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SAN DIEGO'S 2025 TOP ATTORNEYS



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Thomas Crosbie



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Ronson J. Shamoun



Alex Brizolis



Elizabeth Sperling



Emil Petrossian



Joseph Leventhal



Jamie Altman Buggy



Fernando Landa



Cheryl Brechlin



Matthew E Cannon



Liza Perkins-Cohen



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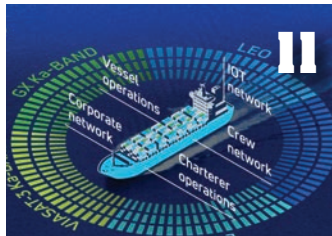
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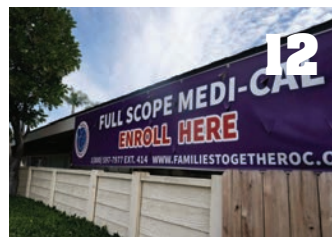
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COVER STORY: San Diego's Top Attorneys:
William Eigner, Frederick Schenk and the calvary of San Diego's Top Attorneys.



DATA AT SEA
Viasat's Real-world tests of NexusWave confirms power of bonded connectivity for ships at sea

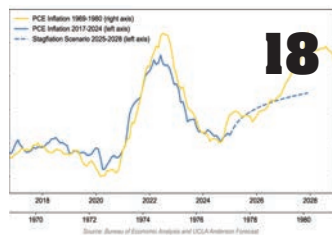


MED-CAL STRAINS AS STATE EXTENDS AID TO ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS:
The state thought it would cost \$2 billion to \$4 billion to fund the health insurance program. Now it's looking closer to \$9.5 billion.



AMERICA'S TORTURED SOUL BUT THRIVING TECH INDUSTRY

A passionate lament by two of the industry's key executives over tech's failures and society's quagmires.



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New California Bill Would Strengthen Property Owners Rights Against Squatters

By Evan Symon | California Globe

For years, California has held some of the most friendly squatter rights in the country. The vast majority of states require tenants to live in properties for at least 10 years and pay taxes on them to have some sort of claim on them, with Texas and New Jersey requiring 30 years as the minimum for claims. However, California only requires five years, tied for the second lowest with Montana and Nevada, with only Arizona requiring less with three years.

Even more, California law makes it hard for property owners to eject squatters swiftly, with those living on the property not even needing certification of documentation to avoid being evicted. In fact, only three major requirements need to meet a successful adverse possession claim: occupying the property for at least five years, cultivating or improving the land/property, and paying all associated taxes during their occupation. In addition, squatters need to be open about living there and not hide it, they can't have a lease with the owner, and they can't share possession of the property. In turn, property owners are limited with what they can do with squatters, and cannot shut off utilities, change locks, or attempt other 'self-help' eviction measures.

"Squatters can claim property after having lived on it continuously for 5 years," states World Population Review. "During this time, the trespassing person must have paid property taxes. They also need to make improvements on the property, and the owner has to know they are there without trying to conceal their presence. The owner must not have tried to evict them either."

If squatters are there with the owners knowledge and consent, it also becomes more complicated, as it only takes 30 days to be considered a tenant.

"While squatters cannot claim ownership after just 30 days, there is a provision in California law that grants tenancy rights to occupants who have resided in a property for more than 30 days with the owner's knowledge and consent," explains Martinez Law Center. "This means that if a squatter has been living on your property for over a month, and you've failed to take action, they may be considered a tenant, requiring a formal eviction process to remove them."

For owners, the eviction process of squatters can be lengthy and requires jumping through multiple hoops. Wanting to reduce the number of squatters and improve property owner rights, Assemblyman Carl DeMaio (R-San Diego) introduced Assembly Bill 897 last month in

Sacramento.

According to AB 897, the bill would state the intent of the Legislature to enact subsequent legislation protecting property rights and removing squatters from leased properties. Amongst other things, AB 897 would create an arrest process for squatters, would finally require certification of documentation by squatters to not be removed by authorities, and would legally define what unlawful squatting is. While it doesn't increase the number of years needed for squatters to claim a property, it would strengthen laws in favor of property owners.

"Unfortunately, California state laws basically prohibit any help for property owners, and my bill would change that. It would uphold private property rights and it would end squatting in our state," said Assemblyman DeMaio of his bill. "We have to put an end to this insanity. We need to have an expedited process for removing squatters from properties where they're trespassing so that property owners are not continually victimized."

AB 897 has yet to be heard in any assembly committee so far this year. However, if successful, AB 897 could lead to even stricter measures against squatters in the future in California.

SAN DIEGO'S TOP ATTORNEYS 2025



William W. Eigner

He is the “go-to guy for M&A and emerging companies.” He has often been recognized for many years in The Best Lawyers in America, Super Lawyers and by SD METRO Magazine as one of California’s best business lawyers. He is a partner at Procopio, Cory, Hargreaves & Savitch, San Diego’s largest law firm, with nearly 200 lawyers in offices in San Diego, Del Mar, Palo Alto, Orange County, Las Vegas, Scottsdale and Washington. His practice emphasizes M&A, venture capital, angel financing, seed capital and the financing, governing, operating, buying, selling and merging of growing and established technology, life science and other businesses. He serves as a director of EvoNexus and currently serves or, has served, on the boards of advisors or directors of Acenda, Quantum AI Health, Cross Ocean Ventures, San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce and other companies and organizations. He graduated from Stanford University and the University of Virginia School of Law, and served as a Judicial Intern at the U.S. Supreme Court.



Jenny L. Dixon

A partner with Hahn Loeser, she has been selected by her peers to San Diego Super Lawyers in each of the past five years. In 2024, she was named among the San Diego Super lawyers Top 25 Women. She has practiced in both state and federal litigation for over 25 years and has secured multi-million-dollar judgments on behalf of clients. She represents individuals and companies in business and employment disputes, corporate and securities fraud, and violations of antitrust and competition laws. She has also guided clients on ways to cost effectively minimize liability. Her efforts contributed to meaningful reforms in director compensation because she litigated several challenges to excessive compensation plans in Delaware Chancery Court. After deposing Mark Zuckerberg, she was able to defeat Facebook’s motion for summary judgment in one such challenge. She has served as a Scout Troop Fundraising Chair and a girls youth soccer coach as well as a girls youth volleyball coach. She is a graduate of the University of California College of the Law, San Francisco.



Gabe P. Wright

He is a natural leader, serving on Hahn Loeser’s Board of Directors and the Firm’s National Diversity and Inclusion Committee. He recently served as Chair of Hahn Loeser’s San Diego Litigation Practice Group and has led San Diego office’s recruiting efforts. He represents clients from various industry sectors including assisted living communities, financial institutions, hoteliers, hospital and medical centers, product manufacturers, and the collections industry. Among his successes, he defeated class certification of a California statewide class action alleging violations of the Rosenthal Fair Debt Collection Practices Act and Business & Profession Code against his client. He thereafter eliminated any ability for the remaining plaintiff to obtain an injunction against his client that could have had an adverse impact throughout the client’s industry. He also defeated certification of a California statewide class action brought on behalf of 500,000 class members seeking \$100 million in damages against a manufacturer of shower pans. He has a top peer review rating of AV Preeminent for legal ability and professional ethics. He is a San Diego Super Lawyer and volunteer and supporter of Promises2Kids. He is a graduate of the Washington & Lee University school of Law.

Frederick Schenk

A former Casey Gerry partner, he recently joined forces with his sister, former congresswoman Lynn Schenk, and son, trial lawyer Benjamin Schenk, to launch The Schenk Law Firm. The firm specializes in personal injury, business and mass tort law. He is a pioneer in mass torts and has secured multiple multi-million-dollar verdicts, settlements and arbitration awards for victims of corporate negligence, especially in asbestos litigation, wrongful death, construction negligence, head injury and auto accidents. A specialist in auto collision litigation, he is co-author of the LexisNexis California Litigation Handbook. For a second time, he has been elected to serve as president of the Board of Directors of the 22nd Agricultural District Association (San Diego County Fair Board). He is also past president of the American Board of Trial Advocates, and a past president of the Consumer Attorneys of San Diego, the Lawence Family Community Center of San Diego, and the Washington, D.C.-based Civil Justice Foundation. He was recently awarded the Distinguished Alumni Award from the University of San Diego School of Law. He earned his undergraduate degree at UCLA.



Thomas Crosbie

He is a founding partner at Crosbie, Gliner, Schiffman, Southard & Swanson (CGS3), a commercial real estate firm which was established in 2013. He has over 30 years of experience in commercial real estate law, including acquisitions and dispositions, financial, leasing and construction in connection with commercial, residential, industrial, retail and mixed-use projects for local, regional and national real estate developers. He has negotiated the purchase and sale of numerous large commercial properties throughout the United States. He has many years of experience in a broad variety of commercial real estate areas. He has been counsel to a vast number of borrowers. On the development front he has extensive expertise in all aspects of ground-up development and redevelopment projects, including drafting and negotiating development agreements VCCV&Rs, REAs, construction contracts and design contracts for commercial, industrial, multi-family residential and mixed-use projects. He is a graduate of Columbia University and the Northwestern University School of Law.



Congratulations to our partners Tom Crosbie and Sean Gaffney, both recognized as one of San Diego's "Best Attorneys" by SD Metro.

With many years of experience in handling complex CRE transactions across all asset types and related litigation, both are talented attorneys whose success is a testament to CGS3's enduring commitment to client service.



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Congratulations to our founding managing partner, Frederick Schenk, named one of San Diego's "Best Attorneys" by SD Metro.

A pioneer in mass torts, Schenk, along with his sister former congresswoman Lynn Schenk and son, trial attorney Benjamin Schenk, recently launched The Schenk Law Firm – a full service personal injury and civil litigation firm – bringing a powerful blend of trial, political and financial acumen to the San Diego legal landscape.

Schenk Law Firm

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Sean Gaffney

He is a partner with Crosbie, Gliner, Schiffman, Southard and Swanson (CGS3). A leading member of the firm's litigation department, he counsels investors, developers and owners looking to minimize risks and handles litigation when disputes cannot be avoided. A skilled litigator, he has represented both plaintiffs and defendants in all phases of trial work and alternative dispute resolution. His practice spans the breadth of California real estate law, including claims arising from failed real estate transactions and construction and development projects; landlord/tenant disputes; corporate governance and insurance coverage disputes; and trespass, partition, easement domain cases. He is a member of the Association of Business Trial Lawyers and the San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Program. He has a B.A. degree from the University of San Diego and a J.D. from the University of San Francisco School of Law.



Ronson J. Shamoun

He is a distinguished tax attorney and a three-time graduate of the University of San Diego. He earned his Bachelor of Arts in Accountancy, followed by his Juris Doctor (J.D.) and Master of Laws in Taxation (LL.M.) A native of San Diego, he has practiced tax law for over 22 years. As the founder and CEO of RJS Law, a tax law firm, he specializes in federal and state taxation, with a focus on tax controversy, criminal tax defense, international tax matters, bankruptcy and estate planning. Beyond his legal practice, he is a co-founder of the USD School of Law-RJS Law Tax Institute. The annual event serves as a premier forum for tax professionals, including attorneys, CPAs, enrolled agents, and tax preparers, to stay informed on the latest developments in tax law. He actively guides and advises students at the USD School of Law. He has established two annual \$5,000 scholarships at both the USD School of Law and the USD School of Business. He donates billboard space across San Diego to support causes like the Girl Scouts of San Diego and the Susan G. Komen for the Cure. He exemplifies leadership, generosity and a genuine commitment to helping others.



Alex Brizolis

He is a partner in Glaser Weil's San Diego office and a seasoned litigator with extensive experience in complex business and real estate litigation. His practice spans state and federal courts, as well as arbitration, where he represents clients in high-stakes disputes involving fraud, unfair competition, breach of contract business interference, partnership disputes, business divorce and corporate control matters. He won a \$26 million settlement in fraud for a government entity client in a breach of contract litigation against a multi-billion-dollar foreign software company. He represented a charter school client in winning a binding, emergency arbitration compelling a former officer to return trade secrets and other materials. He won a weeklong arbitration for a corporate client/seller against a buyer for specific performance and a breach of contract related to the sale of commercial real estate in Los Angeles. He is a Barrister in the American Inns of Court, a graduate of UCLA with a Juris Doctor from the University of San Diego School of Law.

