

SDMETRO

your business your life

NO. 7 VOL. 40

SAN DIEGO COUNTY'S 2025 MEN OF INFLUENCE



William W Eigner



Steve O'Connell



Ron Morabito



Paul Hodge



Xavier Rodriguez



Dr. Noori Barka



Jim Heffner

UCLA Anderson Economic Forecast SEE PAGE 6

SERVING SAN DIEGO, LOS ANGELES AND IRVINE

619-777-7700

RJS LAW
A TAX LAW FIRM

www.RJSlawfirm.com

Our mission is to always provide quality journalism for our readers by being fair, accurate and ethical and a credible resource for our advertisers.



San Diego's Men of Influence 2025

Read about some of San Diego's most influential men. **PAGE 4**



Weakness Persists in California Economy

The forecast warns of weakening U.S. and California economies, rising inflation, softening labor markets and tariff impacts, with risks of recession or stagflation, but expects gradual recovery beginning in 2026 and strengthening in 2027. **PAGE 6**



Alaska Airlines and the San Diego Tourism Authority Fly to new heights

Alaska Airlines and the San Diego Tourism Authority expand their partnership to promote San Diego, boost tourism and economic growth, enhance non-stop connectivity, and spotlight the region's culture, innovation, and business travel appeal. **PAGE 8**



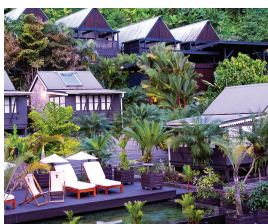
Coastal Commission Looks to Shed Its Controversial Reputation.

California's Coastal Commission extends timelines for affordable housing projects as it seeks to repair its reputation amid political pressure, leadership changes, and debates over its authority, environmental mission, and role in statewide housing policy. **PAGE 10**



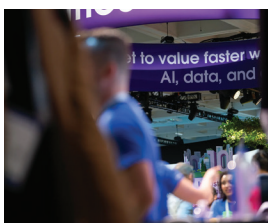
Diagnosis Newsom: Obsessive Political Preoccupation with TRUMP

A columnist describes intense political anxiety becoming obsessive and clinical for some individuals, prompting calls for research and highlighting how fixation, fear, and identity-driven stress now shape many people's reactions to national politics. **PAGE 12**



St. Lucia

A couple visits a Caribbean island seeking rest but finds vivid culture, cacao cuisine, lush landscapes, snorkeling, rafting, and slow "island time," rediscovering joy, calm, and connection through immersive travel and natural beauty. **PAGE 18**



California sees revenue uptick, but not enough to erase its chronic budget deficit

California's revenue bump is likely temporary, analysts warn, with tech-driven gains masking deep structural deficits. Past overestimates created chronic shortfalls, leaving upcoming budgets facing tough choices: genuine cuts, tax hikes, or continued gimmicks. **PAGE 22**

SDMETRO

your business your life

Chairman | CEO

Robert Page
BobPage@sandiegometro.com

Publisher

Rebeca Page
RebecaPage@sandiegometro.com

Associate Editor

Douglas R. Page
dpage@sandiegometro.com

Graphic Designer

Christopher Baker
cbaker@sandiegometro.com

Photography/Illustration

Benjamin Myers
Jim Childers

Contributing Writers

Martin Krumming
Michael McHugh
Marsha Sutton
Alexi Koseff
David Rottenberg
Myrna Marston
Marlise Kast-Myers
Andrew Simmerman

Advertising

SALES & MARKETING DIRECTOR
Rebeca Page

Get in the loop with SD Metro's Daily Business Report. Sign up for daily emails on the latest business at sandiegometro.com

P.O. BOX 3679
RANCHO SANTA FE, CA 92067
858.461.4484

SD METRO magazine is published by REP Publishing, Inc. The entire contents of SD METRO is copyrighted, 2025, by REP Publishing, Inc. Reproduction in whole or in part is prohibited without prior written consent. All rights reserved. All editorial and advertising inquiries can be made by calling or writing to the above. Editorial and ad deadline is the 24th of the month preceding the month of publication. Mail subscriptions of SD METRO are available for \$50 a year for addresses within the United States. A PDF version of this issue is available at sandiegometro.com Additional information, including past articles, online-only content and the Daily Business Report can be found at sandiegometro.com. For reprints or plaques of articles published in SD METRO, please call Rebeca Page at 858-461-4484

All real estate advertising in this newspaper is subject to the Fair Housing Act which makes it illegal to advertise "any Preference limitation or discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, or national origin, or an intention, to make any preference, limitation or discrimination. "Familial status includes children under the age of 18 living with parents or legal custodians; pregnant women and people securing custody of children under 18. This magazine will not knowingly accept any advertising for real estate which is in violation of this law. Our readers are hereby informed that all dwellings advertised in this magazine are available on an equal opportunity basis. To complain of discrimination call HUD Toll-free at 1-800-669-9777. Th Toll-free telephone number for the hearing impaired is 1-800-927-9275.

Read us online at:
sandiegometro.com



Manny Cruz, longtime San Diego Journalist, passes away at 83

By SDMETRO STAFF

Manny Cruz, a longtime San Diego journalist, passed away in his home in Kimball, Michigan, Monday, October 20, at age 83. He had moved from San Diego six years ago to be near his son, Matthew, and two grandchildren.

His long career in San Diego journalism began in the mid-1960s at the Daily Californian in El Cajon, beginning as a reporter before becoming a copy editor and taking the responsibility for training young college interns. He then spent eleven years at the Daily Transcript as wire editor and special sections editor.

He left the Daily Transcript to become editor of the Star-News, a weekly newspaper in Chula Vista, where he wrote a weekly column and supervised reporters, freelance writers, and photographers. Later, he became editor of Antiques & Collectables, a newsmagazine in El Cajon.

He joined San Diego Metropolitan Magazine, now SD METRO Magazine, in 2004. He became the magazine's managing editor in 2009, a post he held until his retirement earlier this year.

"Manny loved the news business. He often said he never could have imagined doing anything else. He could be a demanding editor, and the publications he worked for were better because of it. His contributions to our magazine were many. A good friend has passed," said Bob and Rebeca Page.

He saw active duty in the Air Force as a member of the 7406 Support Squadron at Rhein-Main AFB, Frankfurt, Germany. He was a graduate of San Diego State University.

He leaves behind daughter Cindy Cruz Legg of Huntington, West Virginia, and son Matthew Cruz of Kimball, Michigan, six grandchildren, and sisters Irene Clark and Mary Young, both of San Diego.



Manny Cruz with his dog.

SERVING SAN DIEGO, LOS ANGELES AND IRVINE

RJS LAW®

A TAX LAW FIRM

TAX AUDITS, CIVIL & CRIMINAL TAX LITIGATION

- IRS Audits
- IRS Appeals
- IRS Collections
- OIC / Settlement
- Criminal Tax
- Innocent Spouse Relief
- Payroll Tax
- OVDP / Voluntary Disclosure
- SBOE / Sales Tax
- FTB / State Tax
- Estate Tax
- International Tax
- Corporate Law
- Real Estate Law
- EDD / California State Payroll Tax

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



FULL SERVICE STAFF OF 9 ATTORNEYS & 2 CPAs

619-777-7700

RJSLawFirm.com

SAN DIEGO | 303 A STREET, STE 400, SAN DIEGO, CA 92101
IRVINE | 2 PARK PLAZA STE. 1258, IRVINE, CA 92614, BEVERLY HILLS | 8484 WILSHIRE BLVD. STE 210, BEVERLY HILLS, CA 90211



SAN DIEGO COUNTY'S 2025 MEN OF INFLUENCE



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 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 in the past 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.



STEVE O’CONNELL

He is president and chief executive officer of North Island Credit Union, which has been named a Forbes Best-in-State Credit Union for 2024 and 2025. Under his leadership, North Island has achieved outstanding financial performance and introduced numerous innovations to drive significant transformation, growth, and member service enhancements across every area of operations. Through his guidance, the credit union has achieved the strongest financial performance in the organization’s history, increasing assets to over \$5 billion and serving more than 200,000 members. In addition, consumer lending has reached all-time highs over the past four years. At the same time, the member experience has been improved at every touchpoint, and new internal operational efficiencies have been implemented to further safeguard member services. He is a board member of San Diego’s Classroom of the Future Foundation and a graduate of Cal State Northridge.



RON MORABITO

He is the CEO of V Group, a leading national sign company. As a definitive “Man of Influence,” he founded the company behind the signage seen every day across professional sports, higher education, the U.S. military, corporations and non-profits. V Group’s byline says it all: “STAND OUT—unleash the power of your brand.” V Group is recognized nationwide for its wide array of production and installation capabilities and for delivering exceptional customer service. The company provides high-quality, custom signage and print solutions to organizations of all sizes and industries, offering end-to-end expertise from concept to completion. Among V Group’s clients are the San Diego Padres, Holiday Bowl, San Diego FC, San Diego Seals, San Diego Gulls, UC San Diego Athletics, California State Games, World Lacrosse and WIS. Arenas and stadiums include Pechanga Arena, Frontwave Arena and Snapdragon Stadium. Educational clients include UC Irvine, UC San Diego, USD, San Diego State University and Point Loma Nazarene University. The company’s community initiative, “What Can We Do for You—Wednesday,” donates custom signage to a different charity each month.



