred Piscop
Edited by Stanley Newman
www.stanxwords.com

ACROSS

1 Brown stocking shade
6 Rip (up)
10 Rosemary or basil
14 Actress Ashley or Mary-Kate
15 Deserve to receive
16 Locket shape
17 Calypso band instruments
19 Karaoke singer's device
20 More regretful
21 Airborne toys
22 Serb or Bulgarian
24 Works with bread dough
25 Search for successfully
29 "OK, got it"
31 Fan clubs follow them
32 Type of beer tankard
37 Burrowing mammal
38 Backyard cookout spot
39 Flow in slowly
40 Carousel rider's prize
42 *The Thinker* sculptor
43 Joyful circle dance
44 Can't stand
45 Scheduled (for)
49 Motel room cleaner
51 Removed, as rind
52 Fundamentally
57 Start the bidding
58 Medal for valor
61 City near Tahoe
62 Trucker's haul
63 Make amends
64 Energetic flair
65 Little kid
66 *Inferno* writer

DOWN

1 Soft throw
2 Female voice range
3 App acquirer
4 Gaze (at)
5 Persuades to volunteer
6 __ firma
7 French water
8 Part of a sofa
9 MDs' coworkers
10 Pal from the 'hood
11 Musical about the Peróns
12 Gathered fallen leaves
13 Wish well
18 Proofreader's "remove"
21 Joint above a shin
23 Laos neighbor
24 Trendy low-carb diet
25 Birch branch
26 Nasal appraisal
27 Fast-food beverage
28 Brewery products
30 Gulp from a flask
32 Two-card poker hand
33 Cheer (for)
34 Airplane __ (cellphone setting)
35 Action film weapons
36 Courteous fellow
38 Urge to act
41 Drop fur
42 Carrot-top
44 Ninny
45 Bit of pollen
46 Place for a flag pin
47 Horse show venue
48 Carpentry joint part
50 *Hoarders* network
53 This: Sp.
54 Like __ of bricks
55 Angry tirade
56 Ancestry diagram
58 Crunchy sandwich, for short
59 __ G BIV (spectrum mnemonic)
60 Acorn producer



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09/18/24

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

SMMUSD

FROM PAGE 2

plan in April 2023. A total of $945,748 came in from the Measure R parcel tax on property owners, specifically from the transfer of properties between senior owners exempt from the tax and younger individuals not exempt.

"The County Controller's office is required to collect the parcel tax on that new owner … that's why we've seen a significant increase in Measure R, because properties transferred hands to people who are no longer eligible to receive the exemption," Cruz explained to the board.

Unspent monies accounted for the rest of the revised budget, including $1,458,113 in unspent supplies, textbooks and technology, which was attributed to the new Proposition 28 (Arts and Music in Schools Funding) aiding in the supplies for arts, music and instructional materials. The district also saved $7,800,447 in unspent salaries and statutory benefits, which Cruz stressed was not "decreasing positions" or "removing positions."

"The Board (and district staff) do a great job of making sure we have budget all year long of all the positions we could ever want, and that's board-approved by the FTE and the budget that we adopt every year," Cruz said. "What ends up happening is that vacancies occur or positions don't end up being filled, so we hold that budget all year long in the event that position ends up being filled. You see that number trickle down at each of (the) interims … when we have this number here, it's simply saying that amount of money was budget for the board and staff to have on staffing, but it ended up not coming to fruition."

Other unspent operating costs in categories like legal, travel, consultants and utilities, totaled $4,241,766, something Board Vice President Jon Kean said is a "reflection of the district and the board operating in more effective manners" that can be replicated in future years. Up next for the 2023-24 numbers is an audit the week of Sept. 23, with a final audit report recommendation for board approval coming in December.

The board will return with a regularly-scheduled meeting on Thursday, set to approve two assistant principal appointments, one for Franklin Elementary School, and one that will split time between Edison Language Academy and McKinley Elementary School.

thomas@smdp.com

Santa Monica Daily Press

Classifieds

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GET IT DAILY...



WEDNESDAY | SEPTEMBER 18

KIDS' UKULELE STRUM ALONG CLASS
4 - 5 p.m. Front Lawn, Ocean Park Branch Library, 2601 Main St. Instructors Heidi Swedberg and Daniel Ward introduce young music lovers to the most social, fun and welcoming of all instruments. Bring your own ukulele or borrow one from the library (limited number; first come, first served). For ages 7-11.