Elizabeth Sperling

She is litigation partner at Glaser Weil and co-chair of the firm's Banking and Financial Services practice. She focuses on the representation of financial institutions and other consumer-facing businesses (including in the food and beverage, consumer products, retail, and gaming spaces) real estate companies, property owners, and high net worth individuals in high-stakes and consumer litigation. She has extensive trial, arbitration and appellate experience in class action, business torts, unfair business practices and related consumer protection actions (Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA), Truth in Lending Act (TILA) and Consumer Legal Remedies Act (CLRA). Her recent notable accomplishments include her representation of Fanie Mae and James B. Nutter & Company in two putative class-actions-turned-mass actions filed by hundreds of Puerto Rico residents against numerous banks and mortgage servicers. She and her team defeated class certification and obtained the dismissal of hundreds of borrowers' claims related to their mortgages. She earned her B.A. at Arizona State University and her Juris Doctor at the University of Arizona.



Emil Petrossian

He is an experienced trial attorney and the managing partner of Glaser Weil's San Diego office. His practice covers all facets of complex commercial litigation in federal and state courts and arbitral forums, and he is routinely called upon to handle his clients' most sensitive and pressing business matters. He is recognized as one of the leading Joseph commercial litigators in California and a business leader in San Diego. He has extensive first-chair experience litigating high-stakes commercial dispute for major businesses and corporations throughout the country. He has litigated numerous arbitrations and has substantial appellate experience in federal courts of appeal and the California Court of Appeal. He represented Gensler, a leading architecture and design firm, in an eight-figure indemnity dispute relating to the construction of the Shore Hotel in Santa Monica which resulted in a complete summary judgment victory and a \$1.6 million fee award in Gensler's favor. He is a cum laude graduate of Whitman College with a Juris Doctor from Loyola Law School.



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Partner



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Senior Counsel

Congratulations to Jamie Altman Buggy,
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Best Attorneys in San Diego 2025
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Ronson J. Shamoun, Principal Attorney and CEO of RJS LAW, is an Adjunct Law Professor at the University of San Diego-School of Law where he teaches a Tax Practice and Penalties class. He was recently presented with the following awards:

- San Diego Metro Magazine- Best Attorney 2016
- San Diego Magazine- Top Attorney 2016
- San Diego Business Journal- Best of the Bar 2014, 2015 & 2016
- Martindale Hubbell's- AC Preeminent Rated 2014, 2015 & 2016
- San Diego Daily Transcript- Top Attorney 2014 & 2015
- San Diego Metro Magazine- 40 Under 40 - 2015



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Joseph Leventhal

He is a partner and the head of litigation at Glaser Weil. He is an accomplished trial attorney with extensive experience in complex commercial litigation, class actions, and real estate, employment and intellectual property disputes. He has led jury trial teams in both state and federal courts and achieved successful outcomes through appeals. His clients range from business executives to Fortune 500 companies. His notable accomplishments include his representation of Sony Electronics in *Riddick et al v. Sony Electronics, Inc. et al*, a high profile class action lawsuit challenging Sony's Alpha Female Creator program under California's Unruh Civil Rights Act. Plaintiffs alleged the program, which awarded grants to female photographers, videographers and filmmakers, discriminated against male creators by restricting their eligibility for funding. He won a decisive outcome. He is a cum laude graduate of UCSD with a Juris Doctor from the Georgetown University Law Center.



Jamie Altman Buggy

She is an extraordinary attorney and passionate advocate for her clients. After graduating from the University of Southern California with a degree in business administration, she pursued her Juris Doctor at the University of San Diego School of Law, where she graduated cum laude and as a member of the Order of the Coif. She started her legal career clerking for the Honorable Judge William C Hillman of the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the District of Massachusetts in Boston. She then practiced commercial litigation at Procopio and then at CGS3. She joined Harvest LLP as a partner in 2022 where she currently serves as General Counsel and head of the firm's litigation department. She won a major case on behalf of publicly traded REITs through her litigation of those REITs' landlord-tenant disputes for large portfolios of commercial real estate. Her guiding principle is her belief that her role as a lawyer is to help her clients close their deals and accomplish their business goals. Outside of the law, she serves her community through charitable work including tenures on the boards of Home Stat and Veterans Research Alliance.



Fernando Landa

He specializes in commercial real estate matters with broad expertise working on large transactions working across the country and across the asset spectrum. He brings his experience as a former General Counsel of a large real estate company to his representation of public real estate investment trusts, private equity funds, institutional investors, and entrepreneurial developers in the acquisition, development, financing leasing, and disposition of commercial real estate assets. While he specializes in transactional matters, he also possesses a unique expertise in distressed real estate workouts and the sale of commercial real estate assets through the judicial process. He represented a San Diego-based owner-operator in the preparation and negotiation of a 32,421 square foot office lease to Nashville-based music label Concord Music Group Inc. in Beverly Hills. Represented the purchaser of a \$130 million of mixed-use assets in Los Angeles. He considers one of his most rewarding achievements of his career to be the launch of Harvest LLP, a boutique law firm focused on serving the commercial real estate industry which he founded in 2022. He is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and holds degrees in law (Juris Doctor) and a master's in real estate from the University of San Diego.



Cheryl Nieman Brechlin

She is a gifted attorney and dedicated advocate for her clients. After graduating magna cum laude from the George Washington University, she pursued her Juris Doctor at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, where she was a member of the Moot Court Honor Society. She began her legal career as an associate with Kasowitz Benson Torres LLP in New York City, litigating high-profile commercial cases in various areas of the law. She returned to California, working at a boutique real estate and corporate law firm in Bel Air and CGS3 in Los Angeles and San Diego before joining Harvest LLP in May of 2022 as Senior Counsel. She negotiated numerous commercial leases for one of California's largest privately held REITs, serving as master planner for a portfolio of high-end shopping centers in Southern California. She represented the buyer of the most expensive condominium sold in recent years in Los Angeles, which sold for \$39.1 million. She represented San Diego FC in negotiating its leases of office space in downtown San Diego and Mission Valley. She fosters rescue dogs through a New Life Charitable Foundation and has been a mentor for Jewish Big Brothers Big Sisters in Los Angeles.

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Emil Petrossian
MANAGING PARTNER OF
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Elizabeth Sperling
PARTNER AND CO-CHAIR OF
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Matthew E Cannon

He has devoted his career to advocating for vulnerable children through his work as the managing attorney of the Children's Program at Casa Cornelia Law Center. For over 10 years he has provided expert immigration legal services to children in San Diego County, as well as those detained across the United States and released in San Diego. His work ensures that children facing deportation proceedings have access to critical legal protections and relief. In addition to his representation of children in deportation proceedings, he also represents those eligible for immigration relief outside of deportation. He is a tireless advocate for those who would otherwise be left without legal assistance. He has an unwavering commitment to community service and social justice. He has helped raise awareness of the challenges faced by immigrant children in San Diego. He graduated from Cal State San Marcos with his law degree from California Western School of Law.



Liza Perkins-Cohen

She is the managing attorney of the Litigation Program at Casa Cornelia Law Center. The litigation program provided legal representation to victims of human and civil rights violations, assisting them in obtaining asylum and other forms of immigration relief through the courts and USCIS. She supervises a team of attorneys and support staff, mentors volunteer attorneys from the private bar and continues to provide direct representation to clients. She also regularly trains other attorneys in asylum law and has been an invited speaker on the subject on numerous occasions. Her introduction to Casa Cornelia came through pro bono work while serving as an Associate Attorney at Latham & Watkins where she practiced from 2001 to 2007 American equities analyst in Sao Paulo and New York. She has a Master's in Taxation from the USD School of Law. She also has a law degree from the New York University School of Law and a degree from the University of Chicago.



Evelyn Alicia Lopez

She has dedicated her legal career to advocating for immigrant rights and serving vulnerable communities through her work at Casa Cornelia Law Center. Since joining Casa Cornelia as a post-bar volunteer in January 2013, she has demonstrated exceptional commitment to justice and pro bono legal services. In recognition of her contributions, she received Casa's Special Recognition Award in 2014. She has taken on increasing leadership roles starting as a legal assistant in the Domestic Violence Program before becoming a staff attorney in 2025. She works extensively within the Children's Program and the Victims of Crime Program, including complex cases involving asylum for children, VAWA petitions, U-visas, T-visas and Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS cases). She is dedicated to community advocacy through her extensive Know Your Rights presentations. Throughout her tenure at Casa Cornelia, she has made a profound impact on those she serves. She is a graduate of the Thomas Jefferson School of Law.

Jennifer Trowbridge
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Sara Neva
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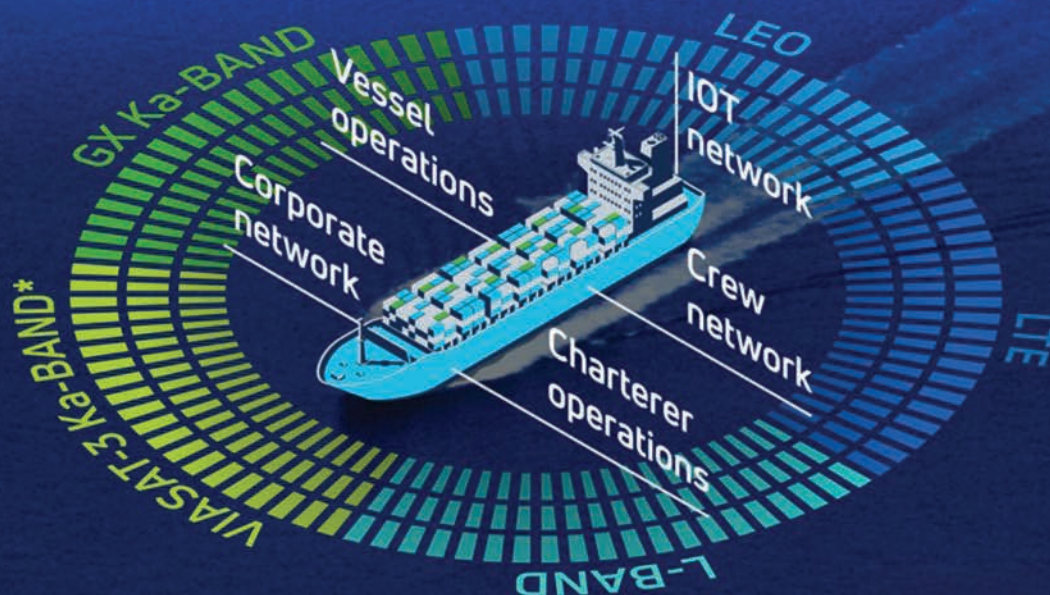
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Inmarsat demonstrates power of network bonding for Maritime market

Real-world tests of NexusWave confirm power of bonded connectivity for ships at sea

NexusWave's bonded connectivity solution for the maritime industry.

Inmarsat Maritime, a Viasat company, has verified its fully managed bonded connectivity service, NexusWave, achieved maximum download speeds of 330–340 megabits per second, with maximum upload speeds of 70–80 Mbps, in real world tests. The trials demonstrated average download and upload speeds of 120–150 Mbps and 20–45 Mbps respectively, with network availability on board NexusWave vessels over 99.99%.

Unlike the load balancing which hybrid connectivity solutions typically use to deliver bandwidth via the best available underlay network, Inmarsat Maritime's NexusWave combines multiple underlays in one bonded connection.

The solution allows applications to leverage the aggregate capacity of all available networks rather than relying on one network at a time. In addition to unparalleled speeds, the unique network-bonding approach provides superior reliability and redundancy.

For instance, in real-life testing, the quality of a video conference remains virtually unaffected by the availability or quality of a single network underlay. Leveraging bonding technology, NexusWave dynamically adjusts traffic routing to maintain a seamless and uninterrupted experience.

"The results of our real-world tests demonstrate, in the clearest of terms, the peerless performance of NexusWave as a fully managed bonded maritime connectivity service," commented Ben Palmer, President, Inmarsat Maritime. "The ability to achieve speeds of 340 Mbps derives from the power of network bonding within NexusWave: no individual underlay network within the package can reach these speeds alone. In NexusWave, Inmarsat's

maritime customers secure a unique value proposition: the capacity of multiple solutions with the convenience of a single provider."

Designed to provide 'connected confidence', NexusWave also delivers unlimited data, global coverage, and enterprise-grade firewall security, while Inmarsat Maritime experts offer round-the-clock technical support to customers worldwide. As a unified service, the solution ensures managed performance levels regardless of the vessel's location or requirements, with full transparency on total cost of ownership.

In a move intended to further increase aggregated connectivity speeds, the future-proof solution will integrate the next-generation ultra-high capacity, high-speed ViaSat-3 Ka-band service following its entry into service.

"Part of what makes NexusWave so compelling is its ability to seamlessly integrate additional technologies and networks as they become available," added Ben Palmer. "This ensures that the service continuously improves over time, giving customers complete connected confidence amid evolving challenges and requirements."

