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# Los Angeles News Observer

Serving Los Angeles County for Over 40 Years



Volume 41 Number 32

Observer Group Newspapers of Southern California

Thursday, April 30, 2026

## Slavery Apology Plaque to Go Up After Capitol Construction



Gavin Newsom takes a photo with members of the California Legislative Black Caucus on Sept. 24, 2024, after signing several reparations bills. From left: Sen. Lola Smallwood-Cuevas (D-Los Angeles), Asm. Corey Jackson (D-Moreno Valley), Asm. Lori Wilson (D-Suisun City), former Asm. Reggie Jones-Sawyer (D-Los Angeles), Gov. Newsom, Asm. Mike Gipson (D-Carson), Asm. Mia Bonta (D-Alameda), and former Asm. Kevin McCarty (D-Sacramento). Photo courtesy of the Governor's Office.

By Antonio Ray Harvey  
California Black Media

Once the State Capitol East Annex Project is completed, plans will move forward to install a plaque displaying California's formal apology for its role in supporting chattel slavery and its legacy of systemic racism, according to former Assemblymember Reggie Jones-Sawyer.

On April 20, Jones-Sawyer, a former member of the California Legislative Black Caucus (CLBC) who represented parts of Los Angeles in the State Assembly from 2012 to 2024, visited the State Capitol. During that trip, he told California Black Media that the plaque would not be installed until after construction is finalized, and a location within the facility is authorized.

"We're all talking about where the ideal spot is because there are rules and regulations for where you can put things that are state-mandated," Jones-Sawyer said. "Once we figure out all of our different places where we don't go up against the rules, whether it's construction, then we'll put it in a place where any young person that comes into the building, it is something they can see, read, and learn from."

The Official State Apology for Slavery was established by Assembly Bill (AB) 3089, authored by Jones-Sawyer, and signed into law by Gov. Gavin Newsom on Sept. 26, 2024. It acknowledges that California enforced fugitive slave laws and tolerated slavery, despite entering the Union as a "free state."

AB 3089 passed the Legislature with bipartisan and unanimous support. The legislation includes critical measures that address a wide range of issues affecting Black Californians, from criminal justice reforms to civil rights and education.

"The State of California accepts responsibility for the role we played in promoting, facilitating, and permitting the institution of slavery, as well as

its enduring legacy of persistent racial disparities," Newsom stated. "Building on decades of work, California is now taking another important step forward in recognizing the grave injustices of the past – and making amends for the harms caused."

AB 3089 was a key component of the 2024 Reparations Priority Bill Package introduced by CLBC. Newsom signed a number of bills included in the 14-bill package to address the legacy of racial discrimination in the state.

The formal apology was a key recommendation in the 2023 report created by the California Reparations Task Force, which spent two years studying the impacts of slavery and atrocities committed against Black Californians.

While the Task Force recommended direct cash payments, AB 3089 is a non-monetary, symbolic action focused on official acknowledgment. Jones-Sawyer emphasized that AB 3089 is a necessary foundation for healing and future action. The law declares a commitment to "restore and repair affected peoples."

On Jan. 10, 2025, the California Department of General Services (DGS) submitted to the Legislature a request of \$500,000 "for the purposes of memorializing a plaque" in the State Capitol building. The project would occur over the course of at least two fiscal cycles.

"Whatever configuration, should it be a bronze plaque, encased with papers, or written, we want it to give the kind of gravitas that when you're looking at it, you're proud to see it," Jones-Sawyer said.

AB 3089 is a landmark California law. Jones-Sawyer said learning about the legislation and broader reparations effort is essential for Black Californians and residents of the state because it represents the first formal state-level acknowledgment of historical injustices.



Assemblymember Dr. LaShae Sharp-Collins (D-La Mesa) takes a selfie on the Assembly floor with former Assemblymember Reggie Jones-Sawyer (D-Los Angeles) on April 20, 2026. Jones-Sawyer said a plaque acknowledging California's role in slavery and committing to reparations will be prominently placed in the State Capitol once construction is complete. The project includes a \$500,000 budget for design and installation. CBM photo by Antonio Ray Harvey.

"The plaque is about learning. Learning about our history, but most importantly, why we should not repeat that part of history ever again," Jones-Sawyer told CBM. "We want it to be a learning opportunity for everyone, no matter what color, race, or gender."

Jones-Sawyer officially left the California State Assembly on Dec. 2, 2024, after reaching his term limit. While he has been active in public life since leaving office, he is currently pursuing a doctorate in policy, planning, and development at the University of Southern California (USC) Price School of Public Policy.

"Yes, I have been busy since leaving the Legislature," Jones-Sawyer said. "It's been great. I feel good."

Jones-Sawyer's visit to the State Capitol happened a few weeks after Assemblymember James Ramos (D-Highland) introduced a bill, AB 2115 – California State Legislature's Formal Apology to California Native Americans Act – in February 2026. The legislation proposes that the Legislature and the courts formally apologize to California's Native Americans for past atrocities.

The "demand," Ramos stated, follows a previous executive apology from Gov. Gavin Newsom in 2019, which Ramos noted had not yet been formally joined by the other branches of state government.

The apology is necessary to address California's historical role in inhumanity committed against Native Americans, including state-sanctioned wars against tribes between 1851 and 1859 and the payment of bounties for the heads of Native Americans, an action Ramos said was an "extermination of the Indian race."

"AB 2115 would provide that the State of California recognizes and accepts responsibility for all of the harms and atrocities committed by its public officials, those who promoted, permitted, facilitated, and enforced policies of violence against California's First People," Ramos said.

## Rapper Akon Defends His Views About Polygamy Says Men and Women Are Not Equal

Akon sparked debate again after defending polygamy and saying men and women are not equal, linking his views to nature and how he believes relationships are structured. His remarks sparked renewed debate on gender roles and modern relationships.

In an interview with Justin Laboy, Akon confirmed that he practices polygamy and is involved with multiple women. He described it as a personal lifestyle choice and said he does not treat it as something secret or controversial.

According to Rolling Out, the conversation shifted when he was asked whether women should have the same freedom in relationships. Akon rejected the idea, saying, "Absolutely not. It doesn't work that way. Only in America do they get it twisted where women feel like they're equal to men."

He supported his position by pointing to biology and reproduction. Akon said, "A woman can have one baby a year. A man can have a thousand. That's our purpose and role in life. That's nature." He said this difference shapes how he sees roles in relationships.

His remarks spread quickly across social media and triggered strong reactions. Critics argued that his view reduces relationships to reproduction alone and overlooks emotional connection, social structure, and modern ideas of equality between partners.

Akon also suggested that men often try harder to understand women than the other way around. He claimed, "If women understood men the same way, they would rule the world."

## Woman Mistakenly Paid \$1,650 an Hour Arrested After Refusing to Return Money to Employer

Rene Nichole Coleman, a 50-year-old woman from Arkansas, was arrested after authorities said she kept more than \$19,000 that was accidentally overpaid to her due to a payroll error. The payment mistake set her hourly wage at \$1,650 instead of \$16.50, and she allegedly refused to return the excess funds.

On May 10, 2025, a payroll system glitch at a business in Jonesboro, Arkansas, miscalculated Coleman's pay for a scheduled 12-hour shift. Because of the error, her wage was processed at the incorrect rate of \$1,650 per hour. That shift alone resulted in a total payment of \$19,388 being deposited into her account.

A police affidavit stated that Coleman did not report the overpayment to her employer. The company later discovered the issue during a routine review of payroll records.

Once the discrepancy was identified, the business owner reported the matter to the police on August 12, 2025. Authorities said supporting documents and internal communications confirmed the money was not legitimately owed.

According to KAIT8, investigators said Coleman was contacted and initially agreed to meet with a detective, but she failed to attend the scheduled interview. This led to the issuance of an arrest warrant.

She was later arrested on April 6 in connection with the outstanding warrant. Coleman now faces a theft charge involving more than \$5,000 but less than \$25,000, classified as a Class C felony in Arkansas.

A judge set her bond at \$15,000 cash or surety, and she is scheduled for arraignment on May 18. Officials have not released additional details about her specific job role or further information about the company involved.

## Black Congressman in South Carolina Says MAGA Politicians Told Him Slavery Was Good

Congressman James Clyburn of South Carolina says that some MAGA Republicans told him directly that slavery was a good thing. He also warned that some would try to bring back Jim Crow-style systems in the United States if given the chance.

Clyburn made the comments during an interview on PBS's Firing Line with Margaret Hoover. In the same discussion, he spoke about his book The First Eight, which looks at South Carolina's first eight Black members of Congress after the Civil War and how they shaped political progress.

He said the book was written after the January 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol. He said the event reflected long-standing ideas tied to the Antebellum South and modern political reactions.

According to Atlanta Black Star, a clip from the interview later circulated online, showing Clyburn talking about conversations he has had with some MAGA supporters in his district. He said a small number openly expressed support for returning to segregation-era systems.

When asked if he viewed MAGA Republicans as racist, Clyburn said he does not apply the label broadly, but said some individuals openly identify as white supremacists and defend slavery.

"I'm very circumspect about using the term. There are racists," Clyburn said. "There are white supremacists. There are people who are supporters of this president who admit to me that they are white supremacists. I've had people who support this president tell me that they thought slavery was a good thing."

He also referenced earlier polling of Trump supporters that showed differing views on emancipation and Civil War history.

Clyburn added that some supporters want policies that closely resemble slavery-era conditions without violating the Constitution. He warned that changes in the Supreme Court could make it easier for such efforts to advance, saying that systems from the past could reappear.

## California Primary Elections: Black Candidates Appearing on Your June 2 Ballot

By Joe W. Bowers Jr.  
California Black Media

The June 2, 2026, primary election will test the voter appeal of Black political candidates in California, where Black residents make up about 6.5% of the population.

At least 57 Black candidates are competing across multiple levels of government. Six of 8 statewide contests (75%) include Black candidates.