PAUL HODGE

He is the CEO and co-founder of World Amenities, Inc., and the visionary behind the San Diego-based trusted supplier of more than 245 stock lines and over 500 signature skincare brands for hotels, cruise lines, vacation rentals, salons, spas, businesses, and medical and educational sites. The products include custom amenities, necessities, and accessories in more than 150,000 hotel rooms per night in over 70 international markets. Under his leadership, World Amenities brands are worldwide, and a million guests use at least one of its products daily. The company is committed to environmental sustainability and repurposed manufacturing practices. World Amenities' business model is to be synergistically propelled by the goodwill, beliefs, and drive behind the products rather than by product sales and pricing. Under his leadership, World Amenities launched its "Help Us Help" program last January in response to the Southern California wildfires. He is an official Forbes Business Council 2024–2026 member and a graduate of Queensland University of Technology.



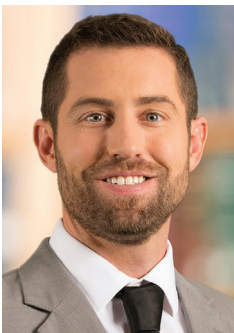
XAVIER RODRIQUEZ

He is the CEO of ADU Geeks, a housing innovation company leading the transformation of small-scale residential development throughout San Diego and beyond. A U.S. Marine Corps veteran and recognized Latino leader, he is redefining how Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) are planned, permitted, and built by integrating smart systems, automation, and data into the development process. His leadership has positioned ADU Geeks as one of the region's most trusted and experienced ADU development firms, with more than 500 completed projects and over 2,500 units scoped across Southern California. Under his leadership, ADU Geeks has evolved from a design-focused services firm into a technology-enabled platform that streamlines every milestone of the ADU journey. Housing development is typically fragmented, requiring homeowners and investors to navigate zoning analysis, architectural design, engineering, city permitting, contractor selection, budgeting, and inspections. He volunteers as a Dinnertime Hero at the Ronald McDonald House Charities.



DR. NOORI BARKA

He is a visionary leader, exemplifying what it means to be a man of influence. An Iraqi Chaldean, he continues to lead with passion, building a legacy through his transformative contributions to education, community service, and business development, all aimed at empowering his community. He earned his Ph.D. in diagnostic immunology from the Université Catholique de Louvain (UCL) in Belgium in 1986. A scientist, entrepreneur, and community leader, Dr. Barka is the founder of Calbiotech, a global diagnostics company, and creator of programs that support refugees, families, students, and small businesses across East County. He established the Chaldean Community Council, Hope for Iraqi Christians, Kidinnu Academy Charter School, and the El Cajon Small Business Incubator. He is recognized for his long-standing dedication to education, health innovation, and community service.



JIM HEFFNER

He is a partner at Hahn Law. He is passionate about learning, hardworking, and a strong and supportive colleague. His practice primarily involves complex commercial litigation, disputes arising from the movement of employees or confidential/trade secret information between competitors, litigation over breaches of duty, and counseling at the intersections of technology and the law. He brings creativity and an unsurpassed passion for the law to each of his matters. He applies his deep understanding of electronically stored information and communications to gain effective litigation advantages. He has earned Martindale-Hubbell's top peer review rating of AV Preeminent for legal ability and professional ethics. He earned Super Lawyers' recognition as a Rising Star for four years. He has been honored as a Man of Accomplishment and a Top Attorney by SD METRO Magazine. He is a graduate of Arizona State University and the University of San Francisco School of Law.

MATT PALMER BILL HOWE

JOE BERTOCCHINI USD

NATHAN SCHMIDT SDCCU

COLLINS EJIUGU UCSD

JOHN BURROWS DEWITT GUAM

MORGAN APPEL UCSDE

JUSTIN BETYAR LAVINE, LOFGREN, MORRIS & ENGELBERG **STATH KARRAS** USD SCHOOL OF BUSINESS



Weakness Persists in U.S. and California Economies, with Recovery Not Expected Until 2026

By UCLA Anderson Forecast

Since the June release of UCLA Anderson Forecast's second quarterly report of 2025, the national economy has endured several inflection points that now inform its subsequent third quarterly economic forecast. First, the labor market deteriorated notably, marked by a decline in payroll employment in June. The inflationary trend pivoted to a rising trajectory. Finally, Federal Reserve chairman Jerome Powell signaled a change in monetary policy. In what is referred to as the "Powell Pivot," the Federal Reserve's focus has shifted to a stronger emphasis on its employment mandate relative to its inflation mandate.

As a result, this latest forecast comes at a time when more extreme economic scenarios are possible; and, while they do not manifest in the current baseline outlook, they are plausible enough to mention and monitor. The risk of rising layoffs leading to a recession is now a tangible possibility. Even if a recession is avoided, the current pivot toward monetary easing sets the stage for what the Forecast anticipates will be a "stagflation-lite" regime, marking a period in which both inflation and unemployment remain modestly elevated. Finally, should the current administration's attempt to undermine the Federal Reserve's independence succeed, a full-blown stagflation scenario becomes a more significant risk.

Previous reports pointed to signs of weakening in the California economy. The data on employment in the state over the past eight months suggest that California is in an employment contraction, one that will last through 2025. Data on income and production are collected with a lag, but it is reasonable to expect that they will also show a sharp slowing from last year and possibly a mild contraction in the state's economy.

The California sectors that have fueled better-than-U.S. growth rates since 2000 have been stagnant or contracting; these include

tech, durable goods manufacturing, entertainment and logistics. Entering 2025 with an economy growing at half the rate of the U.S. left the state's economy without the inertia evident in the national economy. Over the first seven months of the year, California lost payroll jobs and the unemployment rate increased to above 5%. Once the state is past the current weakness, which is expected to occur in late 2026, a tech, durable goods manufacturing and construction resurgence should lead to California's superior growth once again.

The national forecast

The UCLA Anderson Forecast's third quarterly report of 2025 observes that the U.S. labor market remains resilient. Claims for unemployment remain low at 1.92 million and, though the unemployment rate has risen to 4.3%, it remains low by historical standards. However, other dimensions of the labor market demonstrate signs of weakness. The aforementioned unemployment rate masks weak underlying employment growth, a result, simultaneously, of a decline in the labor supply among the working-age population affected by restrictive immigration policies and retiring baby boomers. June's outright decline in non-farm payrolls is particularly noteworthy, as economists view this as the primary signal that a recession is imminent — or even that it has already begun. Moreover, the positive job gains that have occurred on average over the past month are concentrated in just a few sectors, such as healthcare and education. Most other sectors of the economy have seen declining employment numbers since April.

Finally, there are now fewer job vacancies than there are unemployed. The Forecast expects the labor market to weaken further through the end of 2025, with the unemployment rate peaking

at 4.6% at the onset of 2026, accompanied by further declines in non-farm payrolls. This is a mild weakening, similar to the economic slowdown in 1995. It does not represent a full-blown recession. It is projected that labor markets will slowly recover in the second half of 2026 and throughout 2027, as the effects from tariffs have worked their way through the economy and give way to the fiscal and monetary stimulus that is on the horizon.

After trending downward, inflation reversed course in May and has been gradually rising to uncomfortable levels with the monthly CPI inflation rate for August coming in at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 4.8%. This rise is likely to persist: Inflation at earlier stages of production along the supply chain have only just begun rising faster than they have for finished goods. While some of this rise is driven by prices of goods exposed to tariffs, a large part of the increase so far has been driven by the price of non-shelter services, such as airline fares and dental care. This is concerning for two reasons: first, much of the cost of the tariffs has yet to be passed on to consumers; and second, significant inflationary pressures are still coming from the services sector, which makes up about two-thirds of the consumption basket. As a result, the Forecast expects inflation to continue to rise throughout the rest of 2025 as the cost of tariffs is finally passed on to consumers, with the headline CPI peaking at 3.6% SAAR in the first quarter of 2026.

The report forecasts third-quarter GDP growth to come in at around 1.0% SAAR. As in the first quarter of 2025, this subdued headline growth masks a stronger underlying rate of core GDP growth because of a run-up in imports in July before the next round of tariffs was imposed in August. The quarter will be driven by a recovery in consumer expenditure growth and continued expansions of AI capital expenditures, while residential construction contracts further. Following this quarter, growth is expected to weaken substantially in the winter as the cost of tariffs fully take hold. Consumption expenditures growth will weaken, as spending was pulled forward into the third quarter to take advantage of expiring electric vehicle tax subsidies and lower tariff rates. Non-AI related capital expenditure growth, which has been mostly non-existent so far this year, will contract, pushing net investment expenditures into negative territory. Growth will recover in mid-2026 and reach 2.0% by the fourth quarter of 2026. This is a faster pace of recovery than previously projected, owing to the higher levels of monetary and fiscal stimulus that will now take place.