About Inmarsat Maritime

Inmarsat is a Viasat company and continues to power the digitalisation of the maritime industry. With over 40 years of experience, Inmarsat Maritime offers reliable and innovative solutions that enable ship owners and operators to stay connected, navigate safely, enhance operational efficiency, and ensure crew welfare. In May 2023, Viasat completed its acquisition of Inmarsat, combining the teams, technologies and resources of the two companies to create a new global communications partner. Learn more at www.viasat.com.



Millions of children, young adults through age 25 and adults 50 or over have signed up for Medi-Cal services. (SCNG)

Medi-Cal under strain after state extends aid to illegal immigrants

The state thought it would cost \$2 billion to \$4 billion to fund the health insurance program. Now it's looking closer to \$9.5 billion. **By Susan Shelley**

The Newsom administration just informed the Legislature that it needs to borrow \$3.4 billion to pay unexpectedly high costs for Medi-Cal, the state's safety-net health insurance program for low-income residents that is now open to all undocumented immigrants.

As of Jan. 1, 2024, everyone in California who is in the country illegally is entitled to "full-scope" Medi-Cal: unlimited, unrestricted, full, free health insurance, as long as their reported income is low enough to be eligible.

But wait, there's more.

Generally, California can seek reimbursement from the federal government for half of its Medi-Cal expenses. Not always. Federal law forbids reimbursement for care provided to illegal immigrants, other than the limited services available to everyone under "emergency Medicaid," also known as "restricted-scope Medicaid."

In California, the Medicaid program is called "Medi-Cal," as if to warn everyone that it's going to be bad at math.

And it is, like, totally bad at math. In Southern California that's pronounced "baahd at maath." Fer sherr.

It's so bad at math that the government initially calculated it would cost between \$2 billion and \$4 billion annually to provide full-scope Medi-Cal to every income-eligible undocumented

immigrant in the state. By last summer the estimate was \$6.4 billion, and most recently Assemblyman Carl DeMaio, R-San Diego, got a Department of Finance official to admit during a budget hearing that it's \$9.5 billion.

In gratitude for this helpful update, Speaker Robert Rivas, leader of the Democratic supermajority in the Assembly, threw DeMaio off the Budget Committee.

We are baahd at maath here. Get away with your accurate assessments.

But then Gov. Gavin Newsom's Department of Finance sent a letter informing the legislature that it had to borrow \$3.4 billion to cover higher Medi-Cal expenses through the end of March.

Like, oh my Gahd. What are they going to do after March?

Borrow more, probably.

At this point you may be wondering, "How will this loan ever be repaid?"

Oh my Gahd, it's another rilly hard maath question. Like, no way.

No way can the Medi-Cal program pay for unlimited health care services for an unlimited number of people from all over the world for the rest of their lives.

Nearly all of these expenses are billed to the exhausted taxpayers

of California. The federal government provides partial funding only for “restricted scope” Medicaid benefits, such as emergency and pregnancy-related services.

California began its Medi-Cal expansion to undocumented immigrants in 2015 with coverage for children up to 18 years old. Young adults ages 19-25 became eligible in 2019, then in 2022 eligibility expanded to include adults 50 and older. Adults ages 26-49 were added in 2024. Participants are covered for everything from neo-natal through long-term care, free.

California doesn’t even have the distinction of being the first state to march off this fiscal cliff. That title belongs to Oregon, where the Healthier Oregon program has been offering full Medicaid-like health coverage to all undocumented immigrants since July 2023. The Oregon Health Authority had previously calculated that there were 55,000 eligible individuals and 80% would enroll. By mid-2024, the OHA reported that more than 100,000 people were on the program.

Only California and Oregon were dippy enough to sing two choruses of “We Are the World” and open their state treasuries without limitation. But other states have offered additional health care benefits to some undocumented residents.

In Illinois, the Health Benefits for Immigrant Seniors (HBIS) program has been providing coverage to undocumented immigrants age 65 and older since December 2020, and the Health Benefits for Immigrant Adults (HBIA) program added adults age 42-64 in 2022.

How’s it going?

The Illinois legislature ordered the state’s auditor to find out. He reported in February that in fiscal year 2023, the HBIS program had 15,831 enrollees, not the 6,700 that had been estimated. The HBIA program serving adults ages 55-64 had 17,024 enrollees, not 8,000 as expected. And the program for undocumented immigrants

ages 42-54 had 36,912 enrollees, almost double the 18,800 that state officials had projected.

The costs for the three segments of the program were higher than expected by 84%, 282% and 286%, respectively. HBIS and HBIA have cost Illinois taxpayers \$1.6 billion so far.

That’s a cute number, isn’t it? California borrows more than that for breakfast.

Faced with surging costs for the HBIS and HBIA programs, Illinois officials paused new enrollments in 2023, while maintaining coverage for individuals already enrolled.

That’s one way the California government could get out of this situation.

About a dozen states offer full health coverage to undocumented immigrant children up to age 19 or sometimes 21. In Utah, conservative lawmakers agreed to a similar program but put a cap on the spending in advance. The budget is fixed at \$4.5 million per year, limiting enrollment to about 2,000 children.

It’s easy to say “health care is a right,” but health care is a service. It has to be provided by skilled and trained people, using facilities and equipment that have to be rented or purchased, maintained and staffed. Somebody has to pay the utility bills, the payroll taxes and the insurance premiums, but Medi-Cal pays very low reimbursement rates.

If the math doesn’t work in the long term, doctors stop accepting Medi-Cal patients, hospitals close, and more than 14 million low-income Californians wait even longer for an appointment, if they ever receive care at all.

What about their rights? Who is in the streets protesting for them?

Write Susan@SusanShelley.com and follow her on X @Susan_Shelley



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California and Its Collapsing Blue-State Democrat Model

By Victor Davis Hanson

While the media and the new Democrat Party grow hysterical over the Trump counter-revolution, they are missing some of the most revolutionary and insidious changes in American society of the last century.

Much has been written about the collapse of the old orthodox Democratic Party, along with the growing irrelevance and dysfunction of the legacy media, elite universities, and state and federal agencies. But their growing unattractiveness is all related and was not just the result of top-down development.

Rather, current Democrat Party radicalism, street theater, and violence were merely reflections of its own preexisting cultural antipathy toward the middle class. The party is now a pyramidal coalition of the very wealthy and professional classes comprising the capstone, resting atop a vast, expanding bottom of the subsidized and working poor, strapped pensioners and retirees, angry indebted students, 30s-something urban wannabees, impoverished immigrants—including perhaps 30 million here illegally—and, increasingly, trapped residents of a dystopian big-

city America.

The collapse of the blue-state/blue-city model and those who work within and promote it reflects the radical environmentalism of the college-educated, as well as an array of high taxes, high crime, endless government regulations, housing shortages, massive homelessness, illegal immigration, critical-legal-theory prosecutors, ethnic and racial chauvinism, defund-the-police city councils, and, most importantly, chronic budget deficits and vast, unfunded pension liabilities and obligations.

In response to this progressive implosion that accounts for Democrat Party unpopularity, under the radar are historic demographic shifts. They reflect two insidious phenomena.

One, the blue-state, urban/professional/college-educated profile has become antithetical to fertility.

No one knows exactly the contributory relative roles to childlessness played by the progressive embrace of abortion on demand or secularism and atheism. Certainly, the fixations on higher education certification, massive student loan debt, years of

student limbo, prohibitive housing prices, and a cultural value system that places status, titles, careers, and degrees over children all further promote a declining birthrate.

But in the end, the cause of asymmetrical fertility does not matter: red-state, traditional populations are simply growing, while blue-state fertility remains stagnant.

Second, we are witnessing the greatest internal migration in U.S. history since the post-Civil War era. Millions are leaving California, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Illinois, and other northern blue states. And they usually head to Florida, Texas, Tennessee, South Carolina, and other red, low- or no-tax states. So large have become the dislocations that conservative red states will in the next decade grab some 10-12 congressional seats away from liberal blue states along with some 10 or so votes in the electoral college.

The trends are not static but occurring at a geometric rate. The upper-middle and professional classes head to states with perceived lower crime, lower taxes, fewer regulations, better schools, and more affordable housing. Meanwhile, those left in blue states to pay the tab for the subsidized poor and expanding social welfare overhead shrink. For these remaining, the burdens per capita surge—in turn feeding even more exoduses.

We also may be witnessing soon the de facto implosion of a once affluent California—its growing poverty already visible in its decaying roads and infrastructure, dangerous and substandard public schools, soaring property crime, overcrowded, dysfunctional, and dangerous health care system, ethnic fragmentation, and the general bankruptcy and medievalism of San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Those left to pay for its escalating social welfare costs and debt service are beginning to lament that the advantages of the state's climate, beauty, and once upbeat culture are no longer worth the downsides of its costs: big-city homelessness, decayed infrastructure, incompetent government workforce, crime, and general social dystopia.

In California, 50 percent of all births are now paid for by Medi-Cal, which serves 40 percent of the state. And yet the health welfare

system is flat broke, nearing \$7 billion in the red. California has the highest taxes in the nation at 13.3 percent (plus an additional millionaire's tax). Its sales and gas taxes are also among the nation's steepest, while utilities charge the highest gas and electricity rates in the continental U.S.

These disequilibria are increasingly unsustainable.

One percent of Californians pay well over 50 percent of the state's income taxes—and is leaving in droves. Power is exorbitant, in part due to inefficient solar/wind/green mandates, restrictions on oil, natural gas, nuclear energy, and new hydroelectric production.

In addition, some 4 million—or nearly 25 percent of utility users—simply no longer pay their monthly power bills and are yet usually not subject to cutoffs of power. They in turn must be subsidized by a shrinking number whose rates climb almost yearly.

There are two general rules of California's liberal, uni-party politics that symbolize the collapsing blue-state model: all know that the open borders and the generous welfare subsidies of the state explain why half the nation's illegal immigrants flocked to California, almost all in need of massive government aid.

And two, given the political demographics of a minority/majority state, it is political suicide to associate that 50-year massive influx with vast unfunded social service liabilities, poorer schools, rising crime, and the creation of an all-powerful ultra-left-wing government.

The California model addresses inequality not by insisting on legal-only immigration, rapid assimilation, integration, and acculturation of immigrants. It does not acculturate by back-to-basics K-12 schooling to ensure an emerging younger workforce competent in oral and written English, math, and civic education.

Instead, any resulting disequilibria brought about by the sudden vast influx of some of the world's poorest is explained by systemic racism and unearned "privilege"—and thus to be remedied by DEI therapeutics. Rather than fighting the left to acculturate 27 percent of the resident population that is foreign-born and prepping them to help run a once sophisticated and complex state government, each year hundreds of thousands of exasperated Californians just

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Moreover, California is thought to have one of the largest underground economies of the 50 states, likely reflecting that its huge foreign-born and mostly poorer population is struggling economically. In the Central Valley, it is not unusual to see thousands of residents shopping at vast weekend swap meets, eating regularly at local, ad hoc roadside canteens, and buying everything from flowers to bicycles from entrepreneurial vendors that dot almost every busy rural crossroads. Most of these exchanges are not recorded for either sales or income tax purposes and pose a huge loss of revenue for the state.

Another blue-state pathology is the asymmetrical application of the laws. And California again reflects this trend of being the most overregulated and underregulated, the most lawful and lawless state in the nation. Its upper-class coastal elite insists upon the nation's strictest zoning and green regulations. (Gavin Newsom used the voter-approved multibillion-dollar water construction bond not to build a single reservoir as mandated, but rather to blow up four existing dams and lakes.)

The result makes it almost impossible to build new power plants, housing developments, freeways, dams, reservoirs, aqueducts, or even to either finish or quit the monstrous high-speed rail, multibillion-dollar boondoggle.

Half the state, mostly its poorer and immigrant population, largely seeks to bypass these cumbersome regulations. It is almost impossible to travel through the state's interior and not see single-family homes with surrounding shacks, trailers, and lean-tos with substandard, illegal wiring, plumbing, and sanitation. Semi-rural homesteads that traditionally housed one family may now include four or five.

The regulatory agencies of the state exempt the poor from their massive violations of housing and building codes. They compensate for their dereliction by redirecting their energies instead to auditing the shrinking number who follow the laws and will pay fines if cited—yet another reason why the more affluent flee California.

I once asked a building inspector who arrived to certify an upgraded solar breaker box whether he was aware that a mere half-mile away, twenty or so people were living in what was once a single-house compound. Sagging Romex wire without conduit was visibly strung to a number of parked trailers, all without toilet facilities. When I asked him why not venture into that complex, he flashed, "I'm not crazy, sir."

The result is a growing cynicism in California, as in all the blue states. Left-controlled city councils, state legislatures, universities, and executive agencies promote the narrative that the wealthy are greedy, selfish, and 'don't pay their fair share.' The problem with that strategy of blame-gaming the more successful is that it is starting to run out of the more successful. As revenue shrinks and deficits climb, shouting at the increasingly diminishing upper-middle class only makes them more resentful and determined to leave.