At the top of the ticket, eight Black candidates are running for governor: Tony Thurmond (D), Akinyemi Agbade (D), Sophia Edum-a-Sam (D), Derek Grasty (D), Barack D. Obama Shaw (D), Ramsey Roberson (Peace and Freedom Party), Duane Terrence Loynes Jr (No Party Preference) and Nancy D. Young (No Party Preference).

Thurmond, who currently serves as California's Superintendent of Public Instruction, is the most recognizable name among the Black candidates.

The race for Lt. Governor includes Michael Tubbs (D), the former mayor of Stockton, along with Ebie Lynch (R), Skip Shelton (R) and Sean Collinson (No Party Preference).

Shirley N. Weber (D) is seeking reelection as Secretary of State, and Malia M. Cohen (D) is running to retain her position as State Controller. Former State Sen. Steven Bradford (D) and Keith W. Davis (American Independent Party) are running for insurance commissioner.

Nichelle M. Henderson and Ainye Long, are running for Superintendent of Public Instruction, a nonpartisan office that oversees the state's K-12 education system.

No Black candidates are running for state treasurer or attorney general in this election.



Voters cast ballots during California's primary election season, where a growing number of Black candidates are competing for statewide and local offices. (File photo)

Only 1 of 4 Board of Equalization campaigns includes a Black candidate. Assemblymember Mike Gipson (D) is running in District 3, which includes parts of South Los Angeles, Long Beach and surrounding communities.

Black candidates are running in 14 of California's 52 congressional districts (27%).

In Congressional District (CD) 2, which covers a large portion of Northern California, Jimih Jones (R) is on the ballot. In the Sacramento region,

Continued on page A5

## World &amp; Nation

# DC Voters Fill the Seats at 'Ask a D.C. Candidate Mayoral Forum'

By D. Kevin McNeir  
Special to The AFRO

Six candidates for the 2026 Washington, D.C. mayoral race answered questions on topics ranging from affordable housing, high utility bills and childcare costs, to the budget and working with the federal government, during a recent two-hour forum – and voters showed up in force.

More than 300 people attended the event held in the auditorium of the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library in downtown Washington on April 20.

Candidates who participated in the forum included three current or former D.C. Council members, Janesse Lewis George, Kenyan McDuffie and Vincent Orange, as well as three others, Gary Goodweather, Rini Sampath and Hope Solomon. Ernest Johnson, who has declared his candidacy for D.C. mayor, did not attend.

On the question of creating greater revenue for the District in a political season in which the federal government has slashed budgets, Goodweather, a seasoned business executive and military veteran, encouraged voters to review his campaign agenda.

"If D.C. is going to survive and remain a leading U.S. city in the future, we must consider new ways to reduce costs and increase revenue," he said. "One of those ways is to look at the clean energy industry, especially given the huge bills people are now facing from companies like Pepco.

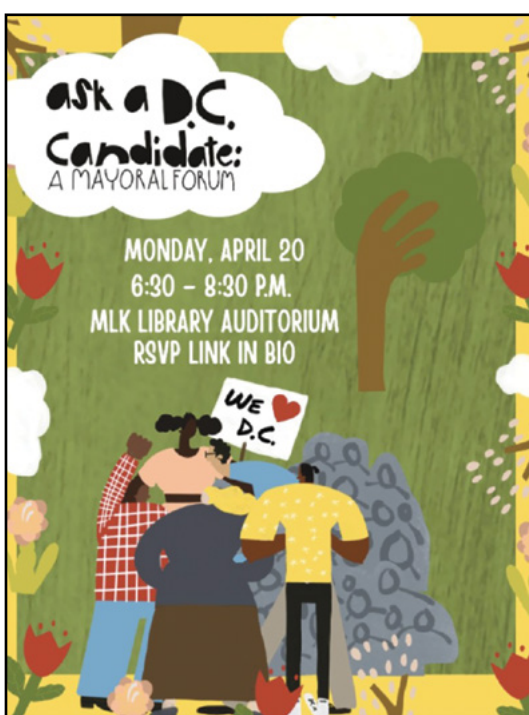
"We often hear residents express the need for more affordable housing. Again, when we can generate more community capital, we can afford to build more housing for those who face financial challenges," he continued. "In some cases, it costs more to build and maintain affordable housing than it does for market-priced housing. So, D.C. needs a mayor who can think creatively and knows the business terrain."

McDuffie said he's concerned about the cost of childcare, and he has good reason to be.

Six candidates vying for Washington, D.C., mayor answer questions about their plans for the city during a mayoral forum co-sponsored by The 51st, The Washington Informer, SpotlightDC and the DC Public Library. (AFRO Photo / D. Kevin McNeir)

According to a 2025 report published by the Economic Policy Institute, the average cost of infant care in the District is \$28,356 – that's \$2,363 per month. A minimum wage worker in D.C. would need to work full time for 41 weeks, or from January to October, just to pay for childcare for one infant. In other words, a median child care worker in Washington, D.C. would have to spend 73.7% of their earnings to put their own child in infant care. (epi.org/child-care-costs-in-the-united-states/#/DC)

"A lot of folk want to raise taxes to pay for the services we know are necessary for D.C. residents," he said. "And childcare costs can be overwhelming with some families paying more for child care than their mortgage. D.C. already has universal pre-K, which was one of the benefits my wife and I took advantage of with our own children.



An eye-catching logo provides information about a mayoral forum featuring seven candidates on April 20 at the MLK Memorial Library in Washington, D.C. (AFRO Photo / D. Kevin McNeir)

"But I want to create a childcare center which I believe – by placing services under one roof – would allow us to reduce the barriers to entry for those who want to provide child care services. And with the amount of unused property which is sitting vacant in downtown D.C., there are buildings in which new childcare agencies could be placed."

Lewis George said the funds which D.C. receives for its budget must be managed with greater efficiency.

"As mayor, I would close the tax loopholes and stop federal budget waste," she said. "D.C. has not done its best at leveraging all of our federal dollars. When I look at our neighbors like the state of Maryland, I see where they've taken full advantage of federal dollars and that has benefited all of their citizens. We can't just wait for federal dollars. D.C. has to grow its economy."

More than 300 people attend a mostly civil mayoral candidate forum at the MLK Memorial Library in Washington, D.C. on April 20. (AFRO Photo / D. Kevin McNeir)

Meanwhile Orange, who repeatedly emphasized his stellar business acumen and ability to work within the limits of any budget, was highly critical of the Bowser administration.

"Residents want to feel safe in their homes and when they move about the city – and they should feel safe," he said. "This stuff that's going on at



Six candidates vying for Washington, D.C., mayor answer questions about their plans for the city during a mayoral forum co-sponsored by The 51st, The Washington Informer, SpotlightDC and the DC Public Library. (AFRO Photo / D. Kevin McNeir)

National Harbor among youth, and in other parts of the city, could be resolved with a full police force. We're taking far too long to make decisions. When a person is bleeding you need to stop the blood flow first. Then you can look to longterm solutions.

"The Council bought into the trend of defunding the police movement and now we're down 1,400 officers, so we're paying exorbitant amounts of money for overtime. In turn, that limits our ability to provide resources that are needed elsewhere. D.C. has the revenue but it's not being used efficiently because we have a management problem."

Some readers may recall a fiery exchange that took place between candidates Lewis George and McDuffie earlier this year during a Free D.C. candidates forum as reported in the AFRO. But on the evening of April 20, all the forum participants remained civil. However, when the question on how candidates would work with the president and the federal government was posed, candidates had a wide range of answers. Some of the candidates even became more animated as they gave their replies. More than 300 people attend a mostly civil mayoral candidate forum at the MLK Memorial Library in Washington, D.C. on April 20. (AFRO Photo / D. Kevin McNeir) Lewis George said she would seek to build better relationships with Congress and the president. "I was speaking to someone in Congress who said from what they could recall, I was the first person from the D.C. government who they'd ever seen in the halls," she said. "Compromise is possible and sometimes the only way to resolve issues. That's why D.C. must do better in establishing and maintaining more positive relationships with the president and members of Congress, no matter who's in office." Near the conclusion of the forum,

McDuffie seemed to segue into political rally form with words that he's shared along the campaign trail. "I believe in hands-on accountability and listening to residents so that I'm better informed," he said. "Believe me, I know what we need in Washington, D.C., and I know how to get it done because I deliver." Whether residents vote in this year's primary election by mail, through early voting (June 8 – 14), or in person on Election Day, June 16, they will need to be prepared to follow a new voting procedure; ranked-choice voting. And because of the large number of seats in city government that are open for reelection, voters should request a sample ballot so they know the layout, as well as the views and plans of the candidates so they can make better-informed choices.



More than 300 people attend a mostly civil mayoral candidate forum at the MLK Memorial Library in Washington, D.C. on April 20. (AFRO Photo / D. Kevin McNeir)

## W.E.B. Du Bois Exhibit Lands at a DAMA, Bringing a 125-Year-Old Vision Back to Atlanta

Los Angeles News Observer

Adjudicated a Newspaper of General Circulation on July 2, 1991, Los Angeles Superior Court Decree, Case No. BS007262, Government Code 6023.

Bulk Mailing Permit 724 Bakersfield, CA 93385

Published every Thursday by The Observer Group Newspapers of Southern California, Inc.

Member: National Newspaper Publishers Ass.  
Associated Press, Better Business Bureau, GLAACCC

President: Ellen Coley  
CEO: Jon Coley  
Publisher/ Editor: James Luckey Jr.  
Operations Manager: James Luckey  
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The Observer Group Newspapers of  
Southern California, Inc.:

Bakersfield News Observer,  
Los Angeles News Observer,  
The Valley's News Observer

Los Angeles News Observer 6060 Center Drive  
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By Noah Washington  
The Atlanta Voice

More than a century after W.E.B. Du Bois presented photographs and data charts documenting Black American life at the 1900 Paris Exposition, his vision has found a new home in Atlanta's West End, at the African Diaspora Art Museum of Atlanta, known as ADAMA.

"W.E.B. Du Bois Revisited: Reimagining Du Bois' Exhibit of American Negroes" pairs historical photographs taken by Atlanta photographer Thomas E. Askew with contemporary portraits and updated data visualizations. The exhibit, which first debuted at Clark Atlanta University in February, is now on view at ADAMA for approximately two weeks.