The California report

For the California economy to grow faster than the U.S. economy, as it is accustomed to do, durable goods manufacturing — including aerospace and technology-laden sectors — will have to rebound strongly. In manufacturing, transportation equipment and related navigational equipment and semiconductors were the subsectors with the largest job losses in 2025. Aerospace should

benefit from the return to normal production at Boeing and Airbus and increased emphasis on space exploration and satellite production. The recovery at Boeing is not expected to be adversely impacted by tariff-based retaliatory action by China and India in the near term, as Boeing has a 10-year backlog of aircraft orders that include many aircraft that would have been manufactured over the three years of an FAA-mandated slowdown in production. Nevertheless, California and the nation have experienced a general decline in manufacturing employment, and the timing of a turn-around in this sector remains uncertain. For technology, the issues are the issuance of a large number of H-1B visas and the rapidly changing skill set emphasizing AI development, now demanded by employers.

Two sectors that will be impacted by deportations are food processing (non-durable goods manufacturing) and agriculture. These will be disproportionately felt in the inland parts of the state and the agricultural coastal valleys. The H-2A program is in place for the purpose of allowing U.S. companies to hire foreign nationals temporarily for agricultural work. However, there is no sign from the Trump administration to indicate that it will champion bringing in seasonal guest workers. Rather, it is believed that U.S. residents with legal status will take jobs in the fields and in the meat processing plants that are now occupied by undocumented workers. Although temporary worker visas could make up for some of the loss of labor, the visas would likely be available only to the subset of workers who are seasonal. Temporary worker programs like H2-A are designed for partial-year entry into the U.S. and not permanent entry.

The data from the past three months confirmed that the California economy has been growing slower than the U.S. in 2025, with several quarters of negative job growth. The current forecast is substantially the same as June's, with a slightly weaker 2025 and a slightly stronger 2027.

A recovery in California will commence in late 2026; growth will be slightly faster in 2027. The unemployment rate is expected to hit a peak of 6.2% early next year and the average unemployment rates for 2025, 2026 and 2027 are expected to be 5.5%, 5.9% and 4.6%, respectively.

The forecast for 2025, 2026 and 2027 is for total employment growth rates to be 0.5%, 0.4% and 2.3%, while non-farm payroll jobs are expected to be -0.1%, 0.1% and 2.2% during the same three years. Real personal income is forecast to grow by 1.5% in 2025, 0.9% in 2026 and 2.7% in 2027. Higher interest rates, shortages of construction labor, and the rebuilding of damaged and destroyed homes lowered our residential construction forecast from March. The UCLA Anderson Forecast's expectation is for permitted new units to be 107,000 this year and grow to 117,000 by the end of 2027. This level of home building means that the prospect for the private sector building out of the housing affordability problem over the next three years is nil.

Alaska Airlines and San Diego Tourism Authority take partnership to new heights, showcasing San Diego as a premier U.S. destination

Building on a long-standing partnership, Alaska Airlines and the San Diego Tourism Authority (SDTA) are uniting once again to elevate San Diego as a world-class destination for meetings, conventions, business and leisure travelers. Together, Alaska and SDTA will spotlight the city's vibrant coastal culture, thriving innovation economy and diverse attractions – all easily accessible with Alaska's growing network of nonstop routes to and from San Diego.

Through a joint partnership, Alaska and the SDTA will showcase San Diego as a must-visit destination for business and leisure travelers across the country and around the world. Beyond tourism, the partnership drives economic growth, supports local jobs and spotlights the region's innovation and culture. Using a 360-degree approach – from direct consumer marketing and business engagement to community impact through the San Diego Tourism Accelerator – Alaska and SDTA bring the city's vibrant culture to national audiences with signature events like Taste of San Diego in New York and the Washington, D.C. Spa Experience.

“San Diego is one of Alaska Airlines' most important hubs, and

we're proud to invest in a partnership that strengthens the local tourism sector and the broader community it supports,” said Neil Thwaites, regional vice president of California at Alaska Airlines. “By combining our extensive network and resources with SDTA's deep local expertise, we're helping ensure San Diego continues to thrive as a premier destination for business and leisure travelers alike.”

With more than 49 nonstop destinations from San Diego International Airport, Alaska Airlines offers more nonstop routes than any other carrier serving the region. Beginning next spring, new service to Dallas-Forth Worth, Oakland and Santa Barbara will further expand connectivity. Furthermore, Alaska's network from San Diego provides seamless access to major business and leisure hubs such as Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, Chicago, Washington D.C. and popular destinations in Mexico – all with the airline's award-winning service and premium travel experience.

“This partnership with Alaska Airlines demonstrates what's possible when two organizations unite around a shared vision for growth,” said Daniel Kuperschmid, President & CEO of the San



Diego Tourism Authority. “Together, we’re not only showcasing San Diego as a world-class destination — we’re also investing in the people, businesses and communities that make this city truly extraordinary.”

“San Diego is always proud to welcome visitors from across the country and around the world, and partnerships like this one between the San Diego Tourism Authority and Alaska Airlines help make that possible,” said San Diego Mayor Todd Gloria. “With more nonstop destinations than ever, Alaska is opening new doors to our city’s world-class beaches, cultural institutions, vibrant neighborhoods, and thriving innovation economy. Tourism is a cornerstone of our local economy, and this collaboration will help drive jobs, investment, and opportunity for San Diegans.”

About Alaska Air Group

Alaska Airlines, Hawaiian Airlines and Horizon Air are subsidiaries of Alaska Air Group, and McGee Air Services is a subsidiary of Alaska Airlines. We are a global airline with hubs in Seattle, Honolulu, Portland, Anchorage, Los Angeles, San Diego and San Francisco. We deliver remarkable care as we fly our guests to more than 140 destinations throughout North America, Latin America, Asia and the Pacific. We’ll serve Europe beginning in spring 2026. Guests can book travel at alaskaair.com and hawaiianairlines.com. Alaska is a member of the oneworld alliance, with Hawaiian scheduled to join oneworld in spring 2026. With oneworld and our additional global partners, guests can earn and redeem points for travel to over 1,000 worldwide destinations with Atmos Rewards. Learn more about what’s happening at Alaska and Hawaiian at news.alaskaair.com. Alaska Air Group is traded on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) as “ALK.”

About San Diego Tourism Authority

San Diego Tourism Authority is a private, non-profit, mutual benefit corporation composed of more than 1,000 member organizations, businesses, local governments, and individuals seeking a better community through the visitor industry. San Diego Tourism Authority members include tourism-related entities in such categories as lodging, dining, arts, attractions, shopping, and transportation, among others, as well as other companies indirectly involved in tourism. Visit sandiego.org to learn more. The majority of funding received by the San Diego Tourism Authority is derived from the City of San Diego Tourism Marketing District Assessment Funds. Lodging business in the District raise these funds through self-assessments for the purpose of promoting tourism in the San Diego region.

AI-Powered Healthcare

Turn patient conversations into accurate documentation

SAVE
providers
3 Hours
of documentation time
per day

Epic **athena health**
practice fusion
computonk ...and many more

- AI-Powered Ambient Medical Scribe
- No more notes after work or on weekends
- Real-time medical notes and ICD-10 billing codes

Quantum AI Health www.quantumai.health

SD METRO

your business your life

2025

MEN OF INFLUENCE AWARD

Paul Hodge
CEO | CO-FOUNDER

Our World Amenities family celebrates Paul’s passion for fostering a confident and positive team-company culture.

He demonstrates his commitment to visionary leadership and ensures our continued success—as documented by appearing on the Inc 5000 five consecutive years!

www.worldamenities.com

WA WORLD amenities



People enjoy the boardwalk in Mission Beach on Friday, Oct. 24, 2025. / Vito di Stefano for Voice of San Diego

Coastal Commission Looks to Shed Its Controversial Reputation

By Nadia Lathan | Voice of San Diego

Commission members gathered in downtown Sacramento last week for their monthly meeting to address the latest developments along California's coast.

On the agenda was a Santa Monica hotel failing to comply with accessibility requirements and the Diablo Canyon power plant – the last remaining nuclear site in California – trying to stay open despite mounting environmental concerns.

Also on the schedule was a rule change that would give coastal affordable housing projects more time to begin construction.

In a unanimous decision, the 12 voting members of the quasi-judicial agency approved it, giving projects up to five years, rather than two, to break ground.

Commissioners and staff lauded the approval as a step in the right direction to allow affordable housing projects more time to get the funding they need.

They also cheered the decision as a step toward remaking the controversial reputation of the 53-year-old agency.