In the current conundrum, we have forgotten completely the old themes of a blue-state Democrat Party. The 1996 Democratic National Convention manifesto that spearheaded Bill Clinton's successful reelection emphasized secure borders, legal-only immigration, tough crime enforcement and punishment, balanced budgets, fiscal responsibility, and "personal accountability." That agenda today in California would condemn any adherent as a racist, xenophobe, or MAGA fanatic.

In its place, the party became more intolerant, narrower in its cultural emphases, and uninterested in existential crises such as housing, secure borders, power generation, infrastructure, and crime. Without answers or correctives to the damage it inflicted, it instead focused on what was largely seen as irrelevant to the state's struggling minority populations—LGBT advocacies, transgendered men competing in women's sports, racial reparations, DEI-mandated programs, and boutique environmentalism.

The result may be that Californians no longer really believe there is a political solution to their crises and fleeing is becoming the only viable option—for those who can afford or are willing to move. Those left are inured to their dogmas that "they"—the allegedly culpable and greedy—will always remain so rich, so selfish, and so always a part of California, California that the government income streams will remain limitless to fund redistribution.

The only mystery is whether other blue states following California's disastrous lead will pause and pivot, or are also already too far gone to make the necessary adjustments.

In addition, the growing dysfunction and irrelevance of the mainstream media—from network news to the old print conglomerates—of elite universities and of the federal government itself are, in part, due to their location in and symbiosis with the dead-end, blue-state model of culture, economics, and politics.

In sum, America is entering a historic reversal.

The old traditional impoverished South is becoming the engine of American prosperity. The Northern Midwest, the Northeast, and the West Coast—for a century the font of American dynamism—have become stagnant and inert, and are shrinking.

These blue loci survive for a while longer on the fumes of the work of past generations who operated under completely different assumptions and models antithetical to those of the present—and thus are regularly damned by those who squandered their once-rich inheritance.

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America's Tortured Soul but thriving Tech Industry

By Doug Page

Given the recent fawning over Mag 7 stocks – Alphabet, Amazon, Apple, Meta Platforms, Microsoft, Nvidia and Tesla – it likely wouldn't surprise anyone to read a book by a techie praising their company and the multiple benefits its gadgets, software, microchips and cars offer society – as well as being a great stock to own.

But it's quite the other to read a passionate lament by two of the industry's key executives over tech's failures and society's quagmires.

Yet that's what comes through in *The Technological Republic: Hard Power, Soft Belief, and the Future of the West*, written by Palantir Technologies CEO Alexander C. Karp and Nicholas W. Zamiska, the company's head of corporate affairs and legal counsel to the office of the CEO, which is also a history of U.S. technology and commentary on the country's troubled soul.

If you haven't heard of Palantir Technologies, one might ask if your head was stuck in the sand over the last few years? It's a media darling, highlighted by CNBC's stock maven Jim Cramer and *The Wall Street Journal*, which called it a favorite among amateur investors last year, reporting that a Reddit forum dedicated to the company's stock (PLTR) has about 60,000 members.

The company builds software and artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities used by U.S. defense and intelligence agencies. It went public in September 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As Karp and Zamiska point out, the United States has a long history with technology, going back to some of the Founding Fathers, including John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin and James Madison, who advocated on behalf of science and technology to improve the country and developed some of its products, too.

But the prevailing attitude in the Silicon Valley, the heart and soul of the U.S. tech industry today, is very different, they bemoan, writing that "the ascendant engineering elite ... that is the most capable of building artificial intelligence systems that will be the deterrent of this century is also the most ambivalent about working for the U.S. military."

Instead, they're more interested in raising "capital for video-sharing apps and social media platforms, advertising algorithms and online shopping websites," they write.

Karp and Zamiska bolster their critique with a sentence by David Graeber, who taught cultural anthropology at Yale University and the London School of Economics, who said, "The Internet is a remarkable innovation, but all we are talking about is a super-fast and globally accessible combination of library, post office, and mail-order catalogue."

What's worse is the technological class's agnosticism toward values, religion, and the country, which permeated other corners of the nation, too, especially its educational institutions.

The "unintended consequence of this assault on religion was the eradication of any space for belief at all," they wrote. "The soul of the country was at stake, having been abandoned in the name of inclusivity."

How is this showing up today?

Statistics show about 20% of all Americans attend church weekly, while 57% seldom or never do, which might prove the United States lacks a sense of community and faith.

In addition, married households in the United States have dropped, too; in 2010, married households became the minority, dropping to 49.7% of all households. In 2024, the U.S. Census Bureau reported, 47.1% of all households were married.

Does this mean there's a causation and correlation between the tech industry's rise and what ails society today? Perhaps. The problem with concluding the former is that long before there was a cellphone or a laptop computer, married households started dropping – in 1950.

Where does our malaise begin?

On the country's college campuses in the 1950s and 1960s, the authors say, when professors became dismissive of classes on Western civilization and, thus, many of the values that led to the creation of the United States.

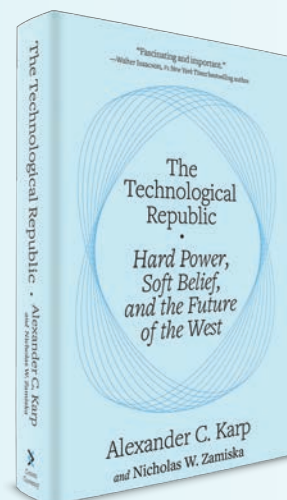
Where are we going? That's a question that doesn't appear to have any easy answers. But perhaps today's Mag 7 titans will join Karp and Zamiska to improve the country's society and its sense of community.

Maybe that will lead to people spending less time on their smartphone and more time interacting in person and, possibly, marrying and having children, too.

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Alexander Karp - Author
Photo Credit Wolfgang Bohusch



**The Technological Republic:
Hard Power, Soft Belief,
and the Future of the West**
Alexander C. Karp & Nicholas W.
Zamiska Crown Currency, 2025,
220 pages, \$30



Nicholas Zamiska - Author
Photo Credit Lev Gorn.

UCLA Anderson Forecast Announces a Recession Watch

Trump Policies, If Fully Enacted, Promise a Recession

By Clement Bohr, Economist, UCLA Anderson Forecast

Recessions are typically the result of a confluence of multiple events, whether disparate or intertwined, that lead to simultaneous contractions in multiple sectors of the economy. Often these involve the financial sector, though that is not necessary. For instance, there were many factors that contributed to the severity of the Great Depression, including a financial crash, an agricultural drought, restrictive monetary policy, and a trade war. More recently, the 1990 recession came about from a contraction in manufacturing, government and residential construction, which were induced by a shock to oil prices, restrictive monetary policy, and a reduction in defense spending following the cold war. A single sector that contracts does not usually suffice in triggering a recession as evidenced by manufacturing in 1995.

As 2025 begins to unfold, there are no signs of an imminent recession. The U.S. added 151,000 jobs in the month of February, and the unemployment rate and unemployment claims remain low at 4.1% and 220,000, respectively. The future also looks bright due to the promises of Artificial Intelligence, smart deregulation, as well as recent public and private investments in infrastructure and technology. However, the stated aim of the Trump Administration is to dramatically transform the U.S. economy in its first 100 days and that begs the question: if fully or nearly fully enacted, could these initiatives cause enough sectors of the economy to contract at the same time and trigger a recession?

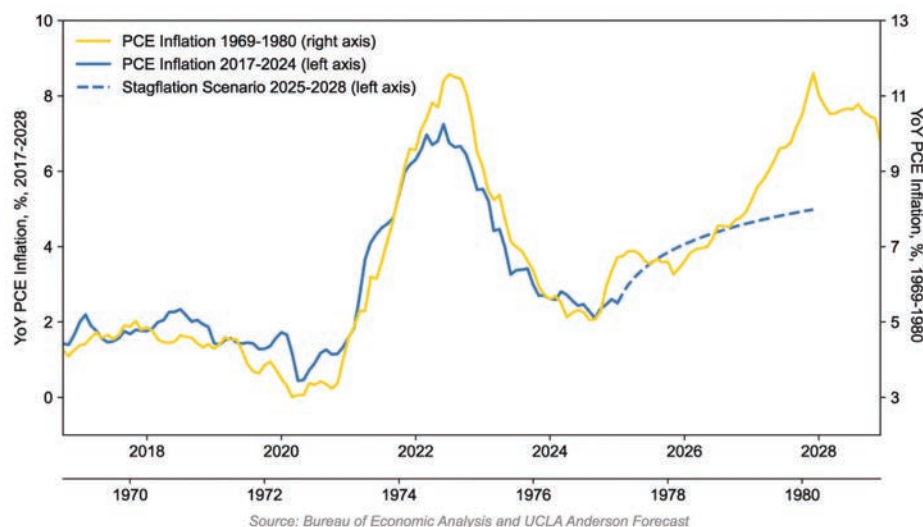
The answer appears to be yes, that a

downturn could result over the coming year or two, and that we should now be on a Recession Watch. The administration's purportedly desired policies would impose, each in their own way, a significant contraction on different sectors of the economy. Weaknesses are beginning to emerge in households' spending patterns. And the financial sector, with elevated asset valuations and newly introduced areas of risk, is primed to amplify any downturn. What's more, the recession could end up being stagflationary. The main areas of concern are:

- The tariff policy and ensuing trade wars will likely lead to a contraction in the manufacturing sector. If fully implemented, the effective tariff rate will rise to similar levels as the Smoot-Hawley tariffs during the Great Depression. These will make it much more costly for American manufacturers to produce, and because of the highly integrated cross-border supply

chains, make current operations in some industries uneconomical. The CEO of Ford Motor Company bluntly stated that incoming tariffs would blow a hole in the US car industry. Downstream and upstream sectors, such as retail and agriculture, will likely also contract. During the first Trump administration, parts of the US agricultural industry needed a bailout because of the trade war with China. The size of that trade war looks like pennies relative to what's currently contemplated.

- Under the directive of Elon Musk-led DOGE, the public sector, its contractors, and its grant recipients are undergoing a reduction in their workforce that is intended to reach 10 to 15 percent. Given that the size of the extended government is around 10 million people, it will amount to the largest single layoff event in U.S. history of up to a million people. And this contraction will take place in a sector that usually serves as a macroeconomic stabilizer,



buffering against any decline in economic activity in the private sector.

- The construction sector, which tends to be a powerful propagator of the business cycle, is particularly vulnerable to mass deportations on the scale of many millions of people. Together with agriculture, this sector relies heavily on immigrant labor and already experiences a labor shortage. One consistent empirical finding across deportation events, going as far back as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and as recently as the Secure Communities program of 2008, is that deportations lead to a loss of jobs for non-immigrants as well. Immigrants occupy distinct occupations from much of the rest of the population, and once deported, they stop spending, paying rent and taxes here.

The exceptional degree of uncertainty surrounding these policies is in and of itself damaging to the economy. The ad-hoc and fitful tariff policy paralyzes firms' investment and hiring decisions as they prefer to wait until there is more clarity surrounding future economic conditions. The threat of deportations paralyzes economic activity in immigrant communities as both workers and consumers choose to stay home in fear of capture. DOGE's activities are creating a heightened level of job insecurity for most federal workers. Such income uncertainty, even for those who maintain their jobs, leads to a pullback in spending and a build-up in precautionary savings. As a result, many measures of consumer and business sentiment have turned negative over the last month.

If contractions in manufacturing, government, construction, and their adjacent sectors were to occur at the same time, it would likely spill over to the rest of the economy, broadening the downturn. The extent of this amplification depends on the underlying conditions of the economy, which as it turns out, might be primed to be severe. Why?

The financial sector often serves as a recessionary amplifier and may yet again, as

it is currently in an exuberant and possibly irrational state. Even with the current sell-off, equity valuations are at levels that parallel the dot-com bubble. There has been a surge in investment in somewhat speculative assets, like Artificial Intelligence, as well as purely speculative assets, like cryptocurrencies. Corporate bond spreads are near all-time lows, suggesting investors still aren't fully pricing in risk. House prices are near record levels, while the number of new unsold homes on the market is at levels last seen in 2009 and still climbing. Finally, private credit markets have become an important new player in the financial sector, and as of now, the systemic risks they may pose to the system are not well understood and likely underappreciated.