The project began as part of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution's annual Black History Month series. According to Miller, it was Suggs, a veteran reporter at the AJC, who reached out to her to handle the photography after Donastorg pitched the concept.

"We're never going to have a story that says Martin Luther King Jr. won the Nobel Peace Prize or Rosa Parks sat on the back of the bus," Suggs said. "We're going to have stories about the talented tenth, about double consciousness, about small things that you probably never heard of or heard glimpses of and didn't know."

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The idea came from Mirtha Donastorg, a business reporter at the AJC. Donastorg said she had been reading Du Bois' work and was struck by how little attention had been paid to its Atlanta-specific content.

"About half of those charts and photographs focused on Atlanta and Georgia, and there had never been an exploration or revisiting of the Atlanta data and charts," Donastorg said. "I wanted to see what these look like with contemporary data, what it looks like with a contemporary look at Atlanta."

The work on the project began in December of 2025. All of the historical photographs from Du Bois' original 1900 Paris exhibit were taken by Askew, a local Black photographer from Atlanta. Most subjects in those images remain unidentified.

"If you look at the cut line, it will say a man, or a boy, a Black boy," Suggs said. "No names are attached. We don't know if they're doctors, we don't know if they're lawyers, we don't know if they're pharmacists. But we do know they represented a certain aspect of Black beauty, and that's what we wanted to recreate."

Miller said choosing contemporary subjects was a blend of intention and instinct. Some pairings, including Clark Atlanta University President George T. French alongside a portrait of Du Bois himself, were planned from the start. Others took shape only after she had shot her subjects and then searched the Library of Congress archives for historical counterparts.

"For a lot of the reference photos, a lot of them didn't have names, so we just kind of paired up based on how we felt like they connected within contemporary subjects," Miller said.

She said the goal was to represent the full range of contemporary Atlanta.

"I just kind of wanted to find people that represent contemporary Atlanta, and that's from doctors to scholars, entrepreneurs, artists," Miller said. "Kind of finding different people that reflect the people Du Bois wanted to share in the past and what contemporary Atlanta looks like right now."

The land on which ADAMA sits formally belonged to Clark College, one of two historic institutions, alongside Atlanta University, that merged in 1988 to form Clark Atlanta University.



A split image showing a historical half-length portrait of an African American woman alongside Rosalynne Duff posing for a portrait in Atlanta in 2026.

It was at Atlanta University where W.E.B. Du Bois spent more than two decades as a faculty member in the history and economics departments, conducting research on Black American life and popularizing the concept of the 'talented tenth.'

For Pecou, that layered history makes the Pittsburgh neighborhood more than just a convenient address. It is, he says, a kind of sacred ground, a place where Black intellectual life, Black commerce, and Black community have long intersected, and where ADAMA's presence feels less like a new arrival than a continuation.

"To be able to bring this exhibition here, to be able to tell this story, to expose this community to this history, many folks in this neighborhood may not even realize that history and that connection," Pecou said. "I felt like it was an important and really powerful message."

Pecou is also among the contemporary subjects featured in the exhibit, photographed alongside an unnamed historical portrait from Askew's collection. He said his only regret is that the run is short.

"My only regret is that the exhibition won't be longer," Pecou said. "It's kind of a pop-up thing. We

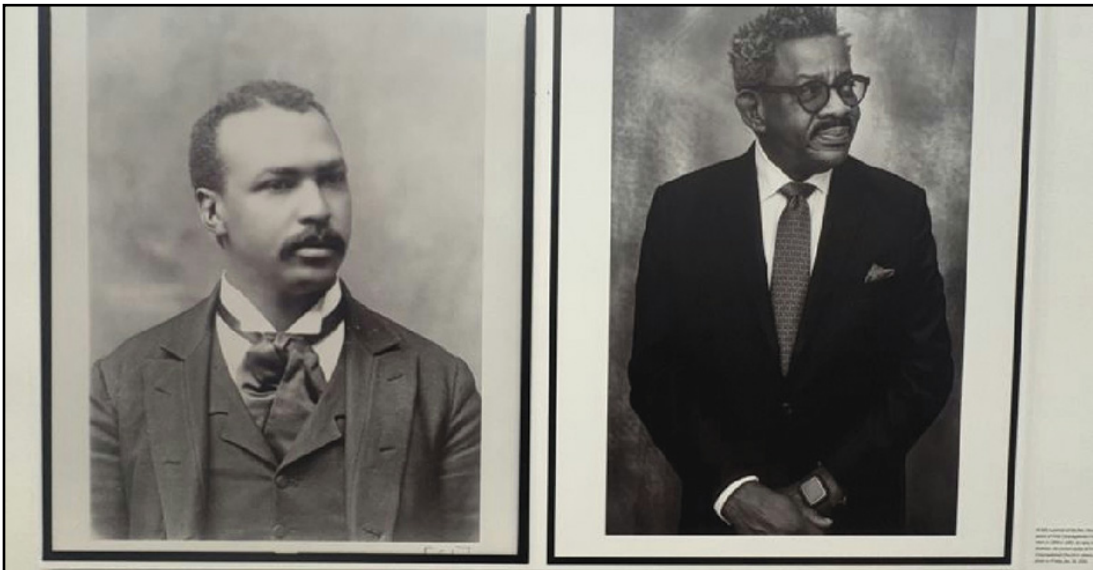
had a space, and we were able to accommodate."

Miller said she hopes visitors leave with a sense of both distance traveled and connection across time.

"I want them to think about the past and the present," she said. "We've done so much in just these 126 years, despite so much. I want them to kind of look back and reflect on what the people before us did to set us up for now, and to think about themselves in the present."

Suggs said that the connection between eras revealed itself most powerfully when the team saw the old and new photographs side by side for the first time.

"We never set out to match any of these photographs with people," he said. "But when Natrice took all the photographs, and we sat down and looked at them, we were like, oh my God. It just kind of shows you how Black people are almost timeless. We all still kind of have these similarities. And I think that this shows the connection that we're all always going to be connected."



Entertainment



A performer from the Dance Theatre of Harlem is captured mid-dance, showcasing the elegance and athleticism of ballet. Photo courtesy New York Carib News.

# Dance Theatre of Harlem Gala to Support Vision for the Future

By New York Carib News

The Dance Theatre of Harlem drew a powerful mix of artists, cultural leaders, and industry tastemakers for its annual Vision Gala, an evening that seamlessly blended performance, tribute, and forward-looking purpose. Held in tandem with the company's New York season opening at New York City Center, the gala unfolded as both a celebration of the institution's cultural legacy and a strategic investment in its future. The night culminated in an elegant dinner program at the Ziegfeld Ballroom, led by Executive Director Anna Glass and cultural curator Kenny Burns. Beyond the glamour, the evening delivered tangible impact. A live fundraising

appeal generated an additional \$160,000, bringing the total raised to \$1,386,047 in support of the company's mission to expand access to ballet and nurture diverse talent. The event was supported by GEICO. At the emotional core of the night was a tribute to acclaimed choreographer Fatima Robinson, recipient of the Arthur Mitchell Vision Award. Actress Rosie Perez delivered heartfelt remarks, framing Robinson's journey as one that redefined the intersections of hip-hop, film, and visual storytelling. That legacy was brought vividly to life through an original ballet by Artistic Director Robert Garland. Performed by the company, the piece fused classical ballet

with contemporary sounds from artists such as Aaliyah and Michael Jackson, a fitting tribute to Robinson's influence across genres. The award was presented by director Kenny Leon, with Robinson delivering a deeply resonant acceptance speech centered on the importance of "trusting your own knowing," drawing a standing ovation from the audience. The evening also recognized media executive Scott Mills with the Virtuoso Award, honoring his contributions to advancing Black storytelling. The award was presented by Stephen Hill and singer Chanté Moore. Among the notable attendees was ballet icon Misty Copeland, fresh from her appearance at the Academy

Awards, alongside a distinguished guest list that included Jordan Cooper, Adrienne Warren, Abby Phillip, Bevy Smith, and S. Epatha Merkerson. The Host Committee, featuring figures such as Antwaun Sargent, Da'Vine Joy Randolph, and Mickalene Thomas, reflected the expansive cultural reach and influence of the organization. The night concluded on an energetic note as DJ D-Nice transformed the ballroom into a lively dance floor, closing out the evening with celebration and community. More than a glamorous affair, the Vision Gala underscored Dance Theatre of Harlem's enduring mission: to challenge the boundaries of classical ballet while championing the diverse voices shaping its future.

# LaToya Jackson Finally Reveals Why Her Sister, Janet Jackson, is Not in the 'Michael' Biopic

LaToya Jackson shared why Janet Jackson does not appear in the Michael biopic, saying her sister simply chose not to take part. The film still features several Jackson family members, but Janet's absence has drawn attention from fans.

Speaking at the Los Angeles premiere, LaToya Jackson said Janet was invited to join the project but declined the offer. "She was asked, and she kindly declined," LaToya, 69, told Variety. "So you have to respect her wishes."

LaToya attended the April 20 premiere of Michael with her brothers Jackie, Marlon, Randy, and Jermaine. She expressed happiness seeing much of her family represented on screen, but also admitted she wished everyone had been included. "I wish everybody was in the movie!"

Janet Jackson has not publicly addressed her absence from the biopic and did not attend the premiere. Director Antoine Fuqua also spoke about it, saying, "I have so much respect and love for Janet, but you know it's okay. She's supportive of Jaafar and that's what matters."

The film Michael stars Jaafar Jackson, son of Jermaine Jackson, in the role of Michael Jackson. The cast also includes Nia Long as Katherine Jackson and Colman Domingo as Joe Jackson, along with Miles Teller and Laura Harrier in supporting roles.

The biopic traces Michael Jackson's journey from his early years with Motown and the Jackson 5 to his rise as the global "King of Pop." It also covers his peak years as one of the most influential figures in music history.