"I think next year would be a good opportunity to roll out an education campaign in the Legislature to highlight some of the movements we made toward this," Commissioner Linda Escalante said.

This week, I reported on how the California Coastal Commission is changing to regain the favor of lawmakers and housing advocates for its storied role in controlling housing along the

Pacific coast.

The commission is one of the most powerful state agencies in the country, overseeing some of the wealthiest real estate in the world, as I mentioned in the Sacramento Report a few weeks ago.

Democratic Gov. Newsom has accused the agency of slowing rebuilding efforts in the Pacific Palisades after the January Los Angeles fires. State lawmakers, including Assemblymember David Alvarez, have introduced a slew of bills in recent years to cut its authority over certain housing rules.

In May, Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas of Salinas appointed two pro-development officials: Monterey County Supervisor Chris Lopez and Chula Vista Councilmember Jose Preciado.

And last month, Newsom appointed Jaime Lee, a wealthy Los Angeles real estate developer to the commission to replace Effie Turnbull Sanders, who helped the agency adopt its current environmental justice policies.

Environmentalists, although surprised by Lee's appointment, were wary of raising alarms, saying it's too early to form an impression of Lee.

"While there have been concerns expressed within the environmental movement, at this point we have no idea how this commissioner will be," said Jennifer Savage, associate director of the coastal protection group Surfrider Foundation.

“At this point we’re optimistic that she’ll uphold the coastal act.”

The 1976 law governs the Coastal Commission and San Diego’s own massive coastal zone, which is larger than that of any other county and includes over 300,000 residents, according to data from Nicholas Depsky at the United Nations Development Programme.

It was created in the aftermath of the 1969 Santa Barbara oil spill, one of the country’s worst environmental disasters, and its main purpose is to protect California’s beloved shoreline from environmental degradation. The coastal act also keeps its pristine beaches open to the public.

Staff and commissioners often point out that coastal protection and public access are the agency’s primary responsibility, not housing policy, which they believe they have been unfairly scrutinized for.

The commission is responsible for approving only a small number of housing permits and has authority over just a handful of local governments that do not have their own coastal rules.

“In the Legislature’s enthusiasm and zeal in order to effectuate housing more quickly, they’re kind of stepping on themselves,” said Sarah Christie, a legislative director at the commission. The myriad housing reform laws California has passed have made it confusing for cities and counties to update their coastal zoning rules, she said.

Commissioner Ray Jackson, a skeptic of big developers, said that lawmakers need to focus more on affordable housing rather than increasing supply more broadly.

Housing activists, such as Colin Parent with Circulate San Diego, have found hope in the recent changes.

“I think it’s a good sign,” Parent said. “I actually think that the coastal commission statute is fine as is if the people enacting it have a broader view of their goals.”

After commissioners approved the housing rule change, commissioner Escalante suggested the agency create a document compiling the movements it has made toward helping California’s intractable housing crisis.

“I don’t know if we can have a white paper that we can walk around with and figure out some of the reputation issues that we have.”

Looking ahead

The state Legislature reconvenes on Jan. 5. Here are some of the previously introduced bills I’m watching.

Senate Bill 369 is a union-backed measure that would require workers on the Salton Sea restoration project be trained or certified by an apprenticeship program. It was introduced by Democratic Chula Vista Senator Steve Padilla. Newsom vetoed the bill on Oct. 13, stating that it would cause delays unless changes were made in consultation with the state labor agency. It was returned to the Senate for reconsideration.

Padilla’s other proposal, to create a California Latino Commission, SB 388, was vetoed by the governor because the governor said “it would lead to ongoing implementation costs in the millions of dollars while duplicating existing efforts.” The bill, which seeks to create a nine-member state agency to address so-

cioeconomic inequities among Latinos, was kicked back to the Senate.

Assemblymember Chris Ward, a San Diego Democrat, plans to revive his surveillance pricing proposal, Assembly Bill 446. It would prevent grocery stores from using user data to inform their prices. Ward previously told the Sacramento Report that he seeks to introduce a broader version of the bill that would include most retailers after AB 446 stalled after an Assembly floor vote.

Senate Bill 741, introduced by Democratic Sen. Catherine Blakespear of Encinitas, would stop the Coastal Commission from reviewing future projects added to the Los Angeles-San Diego-San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor, which hugs the Pacific coast. It would be another blow to the agency’s authority. It passed the Senate and awaits a committee hearing in the Assembly.

Another proposal by Blakespear, Senate Bill 569, aims to help streamline the process for cities to enter agreements with the state transportation department to clear homeless encampments on roads and freeways. It also awaits a committee hearing in the Assembly.



Congratulations Dr. Noori Barka

Scientist, entrepreneur, and Chaldean community leader. Founder of Calbiotech, the El Cajon Business Incubator, the Chaldean Community Council, and Kidinnu Charter School. We congratulate him on this well-earned honor as one of San Diego’s Men of Influence.

NOORI BARKA, PHD 619-212-6888

Diagnosis Newsom: Obsessive Political Preoccupation with TRUMP

By Katy Grimes | California Globe



“Is ‘Trump Derangement Syndrome’ Real?” Jonathan Alpert asked in a column at the Wall Street Journal. “No therapist would render such a derogatory and partisan diagnosis, but I’ve seen it in my practice.”

We’ve all witnessed Trump Derangement Syndrome, and some of us have experienced it in real time with family members, friends, co-workers, and strangers, all who are triggered by a red hat or t-shirt, or an image of Donald Trump on television. TDS is a serious mental disorder in which a person has been driven mad over their hatred of Donald Trump, abandoning all rationality, logic and reason.

Mr. Alpert, who is a psychotherapist, says that he has seen it in his own psychotherapy practice. “Patients across the political spectrum have brought Donald Trump into therapy not to discuss policy but to process obsession, rage and dread,” he says. “Their distress is symptomatic, not ideological.”

Alpert says the presentation aligns with anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorders:

- Persistent intrusive thoughts
- Emotional dysregulation
- Impaired functioning
- Sleepless nights
- Compulsive news checking
- Physical agitation

“Many confess they can’t stop thinking about Donald Trump even when they try. They interpret his every move as a threat to democracy and to their own safety and control.”

Well, never fear. Congress has a solution: H.R.3432. The TDS Research Act of 2025 by Rep. Warren Davidson (R-OH): “To direct the Director of the National Institutes of Health to conduct or support research to advance the understanding of Trump Derangement Syndrome, and for other purposes.”

Jonathan Alpert continues with his diagnoses:

Call it “obsessive political preoccupation”—an obsessive-compulsive spectrum presentation in which a political figure becomes the focal point for intrusive thoughts, heightened arousal and compulsive monitoring. (Gavin Newsom, call your office, stat).

I initially viewed this as an ideological reaction, an understandable response to a polarizing figure. But over time the symptoms took on a more clinical shape. What once looked like outrage now presents as a fixation that distorts perception and consumes attention.

One patient told me she couldn’t enjoy a family vacation because “it felt wrong to relax while Trump was still out there.” (imagine if that was your wife...) Others report panic attacks or trouble sleeping after seeing him in the news.

Their anxiety has outgrown politics and become a way of being.”

“Their anxiety has outgrown politics and become a way of being.” Let me interject here... Most TDS sufferers were

“In 2016 the reaction was acute: disbelief, anger, panic. By 2020 it had hardened into identity. Now it has become a way of life.”

- JONATHAN ALPERT,
WALLSTREET JOURNAL COLUMNIST

always nutty. What once looked like outrage at Donald Trump’s elections now presents as a fixation that distorts perception and consumes attention. It’s not normal or mentally healthy.

TDS sufferers lost their minds when they lost the first election to Trump. Most Democrats assumed that they would retain power following Obama’s two terms. When Trump beat Hillary Clinton in 2016, obsessive political preoccupation set in. They lost power, and because power and control are at the root of the Democrat Party, the loss was overwhelming. Political disagreement turned into perceived personal threat – transference or projection – they irrationally imagined that what they had planned for conservatives, would now be done to them.

Alpert says: “From a diagnostic standpoint, it overlaps with obsessive-compulsive disorder, generalized anxiety disorder and trauma-related syndromes. While not a formal diagnosis in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, it reflects the same symptom patterns and behavioral mechanisms used to define emerging conditions. By that measure, this presentation merits serious consideration.”

Intense therapy is needed because “Mr. Trump himself isn’t the pathology; he is the trigger.” Alpert continues:

“For many, he functions as a psychological screen onto which unresolved fears and insecurities are projected. Political disagreement turns into perceived personal threat.”

“Therapy, once a space for cognitive restructuring, has in some quarters become an echo chamber for emotion. Rather than challenging distorted thoughts, many therapists affirm them, mistaking empathy for effectiveness.” (leftist therapists empathize with TDS

Enjoy H.R. 3432 the “Trump Derangement Syndrome Research Act of 2025”

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Trump Derangement Syndrome Research Act of 2025” or the “TDS Research Act of 2025”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) Trump Derangement Syndrome has been described as a behavioral or psychological phenomenon involving intense emotional or cognitive reactions to Donald J. Trump, his actions, or his public presence, with early documented references emerging during his 2016 presidential campaign.