The administration is also playing with fire when it comes to the stability of the financial system. The U.S. debt has reached a level where it will begin to snowball without legislative changes to both taxation and spending. Rather than attempting to pivot us to a sounder fiscal footing, the current budget reconciliation bill in the House is pushing for additional tax cuts without commensurate cuts to spending, which would only worsen the U.S. debt trajectory. In addition, the administration intends to cut the Internal Revenue Service's workforce in half, further crippling its ability to enforce tax collection, which will lead to hundreds of billions in foregone tax revenues, primarily from wealthy tax evaders, and a further erosion of confidence in the value of U.S. debt. While we can find some solace in being the supplier of the world's primary safe asset and medium of exchange, it is naive to assume that we are immune to a sell-off in the treasury market akin to that which occurred in 2022 for the United Kingdom, when it attempted to pursue a fiscally reckless path.

What about inflation? Tariffs will raise prices by directly raising the cost of production and consumption. Deportations will raise prices by creating labor and production shortages, also raising the cost

of production. Inflation will thus rise at the same time as the economy would be contracting.

With the most recent February core CPI reading coming in at 3.1 percent, inflation continues to remain elevated following its surge during the COVID-19 pandemic. These inflationary policies will extend the substantial amount of time that the inflation has already spent above its two percent target, implementing the second wave of supply shocks in what mirrors the sequence of supply shocks that led to The Great Inflation of the 1970s. To avoid a repeat of that era, the Federal Reserve would need to aggressively pursue its commitment to the inflation target and may indeed need to raise rates, reinforcing the strength of the economic downturn. Restrictive monetary policy often summons the disapproval of the contemporaneous administration, which is one underlying reason for central bank independence. However, this administration has expressed its desire to reign in the independence of the Federal Reserve. If they attempt and succeed in influencing monetary policy decisions, it will likely lead to interest rates that are too loose to quell inflation, yet too tight to counter the downturn, leading to a longer period of low growth and high inflation, i.e. a stagflation.

Some Administrations inherit the conditions of a looming recession. What's unique about this Recession Watch is that, to a large degree, it primarily depends on incoming policy. A recession is thus entirely avoidable. If the policies outlined above are pared back or phased in more gradually, they are unlikely to trigger one. This Watch also serves as a warning to the current administration: be careful what you wish for because, if all your wishes come true, you could very well be the author of a deep recession. And it may not simply be a standard recession that is being chaperoned into existence, but a stagflation.

Clement Bohr is an economist at the UCLA Anderson Forecast.

SLO-ing Down in 2025

Chasing the New Year Sun in Redding

By Marlise Kast-Myers

It was two days before the holidays when my husband, Benjamin and I stood on the jet bridge awaiting our flight to San Luis Obispo. It had been a rough month of deadlines, diagnoses, and drama that rattled us enough to prioritize living in the moment.

My reflection in the window looked as tired as I felt. Kneeding the bags under my eyes, I told Benjamin, “I want to just be.”

He nodded, knowing that this made perfect sense, despite the fact I spoke in a dangling verb hungry for its noun. Lately, we had lived in verbs, “stressing, fearing, crying, praying, working,” and now oddly enough, “traveling.”

But this was an escape trip, one spontaneously chosen because we wanted to run to a place we knew nothing about. It was our chance to push reset and stay close to home but far from reality. And so, we chose Central California.

As serial travelers, we’ve been known to chase the glass half full, seeking bold pours that somehow reward us for not reading the label. Our blend of choice was Allegretto Vineyard Resort in Paso Robles, which could as easily have been Tuscany.

Lavender fields and dormant vineyards greeted us at the entrance, overshadowed by Mediterranean gardens and a Romeo and Juliet tunnel that spilled onto a piazza. Marble statues and olive trees had me questioning how an Italian dream bloomed in Paso Robles.

Halfway between LA and San Francisco, El Paso de Robles (The Pass of Oaks) was pinned on the map for its hot springs, almond orchards, and Southern Pacific Railroad. Yet its innovative cowboys and vineyard pioneers kept it there, making it a wine-lover’s destination with over 200 wineries.

Despite the passage of time, it’s the type of place where the farmer, wine maker, and owner are all the same person, clinging to the fertile Salinas River Valley.

Just ask Douglas Ayres, who plucked the low-hanging cluster after 13 years with an eye on the prize. As a fourth-generation hotelier, Douglas purchased 20 acres that would later become Allegretto, meaning “cheerful tempo.”

But in 2006, the music went silent when Douglas learned that his 15-year-old son Dylan was killed in a car accident on his way to Mammoth. In a quest for healing, Douglas embarked on a spiritual journey that took him from a Pentecostal church in LA to a silent monastery in the desert. Rather than grieving, he committed to work on his “inner garden” from 2007 to 2010.

This global pilgrimage gifted Douglas with enlightenment, spirituality, and artwork that reemerged back “home.” Today, those valuable assets are what make Allegretto a purposeful property built with intention.

The resort itself is a living gallery featuring French limestone, Venetian plaster, Italian gazebos, Murano chandeliers, Cambodian tables, Indian teak, Buddhist statues, Greek amethyst, and over a million dollars’ worth of commissioned works. In the shutters and bell tower are pops of teal and aqua, Dylan’s favorite colors. The masterpiece is Star Garden Trail, a walking journey through 12 stations of the constellations.

We tasted the stars through a flight of the hotel’s wines, our favorites being Tannat and Heart of the Vibe. During vineyard tours and art walks, we experienced the tranquility and rejuvenation that

Santa Margarita Lake, formed in 1941 by the Salinas Dam.





Copia Winery



Allegretto Vineyard Resort in Paso Robles

Douglas longed to share. Despite being part of the Ayres Hotel empire, he considers Allegretto his personal “story of joy” where he mingles among guests and introduces himself as “the gardener.”

As we soon discovered, Douglas was just one of many locals holding the bottle high. In Paso Robles, there are Michelin-star chefs, award-winning restaurants, budding brewmasters, jazz clubs, and visionary vintners, all digging their heels into the small-town charm.

Our tastebuds awakened at Fish Gaucho, leaning into its coastline proximity and Mexican heritage with one of the most impressive tequila and mezcal lists in California. They hooked us with shrimp ceviche and ahi tacos, and reeled us in with sea bass and lobster enchiladas.

And then there was Parchetto, downtown’s latest culinary jewel with Italian-meets-Californian cuisine in a swanky bistro setting. Seasonal, local, and sustainable options had us torn between braised oxtail, tuna tartare, duck confit croquettes, and lamb shank.

While eating may be a cornerstone of our travels, so is nature. Santa Margarita Ranch heard our cry with their Nature Adventure Tour that had us boarding a retired-military hummer, opening cattle gates, and exploring the historic 14,000-acre private lands.

From the Salinan-and-Chumash tribes to Franciscan missionaries, the ranch’s historical pedigree still echoed value in the valley. We saw it firsthand in the rich soil and abundant wildlife including eagles, turkeys, deer, and boar.

Among Mexican generals and rambling outlaws, a notable owner was Joaquin Estrada, a colorful ranchero granted farmland in 1841. His fiestas and rodeos made Santa Margarita Ranch a gathering place for generations, including the three current owners—the Filipponis, Rossis, and Wittstroms—who have preserved its roots as a ranch and vineyard.

Outside the cattle guards is the unincorporated community of Santa Margarita, with some 1,000 residents landlocked by the ranch. Meeting their needs are feed stores and storefronts labeled “Provisions.” Today, quiet streets are named after Estrada’s daughters, and hats are off to Patrick Murphy, Estrada’s successor

who helped bring the Southern Pacific Railroad to the area.

In the smalltown mix is Ancient Peaks Winery, a stone’s throw from Margarita Adventures where zip-and-sip are on the menu. As thrilling as that combo sounded, we opted for just the latter, sampling blends crafted under Winemakers Mike Sinor and Stewart Cameron.

As one of 11 American Viticultural Areas in Paso Robles, Santa Margarita Ranch stands out from the barrels for its cool microclimate, marine influence, and five diverse soils. In 2000, Napa winemaker, Robert Mondavi, knew a good thing when he saw it, bringing modern viticulture to the area. Prior to his vines were the Franciscan missionaries who planted grapes in 1780.

History aside, the present was on point at Ancient Peaks Winery, especially with their Pearl Collection reserve paired with a charcuterie platter. Leaning back in my barstool, I asked my husband if we should nap or hike. It really wasn’t a tossup, but our nature guide told us about a nearby lake worth a detour.

Next stop: Santa Margarita Lake, formed in 1941 by the Salinas Dam near the Santa Lucia Range. A 1.8-mile trail traced the fingers of the lake to Murphy Bay. From the peak, the lake resembled a puddle of paint awaiting Bounty to mop up the spill. Deer faced us without fear, and turkeys gobbled in the horizon.

With nothing on our agenda, we swam laps, tandem biked, and drove one-hour to the coast where sealions sprang in arches as if trained by rainbows. Between Avila Beach and Morro Bay, the Bluff Trail at Montaña de Oro State Park framed the dramatic shoreline above tidepools, chiseled cliffs, and rocky inlets. Curvy Old Creek Road back to Allegretto had us slowing for deer at dusk and Benjamin noting, “Well, there’s certainly less traffic than in San Diego.”

This was truth, recognizing the void of crowds once they were gone. The masses reappeared back at Allegretto’s restaurant, Cello. Allegretto did things right, and even pointed us toward other wineries that made the glass proud. Among them was Copia Winery, where ironically, Douglas Ayres was winetasting with friends.



The Neptune Pool at Hearst Castle is a masterpiece that spans 104 feet in length.

Following suit, we embarked on the wine flight and culinary pairing, loving the wine as much as the owners, Anita and Varinder Sahi. With Varinder's background in business and engineering, and Anita's in restaurants and marketing, they had the perfect formula for winemaking.

During their visit to Paso Robles in 2015, it was love at first sip. Setting down roots (literally), Anita and Varinder turned rows on 50 acres and 40,000 vines to produce Rhône and Bordeaux varietals. In 2017, they tasted the fruits of their labor with Copia (abundance or plenty). Since then, the estate has grown along with their popularity, thanks to their opulent wines with rich characteristics.

Yet Copia isn't the sole vineyard with a story. About 45 minutes away in Cambria, our winetasting escapade landed us at Parr Collective Tasting Lounge at Stolo Vineyards. As a former dairy farm from the 1800s, the garden setting set the tone with sheep and sunflowers.

Behind each glass is Rajat Parr, an Indian-American sommelier-turned-winemaker. From humble beginnings as a waiter, he visited vineyards on his days off, eventually being named "one of the most celebrated sommeliers in the world."

From Pinot Noir to Chardonnay, his wines are light bodied with little manipulation. Rajat is obviously doing something right, as coauthor of *Secrets of the Sommeliers*, and *The Sommelier's Atlas of Taste*.

For us, our personal "atlas of taste" kept us in Cambria, a seaside village in San Luis Obispo County. Monterey pines paved the way to antique shops, art galleries, and as many churches as cafes. We lunched at the Brydge, a former cottage from 1877.

From three generations of admirals, to now Executive Chef, Elaine Rivera-Glenn, this current owner has a culinary background that makes a visit to Brydge worth bragging about. Prior to Cambria, she had her head over stoves at Chez Panisse in San Francisco and in kitchens in Spain.

All that experience culminated at Brydge, with a rotating menu inspired by the organic farming community blooming nearby.

Shareable plates like roasted mushrooms with truffle oil, roasted beets with persimmons, and Petrale sole with fennel, had us both acting a little selfish on the "shareables."

From there, we headed 15 minutes north to San Simeon. The historic Hearst Castle was so close, we just had to go. As the former estate of publishing tycoon, William Randolph Hearst, the house built in 1919 was "the place" for Hollywood elite to play. From Bob Hope and Walt Disney to Bing Crosby and Charlie Chaplin, the 1920s were the heyday of the 165-room estate. Among those, we toured the Assembly Room, Refectory, Morning Room, Billiard Room, and Theater. Sparing no expense was the indoor swimming pool with Venetian golden tiles.

"Well, I feel poor," I whispered to Benjamin. "I feel liberated," he responded, referring to our minimalism.

From man's creation to God's, we soaked in coastline views where Highway 1 separated surfers from cattle. Another 5-miles north was Elephant Seal Vista Point, an alcove where hundreds of these hefty creatures shimmied to shore.

Saying farewell to coastlines and wineries, we went urban with two nights in downtown San Luis Obispo. It was less than an hour's drive and worth the hype. Staying central, Hotel San Luis Obispo was our base, with modern rooms, a lively bar, and prime location off Higuera Street.

This hub of action meant we could walk to Scout Coffee Co by day, and toast to being present at Feral Kitchen by night. The latter was a funky-fresh restaurant with a cocktail menu that "raised our spirits" in the lounge complete with a library and disco ball. The marketing team (and chef) earn top scores for Bone Appetit (bone marrow), Duck Duck Frites (duck fries), and Braise the Bar (braised short ribs).