LaToya also praised Jaafar Jackson's performance, saying he delivered a convincing portrayal of Michael. She added that his performance felt so authentic that it brought back memories of her late brother for the family.



LaToya Jackson and Janet Jackson

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You have 30 CALENDAR DAYS after this summons and legal papers are served on you to file a written response at this court and have a copy served on the plaintiff. A letter or phone call will not protect you. Your written response must be in proper legal form if you want the court to hear your case. There may be a court form that you can use for your response. You can find these court forms and more information at the California Courts Online Self-Help Center (www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp), your county law library, or the courthouse nearest you. If you cannot pay the filing fee, ask the court clerk for a fee waiver form. If you do not file your response on time, you may lose the case by default, and your wages, money, and property may be taken without further warning

from the court.

There are other legal requirements. You may want to call an attorney right away. If you do not know an attorney, you may want to call an attorney referral service. If you cannot afford an attorney, you may be eligible for free legal services from a nonprofit legal services program. You can locate these nonprofit groups at the California Legal Services Web site (www.lawhelpcalifornia.org), the California Courts Online Self-Help Center (www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp), or by contacting your local court or county bar association. **NOTE:** The court has a statutory lien for waived fees and costs on any settlement or arbitration award of \$10,000 or more in a civil case. The court's lien must be paid before the court will dismiss the case.

**¡AVISO!** Lo han demandado. Si no responde dentro de 30 días, la corte puede decidir en su contra sin escuchar su versión. Lea la información a continuación. Tiene 30 DÍAS DE CALENDARIO después de que le entreguen esta citación y papeles legales para presentar una respuesta por escrito en esta corte y hacer que se entregue una copia al demandante. Una carta o una llamada telefónica no lo protegen. Su respuesta por escrito tiene que estar en formato legal correcto si desea que procesen su caso en la corte. Es posible que haya un formulario que usted pueda

usar para su respuesta. Puede encontrar estos formularios de la corte y más información en el Centro de Ayuda de las Cortes de California (www.sucorte.ca.gov), en la biblioteca de leyes de su condado o en la corte que le quede más cerca. Si no puede pagar la cuota de presentación, pida al secretario de la corte que le dé un formulario de exención de pago de cuotas. Si no presenta su respuesta a tiempo, puede perder el caso por incumplimiento y la corte le podrá quitar su sueldo, dinero y bienes sin más advertencia. Hay otros requisitos legales. Es recomendable que llame a un abogado inmediatamente. Si no conoce a un abogado, puede llamar a un servicio de remisión a abogados. Si no puede pagar a un abogado, es posible que cumpla con los requisitos para obtener servicios legales gratuitos de un programa de servicios legales sin fines de lucro. Puede encontrar estos grupos sin fines de lucro en el sitio web de California Legal Services (www.lawhelpcalifornia.org), en el Centro de Ayuda de las Cortes de California (www.sucorte.ca.gov) o poniéndose en contacto con la corte o el colegio de abogados locales. **AVISO:** Por ley, la corte tiene derecho a reclamar las cuotas y los costos exentos por imponer un gravamen sobre cualquier recuperación de \$10,000 ó más de valor recibida mediante un acuerdo o una concesión de arbitraje en un caso de

derecho civil. Tiene que pagar el gravamen de la corte antes de que la corte pueda desechar el caso.

The name and address of the court is (El nombre y dirección de la corte es): Santa Monica Courthouse  
 1725 Main Street,  
 Santa Monica, CA 90401  
 The name, address, and telephone number of plaintiff's attorney, or plaintiff without an attorney, is (El nombre, la dirección y el número de teléfono del abogado del demandante, o del demandante que no tiene abogado, es):  
 Alan S. Turlington, Esq.; Victor Vera, Esq.; TUSH LAW LTD.,  
 18071 Irvine Blvd., Tustin, CA 92780  
 Tel. (949) 575-8874  
 DATE (Fecha): October 31, 2025  
 David W. Slayton,  
 Executive Officer/Clerk of Court  
 By J. Hernandez, Deputy  
 (Adjunto)  
 (SEAL)

**NOTICE TO THE PERSON SERVED:**  
 You are served.  
**LOS ANGELES NEWS OBSERVER**  
**PUB: Apr 16, 23, 30, May 7, 2026**

## LIEN SALE

**NOTICE OF LIEN SALE**  
 Lien Holder:  
**8461 COMMONWEALTH AVE.,**  
**BUENA PARK, CA 90621**  
 Vehicle:

### 2012 HOND

Vin: 1HGCP2F64CA110212  
 License #:  
 Date of Sale: **05/11/2026**  
**LOS ANGELES BAY NEWS OBSERVER (E)**  
**PUB: Apr 30, 2026**

## LIEN SALE

### NOTICE OF LIEN SALE

Lien Holder:  
**5214 W PICO BLVD.,**  
**LOS ANGELES, CA 90019**  
 Vehicle:  
**2025 NISS**  
 Vin: 3N1AB8CVXSY337727  
 License #:  
 Date of Sale: **05/06/2026**  
**LOS ANGELES BAY NEWS OBSERVER (E)**  
**PUB: Apr 30, 2026**

## LIEN SALE

### NOTICE OF LIEN SALE

Lien Holder:  
**5214 W PICO BLVD.,**  
**LOS ANGELES, CA 90019**  
 Vehicle:  
**2018 VOLK**  
 Vin: 1VWBA7A343JC006761  
 License #:  
 Date of Sale: **05/06/2026**  
**LOS ANGELES BAY NEWS OBSERVER (E)**  
**PUB: Apr 30, 2026**

## LIEN SALE

### NOTICE OF LIEN SALE

Lien Holder:  
**5350 W ADAMS BLVD.,**  
**LOS ANGELES, CA 90016**  
 Vehicle:  
**2024 NISS**  
 Vin: 3N1AB8CVXRY321974  
 License #:  
 Date of Sale: **05/04/2026**  
**LOS ANGELES BAY NEWS OBSERVER (E)**  
**PUB: Apr 30, 2026**

### FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT

FILE NO: 2026 085130

Doing business as:  
**WITHFOUND / FOUND COLLECTIVE**

at 8605 SANTA MONICA BLVD #317595, WEST HOLLYWOOD, CA 90069  
 Mailing Address: same  
 County: Los Angeles  
 Full name of registrant(s):  
**KEYANNA REES INC** at 8605 SANTA MONICA BLVD #317595, WEST HOLLYWOOD, CA 90069  
 State of incorp. or org.: CA  
 The business is conducted by: a Corporation  
 SIGNED: **KEYANNA REES, CEO**  
 The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name or names listed above on: 04/2026  
 This statement filed with the County Clerk of Los Angeles County on: April 17, 2026  
 DEAN C. LOGAN  
 Los Angeles County Clerk

By: Savannah Rodriguez,  
 Deputy

This fictitious Business Name Statement expires five years from the date it was filed in the County Clerk's Office. A new fictitious business name statement must be filed before that time. The filing of this statement does not of itself authorize the use in this state of a fictitious business name in violation of the rights of another to a trademark or trade name under federal, state, or common law (see section 14411 ET SEQ., business and professions code). I declare that all information in this Statement is true and correct. (A) Registrant who declares as true information which he or she knows to be false, is guilty of a crime  
 This statement expires on April 17, 2031

### LOS ANGELES NEWS OBSERVER

**PUB: Apr 30, May 7, 14, 21, 2026**

### FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT

FILE NO: 2026 086374

Doing business as:

**AVYN UPHOLSTERY CLEANING** at 437 Palm Dr Apt A, Glendale, CA 91202  
 Mailing Address: same  
 County: Los Angeles  
 Full name of registrant(s):  
**YEVHENI AVDOSHYN** at 437 Palm Dr Apt A, Glendale, CA 91202  
 The business is conducted by:

an individual  
 SIGNED: **YEVHENI AVDOSHYN, Owner**

The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name or names listed above on: 02/2026  
 This statement filed with the County Clerk of Los Angeles County on: April 21, 2026  
 DEAN C. LOGAN  
 Los Angeles County Clerk  
 By: Lorena Valdez,  
 Deputy

This fictitious Business Name Statement expires five years from the date it was filed in the County Clerk's Office. A new fictitious business name statement must be filed before that time. The filing of this statement does not of itself authorize the use in this state of a fictitious business name in violation of the rights of another to a trademark or trade name under federal, state, or common law (see section 14411 ET SEQ., business and professions code). I declare that all information in this Statement is true and correct. (A) Registrant who declares as true information which he or she knows to be false, is guilty of a crime  
 This statement expires on April 21, 2031

### LOS ANGELES NEWS OBSERVER

**PUB: Apr 30, May 7, 14, 21, 2026**

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Features

# California Primary Elections: Black Candidates Appearing on Your June 2 Ballot

Continued from page A1

Lauren Babb Tomlinson (D) is running in CD 6, and Ralph Nwobi (R) in CD 7.

In the Bay Area, Gregory M. Haynes (D) is running in CD 11, while incumbent Lateefah Simon (D) is running in CD 12 in Oakland.

In the Central Valley, Kevin Lincoln (R), the former mayor of Stockton, is on the ballot in CD 13.

Los Angeles County remains a central hub for Black political activity. In CD 34, which includes central Los Angeles (LA), Arthur Dixon (D) is on the ballot. In CD 37, which covers parts of Southwest LA, incumbent Sydney Kamlager-Dove (D) is running alongside John Thompson Parker (Peace and Freedom), Ryan Duckett (D) and Steve Hill (No Party Preference).

In CD 43, which includes South LA and Inglewood, longtime Rep. Maxine Waters (D) is running for reelection alongside Myla Rahman (D).

Other candidates running in districts across Southern California include Shonique Williams (D) on the ballot in CD 41 in the Inland Empire. In San Diego County, Eric Shaw (D) is running in CD 48, and Deborah Calhoun-Rhodes (D) and Jeff Belle (R) are on the ballot in CD 52. Star Parker (R) is running in CD 49, which includes parts of coastal Southern California.