(2) Notable early instances of TDS include certain media coverage amplifying polarized responses to Donald J. Trump’s campaign rhetoric, which some observers cite as initial signs of TDS, though precise origins remain understudied.

(3) Recurrent, selective reporting by media outlets, emphasizing aspects of Donald J. Trump’s actions or statements while omitting broader context, has been alleged to contribute to TDS by intensifying polarized public reactions and deepening societal division.

(4) Frequent amplification of unverified or anonymously sourced claims about Donald J. Trump’s conduct has further fueled TDS, driving significant public outrage and contributing to heightened emotional responses among individuals and groups.

(5) The following two confirmed assassination attempts against Donald J. Trump occurred in 2024:

(A) On July 13, 2024, at a campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, a shooter wounded Donald J. Trump’s ear, killed one attendee, and injured two others.

(B) On September 15, 2024, at the Trump International Golf Club in West Palm Beach, Florida, a suspect was apprehended with a rifle and the incident was investigated as an assassination attempt.

(6) Understanding TDS may contribute to broader insights into political polarization, media influence, and psychological responses to public figures, with implications for public health and social cohesion.

(7) The National Institutes of Health, through its existing programs, is well-positioned to study the psychological and social factors underlying TDS, including its origins, media influences, and potential links to extreme behaviors, to inform public health strategies.

sufferers, and affirmed their madness rather than treating it).

“The language of trauma and safety has migrated into everyday discourse, pathologizing discomfort and politicizing distress.

“Political anxiety serves as moral performance instead of a cue for regulation.”

For many Americans, what began as a stress response has become a chronic state of hyperarousal and vigilance, Alpert explains. “In 2016 the reaction was acute: disbelief, anger, panic. By 2020 it had hardened into identity. Now it has become a way of life.”

The loss of control is overwhelming for TDS sufferers.

“During the 2024 campaign and into 2025, many patients have spoken with fatalistic dread about Mr. Trump’s continuing presence at the center of national life. Even hearing his name can trigger a physiological response. They aren’t reacting to Mr. Trump the man but to Trump the symbol—the embodiment of chaos, threat and loss of control.”

TDS sufferers are reacting to the embodiment of chaos, threat and loss of control.

“Patients must learn to separate internal anxiety from external reality and to see Mr. Trump not as an emotional projection but as an external figure whose significance can be managed rather than magnified,” Alpert says.

For the left and far too many on the right, they are critical of Trump’s approach to and style of politics, ignoring that he is a street fighter from Queens. Trump’s politics are far more honest than those who claim he doesn’t act “Presidential.” They loved Barack Obama’s “Presidential” behavior, ignoring that he set America on a dangerous path to destruction.

Alpert concludes, “The goal isn’t to feel safe from Mr. Trump but to feel stable despite him. We can’t have a healthy democracy if half the country experiences the other half as a trauma trigger. The challenge, clinical and cultural, is to rebuild psychological distance—to see the difference between what we feel and what truly is. Only then can people engage politically without losing their mental balance.”

SEC. 3. NIH RESEARCH ON TRUMP DERANGEMENT SYNDROME WITHIN EXISTING PROGRAMS.

(a) In General.—The Director of the National Institutes of Health, through the existing programs and authorities of the National Institute of Mental Health and other relevant institutes and centers, shall conduct or support research to advance the understanding of Trump Derangement Syndrome, including its origins, manifestations, and long-term effects.

(b) Research Objectives.—The research conducted under subsection (a) shall include:

(1) Efforts to identify the initial emergence or earliest documented cases (commonly referred to as “patient 0” or index cases) of TDS, including historical and social analyses to trace the onset of TDS

(2) Investigation of the long-term psychological, social, or behavioral impacts of TDS on affected individuals, communities, or public discourse;

(3) Analysis of contributing factors, such as media exposure, political polarization, or social dynamics, to the development or spread of TDS; and

(4) Exploration of potential interventions, coping mechanisms, or strategies to mitigate adverse effects of TDS, as applicable.

(c) Collaboration.—The Director shall collaborate with the heads of other Federal agencies, academic institutions, and relevant organizations, as appropriate, to achieve the objectives described in subsection (b).

(d) Annual Report To Congress.—Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the Director shall submit to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate and the Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House of Representatives a report on—

(1) the progress of research conducted under this section;

(2) any findings related to the initial emergence or long-term effects of TDS; and

(3) recommendations for further research or public health actions.

SEC. 4. DEFINITION.

In this Act, the term “Trump Derangement Syndrome” or “TDS” refers to a behavioral or psychological phenomenon characterized by intense emotional or cognitive reactions to Donald J. Trump, his actions, or his public presence, as observed in individuals or groups.

Choosing the Right Care at Home

Understanding Home Care, Home Health, Hospice and How They Can Work Together

By Porsha Vogt

As loved ones age, many families face a familiar question: what kind of help is best and when? The world of “care at home” can seem confusing, with terms like home care, home health, and hospice often used interchangeably. Yet each serves a distinct purpose, with different payment sources and eligibility rules.

At Golden Care, a locally owned home care agency serving San Diego County, we often help families untangle these options. Here’s a clear guide to understanding when to use each service and how some can even work together.

Home Care: Non-Medical Support for Daily Living

Best for: Seniors who need help with day-to-day activities but not skilled medical treatment.

Paid by: Private pay or long-term care (LTC) insurance.

Home care focuses on keeping older adults safe, comfortable, and independent in their own homes. Caregivers aid with bathing, dressing, meal preparation, light housekeeping, medication reminders, errands, and companionship.

Because its non-medical, home care doesn’t require a doctor’s order or homebound status. Families hire an agency directly and can choose flexible schedules from a few hours a week to live-in support.

Medicare does not cover this type of care, but many LTC insurance policies do. Golden Care helps families navigate these policies and coordinate with other services when needed.

Home Health: Short-Term Skilled Medical Care

Best for: Recovery from illness, surgery, or injury when skilled nursing or therapy is needed.

Paid by: Medicare (if eligibility criteria are met).

Home health care is prescribed by a physician for someone who is homebound and needs intermittent skilled services such as nursing, physical therapy, or speech therapy.

It’s designed to help patients regain health and independence after a hospital stay or major medical event. Medicare covers 100% of approved home health services, but aide assistance is limited to short, medically necessary visits. Once therapy goals are met, coverage ends.

If ongoing daily support is needed after home health discharge, families often add private home care for continuity.

Hospice Care: Comfort and Dignity at the End of Life

Best for: Individuals with a terminal illness who choose comfort-focused care.

Paid by: Medicare Part A hospice benefit.

Hospice shifts the focus from curing illness to maximizing comfort, dignity, and quality of life. It’s available when two physicians certify a life expectancy of six months or less.

Hospice teams: nurses, aides, social workers, and chaplains

provide pain and symptom management, emotional support, and caregiver relief. Services are covered in full by Medicare and can be provided at home, in assisted living, or in a hospice facility.

Many families combine hospice care with non-medical home care so a caregiver can stay with their loved one throughout the day, while hospice clinicians visit as needed.

Using Services Together

A common misconception is that families must choose only one type of care. Several services can work concomitantly (at the same time):

- **Home Care + Home Health:** While a nurse or therapist visits a few hours a week under Medicare, a home-care aide can provide daily personal care, meal prep, and/or transportation.

- **Home Care + Hospice:** Hospice nurses manage comfort and medications, while caregivers provide round-the-clock companionship and practical support.

This blended approach ensures medical needs are met while maintaining comfort and continuity that only consistent caregivers can provide.

VA Aid & Attendance: Help for Veterans and Spouses

Veterans and surviving spouses may qualify for a monthly pension supplement called Aid & Attendance to help pay for in-home care, assisted living, or other long-term care costs.

Eligibility is based on service history, medical need, and financial criteria. Though the paperwork can feel daunting, the benefit can significantly offset private-care expenses. Local Veteran Association, accredited representatives can assist with applications, and Golden Care can provide documentation of care needs if required.

Southern Caregiver Resource Center: Free Local Support

San Diego’s Southern Caregiver Resource Center (SCRC) offers no-cost services for family caregivers, including education, counseling, support groups, and respite referrals. If you’re caring for a loved one in San Diego, SCRC is a trusted local hub for guidance, workshops, and community connections.

Visit caregivercenter.org or call (858) 268-4432 to learn more.

The Bottom Line

Every family’s journey is unique. Some begin with short-term Medicare home health and later add private home care for ongoing support. Others bring in hospice for comfort and continue working with trusted caregivers who know their loved one best.