Between window shopping and battling over Pac-Man at an arcade, we let our hearts dictate our pace and path, taking us to Avila Beach. This walkable village hosts galleries, boutiques, and Avila Pier with a smattering of beachy eateries and seafront dining. Blue Moon Over Avila transported us to southern France with its bistro chairs, ocean views, a menu of baked brie, escargot, and Steak Au

Poivre ... yep, we tried them all.

From there, we sweat calories at Sycamore Mineral Hot Springs in their hillside soaking tubs. After a deep sleep and full hearts, we headed to SLO airport, stopping midway at Madonna Inn. What started as 12 hotel rooms in 1958 expanded to a bakery, spa, coffee shop, dining room, cocktail lounge, and three gift shops meeting the needs of their kitsch following.

Pink is more than a color at Madonna Inn; It's a pillar of strength, luring travelers from afar to photograph the Barbie-meets-Dolly Parton match-up of décor. Over breakfast, we must have counted half a dozen signature Pink Champagne Cakes bouncing by, renowned for three layers between whipped almond Bavarian cream.

"I'm so full," Benjamin said, pushing away remnants of his corned beef hash.

Setting down my biscuit, I blurted, "I don't want to go home yet."

With no kids and a tank full of gas, it didn't require much convincing for a couple on the run from responsibility. As the realist, Benjamin threw out budget and weather as priorities. And so, we headed north.

The sunniest city in California, Redding was an economic move and a bold one at that. Looking at the map, Benjamin noted, "It's a freeway surrounded by a town."

"Or maybe," I said with optimism, "It's a town surrounded by a freeway."

In the rearview mirror were gas stations, Weiner Schnitzel, motels, and a north-western vibe to match. I still held tight to my hypothesis. Regardless, for us, it didn't come down to fancy hotels, nor the food scene, but rather nature. That was our purpose, to get outside and keep fueling. Our plan was to set up camp in Redding and to web out to Lake Shasta, Whiskeytown Lake, and maybe even try our luck at fly fishing. Welcoming us to Redding were cotton-candy skies pierced by Mount Shasta, the fifth highest peak in the state.

That night, we dined at Pipeline, a brick-loft-esque hotspot with stellar crafts and elevated bar food profiling lamb burgers, ahi tacos, and Reubens. By day, the sun overpowered the glitter of night, as we biked 15 miles beyond the Sundial Bridge along the Sacramento

River Trail. The award-winning 17.4-mile loop framed the river, connecting over 80 miles of trails.

For lingering bites and "another round," we found nourishment at Cheesecakes Unlimited with salmon wraps, Fusion Lounge with ramen, Evergreen with organic waffles, and Mosaic Restaurant with elk meatloaf. The food scene was eclectic, with cozy cafes and dive bars coming up for air.

The big win came at Lake Shasta Caverns, where we boarded a catamaran to cross Lake Shasta. On the banks, we explored ancient caves resembling candle wax, coral, honeycomb, and lemon meringue. Another gain came at Shasta Dam constructed in 1938, as the second largest concrete dam in America.

With nothing but time on our hands, we dedicated an afternoon to Whiskeytown, a 42,000-acre national recreation area boasting 36 miles of shoreline and multiple waterfalls, both of which we explored.

Of all the trails we had trekked, it was a "zoo" and a lazy trout that brought me home. At the edge of Sundial Bridge, sat Turtle Bay Exploration Park, which ironically has nothing to do with turtles. Instead, it has to do with life-giving moments that start with rescued animals and ends with a full heart. From porcupines and opossums, to skunks and beavers, guests can interact with these "free-range" healers during daily parades and private encounters.

I might have cried.

Literally hours before our flight home, we rowed onto the Sacramento River with Darrin Deel from AC Fly Fishing. As a first-time caster, I failed miserably as my husband pulled in one trout after another. I clapped without spirit. And then my moment arrived, when the biggest beauty of the bunch tugged my line. For the first time in my life, I couldn't wait to thank the puckering creature for gifting me a memory in Redding.

It was a moment where life below the river kissed the setting sun; where a jet bridge of exhaustion led me to a story of a man's sorrow that built a sanctuary; where farmers had the power to turn grapes into wine; where rancheros could build kingdoms; where waiters could become authors; where fishermen could become guides; and where a couple broken and done could learn how to "just be."



Lake Shasta Caverns National Natural Landmark



The route to Lake Shasta Caverns.

Once!

Another Spectacular Play at Lamb's Theater Playhouse

By Martin Kruming | Theatre Critic

Set in Belfast, Ireland, *Once* is a musical that gets your heart pounding from the moment you arrive at at Coronado's Lamb's Players Theatre.

"It's so good," gushes usher Roberta, to which colleague Ivan down the hall adds, "I've seen it. You'll love it."

They're not kidding. Adapted from the 2007 film with the same name, *Once* is more than a love story about a Dublin busker who plays the guitar and a Czech woman who plays the piano. It's also about the lovers they've left but go back to, and so many friends and neighbors who play musical instruments of all kinds – from guitar and violin to drums and mandolin. – tell jokes and one-liners, and share tender moments.

It's a fast paced, high energy, 90-minute (one intermission) story with tender as well as confrontational moments.

"How's everyone doing today?" asks one of the musicians right out of the box. Not satisfied with the audience's loud response, he responds, "We can do better than that." The primarily older audience is really into it now.

Coronado's weather outside was sunny with temperatures in

the 70s. Inside, the guitar-playing lead actor wore a long overcoat and scarf on a Dublin street in chilly weather. "It was my destiny to meet you today," he tells the Czech woman with the accent. "We all have accents." The guitar player also repairs vacuum cleaners, something the pianist needs. "You fix my Hoover and I pay you with music," she says.

Where do you get your energy? asks Hoover Man, whose girl friend is now living in New York. "I'm a mother. We are a special breed," responds the Czech woman with a young daughter, whose husband has left her. "Are you proud to be Irish?"

"To live, you have to love," she says. "Sweet," says he.

During intermission, theater-goers could order coffee or hot chocolate from Café Moto, a part of the Shamrock Pub.

"I was moved by the story the music told," said one theatre-goer. "Sometimes it took me to a very melancholy place; at others, it was foot-stomping fun."

Once has been extended again through April 26 at the Lamb's Players Theatre in Coronado.





Martin Kruming is a retired journalist, attorney and college instructor who chairs the Global Neighborhood Project, a nonprofit that focuses on citizen diplomacy through photography, storytelling and chess plus the arts and sports in countries off the beaten path such as Azerbaijan, Botswana, Latvia, Mongolia, Morocco, Uruguay and Uzbekistan.

New Poll Finds Gov. Newsom's Popularity Fell: 26% Say it Harmed their Perception of Gov.

Only one-half of 1% said that they listened to Newsom's podcast

By Evan Symon | The California Globe

According to a recently released Capitol Weekly poll, Governor Gavin Newsom's new podcast, "This is Gavin Newsom" only made 13% of voters have an improved perception of the Governor, with a huge 26% saying that it harmed their perception of Newsom.

Overall, the poll found that Newsom's new poll was hurting him rather than helping him. In total, 54% of Californians said that they at least heard about the podcast, with 46% not even knowing about it. Out of all respondents, only one-half of 1% said that they listened to it.

Other questions dealt with how respondents felt about Newsom's response to a discussion with Turning Point USA co-founder, talk radio host, and activist Charlie Kirk over trans athletes. During the discussion in the podcast, Newsom stunned many by saying that it was "deeply unfair" to have trans athletes competing against women in sports. His response led to many prominent Democrats denouncing his response and many LGBT groups pulling their support of him.

"I think it's an issue of fairness, I completely agree with you on that. It is an issue of fairness — it's deeply unfair," said Newsom.

"I am not wrestling with the fairness issue. I totally agree with you."

After respondents heard this, they were asked if they generally agreed that transgender women born as biological men should be able to participate in women's sports. Only 13% said yes, 26% said that it depended on the situations, and a vast majority of 61% said no. A majority of respondents also agreed with Newsom's response on the issue, with most further noting that the response was a huge change from the Governor.

In total, respondents were given three podcast snippets to listen to from the Kirk interview: the trans athlete snippet, a snippet over the usage of "Latinx," and a clip where Newsom introduced Kirk and joked that his 13-year-old son wanted to stay home from school to meet him, with Kirk responding by saying "You cancelled school for like two years, what's one more day!?"

And the results show that it has been hurting Newsom's popularity.

When asked if the podcast made Newsom seem more moderate, 24% of voters agreed that it did, 17% said it made them less likely to see him as moderate, and 59% said that his podcast



This is Gavin Newsom announcement (Photo: Gavin Newsom X page)



Gavin Newsom and Charlie Kirk (Photo: Gavin Newsom)

made no difference there. More telling was the question over perception of Newsom. Only 13% of Californians claimed an improved perception of Newsom after the podcast, 26% saying that it harmed their perception, and 58% saying that it made no difference.

According to the poll, while “This is Gavin Newsom” has made him seem slightly more moderate, it has also greatly damaged his perception and support amongst voters.

This isn't Gavin Newsom

Newsom first announced “This is Gavin Newsom” last month amidst many Californians saying that he mishandled the wildfires and the recall movement against him gaining steam.

“I’m here to stress test positions, including my own, in a more transparent manner,” explained Newsom last month. “It’s not a place everyone comes for therapy. I’m not looking to just give the orthodoxy — progressive and liberal talking points. There are so many outstanding people doing that, like our gifted professionals. I add no value in that space. I’m a redundant voice. But what I think I can offer is as a practitioner — not an ideologue, not a pundit: I’m in it as much or more than most elected officials in this country, because I’m in the largest state. I’m in a state that’s deeply on the mind of the administration. I’m in a state that is profoundly critical to the fate and future as it relates to some of the most critical industries like artificial intelligence, and obviously in this remarkable moment as it relates to geopolitical re-calibration.”

Even before the first episode aired, many called him out on hosting a second podcast instead of taking care of his Governor duties. Others said that the podcasts, both This is Gavin Newsom and Politickin’, would serve as a way for Newsom to stay in the public eye between leaving office in 2027 to when he announces his candidacy for president. And then there were those that said this was just a way for Newsom to look good and look more centrist in the leadup to his presidential candidacy.

Episode 1 was a disaster for Newsom, with Kirk walking all over Newsom, and turning the tables on Newsom, by having him admit that he thinks that it was deeply unfair to have trans athletes competing against women in sports. Further in the interview, Newsom even asked for advice for the Democratic party from Kirk and admitted that his own son was drawn more to the GOP now. Republicans roasted Newsom for his performance with Democrats, including Senator Scott Wiener (D-San Francisco) blasting Newsom for his reversal on trans rights.

While episode 2 with political commentator Michael Savage was seen as benign, his third episode with former White House Chief Strategist Steve Bannon caused shock from both the right and the left yet again. Many potential 2028 Democratic presidential primary rivals, including Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear (D), slammed Newsom for the episode. With episode 4 returning to banality with Minnesota Governor and 2024 Democratic Vice Presidential candidate Tim Walz (D) as his guest, many Newsom supporters are now apprehensive over just who else Newsom has planned after this breather episode.

“We all want him to stop. Like, what is he doing? Why did he think this was even remotely a good idea,” said Heather Wilson, a Newsom supporter who helped organize local events during his 2018 and 2022 gubernatorial runs, to the Globe on Tuesday. “You didn’t need to show us a poll to tell us that his podcast was hurting him. It was pretty obvious after that trans comment with Kirk and him agreeing with Bannon over some things.

“We all know he is doing this to build up for when he runs for president in a few years. But we just want to see him govern, not shoot his mouth off. When it comes time for debates and primary season, these clips are going to play. He is already going to have to deal with so much, like, say, that time when he ignored COVID guidelines at the French Laundry.

“Me and many others still support him, which I know isn’t a popular sentiment for some. His stance on environmental issues personally does it for me which, again, I know that may not be a popular sentiment to some. But me and many fellow supporters are siding with Republicans when it comes to stopping the podcast. In fact, both of them. At least until he is out of office. This is just awful.”

“He seems to be getting some broader appeal, which is what he wanted,” added media analyst Lydia Hart to the Globe on Tuesday. “But it is coming at the expense of overall support, particularly from the far left, which has been an important part of his base.”

La Jolla Music Society Announces 39th SummerFest, on July 25–August 23, 2025



J. Kenji López-Alt



Inon Barnatan



Renée Fleming

Return of SummerFest favorites including Alan Gilbert, Alisa Weilerstein, Clive Greensmith, Tessa Lark, Yura Lee, Stefan Jackiw, Anthony McGill, and Stefan Dohr

La Jolla Music Society (LJMS) today announced the lineup for its 39th annual SummerFest, its renowned chamber music festival which brings the greatest classical musicians and more from around the world to The Conrad in La Jolla for four weeks of concerts planned by Music Director and acclaimed concert pianist Inon Barnatan.