State Senate races show a smaller but focused presence of Black candidates. There are Black candidates on the ballot in 3 of 40 State Senate district races (7.5%).

In Senate District (SD) 12, which includes parts of the Central Valley, William Brown Jr. (Libertarian) is on the ballot. In SD 28, covering downtown LA, parts of West LA to South Los Angeles, incumbent Lola Smallwood-Cuevas (D) is running alongside Daphne D. Bradford (No Party Preference). In SD 32, which includes parts of Riverside County, Tiffanie Tate (D) is also on the ballot.

In the State Assembly, Black candidates are running in 13 of 80 districts (16%), with the largest concentration in Los Angeles County and surrounding regions.

In Assembly District (AD) 11, which includes

parts of Solano and Contra Costa counties, incumbent Lori D. Wilson (D) is running alongside Rochelle Conner (No Party Preference). In AD 12 in the North Bay, Jackie Elward (D) is running and in AD 13 in Stockton, incumbent Rhodesia Ransom (D) is on the ballot.

In the Bay Area, incumbent Mia Bonta (D) is running in AD 18 alongside Andre Sandford (D).

In Southern California, Rickey Tracy Hayes II (R) is running in AD 40 in San Bernardino County. In AD 55 in Los Angeles, incumbent Isaac Bryan (D) is on the ballot alongside Ashley M. Brown (D). In AD 57, incumbent Sade Elhawary (D) and Constance Jewel Menzies (R) are running.

In AD 60 in Riverside County, incumbent Corey Jackson (D) and Ron Edwards (R) are on the ballot. In District 61 in Inglewood, incumbent Tina McKinnor (D) is running unopposed.

In AD 65, which includes parts of Los Angeles and Orange counties, Ayanna Davis (D), Vinson Eugene Allen (D) and Lamar Lyons (D) are running to replace Mike Gipson, the only Black legislator terming out at the end of the current legislative session. In AD 69 in Santa Ana and Anaheim, Carolyn J. Essex (D) is on the ballot, and in AD 70 in the Huntington Beach area, Paula Swift (D) is running.

In AD 79 in San Diego, incumbent LaShae Sharp-Collins (D) is on the ballot.

Voting will take place over several weeks. County elections officials will begin mailing vote-by-mail ballots on May 4, the same day early voting sites open. Ballot drop-off locations open May 5.

The last day to register to vote for the primary is May 18. In counties operating under the Voter's Choice Act, voting centers will open for early in-person voting on May 23.

Primary Election Day is June 2, when polls will be open from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

The June 2 primary will determine which candidates advance to the general election in November.

To print readers: for links to candidate websites, read this story online and click on each candidate's name.



Andrea and Jamal McCaskey met at a special Fifth Sunday service at Sixth Avenue Baptist Church. The couple married in 1992. (Provided)

## 'I Was Confident in Myself and Her Answer. I Knew She Would Say Yes ... We Had Spent a Lot of Time Together'

By Mia Watkins  
The Birmingham Times

Andrea & Jamal McCaskey

Live: Irondale

Married: September 25, 1992

Met: Meeting each other almost didn't happen for the McCaskeys. The two met entirely by chance at a special Fifth Sunday service at Sixth Avenue Baptist Church.

"It was a Sunday that I almost didn't go," said Jamal. "I'd been out partying all night. I decided to get up and go to church, and she just happened to come in and sit next to me. I noticed she was a visitor, and we struck up a conversation. After church, I saw her in the parking lot, and we talked some more and exchanged numbers."

Andrea remembers it a little differently.

"He gave you the short version," she laughed. "It was Fifth Sunday in August 1991. On Fifth Sunday, the male chorus sings, and so every female in Birmingham and all the surrounding counties came to church that day. By the time I got there, I had to park in the neighborhood somewhere. I walked into the church and ended up sitting in the back. He came and sat by me; I did not sit by him. He did notice that I had a visitor card. After church, he said, 'Hey, I notice you have a visitor card. I usually go to some restaurant to eat. Would you like to eat?' I was like, 'Yeah, I would love to, but I have family at home. I'm not able to go this Sunday. Thank you for asking.' He leaves."

Andrea said she was actually visiting the church to meet someone else.

"The reason I even came to church that Sunday was because a student that I'd been working with said, 'Hey, I have someone I want you to meet.' I go to church and wait for my student to show up so that he can introduce me to whoever this is that he wants me to meet. Well, I waited for about 10 minutes, and he never showed up. So, I got out into the parking lot and ran into Jamal again, and Mayor Arrington was there campaigning, so we struck up a conversation 'Hey, are you going to vote for Mayor Arrington.' 'No, I don't live in the city limits, what about you?' 'I don't live in the city limits either.' Well, we learned that we lived about a half mile from each other on 280. We exchanged numbers, and he called me the next Tuesday. He always says he wanted to meet me a couple of days."

First date: The two don't remember the details of their first date besides eating at Ruby Tuesday's, but they remember what led up to the date and how they felt about each other.

"The Tuesday that he called, he asked me what I was doing, and I had just moved to Birmingham the month before," she recalled. "When they hooked up my washer, they installed the hot water to the cold water and the cold water to the hot water. I was trying to use some tool that wasn't the correct tool to make the change. He said, 'Oh, I have the tool that you need. I've got a meeting to go to, but I can drop the tool off.' He came and dropped the wrench or whatever it was, and that was the first time we saw each other after church."

Andrea remembers finding Jamal intriguing. "The things I remember about him are that he was someone who was interesting to talk to," she said. "He could talk about current events, he could talk about himself and things that he liked. He had a job. He had a car and he had his own place to live. All of those things were important."

Jamal remembers finding Andrea intriguing too.

"She seemed very professional," he said. "She kind of struck me as a person who I would want to get to know more about."

The turn: Jamal remembers telling his brother that Andrea was the one.

"We used to joke about 'this is the one, this is the one,'" he said. "One day, I said to him that she might be the one."

Andrea said it didn't take her long to realize Jamal was her person.

"I probably knew pretty quickly," she said. "Both of us were a little older. We were both 29 at the time. I had dated my fair share of knuckleheads, and I could tell he was not a knucklehead. I was probably all in from the beginning. One thing that I'll always remember is that most of my friends who came from Nashville to visit me or called from Nashville would spend more time talking to him than they would talk to me. He was always able to just be a good friend to all my friends."

Jamal said he could tell a lot about Andrea from her friend group.

"I've always heard that you look at people's friends, you could tell a lot about them," he said. "I could tell that her friends liked her a lot and were the kind of people I want to be around, too. That

was a plus in my book."

Jamal said his favorite thing about Andrea is her conviction.

"She speaks her mind, she says what she believes and she doesn't tell you one thing and mean something else," he said.

The proposal: The two got engaged in January of 1992 on MLK Day.

"He had been out chopping wood, I don't even know why he was out cutting down wood," she remembered. The apartment I was in had a wood-burning fireplace, so he brought some wood to me for the fireplace. After he came in, he said, 'Hey, what would you say if I asked you to marry me?' I said, 'Don't play with me because I ain't to be played with with that question.' I told him, 'If you're serious, then, yes, I will marry you.'"

Jamal said he doesn't remember chopping wood, but he does remember not being nervous to propose.

"I don't remember bringing wood, and I certainly don't remember chopping," he said. "That was the day I decided that this was the one, and it was time to make a move. I was confident in myself and her answer. I knew she would say yes. I don't mean sound conceited, but we had spent a lot of time together during that time period."

The wedding: The wedding took place at Andrea's home church in Nashville. It was presided over by Dr. Clement Fugh and her childhood pastor, Reverend Reed, who travelled from Indianapolis to marry the McCaskeys.

Their colors were peach, cream and a medium shade of blue. The church was filled with loved ones from both their life in Birmingham and from her hometown of Nashville.

"The church was full, and it was just a beautiful ceremony," she said. "It was just a beautiful time."

Andrea said the memory from that day that she still carries is what Jamal said when she reached him at the altar.

"When I got down the aisle and got to where he was, he said, 'You look so beautiful,'" she said. "I have remembered that all these years."

Jamal just remembers it being a happy day.

"I remember winking at her mom," he said. "I remember smiling when Andrea came down the aisle. I remember a spring in my step the whole day. It was just a great day."

The honeymoon: The two went on a cruise to the Bahamas for their honeymoon, a trip they are about to recreate.

"We did a ballroom dancing class, that's the one thing I remember about it," Andrea said.

Jamal said they met other married couples who shared pearls of wisdom.

They brought back a memento, a Lladro figurine of a Black bride and groom, to remember the occasion.

Words of wisdom: Andrea said that newer couples should keep in mind that love is an action.

"Love is more than a feeling," she said. "Yes, there are days when we disagree and days when we just like, 'Who are you and what have you done with the person I married?' And you continue to work. Do the work, put in the work and remember what it is that's important."

Jamal agreed.

"Keep the main thing the main thing," he said. "You've got to find somebody who's a friend, not just feeling butterflies in your stomach. You need somebody you can match you."

Happily ever after: The McCaskeys have two adult children: a 29-year-old son who lives in Grayson Valley with his wife of two years, and a 27-year-old daughter who lives in Brooklyn, New York. Andrea is a retired HR professional who worked for the Inroads and Momentum programs. Jamal is a retired Deputy Chief of the Birmingham Police Department. He now works in real estate.

"You Had Me at Hello" highlights married couples and the love that binds them. If you would like to be considered for a future "Hello" column, or know someone, please send nominations to editor@birminghamtimes.com. Include the couple's name, contact number(s) and what makes their love story unique.



Voters cast ballots during California's primary election season, where a growing number of Black candidates are competing for statewide and local offices. (File photo)

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## Features

# Mayor's Office Seeks Ethics Review of IG's Social Media Post Amid Ongoing Legal Dispute

By Megan Sayles

AFRO Staff Writer msayles@afro.com

A senior aide to Mayor Brandon M. Scott sent a letter to the Baltimore City Ethics Board and the Office of Inspector General's (OIG) Advisory Board on April 21, calling for a review of Inspector General Isabel Cummings' online conduct. In the letter, Chief of Staff John David Merrill denounced an April 20 Facebook post from the inspector general's account that shared a YouTube video with an AI-generated thumbnail of Scott.