FREE WALK-IN LEGAL CLINIC
4:30 - 7 p.m. Park Center Building, Virginia Avenue Park, 2200 Virginia Ave. Santa Monica residents can meet one on one with a lawyer from Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles for help with housing issues. Immediate assistance is available by calling LAFLA directly at 800-399-4529 or visit lafla.org/gethelp.

PLANNING COMMISSION
6 p.m. City Council Chambers, Santa Monica City Hall, 1685 Main St. Established in 1946, the Planning Commission envisions Santa Monica as a city of wellbeing, sustainability, and equity, and seeks to balance the many needs and priorities within our community in accordance with the City's General Plan and Specific Plans. The Commission acts through open and civil discourse that is informed by public input, impartial analysis, and best practices in land use and planning.

COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE HAPPY HOUR
6 - 8 p.m. Viceroy Santa Monica, 1819 Ocean Ave. An exclusive networking event designed for innovators, community leaders and trailblazers. Come and connect with a lively crowd, enjoy great conversations, and make new connections. Free event.

LITERARY LOUNGE
6:30 - 7:30 p.m. Central Courtyard, Santa Monica Main Library, 601 Santa Monica Blvd. Discover the joy of social reading at the Literary Lounge; a space for bibliophiles to bond over books, with music and literary inspired mocktails. Bring your own book or choose one from a collection of staff favorites.

THURSDAY | SEPTEMBER 19

RETAIL/HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE MEETING
8 - 9 a.m. Virtual. The Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce members-only Retail and Hospitality Committee meeting encourages businesses to join and discuss any issues, policy changes, or other proposals that may be effecting your industry currently or in the future. To register, visit: https://santamonicachamber.chambermaster.com/eventregistration/register/23198.

TECH & TASKS
2 - 4 p.m. Tutoring Center, Santa Monica Main Library, 601 Santa Monica Blvd. Volunteer tutors provide help with reading documents or written tasks, using mobile devices, navigating government websites, filling out forms, using email, writing resumes and more.

LEGO CLUB
4 - 5 p.m. Youth Activity Room, Santa Monica Main Library, 601 Santa Monica Blvd. Explore the limits of your building imagination or try out one of our suggested builds. All materials provided. For ages 18 months - 11 years old.

LAND USE, DEVELOPMENT AND MOBILITY COMMITTEE
4 - 5 p.m. 2800 28th St., Suite 170. Focuses on issues influencing the operation of businesses in Santa Monica including permitting, zoning, parking and access. To register, visit: https://santamonicachamber.chambermaster.com/eventregistration/register/24083.

THIRD THURSDAYS AT THIRD STREET
5 - 8 p.m. Third Street Promenade. A free block party with live music, interactive art, outdoor dining and community booths. Music performances from DJ Asha, No False Ego and Good Cop Bad Cop. Community booths include free face painting and caricature artists, as well as voting registration city staff.

MONTANA AVENUE BRANCH BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP
6 - 7 p.m. Montana Branch Library, 1704 Montana Ave. This community-led, monthly book discussion group currently meets in person. This month's title is "The March" by E.L. Doctorow.

RECREATION AND PARKS COMMISSION
6 - 8 p.m. City Council Chambers, Santa Monica City Hall, 1685 Main St. The Commission shall act in an advisory capacity to the City Council and Director of Community Services in all matters pertaining to public recreation including playgrounds, music and entertainment. The Commission will consider the budget of the Community and Cultural Services Department and make recommendations to the City Manager and the City Council. The Commission will also assist in the planning and promotion of a recreation program for residents and solicit the cooperation of school authorities and other public and private agencies.

AUTHOR EVENT WITH ED BURNS
6 - 7 p.m. Zibby's Bookshop, 1113 Montana Ave. Zibby's Bookshop is thrilled to host Ed Burns to celebrate the release of "A Kid From Marlboro Road." Ed will be joined by author and Zibby's Bookshop founder Libby Owens. Lodestar Whiskey will also be on hand to bring specialty cocktails to the event. Includes discussion, Q&A and book signing. Tickets $18-$49, to purchase visit: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/author-event-ed-burns-x-zibby-owens-tickets-980383693017.

FRIDAY | SEPTEMBER 20

OPEN HOUSE AND RESOURCE FAIR
4 - 6 p.m. Virginia Avenue Park, 2200 Virginia Ave. Virginia Avenue Park presents the free Virginia Avenue Park Open House and Resource Fair. Participants are invited to connect with a wide array of local services providers, many of whom offer free programs at the park. Learn about their offerings including senior services, financial services, mental health services, music education, hospitality employment training and other services. In addition, Seeds of Hope Free Produce Market will provide free produce to all attendees while supplies last. Whole Foods will be providing refreshments.

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