Whatever the path, Golden Care is here to guide families through each step ensuring seniors receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

Golden Care — Serving Rancho Santa Fe and Greater San Diego 760-828-5201 www.getgoldencare.com

SPEAKING OUT

A college student speaks out against a woke faculty and DEI

By John Hinderaker | Powerline



The Texas A&M University student newspaper published an op-ed by an anonymous teacher that is described by the College Fix: “The professor’s 1,000-plus word op-ed defends woke faculty and DEI-related issues, and urges students to organize against conservative political interference allegedly undermining academic freedom.” That op-ed drew a response by a student named Justino Russell. The student paper wouldn’t print Russell’s response, but here it is. This kid has a future:

Dear Anonymous Professor:

You are profoundly detached from the real issues affecting us, our families, our country, and the world today.

We are the most depressed, anxious, suicidal, obese, addicted, and indebted generation in American history, and the first to be worse off than our parents. We are forced to take pointless courses, buy outrageously expensive textbooks for information freely available online, and serve as a captive audience in a system where everyone—from publishers, administrators, and banks to professors like you—profits while we drown in debt.

The numbers don’t lie: almost 40% of students drop out, burdened by loans but no degree. Half of those who graduate end up in jobs that never required a degree in the first place. A bachelor’s degree has become a \$100,000 high school diploma.

What caused this collapse, you ask?

You and your ideologies did. You are no longer educating us to build, compete, and lead. You are indoctrinating us to deconstruct, resent, and surrender.

In economics, you promote Marx and Keynesian financialization, offshoring, and money printing—policies that make homes unaffordable and force us to work two jobs just to pay bills. You omit Austrian School economists like Mises and Hayek, who de-

fended the free markets that built the unprecedented prosperity we enjoy today. You smear capitalism as “oppressive” while pushing the actually oppressive redistribution schemes that have failed everywhere they’ve been tried.

In psychology, you idolize Alfred Kinsey as the father of the sexual revolution and John Money as the one who coined the word “gender” as separate from sex. Yet you never tell us that Kinsey gathered data from pedophiles who abused babies, and that Money’s theory was founded on his experiments with the Reimer twins, both of whom committed suicide from the trauma.

In literature, you replace Shakespeare, Dickens, and Dante with a racist DEI quota system, choosing books based on race and victimhood instead of merit. The more “marginalized” the author, the less their work is critiqued and the more you celebrate it.

In sociology, you force-feed us feminism, an ideology that teaches women to resent men, motherhood, and family. You glorify Simone de Beauvoir and Betty Friedan but hide the inconvenient truth: that single, childless women are the unhappiest demographic, while married women in Christian households report the highest life and sexual satisfaction.

In history, you teach that slavery was America’s unique sin, ignoring that it was universal until White Christian nations abolished it first. You never mention the 600,000 Americans who died ending it, the Royal Navy’s anti-slavery squadron that liberated 150,000 slaves, or that slavery still thrives in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

In philosophy, you prioritize Marx, Freud, and Foucault—the philosophers of disorder—over Aristotle, Aquinas, and Locke, who built the foundations of virtue, natural law, and liberty. You conveniently leave out that the philosophical purpose of freedom is to do what is good, not to do whatever we want.

In political science, you present the genocidal failures of Marxism, socialism, and communism as “viable alternatives” for academic debate, while downplaying the brilliant, liberty-ensuring architecture of our Constitution. You dismiss foundational mechanisms like the separation of powers and the Electoral College as archaic flaws, and ignore the wisdom of the Federalist Papers, because you are racist toward the White Christian males who authored them.

In the sciences, you deny the biological reality of sex, even though every single one of the 60 trillion cells in the human body is either male or female, and no amount of hormones can change that. Instead of helping people with body image and mental health issues, you promote their permanent and irreversible mutilation to virtue signal.

And we could go on. But the bitter irony is that you stand on the shoulders of the giants who built this country, this state, and this university, using your cushy job to spit on their legacy and the values that have given you everything you enjoy today. You take parents’ life savings and teach their kids to hate them, their faith, and their heritage, causing fights over Thanksgiving dinner.

You aren’t teaching us how to think; you’re teaching us what to think. You turned a marketplace of ideas, where each side is supposed to be heard equally, into an indoctrination camp where only the approved party line is parroted. You created the first generations in world history without love for their God, their family, or their country—and then wonder why they’re miserable.

Meanwhile, China, Russia, and our competitors teach their engineers calculus and physics, not gender studies and woke-ness. They laugh at us as they dominate in AI, energy, and manufacturing.

So why are you scared when taxpayers demand a return to excellence? Why fear being recorded? What are you teaching that can’t stand scrutiny? Lobotomies and eugenics were once taught, too. The gender unicorn is just the current pseudoscience.

You’re not scared of politicians. You’re scared of losing your six-figure, taxpayer-funded salary because your indoctrination model is failing. What you’re seeing around you is a call on Texas A&M, the nation’s universities, and the West to become once more the leader of the educational world, as it is the leader of the free world. We need engineers, not ideologues: builders, not critics.

We need more Charlie Kirks, not more Ibram X. Kendis. We are your customers, your bosses, and your product is broken. Don’t gaslight us for demanding a better one.

Justino Russell
Texas A&M Student

P.S. I want to defend the truth, so I’ll sign my name. If you were teaching the truth, why didn’t you sign with yours?

SDMETRO
your business your life
MEN OF INFLUENCE
2025

Congratulations
XAVIER RODRIGUEZ
CEO OF ADUGEEKS

The ADU Geeks team proudly congratulates **Xavier Rodriguez**, CEO of ADU Geeks, for being named one of the **SD Metro Magazine's 2025 Men of Influence.**

ADUGEEKS.COM

Congratulations

to our Founder & CEO, **Ron Morabito**
Named one of SD Metro Magazine's
MEN OF INFLUENCE 2025

A recognition of leadership, innovation, and impact.

V GROUP
signs | print
vgroupsigns.com

California sees revenue uptick, but not enough to erase its chronic budget deficit

By Dan Walters | CalMatters

In the four months since the Legislature and Gov. Gavin Newsom enacted a new state budget, revenues — primarily from personal income taxes — have outstripped expectations by several billion dollars.

The uptick has buoyed hopes within the Capitol that California's chronic budget deficits might disappear if the revenue surge continues. That would spare Newsom and legislators from having to dream up more accounting gimmicks, deferrals and loans to cover the gap between income and outgo.

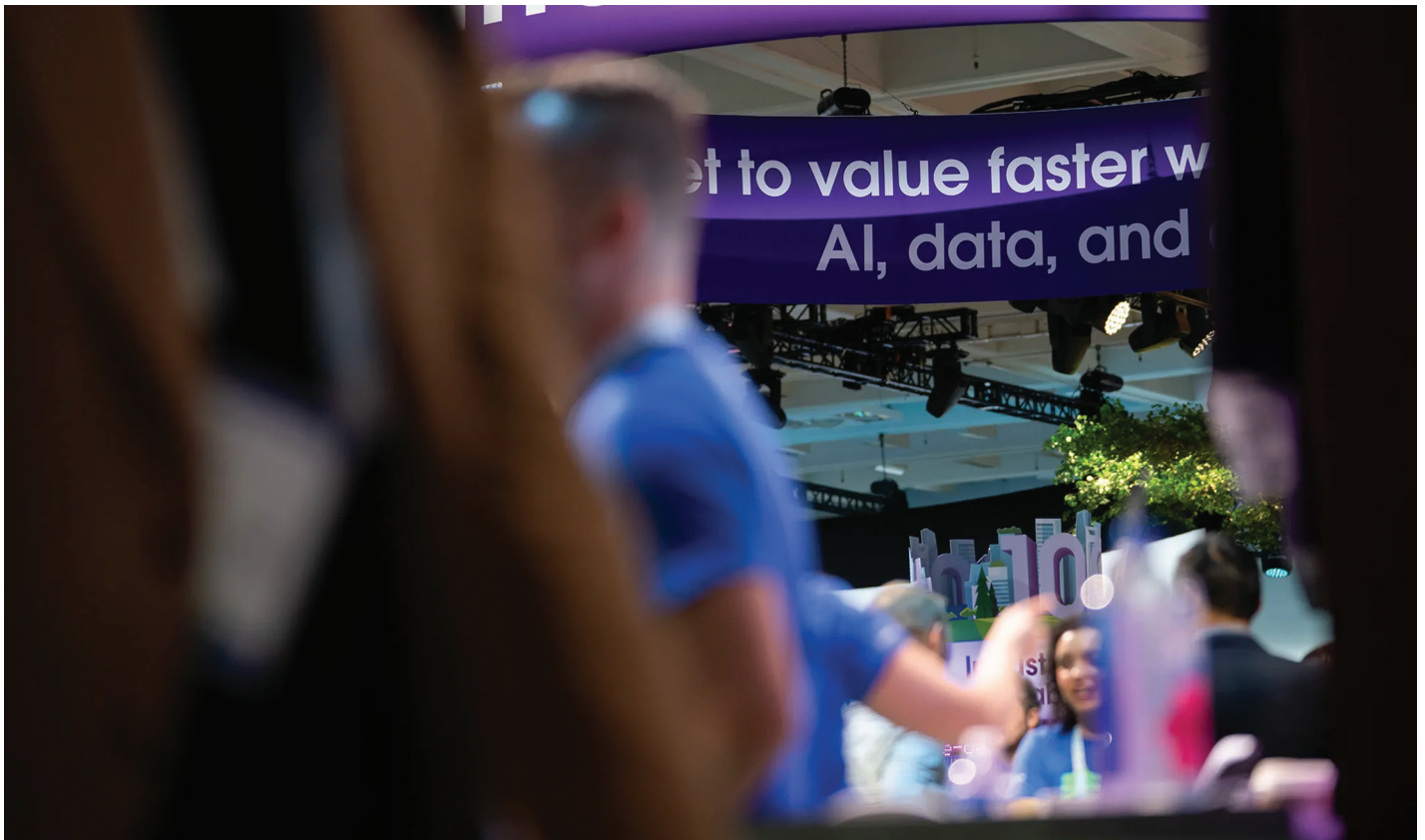
However, the Legislature's fiscal advisor, Legislative Analyst Gabe Petek, threw cold water on those rosy scenarios Wednesday. He sees recent revenue gains as a spike driven by an artificial intelligence boomlet in Silicon Valley that's likely to implode, as have previous tech-related bubbles.