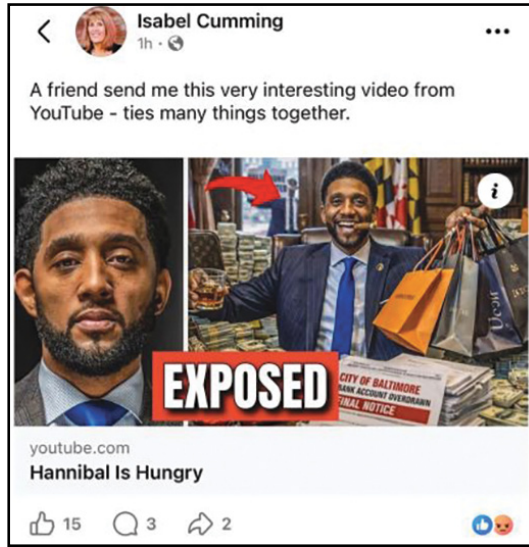
Mayor Brandon M. Scott's administration is calling for a review of Inspector General Isabel Cummings' online conduct after she shared a YouTube video that depicted the mayor smoking a cigar and holding what appears to be luxury shopping bags and an alcoholic drink. The request comes as Cummings sues the mayor and Baltimore City Council over blocked access to certain city records. Credit: Facebook screenshot

The image portrayed the mayor smoking a cigar, holding a seemingly alcoholic drink and clutching luxury shopping bags. It also depicted a notice of the city's bank account being overdrawn.

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The clash comes as Cummings and Scott engage in a legal dispute over the IG's access to city records, particularly those related to the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (MONSE). On April 17, a Baltimore City Circuit judge denied the city's motion to disqualify Cummings' private attorneys in her lawsuit against the mayor and Baltimore City Council.

"We are cognizant of the ongoing context in which both the Scott Administration and the OIG are currently operating, including active litigation.



**Mayor Brandon M. Scott's administration is calling for a review of Inspector General Isabel Cummings' online conduct after she shared a YouTube video that depicted the mayor smoking a cigar and holding what appears to be luxury shopping bags and an alcoholic drink. The request comes as Cummings sues the mayor and Baltimore City Council over blocked access to certain city records. Credit: Facebook screenshot**

While we may have differences around what constitutes lawful access to City documents and the City's responsibility to follow state law, there is an appropriate way to resolve those differences through our traditional governmental processes," Merrill wrote in the letter. "However, while those processes

unfold, there is simply no place in our civic life for public officials to elevate the kind of vile, racist and caricatural content like what IG Cummings shared on her social media."

The video posted by Cummings was entitled, "Baltimore Mayor is in Big Trouble After Losing in Court Exposes His \$4.5 Million Office Power Grab." In it, YouTuber Hannibal Darby—known as Hannibal Is Hungry—criticized the mayor's addition of 16 positions to his office within his preliminary budget for fiscal year 2027.

Darby, known for his watchdog-style content about government officials, compared Baltimore's proposed staffing level of 134 positions in the mayor's office to those of larger cities, including 96 positions in Philadelphia and 94 in Los Angeles—arguing that Baltimore's mayoral staff would be unusually large by comparison. The creator also raised concerns about the inclusion of privately funded positions within the mayor's office, questioning whether they could be subject to outside influence.

Scott addressed the proposed staffing expansion during a budget meeting on April 22, saying that eight of the 16 positions are not funded by city taxpayers but instead supported through grants.

According to the preliminary budget, those positions include one supported by the city's Opioid Restitution Fund and seven funded through a grant from Bloomberg Philanthropies to support the city's Innovation Team (i-Team). The Baltimore i-Team operates as part of a nationwide initiative supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies and focuses on initiatives related to vacancy prevention and public safety recruitment and retention.

The budget also notes that some of the roles reflect internal staffing changes, including the transition of part-time positions into full-time roles within the Mayor's Office of African American Male

Engagement.

During the budget meeting, Scott said his administration continues to pursue a mix of funding sources to support city operations and initiatives.

"We take managing the city's taxpayer dollars very seriously. We make sure that we bring things in house when we need to, but the strategy that we have always and will continue to have is to make sure that we can get investment in any way that we can to make the city of Baltimore a better place," said Scott. "That includes going on to seek grants and other funding for what is happening in the city of Baltimore."

When Cummings shared Darby's video on Facebook she included a caption that read: "A friend sent me this very interesting video from YouTube—ties many things together." The inspector general has since removed the post from her profile.

In a statement sent to the AFRO on April 22, Cummings issued an apology, saying she did not realize the image of Mayor Scott was created by AI.

"I shared a link to third-party video commentary on current events on my personal Facebook account. That video included a satirical, AI-generated digital image that I did not notice and do not endorse or support. I removed the video from my personal Facebook post upon receiving feedback," said Cummings. "I apologize to Mayor Scott, my dedicated OIG team and the residents of Baltimore City. This post detracted from the important mission of the OIG to investigate waste, financial abuse and fraud. It will not happen again."

Scott's administration has called for a review of whether Cummings' online conduct violated ethical standards related to professionalism and impartiality and whether any corrective action is needed to ensure fairness and objectivity within the OIG.

## Senate Advances Weber Pierson's Bill to Reform Gang Databases

By Antonio Ray Harvey

California Black Media

A bill authored by Sen. Akilah Weber Pierson (D-San Diego) aimed at reforming California's gang databases — **primarily the CalGang system** — has advanced out of the Senate Public Safety Committee with a 5-1 vote.

**Senate Bill (SB) 1210**, introduced by the chair of the California Legislative Black Caucus (CLBC), seeks to address systemic inaccuracies, racial bias, and a lack of transparency that, according to the author, jeopardize the civil liberties of thousands of Californians — particularly Black and Latino individuals.

The measure now heads to the Senate Appropriations Committee for consideration.

"SB 1210 amends the Penal Code to make all gang databases, regardless of whether they are shared or not, subject to the Legislature's previous and active reforms, including the Department of Justice's oversight and regulations," Weber Pierson said.

A key provision of the bill removes the restrictive term "shared gang database," ensuring that state regulations apply to all gang databases, including those not accessed by external agencies. The legislation would require full compliance with Department of Justice regulations by Jan. 1, 2027.

The bill builds on findings from a 2016 state audit, requested by then-Assemblymember and

current Secretary of State Shirley Weber, which identified widespread inaccuracies and weak oversight in shared gang databases.

Audits of the CalGang system revealed that law enforcement agencies relied on unreliable data, failed to purge records after five years, and included individuals without sufficient evidence. The database even listed toddlers "as young as three years old," Weber Pierson said.

Following reforms that mandated audits for shared databases, some agencies shifted to internal systems not subject to the same level of oversight. Weber Pierson said SB 1210 is designed to close those loopholes by requiring all databases to meet the standards established under **AB 90, the Fair and Accurate Gang Database Act of 2017**.

"Being wrongfully placed in a gang database can have serious life-altering consequences, which is why the audit became an issue in the first place," Weber Pierson said. "Including police scrutiny, higher bail, harsher sentencing through gang enhancement, barriers to employment, and now the risk of deportation."

According to the California Department of Justice's 9th Annual Report, the CalGang database contained 9,948 records as of Sept. 30, 2025. That figure represents a significant decline from earlier years, when the database held more than 100,000 records. Between 2017 and 2022, CalGang identified disparities in 103,840 entries.

The database is 94% male and disproportionately composed of Latinos (66%) and Black individuals (23%).

"Unfortunately, we are now seeing many law enforcement agencies that have chosen to disregard the legislature's reforms by ending their relationships with the use of CalGang," Weber Pierson said. "The number of law enforcement agencies entering records into CalGang has dropped from 214 to just 19. There is no evidence that these agencies stopped gang intelligence altogether."

Opponents of the bill, including the California Police Chiefs Association (CPCA), argue that the measure could hinder law enforcement efforts.

Jonathan Feldman, a legislative advocate for CPCA, told the Senate Public Safety Committee that gang databases provide officers with immediate access to critical information, including photographs, tattoos, vehicle descriptions, and known associates. He said the tools are essential for tracing suspects, identifying victims, and supporting criminal investigations.

"I understand the shift to the local databases, not as an attempt to circumvent the oversight, but in terms of doing active investigations and needing to record that information on a daily basis," Feldman said. "There is a need to develop those leads, collect that information without going into a formal database system."

Feldman added, "I do think it's difficult to take

those AB 90 CalGang standards and apply them to all gang databases. A lot of these are informal, in process, and developing investigations."

Supporters of the bill argue that disparities in the database reflect broader systemic issues. According to the Department of Justice, Black individuals are disproportionately represented due to factors such as concentrated policing in minority communities, subjective inclusion criteria, and data inaccuracies.

Weber Pierson also shared a personal account during the hearing, noting that her brother, who is 6 feet and 5 inches tall, was nearly added to the gang database in San Diego based solely on his race and physical appearance.

"He has never been affiliated with a gang in his life," Weber Pierson said.

Sean Garcia-Leys, executive director of the Peace and Justice Law Center in Santa Ana, testified in support of the bill, noting that compliance with oversight requirements is feasible.

"Many others have opted out to avoid oversight," Garcia-Leys said. "SB 1210 addresses this gap. It does not expand the law or rebalance public safety and civil rights. It simply ensures that all gang databases share their local (data), according to the standards the Legislature sets."

## Midweek Magic: How Sloss Furnaces Brings History to Life for Students

If you think Sloss Furnaces is only a place to visit on special occasions, here's a little insider knowledge: Every Wednesday, the historic site comes alive with the energy of students discovering Birmingham's roots in a hands-on, unforgettable way. Learning Where It Actually Happened

There's something powerful about standing in the very place where history unfolded. For students visiting Sloss Furnaces on field trips, this isn't just another lesson from a textbook, it's a full-on experience.