Centered on the theme of “Milestones,” SummerFest 2025 runs from July 25 to August 23 and brings back talents such as Alan Gilbert, Tessa Lark, Yura Lee, Stefan Jackiw, Alisa Weilerstein, Anthony McGill, Stefan Dohr, and Cécile McLorin Salvant, with Jessie Montgomery as Composer-in-Residence.

Making their SummerFest debuts this year are exceptional European artists including Yulianna Avdeeva, Nicolas Alstaedt, Vilde Frang, Steven Osborne, and Stephen Waarts, among others.

Special guests include soprano Renée Fleming in her SummerFest debut, dancers Caleb Teicher and Nic Gareiss with a new piece, and chef and food writer J. Kenji López-Alt in a concert that pairs musical selections with specially prepared food courses.

Contemporary composers Timo Andres, Matthew Aucoin, and Patrick Castillo will be featured in a “New York Takeover” of The JAI, The Conrad’s intimate cabaret-style space. Composer-in-Residence Jessie Montgomery will also curate a Takeover @ The JAI in addition to performing on several programs. A variety of her works will be showcased throughout the festival.

“SummerFest 2025 takes you on a journey through ‘Milestones’—the pivotal moments that shape a composer’s creative life and the evolution of chamber music itself,” Barnatan says. “Each concert highlights a key turning point or life stage, illuminating the spark of youthful experimentation, the mid-career breakthroughs that redefined boundaries, and the poignant final reflections that cemented legendary legacies. Beyond reflecting on the past, ‘Milestones’ also embraces fresh perspectives and interdisciplinary collaborations that underscore how every era has its own defining achievements. By exploring these transformative milestones—from personal triumphs to monumental shifts in the musical landscape—the festival reveals how each era’s bold leaps and discoveries continue to resonate today.”

SummerFest 2025 brings back the popular Midweek Masterworks series on Wednesday evenings, with intermission-less programming of some of the best-loved chamber music works followed by a complimentary sparkling wine toast in the courtyard. Also returning is the Synergy Initiative, a series co-produced by Inon Barnatan and Clara Wu Tsai which invites top creators of music, dance, spoken word and visual arts to collaborate across their different art forms and produce performances that inspire audiences in unexpected and powerful ways.

California's War on Oil Finally Prompts a Response

Exxon claims the state's attorney general is working with a bevy of nonprofits to ruin its reputation. **By Will Swaim | The Wall Street Journal**

In 2022, following several wildfires in California, Gov. Gavin Newsom blamed “corporate greed” and “climate change”—everything but environmental policies that have reduced the state’s forests to kindling. Mr. Newsom declared he would punish oil companies by prohibiting the sale of new gasoline-powered cars by 2035. Bans on oil drilling and gas appliances followed. When the next year brought more fire, Mr. Bonta sued Exxon Mobil, Shell, Chevron, ConocoPhillips and BP for allegedly causing the damage through climate change. In September 2024, Mr. Bonta sued Exxon Mobil again, this time for oil’s role in the production of plastics.

Exxon Mobil’s defamation suit, filed in federal court in Beaumont, Texas, reads like a Hollywood thriller. It begins with Andrew Forrest, the Australian founder of Fortescue, one of the world’s largest iron ore producers. A few years ago Mr. Forrest decided his company would decarbonize by 2030 and transform itself into a renewable energy powerhouse producing enough “green hydrogen” to power the globe. But green hydrogen uses massive amounts of electricity to separate hydrogen from water. To produce that electricity, Exxon Mobil says, Fortescue officials considered electricity-generation projects that sound anything but green—“damming the Congo and developing hydropower in Afghanistan, all with the objective of creating enough renewable energy to make affordable hydrogen.”

At the same time, Exxon Mobil alleges, Fortescue went on offense against its competition, developing a “novel strategy” of “smear campaigns and lawfare” against oil companies.

To accomplish that mission, Exxon Mobil says, Mr. Forrest established a foundation called Minderoo and funded it with some \$5

billion. Exxon Mobil claims that Minderoo made grants to a nonprofit called the Intergenerational Environment Justice Fund, which allegedly hired San Francisco-based Cotchett, Pitre & McCarthy “to recruit and enlist” the Sierra Club, Surfrider, Heal the Bay, and Baykeeper as plaintiffs in a suit against Exxon Mobil. Exxon Mobil alleges that Cotchett attorneys “developed deep financial ties to Attorney General Bonta” and that the firm’s partners “donated tens of thousands to Mr. Bonta’s political campaign at almost the exact same time as the firm received as much or more in fees for ‘legal services’ from the Foreign Interests.”

Minderoo, IEJF and the environmental groups deny Exxon Mobil’s allegations. A Cotchett spokesman called the lawsuit an effort to distract from the environmental harm allegedly caused by the oil company.

Californians first heard about all this on Sept. 23, 2024, when Cotchett sued Exxon Mobil on behalf of the environmental groups and Mr. Bonta sued the oil company on behalf of California. “There can be no question that Cotchett, through its NGO lawsuit, and Bonta, through his lawsuit ... are working together,” Exxon Mobil says. “The two lawsuits were filed on the same day, within hours of each other.”

Though neither Fortescue nor Mr. Forrest is named as a defendant in Exxon Mobil’s suit, Mr. Forrest says he is “personally delighted” that the company “has...opened themselves up to cross-examination” in a U.S. court.

Exxon Mobil’s lawsuit touches only briefly on Mr. Bonta’s troubles with political contributions from ostensibly “clean energy” interests. In 2021, the attorney general declared he wouldn’t prosecute Southern California Edison for its alleged role in a 2018 Los Angeles fire. Days before that

announcement, Politico reported, his campaign received \$72,500 from Hueston Hennigan attorneys, “including partners at the firm who directly represented SoCal Edison on the case.” Hueston Hennigan and Mr. Bonta denied any quid pro quo, but his campaign says Mr. Bonta returned the money “to remove even any appearance of a question around the donations.” A spokesperson for the utility says it had no involvement in the contributions.

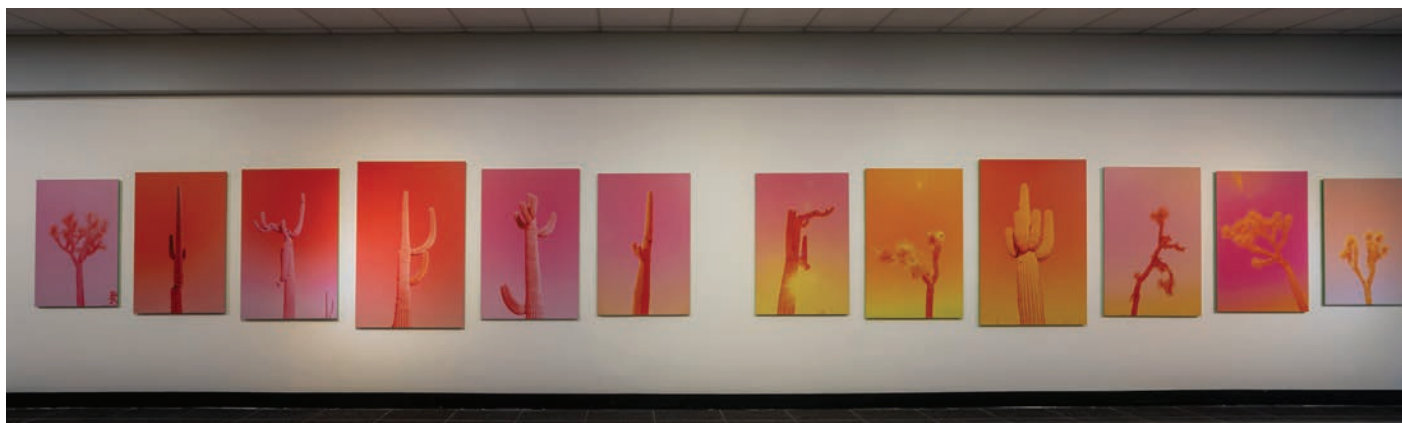
Last summer evidence surfaced that Mr. Bonta had accepted \$155,000 in campaign contributions from a recycling firm at the center of a Federal Bureau of Investigation probe into political corruption in Oakland, Calif. Mr. Bonta, who represented Oakland in the state Legislature, had allegedly attended Golden State Warriors games and travelled to the Philippines as a guest of the firm’s owners, one of whom called the attorney general “my brother” in social-media posts featuring a photo of the pair in the back of a limousine.

Mr. Bonta’s staff says the attorney general has returned the contributions. His spokesperson dismissed the latest lawsuit as “another attempt from ExxonMobil to deflect attention from its own unlawful deception.” Mr. Bonta, the spokesperson said, is “proud to advance his lawsuit against ExxonMobil and looks forward to vigorously litigating this case in court.”

Californians are financing this war on oil. They pay the highest fuel prices in the nation and watch as state officials who can’t clear tinder-dry brush from a single hillside claim they’re working to control the planet’s weather. Meanwhile, California burns and American taxpayers are asked to provide relief.

Mr. Swaim is president of the California Policy Center and a co-host of National Review’s “Radio Free California” podcast.

Mirror Mirror Art Exhibition Unveiled at San Diego International Airport



Rebecca Webb

A Captivating Light and Color Experience Fills Terminal 2

When you think of San Diego, what comes to mind? Perhaps it's the dazzling sunlight reflecting off the ocean water, or the breathtaking red and purple hues of a sunset that blankets the horizon. These iconic Southern California images have long captivated artists. Decades ago, artists who shaped the Southern California Light and Space movement revolutionized the art world by harnessing the power of light in new and innovative ways. Now, that legacy continues with Mirror Mirror, a temporary exhibition on display at San Diego International Airport (SAN) in Terminal 2 in both pre- and post-security areas throughout 2025.

Mirror Mirror brings together more than 100 works by 16 contemporary artists from the region, all exploring the fascinating interplay between light, color, and space. Artists use a variety of materials including interactive LED displays, vibrant lightboxes, and yarn installations that invite viewers to engage directly with the art. Whether through optical illusions, dazzling surfaces, or unexpected contrasts, Mirror Mirror offers a dynamic experience, transforming your understanding of space and perspective as you move through the exhibition.

"We are thrilled to bring Mirror Mirror to SAN and offer travelers this unique visual experience as they journey through our airport," said Kimberly Becker, CEO and President, San Diego County Regional Airport Authority. "This collection connects

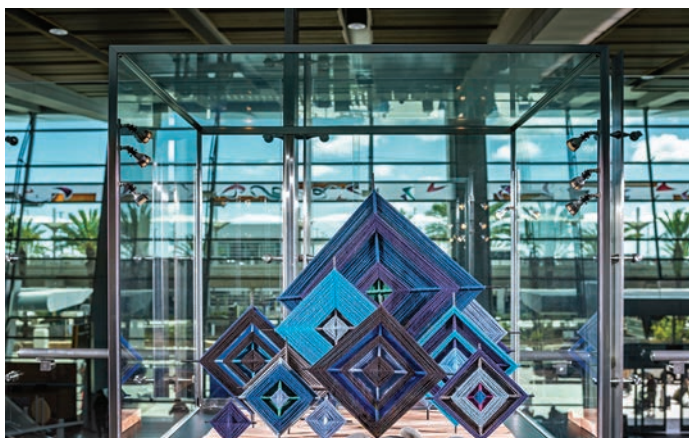
viewers to the Southern California arts community and the history that influences this contemporary art. We are grateful to the Airport Authority's Arts Advisory Committee for their efforts to ensure that the arts are woven into the customer experience at SAN and reflect the richness of the regional arts and culture community."

Mirror Mirror is open to all visitors at SAN. Whether you are arriving, departing, or simply passing through, take a moment to explore this captivating exhibition. It offers a unique opportunity to engage with contemporary art in a dynamic and accessible setting.