"With so much exuberance surrounding AI, it now appears

time to take seriously the notion that the stock market has become overheated," Petek says in his annual fiscal overview, which predates the governor's introduction of a new budget. "History suggests that the stock market is prone to overreact to major technological advances, even if the technology itself turns out to be revolutionary."

Instead of savoring a surge in revenues that would erase what officials are calling a "structural deficit" that is somewhere in the \$10-20 billion range, officials should anticipate a larger gap, Petek says.

"Under our revenue and spending estimates, the Legislature faces an almost \$18 billion budget problem in 2026-27," Petek says. "This is about \$5 billion larger than the budget problem anticipated by the administration in June, despite improvements in revenue."



The growth in artificial intelligence companies has contributed to a higher than expected bump in state revenues. Thousands of people attended Dreamforce, one of the largest AI conferences in the world, held in San Francisco on Sept. 18, 2024. Photo by Florence Middleton for CalMatters

“Starting in 2027-28, we estimate structural deficits to grow to about \$35 billion annually due to spending growth continuing to outstrip revenue growth.” - GABE PETEK, FISCAL ADVISOR

The analyst notes that California’s constitution requires the state put money toward public schools and reserves, which will “almost entirely offset revenue gains,” and toward other spending that’s running about \$6 billion over the current budget’s estimates.

“Starting in 2027-28, we estimate structural deficits to grow to about \$35 billion annually due to spending growth continuing to outstrip revenue growth,” Petek says.

It should be noted, not for the first time, that California’s chronic deficit is not caused by an economic downturn, which has occurred in the past, but rather by an enormous error by Newsom and his budget advisors three years ago.

In 2022, they projected a permanent increase in revenues, based on a one-time spike, leading Newsom to declare a \$97.5 billion budget surplus, boasting “No other state in American history has ever experienced a surplus as large as this.”

Confident that the money would be there, Newsom and lawmakers fattened up the spending side of the budget, only to learn

that the supposed surplus was based on what was later acknowledged to be a \$165 billion overstatement of revenues over four years.

Ever since, revenues have failed to cover the elevated spending, and Newsom and lawmakers have covered the gaps with the aforementioned gimmicks. They have incurred more than \$20 billion in internal loans from special funds that must be repaid. They also have drawn down reserves that were supposed to cover genuine emergencies, not political shortsightedness.

Newsom and his staff are now in the final throes of drafting an initial 2026-27 budget that will be his last as governor and will be unveiled in January. The question is whether he will face the fiscal music and finally write a truly balanced budget or employ more short-term fixes and dump the problem on his successor.

That would mean either making real cuts in spending or raising taxes, both of which would take some courage. The past has not been encouraging.



Congratulations
Steve O’Connell, *President & CEO*
of North Island Credit Union



SDMETRO

San Diego Metro Magazine
2025 Men of Influence Award

WINNER



ccu.com @ f in X @northislandcu

St. Lucia

The traveling couple of Marlise Kast Myers and Benjamin Myers

By Marlise Kast-Myers | Photos by Benjamin Myers

Despite our addiction to travel, we seldom use the word “vacation.” My husband Benjamin and I hit the ground running, maximizing experiences in front of us, even if we leave more exhausted than when we arrived. Life is short, aspirations are long, and budget is somewhere in between.

We avoid visiting the same place twice, knowing that our bucket list still has some unchecked boxes. Ironically, island escapes are not at the top of it. We’re like tropical Scrooges-of-the-sea, choosing surfing over sunning, knowing there’s only so long we can lay in the sand without the fear of blistering rays or death by coconut.

I thought of all this on our way to Saint Lucia, an island between Martinique and St. Vincent. Other than Puerto Rico, neither of us had never been to the Eastern Caribbean archipelago. Timing, budget, and desire had somehow aligned with five days to pause in paradise. Peeling back the foil on his airplane meal,

Benjamin leaned over to see if I had made the wiser choice. I hadn’t.

Victoriously twirling his pasta, he asked, “What are we going to do there?” Pushing away my untouched tray, I closed my eyes. “Sleep. That’s what we’re going to do. Sleep.”

Unlike most getaways, this trip to the West Indies had little on the itinerary other than rest and recuperation. With full-time jobs and a hobby-turned-business, we were tired. Twenty hours of travel and a redeye flight didn’t help. Once on land, we immediately went into “us mode,” asking our driver all sorts of questions, subconsciously turning the taxi into a textbook.

During the 45-minute drive, we learned how the international airport was built and used by the US Air Force during World War II to protect the Caribbean. We heard how Saint Lucia changed hands 14 times, slipping through the fingers of the French and British until finally becoming a sovereign nation in 1979.

I was slightly older than Saint Lucia, meaning we could poten-

Pool reflections at Rabot Estate.



tially be friends. Unlike me, Saint Lucia was not showing her age. She was full of youth and color as we skirted mountains and beaches on our way to the southwest side of the island. Perched on hillsides were tin-roof homes painted turquoise, coral, and sunshine yellow. In the horizon were banana plantations, palm-fringed beaches, and slopeside towns where hibiscus and bougainvillea grew like weeds.

Framing the narrow shoulder were fallen mangos, crushed beneath our tires like rich-man's litter. The air smelled of sea salt, cinnamon, and tropical fruit, as if God had spilled sunscreen from the heavens during application. In the background was the faint sound of steel drums, making me wonder if we were entering Carnival or if Saint Lucia constantly moved to the rhythm of reggae and calypso.

Rolling down his window, our driver slowed to greet friends with a fist bump and tap of his heart. Although English was the official language, our driver—and many locals—spoke Creole (Kwéyòl) with one another, a French-based vernacular he claimed was endangered due to the next generation's obsession with social media. That made me sad, as did his comment about bustling towns and sugar farms colonized by the French, and

African slaves who had kept them running. But with abolition in 1834, and independence 145 years later, a freedom and culture were awakened, so rich you could taste it. And, at Rabot Estate, we did.

As the oldest cacao farm on the island, the 140-acre plantation was purchased in 2006 by British luxury chocolate brand, Hotel Chocolat. Behind the vision were UK entrepreneurs, Angus Thirlwell and Peter Harris who bridged the gap between growing cacao and making artisanal chocolate. In less than three years, the semi-abandoned farm turned into a revival of Saint Lucia's cacao industry that now supports more than 50 island growers. From seedling to roasting, sustainable farming methods have helped transform an initiative into an empire of chocolate shops, a boutique hotel, restaurant, spa, and cacao farm with immersive tours. Headquarters for the crop were right outside our door at Rabot Estate.

For now, we would just eat the harvest at the hotel's restaurant. A far (and good) cry from Hershey's, nearly every dish was delicately infused with cacao. From tangy pulp to roasted nibs, every part of the pod was integrated into the traditional menu featuring saltfish, callaloo soup, and stewed meats with tropical fruits and island spices. From farm to fork were eggs, coffee, herbs, honey, vinegar, and ricotta. Cacao-braised pork, tuna tartar drizzled with cacao oil, white-chocolate mash, cacao nib rice, grilled fish with cacao butter—it was like Willy Wonka and Gordon Ramsay were locked in the kitchen and turning out magic.

Apparently New Yorkers fly in by private jet just for dinner. Luckily for us, our commute was steps away to bungalow number 5. They hooked us with "adults-only" and reeled us in with open-air rain forest suites overlooking the Piton mountains.

We've had our fair share of rooms with a view, but nothing quite like this. Rising dramatically from the sea, Saint Lucia's twin volcanic peaks powerfully created one of the most iconic landscapes in the Caribbean. They didn't seem real, but some



Rabot Estate bungalows.