They walk beneath towering iron structures, see the massive furnaces up close, and learn how raw materials were transformed into the iron that helped build a city. It's immersive, a little gritty, and way more memorable than reading about it in class.

**Why Wednesdays Matter**  
Wednesdays at Sloss are dedicated to education. School groups from across the region come through the gates to explore everything from industrial science to local history. Guided tours break down complex processes like how blast furnaces worked into engaging, easy-to-understand stories.

And it's not just about machinery. Students also learn about the people behind the industry, the workers, the challenges they faced, and the role Sloss played in shaping Birmingham's identity.

**More Than a Field Trip**  
What makes these visits special is how they connect the past to the present. Kids don't just hear about Birmingham becoming the "Magic City"—they see why it happened.

Students watch as talented metal artists pour their artwork in molten iron and prepare it for students to take home the same day. For many students, it's their first time realizing that history isn't distant or abstract. It's local. It's tangible. It's right here.

While weekends and events often get the spotlight, these midweek field trips are a reminder that Sloss Furnaces is an active learning space year-round. It's not just preserved history. It is a place where new generations come to understand and appreciate it.



Students observe and learn about the historical significance of Sloss Furnaces during their visit.

So next time you're nearby on a Wednesday, don't be surprised to see groups of students exploring, asking questions, and maybe even imagining what it was like when the furnaces first roared to life.

**A Hidden Gem in Action**  
While weekends and events often get the spotlight, these midweek field trips are a reminder that Sloss Furnaces is an active learning space year-round. It's not just preserved history. It is a place where new generations come to understand and appreciate it.

So next time you're nearby on a Wednesday, don't be surprised to see groups of students exploring, asking questions, and maybe even imagining what it was like when the furnaces first roared to life.

Home schools, Private schools, and Public

schools groups are welcome. Tours and Pours are free for Birmingham City Schools. Educators, email Sloss Furnaces Historian, Ty Malugani to schedule your school tour.



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Wednesdays at Sloss Furnace are dedicated to education. (Sloss Furnace)

# Political Playback:

## California Capitol News You Might Have Missed

By Bo Tefu  
California Black Media

### Suspect in White House Correspondents' Dinner Shooting Is From SoCal

A Southern California man is in custody after a shooting incident late Saturday at the White House Correspondents' Dinner.

The incident disrupted one of the nation's most high-profile gatherings of journalists and political leaders celebrating the First Amendment, freedom of the press and raising money for journalism scholarships.

Authorities identified the suspect as Cole Tomas Allen, 31, of Torrance. Federal officials said Allen allegedly traveled from the Los Angeles area to Chicago by train and then continued on to Washington, D.C., in the days leading up to the incident. Investigators are now examining his background, travel history, and any potential ties or motivations connected to California.

According to officials, Allen was armed with a shotgun, a handgun and multiple knives when he charged through a security checkpoint at the Washington Hilton, where hundreds of attendees had gathered. Allen fired five to eight shots during the incident. One Secret Service officer was shot but was protected by a bulletproof vest and is expected to recover.

Authorities said the suspect appeared to be targeting members of the administration of Donald Trump, and possibly Trump himself, though officials cautioned that the information remains preliminary. Allen is currently not cooperating with investigators.

U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia Jeanine Pirro said Allen will face multiple federal charges, including two counts of using a firearm during a crime of violence and one count of assault on a federal officer using a dangerous weapon.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom responded to the incident, emphasizing the importance of press freedom and public safety.

"Relieved everyone at the White House Correspondents' Dinner is safe tonight based on initial reports," Newsom posted on the social media platform X. "A free press is foundational to our country. Violence is never acceptable."

The annual dinner, attended by political leaders, media figures and celebrities, was interrupted as security quickly moved attendees to safety. Federal agencies continue to investigate the suspect's motives, including any ideological influences or connections stemming from his time in Southern California.

Allen, a 2017 graduate of Caltech, worked at C2 Education, a private tutoring and test-prep firm in Torrance. As of press time, California Black Media could not confirm whether he is still employed with the organization.

### Your Vote in 2026: California Dem Party Releases New Poll Results on Gov's Race; 20% Still Undecided

The California Democratic Party (CADEM) has released a new tracking poll showing a tight and uncertain race for California governor, with Republicans leading in early polling and Democrats divided across a crowded field.

The California VOTER Index survey, conducted by EVITARUS, a firm led by Black and Latina women, surveyed 1,200 likely voters from April 15-17. The poll found Republican candidates Steve Hilton and Chad Bianco holding the top two spots.

Sacramento political insiders acknowledge that the GOP lead highlights a key risk for Democrats under the state's primary system, where the top two finishers advance regardless of party.

The poll's findings point to a central issue shaping the race: too many Democratic candidates splitting support, according to state Party leadership. Party Chair Rusty Hicks urged candidates to reconsider their campaigns as voting approaches.

"I continue to believe there are too many Democrats in the field," said Hicks, calling on lower-polling candidates to assess whether they have a viable path forward.

Among Democrats, the survey showed movement. Xavier Becerra rose from 4% to 13%, tying with Tom Steyer for third place. Meanwhile, support for Rep. Eric Swalwell (D-CA-14) dropped sharply, falling from 12% to less than 1% after he exited the race.

The share of undecided voters also declined, from 24% to 20%, suggesting more voters are beginning to focus on the contest. Hicks said that trend is encouraging but warned it is not enough to secure a Democratic win in November without consolidation.

The survey follows earlier polls released in March and early April that showed similar patterns, with Republicans leading and Democrats trailing behind in a fragmented field. The research included outreach to Latino, Black and Asian American voters to improve accuracy across key groups.

Hicks also praised former State Controller Betty Yee, who recently suspended her campaign, and suggested others consider doing the same to strengthen the party's chances.

With about 60 candidates on the ballot and mail voting set to begin in early May, the race remains fluid. Party officials say additional tracking polls will be released in the coming weeks as campaigns intensify, and voters prepare to make their final decisions.

### From Storyboards to Statehouse: Black Women Leaders Spotlight Role of Culture and Media in Maternal Health Policy

A cross-section of policymakers, storytellers, and advocates gathered April 18 for a discussion on how media narratives shape public policy affecting Black maternal health.

Hosted by In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda, the panel—



From Storyboards to Statutes: How Narrative Power Shapes Black Maternal Health — featured Rep. Sydney Kamlager-Dove (D-CA-)37, writer and producer Mara Brock Akil, L.A. County Supervisor Holly Mitchell, writer Nicole Jefferson Asher, and Dr. Regina Davis Moss, the organization's president and CEO.

Held just after Black Maternal Health Week (April 11-17), the conversation focused on how portrayals of Black women, pregnancy, and motherhood influence public perception — and ultimately, policy decisions.

"Black maternal health doesn't exist in a vacuum—it's shaped by the stories people see, hear, and come to believe about Black women's lives," said Davis Moss. "That's why our Narrative Power for Justice Initiative is so critical... When we tell fuller, more truthful stories, we don't just transform culture—we lay the groundwork for policies that truly reflect and protect our communities."

The event highlighted the organization's Narrative Power for Justice Initiative (NPJI), a multi-year effort aimed at reshaping how Black maternal health and reproductive justice are understood through research, storytelling, and advocacy.

Panelists emphasized the link between cultural representation and legislative outcomes, particularly amid ongoing challenges to diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in Hollywood.

"In my line of work, Black women are too often thought of last—if we're considered at all," said Kamlager-Dove. "Storytelling isn't extra - it is essential... so we can drive real, informed solutions."

Akil added, "Reproductive health begins when we can make women, young girls, and boys feel safe... When people feel seen and supported, they can tell the truth, grow, and make choices without shame."

Through research and its Creators for Change Council, NPJI is working to align authentic storytelling with policy change, advancing more accurate narratives about Black life in mainstream media.

### Atty. Gen. Bonta Warns School Districts: Act on Sexual Misconduct or Face Consequences

California Attorney General Rob Bonta is urging K-12 school districts across the state to take stronger action to prevent and respond to sexual harassment, assault, and abuse, reminding them of their legal obligations under state law.

In a legal alert issued April 22, Bonta emphasized that schools must actively stop misconduct, address harm, and prevent future incidents under laws including the California Education Code and the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act. The alert also coincides with the launch of a multilingual "Know Your Rights" resource to help families understand reporting processes and available support.

"Sexual harassment, assault, and abuse in schools are far too common and completely unacceptable. Every student has a right to a safe learning environment, and it is the duty of our school districts — along with a moral obligation — to step off the sidelines and be a part of the solution," said Bonta.

The announcement comes amid troubling data. Nationwide, schools reported thousands of incidents in a single year, including 2,700 sexual assaults and 17,000 allegations of sex-based harassment. In California, districts paid an estimated \$2 billion to \$3 billion to student victims between 2019 and 2023.

Under state law, school districts must immediately investigate reports, notify parents or guardians, and report suspected abuse to law enforcement or child welfare agencies. They are also prohibited from retaliating against students who come forward and must act even if complaints are submitted informally.

"It's time to turn up the volume and reject the quiet acceptance of these incidents," Bonta said. "We owe it to our community and especially to our children to ensure that all sexual misconduct is adequately addressed."

The alert also highlights a new requirement

under Senate Bill 848 mandating school safety plans by July 1, 2026, reinforcing the state's push to protect students and strengthen accountability in schools.

### Lawmakers, Advocates Address California's Growing Medical Debt Problem

California lawmakers are advancing a new proposal aimed at easing the financial burden of medical debt, as officials warn that millions of residents continue to struggle with health care costs.

Assembly Majority Leader Cecilia Aguiar-Curry (D-Winters) last week introduced Assembly Bill 2123, known as the Medical Debt Relief Act of 2026. The measure would create a state-backed program to buy and eliminate qualifying medical debt for low- and middle-income Californians.

The proposal comes as nearly 40% of Californians are saddled with medical debt, according to the California Health Care Foundation. The debt is often driven by high out-of-pocket costs, deductibles and unexpected bills. Lawmakers and advocates say the issue can lead to long-term financial instability, including damaged credit and housing challenges.