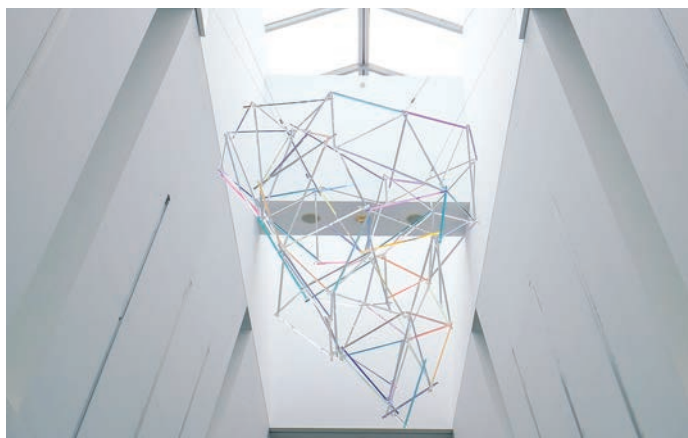
For more information about Mirror Mirror, including details on the featured artists and specific installation locations within Terminal 2, visit: arts.san.org/exhibitions-2025/

Light and Space Movement of the 1960s

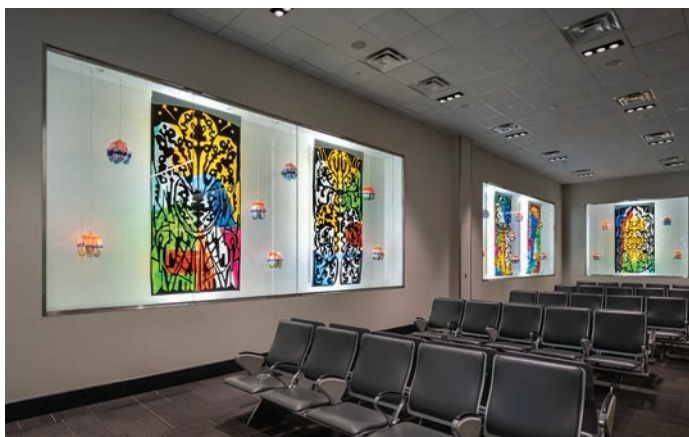
The Light and Space movement of the 1960s was driven by artists who were inspired by the unique quality of Southern California's light. They incorporated new, light-interactive materials provided by local industries, including aerospace manufacturing and industrial design. By doing so, they created minimalist works that invited viewer interaction and engagement, transforming with the changing light and surroundings.



Natalie Gonzalez



Kaori Fukuyama



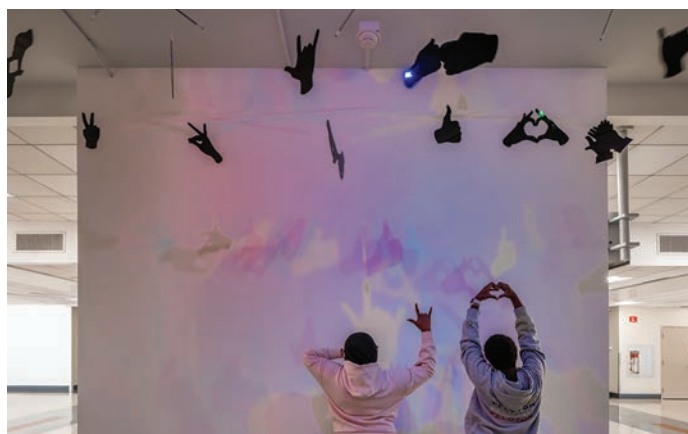
Wendell Kling



Alex Cerutti (aka Change The Game)



Taylor Chapin



Christian Michaels

In The Blink of an Eye:

THE UNTHINKABLE JOURNEY OF C. CHRISTIE CRAIG

Life is a fragile thread, and for C. Christie Craig, that truth became a devastating reality on January 3, 2025. In a single instant, she went from a person who made it her business to help athletes overcome traumatic injuries to becoming completely helpless herself—a quadriplegic fighting for her life. Her story is one of resilience, the courage to face an uncharted road, and the unrelenting will to reclaim the world she lost.

Life Before

A serial entrepreneur from the age of 21, Christie was deeply entrenched in the health and wellness industry. In addition to being a real estate professional, she specialized in managing the brands of elite football players, such as Rob Gronkowski and Jim McMahon. One of the most rewarding aspects of her work involved overseeing the care and support her clients needed to recover from sports-related injuries, such as traumatic brain injury. As part of her work, she had assembled a network of top physicians, including Dr Melinda Silva, an integrative medicine physician, based in Costa Mesa, CA. Outside of the joy and fulfillment she derived from helping her clients, she dedicated time to her ownself-care—eating well, running stairs with her beloved dog, lifting weights, and tackling seven-mile treadmill sessions. She was, by every definition, the picture of health.

Then, in the blink of an eye, everything changed.

The Moment Everything Shifted

January 3, 2025, started like any other day. Christie was working from home, calling patients for the physician with whom she collaborated. A quick turn—so minor, so unremarkable—was all it took. She heard something snap in her neck. A wave of numbness spread through her left arm, then her left leg. Within moments, the sensation moved across her entire body. She collapsed.

Her dog found her and alerted her business partner, Adrian, who called 911. By the time paramedics arrived, Christie's body was unresponsive from the chest down.

She was rushed to the ER, where doctors delivered the devastating news: she had suffered a catastrophic spinal hemorrhage, a complex and rare event. There was no surgical fix. No cure now, if ever, and the prognosis was unknown. The uncertainty hit her hard.

Losing Everything

From the ER, Christie was transferred to Scripps in La Jolla for neurosurgical consultation. She awoke in the ICU, surrounded by doctors. "They were stunned," says Christie. They told me there was nothing they could do surgically. "One doctor, Dr. Jihad Jaffer, a physical medicine and rehabilitation specialist, didn't sugarcoat his prognosis. "He told me I was facing something worse than I ever imagined. That I might never regain function. That I'd need help with absolutely everything—eating, drinking, even using the bathroom."

As the days in the hospital stretched into weeks, the reality of her situation became even grimmer. She lost more than her ability to move—she felt as though she'd lost everything.

"I had spent years helping people transform their lives, and now, I was the one who needed saving," she says. "I couldn't even scratch my own face. I would need help with everything and it could be permanent. There's no blueprint for how to handle this."

Fighting for Every Inch of Progress

Once stable, Christie was transferred to Sharp Memorial Rehabilitation Center, a world-renowned facility specializing in spinal cord injuries. Entry into the program was a feat in itself, but well worth the effort.

"Over the years I've seen probably a dozen rehab facilities," says Christie. "Sharp is by far one of the best. They specialize in brain and spinal injuries and their people and facilities are remarkable."

"I tried to call out for help, but could barely speak," Christie recalls. "I was lying on the floor, unable to move, unable to reach my phone. I was paralyzed and helpless. Just like



Christian Michaels

"It was a soul-crushing reality check. "I went from preparing for the Super Bowl to not knowing if I'd make it through the night."

Fighting for Every Inch of Progress

Christie felt lucky to have landed at Sharp but that didn't mean the road ahead would be easy.

"When I arrived, they told me: 'Things are going to change now. You have to commit to this process,'" she remembers. The nerves that once carried signals from her brain to her limbs are silent now and it would take hard, daily effort to reconnect her mind with her body.

Every day was a battle with hours of therapy. Tasks that once seemed trivial—holding a spoon, feeding herself, brushing her teeth, writing her name—she had to relearn everything. And there were devastating moments along the way, such as the harsh reality of learning to catheterize herself to go to the bathroom.

Through it all, Christie pushes forward, determined to regain whatever she can. Knowing that the alternative could mean death.

The Emotional and Psychological Toll

As bad as it was to lose movement due to paralysis, it was probably the loss of identity that hit her hardest.

"One of the nurses referred to me as, 'the quad in Room 104,'" she recalls. "That was the moment it hit me. This was my identity now. I wasn't just Christie anymore. I was 'the quad.'"

"I felt like I had died, but my body hadn't caught up yet," she says. "Every morning, I woke up hoping it was just a bad dream."

The emotional weight of paralysis is immense. Studies show that people with spinal cord injuries are three times more likely to experience depression than the general population. Christie was no exception.

"There were days when I just didn't want to keep going," she admits. "I had gone from being there for others to someone who couldn't even cough on her own. But I knew I had to make a choice: either I let this consume me, or I fight back."

Unbelievably, It Could Have Been Worse

Christie's injury was eerily similar to that of actor Christopher Reeve, best known for playing Superman. In 1995, Reeve suffered a cervical spinal cord injury after being thrown from a horse during an equestrian event. His injury occurred at the C1-C2 vertebrae, leaving him completely paralyzed from the neck down and unable to breathe on his own. He required a ventilator for the rest of his life.

Christie's injury, while catastrophic, stopped just short of this worst-case scenario. "Dr. Jaffer told me that if the hemorrhage had affected anything higher than C3, I would have been on a ventilator too," she says. "I was literally an inch away from Reeve's fate."

While Reeve's injury ultimately led to his passing from complications related to paralysis, his advocacy for spinal cord research left an indelible impact. Christie hopes to use her own experience to continue raising awareness about the realities and challenges of spinal cord injuries.

"I never imagined I'd be here, but now that I am, I have to push forward. I have to keep fighting. If I can get my story out there, maybe I can bring awareness to the devastating consequences of spinal cord injuries and how so many of us struggle to get the resources we need."

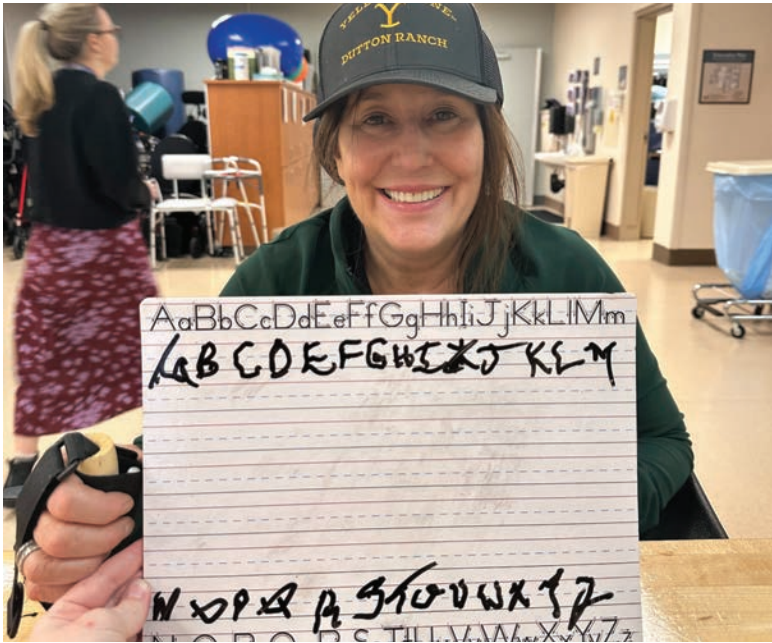


Christie Craig (after spinal hemorrhage)

"I talk to my body out loud, telling it what to do. Sometimes, nothing happens, and I just cry.

Other times, I see a tiny flicker of movement, and it gives me hope. "

"When you lose spinal function, it's like the motherboard on your computer crashing. The signals don't get



To support Christie's journey, visit her GoFundMe page by scanning the QR code below and help her begin to rebuild her life



Rebuilding Her Life, Starting at Home

Christie's fight is far from over. She has her hopes set on continuing her recovery at the renowned Craig Hospital in Denver, Co. In the meantime, she's thinking ahead to life in a wheelchair. Her home with its four levels of stairs is now an insurmountable obstacle to someone wheelchair bound. With the help of friends, she is launching a GoFundMe to raise funds to make it accessible.

Spinal Cord Injuries: Expect the unexpected

Christie's case is a stark reminder of the thousands who experience spinal cord injuries every year. According to the National Spinal Cord Injury Statistical Center, approximately 18,000 new spinal cord injuries occur annually in the U.S. The leading causes are:- Vehicular accidents (39.3%)- Falls (31.8%)- Violence, including gunshot wounds (13.3%)- Sports-related injuries (8%)- Medical and surgical complications (4.3%) Spinal cord injuries disproportionately affect young adults, with the average age at injury being 43 years old. Men account for nearly 78% of all cases. Despite advances in medicine, the long-term prognosis for many remains daunting. Only about 1% of spinal cord injury patients fully recover, and many face a lifetime of mobility impairments, chronic pain, and secondary health complications.

For those who experience a spinal cord injury—know someone who does—here's what you should brace yourself for:

1. The Initial Shock

- Paralysis often sets in immediately. It's a terrifying, disorienting experience.
- Medical teams will focus on stabilizing you and assessing the damage.

2. The Harsh New Reality

- Expect to lose independence in ways you never imagined. Daily tasks like eating, dressing, and even scratching an itch become impossible.
- The medical system isn't always prepared for the depth of emotional trauma involved. Seek out support groups and mental health professionals.

3. The Long Rehab Journey

- Most patients require months, if not years, of physical therapy.
- Recovery is unpredictable and slow. Some people regain movement, others do not.

4. The Cost

- The average first-year cost for a quadriplegic patient is over \$1 million. Long-term expenses are staggering.
- Insurance rarely covers everything, so fundraising or financial planning is crucial.

5. Advocating for Yourself is Vital

- Be prepared to advocate for yourself. Medical care for spinal cord injuries is often inadequate. Many patients struggle with finding accessible homes, quality rehab, and ongoing care.
- Raising awareness and advocating for better resources can make a difference.

By Pamela Tames Pamela

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