Need In-Home Care?

Call Golden Care
for a *free* home
assessment!

We are a concierge care company
and treat you like family.

(760) 828-5201 | [getgoldencare.com](https://www.getgoldencare.com)



Rooms at Caille Blanc Villa & Hotel.



Rooms at Rabot Estate.

12 hours later, they were the dreamiest view I could wake up to. Rested and back on physical track, we started with a morning hike, only to find out that halfway in, humidity would pivot us toward the pool. “Island time” was eminently real, where people were relaxed, pace was slow, and no one wore a watch.

Taxis “minutes away” would leave us drawing faces in the sand for hours. Tours were delayed, reservations would go missing, but “Ya Mon,” life was good... and so was the rum... and cacao gin, and salted-caramel vodka, and chocolate velvetised cream. They had it all at Rabot Estate’s Project Chocolat, during the “Tree to Bar” experience. Our farm tour through the rainforest concluded with liquor tasting and handcrafting our own chocolate bar. With a mortar and pestle, we ground nibs, sugar, and cocoa butter into a paste, muscling our way to a 65% organic chocolate bar that never made it past midnight. Mine was good, Benjamin’s was better.

At sunset, we walked the estate’s jungle trail through a cacao grove around Rabot Lake. Lizards scampered up bamboo, dragonflies kissed the water, and hummingbirds darted from pod to petal. Along the boardwalk we stopped to smell the limes, coffee, cashews, and bananas. I felt alive, parkouring off boulders, swinging from branches, and singing until I tangled the lyrics. Travel does that. It brings out the best me when priorities, productivity, and profession are faded by the culture in front of me.

“You live your life in these sunny little experiences,” my husband said, “and I get to watch them rise and set every day.” It seemed that sun was setting a little later in Saint Lucia, as we slowly discovered our own rhythm. Despite the fact our hotel had ocean views, we had yet to touch the Caribbean Sea. A 10-minute drive took us to Malgretoute Beach for margaritas and roti—a traditional flatbread filled with curry stew. The soft brown sand reminded me of beaches back home in San Diego; but as we soon discovered, not all beaches are created equal. Some had black sand, others had white, and several strands—including the island’s most pristine, Sugar Beach—imported the powdery perfection to the island. For us, none of that mattered. The coastline became an aesthetic backdrop rather than a tactile activity. Such was the case at Caille Blanc Villa & Hotel, a 15-minute drive

up the coast near the village of Soufrière. For the second leg of our trip, we went big, opting for a suite at the 6-bedroom boutique hotel. Beyond the fountain courtyard was a 65-foot infinity pool and waterfall overlooking the Pitons and sea. Hand-carved wooden doors unveiled massive rooms with Balinese-meets-safari décor complete with four-poster beds draped in linen. Palm-leaf ceiling fans twirled overhead while our butler accordion-folded back an entire “wall” facing the ocean.

Nothing stood between us and the view, as every barrier was removed that blocked us from nature. Hidden beneath our cliffside room was a staircase that led to a private snorkeling cove. Purple sea fans waved beneath the surface while iridescent Blue Chromis looked fit for a rave. We floated above the reef, mesmerized by the crackling and snapping sound that took me back to my childhood when Pop Rocks served as currency between classmates. That jungle trail to the cove became our sunset ritual, tugging on Tarzan vines and sharing tales of underwater adventures.

We thought the snorkeling was good until the following morning when it was great. Just offshore at Anse Chastanet Beach were shallow reefs where Needlefish looked ready to fix a button and Trumpetfish were on their way to craft as pipe cleaners. Circling brain coral were all types of neon fish—sergeant major, parrot, squirrel, angel, and butterfly—all reminiscent of Dr. Seuss book escapees. Our aqua day was just getting started. From there, we went to Sulphur Springs, the world’s only drive-in volcano where we soaked in mud baths known to detoxify the body and cure everything from eczema to arthritis. We painted our bodies like warriors, letting the mud dry and crack on our skin like sour-dough crust. Nearby, we deep rinsed at Toraille Waterfall cascading 50 feet onto our shoulders and backs.

The massage-by-nature seamlessly took us to a place of calm, grabbing sugarcane sticks on our walk back to town, gnawing on the fibrous stalks while recognizing honks as greetings rather than road rage. These were the small things that pushed reset on our souls. Well, that, and the al fresco lunch at Mango Tree Restaurant. Perched on the bluff at Stonefield Villa Resort, the award-winning restaurant served Creole dishes like fried fish

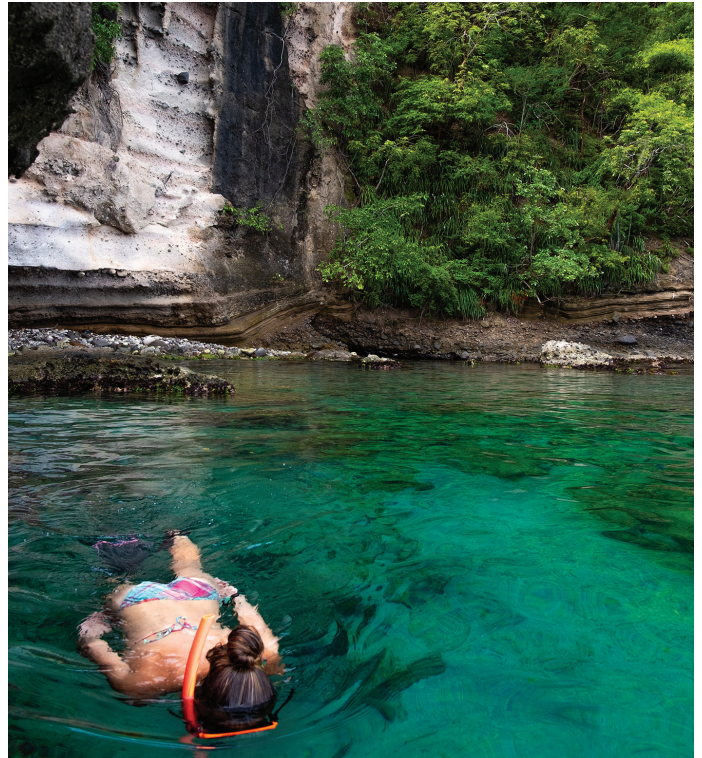
with coconut rice and beef pepperpot stew with green-fig mash. We toasted to nothing in particular and slept to live another day.

Oddly enough, we napped...a lot. As non-nappers, we couldn't get enough of the inside of our eyelids. The sound of steel drums made their way from our dreams onto our terrace, as live music was on deck right outside our door. We swam at sunset, ate dinner at dark, and danced at midnight. It was almost too perfect, and even more so during our bamboo rafting experience on the Roseau River. For two miles, we glided under rainforest canopies, sipping from fresh coconuts while iguanas sunbathed in branches.

Our guide explained how Saint Lucia was once called "Ioüanalao" by the Arawak Indians, and later "Hewanorra" by the Caribs, both meaning "where the iguana is found." In the late 16th century, the island was officially named Saint Lucia in honor of the Christian martyr Saint Lucy of Syracuse—making it the only sovereign state in the world named after a woman. There was certainly beauty behind it all. Stabbing the muck with his bamboo pole, our guide pushed us from the narrow canals toward the open sea. Like claws to the earth, mangrove roots arched their way into the marsh, thirsty for the nutrients Saint Lucia had to offer.

That sustenance was found on a private bay where our rafting experience ended with a beachside lunch. We swam in the ocean, grading one another on our aqua-gymnastics, with my handstand earning a perfect 10 due to my toe point. A pitter-patter of rain turned into a full-blown storm. We didn't care, but our chef did. Motioning us toward shore, he was ready for shelter. Of course I had to ask how such an idyllic, perfect place could be deserted, with no one there but us. "This is everyday," he told me. "—and everywhere."

With less than 185,000 residents on an island stretching 27 miles long, perhaps there was plenty of space to live life fully; to walk the powdery sands that cradled the Caribbean; to embrace a culture that values the wisdom of its elders; to drive into volcanoes, plunge into children's books, and climb natural wonders. —To stop and smell the cacao; to ignore the clock and live by the sun; to fist-bump your neighbor and tap your heart in gratitude; to dance under waterfalls and swim in the rain; to change hands 14 times and still declare your independence; to cling to your roots, and above all, to rise and set a little later because you've discovered your own island time.



Snorkeling at Anse Chastanet Beach.

WOMEN 2026 IN BUSINESS



LOOK FOR OUR SPECIAL
SECTION IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF

SDMETRO
your business your life

PRSRT STD
US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT #3175
SAN DIEGO, CA



AND IT'S JUST THE BEGINNING OF YOUR ASCENT.

Congratulations
from Alaska Airlines
to San Diego's
Men of Influence.
Your ambition and
success are what
keeps taking you—
and San Diego—to
new heights.

Alaska.
AIRLINES