"Too many Californians are doing everything right and still getting buried in medical debt they realistically can't pay," said Aguiar-Curry during a news briefing at the State Capitol on April 20.

"AB 2123 takes a common-sense approach—buying up that debt for pennies on the dollar and wiping it out," she said.

The bill would establish a Medical Debt Relief Program within the state, allowing California to purchase debt from providers or collection agencies at reduced cost and cancel it. The program would be funded with a \$2.5 million investment and target households earning up to 400% of the federal poverty level or those with high debt relative to income.

State Treasurer Fiona Ma, who is sponsoring the bill, said the initiative could deliver large-scale relief. "Through this initiative, California can leverage its financial tools to relieve billions in burdensome debt for residents who did everything right but still fell behind due to health care costs," Ma said.

Health advocates say even insured patients face steep expenses. Spencer Dayton, a cancer patient, described the toll of ongoing treatment costs.

"These are not optional expenses; they are the cost of me staying alive," said Dayton. "Being sick is hard enough. Going broke to stay alive should never be part of our treatment plans."

Supporters say the proposal builds on earlier efforts, including a Los Angeles County program that erased hundreds of millions in medical debt and a 2024 state law that removed medical debt from credit reports.

"People shouldn't have to choose between seeing a doctor and keeping the lights on," Aguiar-Curry said.

If approved, AB 2123 would mark a major step in California's efforts to address medical debt and reduce financial strain for vulnerable residents.

### Report: Dems and Republicans Deeply Divided Over California Income Inequality—Blacks and Latinos Most Impacted

A new analysis of income trends in California highlights persistent economic inequality in the state while showing major partisan disagreement over how much government should do to address it.

The report, based on 2024 data from the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC), finds that California families at the top of the income distribution earn about 11 times more than those at the bottom. While the state has higher median incomes than the rest of the U.S., inequality remains near historic highs.

The data shows significant racial and ethnic

disparities. Median income is highest among Asian and White families, while Black and Latino families earn significantly less on average. The report also finds that households headed by college graduates earn far more than those without degrees, and that income varies widely by region, with the Bay Area reporting the highest median incomes.

Overall, families in the top 10% earn substantially more than those in the bottom 10%, reflecting long-term growth at the top while lower incomes have grown more slowly over time.

The report also highlights strong political divisions over how to respond to income inequality. Statewide survey findings show that most Democrats support stronger government action to reduce the income gap, while fewer independents and Republicans agree.

Economists cited in the report note that income differences are driven in part by differences in education, occupation, and access to investment income, with higher-income households more likely to earn from assets such as businesses, stocks, and real estate.

Lower-income households, by contrast, spend a larger share of their earnings on basic needs such as housing, food, transportation and health care, making them more vulnerable to inflation and economic shocks.

### Eaton and Palisade Fires: State Senators Announce Bills to Hold Insurance Companies Accountable

California lawmakers are advancing a package of insurance reform bills aimed at increasing transparency and holding insurers accountable in the wake of the Eaton and Palisades fires, as survivors continue to report delays and disputes in the claims process.

State Sen. Sasha Renée Pérez (D-Alhambra) announced the legislation during a news briefing on April 22 in Sacramento, saying the measures are intended to address widespread problems in how insurers handle wildfire claims.

At that briefing, one fire survivor described how her insurer initially indicated her home would need to be rebuilt from the ground up, before later reducing the estimated payout.

"The fire damage to my house did not change," said Claire Thompson. "But the loss estimate did, and it was reduced to an amount that made recovery impossible."

The legislative package includes Senate Bill (SB) 877, SB 878, and SB 1076. The bills would require insurers to disclose all versions of loss estimates and explain changes, impose penalties for missed payment deadlines, and require insurers to offer coverage to homeowners who meet wildfire safety standards.

Pérez said the proposals respond directly to experiences shared by fire survivors across Los Angeles County. She has argued that inconsistent estimates and delayed payments have slowed rebuilding efforts.

Advocates say the reforms are needed as many residents continue to struggle with recovery long after the fires.

Joy Chen, executive director of the Eaton Fire Survivors Network, said insurance access is central to rebuilding communities.

"Survivors are rebuilding stronger and safer," said Chen. "But if our community cannot access insurance even after making our homes fire-safe, our housing market will crater."

Chen also emphasized the stakes for recovery timelines, saying, "Recovery accelerates when the money shows up."

Enrollment in the California FAIR Plan has also increased sharply in recent years as homeowners in high-risk areas lose access to private insurance.

Lawmakers say the bills will test whether California can impose stronger accountability on insurers while still stabilizing a strained insurance market in wildfire-prone regions.

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# Dodgers Steady the Ship With Strong Pitching, Series Win

By Earl Heath  
Contributing Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES — After a rough stretch, the Los Angeles Dodgers found a needed reset behind strong starting pitching and timely hitting.

Tyler Glasnow and Tanner Scott combined on a one-hitter as the Dodgers avoided a three-game series sweep with a 3-0 win over the San Francisco Giants. Glasnow was dominant, striking out nine and allowing just one hit and one walk over eight scoreless innings. He threw 105 pitches, 69 for strikes, and retired the final 14 batters he faced. Scott handled the ninth inning for his first save of the season.

The win gave the Dodgers their second shutout of the season and helped them leave San Francisco with a measure of momentum after a difficult road series.

Kyle Tucker and Hyeseong Kim had two hits apiece, while Kim and Dalton Rushing each drove in a run. Shohei Ohtani went 0 for 5 with two strikeouts, continuing a brief skid at the plate.

The Dodgers then returned home and took two of three from the Chicago Cubs, showing signs of balance from both the lineup and pitching staff.

After dropping the series opener, 6-4, Los Angeles bounced back in a big way. Roki Sasaki earned his second major league victory as the Dodgers erupted for six runs in the fourth inning and beat the Cubs, 12-4, snapping Chicago's 10-game winning streak.

Ohtani ended an 0-for-12 skid with a first-inning single and stole second base for just his second steal of the season. He was one of several Dodgers to contribute as Los Angeles collected 14 hits and set a season high for runs at home.

Sasaki gave up four runs, including solo home runs by Seiya Suzuki, Moisés Ballesteros and Miguel Amaya, but battled through his longest outing of the year. The Japanese right-hander struck out five and threw a career-high 99 pitches on his bobblehead night.

The Dodgers' offense kept the pressure on. After scoring six times in the fourth, they added four more runs in the sixth. Andy Pages delivered a two-run double, then later scored on a wild pitch.

Los Angeles closed the series with another statement from the mound. Justin Wroblewski tossed six scoreless innings in a 6-0 win Sunday, becoming



Shohei Ohtani hit an opposite-field home run on the CUBS Hoby Milner's first pitch in the seventh inning

the first Dodgers pitcher since 2009 to win his first four starts. Wroblewski allowed four hits, struck out six and walked four while throwing a career-high 109 pitches.

Wroblewski and Cubs starter Shota Imanaga both struggled with command early, combining to throw 100 pitches through the first two innings.

But Wroblewski settled in, and the Dodgers gave him enough support to cruise.

Ohtani added a highlight in the seventh, driving an opposite-field home run to left-center field on the first pitch from Hoby Milner. The 382-foot shot cut through the wind and ended Ohtani's homerless stretch. He finished 3 for 4 with a walk and scored twice.

Dalton Rushing added an RBI single, and Kyle Tucker scored after a pickoff error by Cubs catcher Carson Kelly.

After losing four of five, the Dodgers responded by winning three of their next four, including two shutouts. With the pitching staff settling in and the lineup beginning to wake up, Los Angeles steadied the ship at an important point early in the season.

# Cobi Jones Honored With Statue at Dignity Health Sports Park

By Earl Heath  
Contributing Sports Writer

CARSON — Cobi Jones, one of the most recognizable figures in American soccer and a foundational star of the LA Galaxy, received one of the club's highest honors Sunday as a 9-foot bronze statue was unveiled outside Dignity Health Sports Park.

The ceremony took place ahead of the Galaxy's match against Real Salt Lake and drew fans, former teammates, Major League Soccer officials

and members of the Southern California soccer community. The statue, created by artists Oscar Leon and Omri Amrany of Rotblatt Amrany Studio, now stands in Legends Plaza alongside statues of Galaxy icons David Beckham and Landon Donovan.

For Jones, the moment was more than a personal tribute. It was a celebration of Los Angeles' role in helping grow soccer across the country.

"We showed the world that Los Angeles — and the LA Galaxy — this is a soccer hotbed," Jones said during the ceremony. "This is the place where

soccer can grow and thrive within the United States, and in my humble opinion, the LA Galaxy is the pinnacle of MLS."

Jones played his entire Major League Soccer career with the Galaxy from 1996 to 2007, becoming one of the league's early stars and a steady presence during MLS' formative years. Over 334 appearances for Los Angeles, he scored 70 goals and helped lead the Galaxy to MLS Cup championships in 2002 and 2005. He also helped the club win two U.S. Open Cups and a Concacaf Champions Cup.

Born in Detroit and raised in Southern California, Jones graduated from Westlake High School before starring at UCLA. His speed, creativity and signature dreadlocks made him a fan favorite, while his consistency helped define the Galaxy's identity in the club's first decade.

Jones also became a major figure for the U.S. Men's National Team, representing the country in the 1994, 1998 and 2002 FIFA World Cups. He

was named U.S. Soccer Athlete of the Year in 1998 and was a five-time MLS All-Star. In 2002, he helped the United States capture the CONCACAF Gold Cup title.

MLS Commissioner Don Garber attended the unveiling and praised Jones as one of the players who helped build the league's foundation.

"I always believed that you can't celebrate your future without properly honoring our past," Garber said. "And what better player and what better man to honor today other than Cobi Jones?"

After retiring in 2007, Jones remained connected to the Galaxy as a coach for two seasons. In 2011, he was inducted into the National Soccer Hall of Fame, cementing his place among the most influential players in U.S. soccer history.

The statue adds another permanent reminder of Jones' impact — not only on the Galaxy, but on the growth of the sport in Los Angeles and across the nation.

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