



Predatory Auto Lending Exploits Black Consumers

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Extreme Heat Bakes L.A. County as 29,000 Unsheltered Angelenos Are Directly Impacted

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Gov. Newsom Signs New Affordable Housing Legislation

By Bo Tefu

California Black Media

Gov. Gavin Newsom has signed new legislation aimed at expanding affordable housing, reducing construction costs and speeding up housing development across California as part of the state's 2026-27 budget.

Assembly Bill (AB) 179, signed July 17, modernizes California's affordable housing finance system by streamlining project approvals, expanding funding for housing programs and creating new financing tools for homeowners rebuilding after disasters. State officials said the measure is intended to help increase housing production while strengthening efforts to address the state's housing affordability and homelessness challenges.

The legislation introduces a new "One-Stop-Shop" financing system designed to reduce duplicative reviews and accelerate affordable housing projects. According to the governor's office, the reforms are expected to lower construction costs by an estimated \$60,000 to \$70,000 per affordable housing unit, allowing existing state investments to finance more homes.

"When I took office in 2019, my goal was clear: to reverse decades of inaction on housing and homelessness and ensure there was enough housing and care for people to leave the streets," Newsom said in a statement. "I'm grateful for the Legislature's partnership, as together we add to this proven foundation with new laws that cut red tape, expand financing opportunities, and help communities build housing faster."

The measure also establishes a \$100 million Disaster Rebuilding Fund to help homeowners repair or reconstruct homes damaged by disasters.



California Governor Gavin Newsom stands with public officials after signing Assembly Bill 179 in Oakland, Calif., on July 13 2026. Assembly Bill 179 modernizes how California finances and delivers affordable housing. (Lloyd B Davis/Bay City News)

In addition, the budget includes \$900 million for another round of Housing, Homelessness Assistance and Prevention grants while adding new accountability requirements for certain cities and counties receiving state funding.

To support affordable housing development, the budget provides \$500 million in enhanced state low-income housing tax credits and \$200 million for the Multifamily Housing Program to build and preserve affordable rental housing for low-income Californians.

According to the governor's office, California

has made progress in increasing housing production since 2019. Annual residential construction has risen by 59%, from about 70,000 homes in 2018 to approximately 111,000 in 2024. The administration also reported that more than 682,000 homes have been built statewide during that period and that the average time from development application to entitlement has dropped from 160 days to 68 days.

State officials also highlighted recent declines in homelessness, including what they described as the state's largest reduction in unsheltered homelessness in 16 years.

Proposition 39 Puts California at the Center of the National Voter ID Debate

By Edward Henderson

California Black Media

Questions about election security, voter access and public confidence in elections have become some of the most closely watched issues in American politics.

This November, California voters will weigh in on those debates through Proposition 39, a ballot measure that would establish new voter identification requirements while expanding citizenship verification and election auditing procedures.

If approved, Proposition 39 would require voters to present a government-issued identification card when voting in person. Mail-in voters would be required to provide the last four digits of a government-issued identification number they designated during voter registration. The measure would also require election officials to use government data to verify U.S. citizenship, when possible, publish annual reports showing the percentage of voter registrations verified for citizenship in each county and require the California State Auditor to conduct regular audits of compliance with the new requirements.

A "yes" vote would amend the California Constitution to establish those requirements. A "no" vote would leave California's current election laws in place, under which most voters are not required to present identification at the polls and citizenship is verified through existing voter registration procedures.

Supporters argue Proposition 39 is intended to strengthen public confidence in California's elections by increasing transparency and oversight.

In a statement by Julie Luckey, director of Californians for Voter ID, the campaign behind the initiative, she highlights the need for the state to catch up with the times when it comes to these procedures.

"Thirty-six states in the U.S. have implemented some form of voter identification requirement,"

Luckey said. "Voter ID is simply a common-sense policy. California needs to modernize its elections to align with the vast majority of the world's democracies. While our state leads in so many areas, it lags behind on this issue. It's time for California to catch up and enact voter ID laws."

Opponents contend the initiative would discourage participation and make it more difficult for many eligible Californians to vote while attempting to address a problem they say does not exist. They also argue that the initiative would not improve election security.

Jenny Farrell, executive director of the League of Women Voters of California, spoke with California Black Media (CBM). She said Proposition 39 is unnecessary because, in her view, California already has safeguards in place to protect elections.

"Prop 39 is part of President Trump's voter suppression agenda designed to make voting more difficult, undermine confidence in our elections, and narrow who gets to participate in our democracy," Farrell said. "California's elections are already secure, and we already verify voters. There is no problem to solve."

Farrell also shared that the in-person identification requirement would disproportionately affect groups that are less likely to have the required forms of government-issued identification.

The debate has also moved into the courts. Proposition 39's backers, led by lead plaintiff Assemblymember Carl DeMaio (D-San Diego), filed a lawsuit in Sacramento County Superior Court against Attorney General Rob Bonta and Secretary of State Shirley N. Weber. They argue that the measure's revised ballot title and summary are biased and violate state election laws requiring impartial language. The original title stated that the measure "establishes additional voter identification and citizenship verification requirements." The revised title says it "prohibits citizens from voting unless they present government-issued identification."

The lawsuit asks the court to order the state



On Your November Ballot:

Shutterstock

to replace the revised description before voter-information materials are finalized.

Bonta's office defended its handling of the measure, noting that ballot language routinely changes after initiatives qualify. "We take our duty to prepare a title and summary and ballot label seriously, and we are confident the court will agree we have faithfully executed that duty here," a spokesperson for Bonta's office said. The court's decision could determine how Proposition 39 is described to millions of voters in the state's official voter guide.

"This requirement would disproportionately burden people who are less likely to have the sort of ID that Prop 39 requires — including Black Californians and other communities of color, women and others who have changed their names, seniors, voters with disabilities, and Californians who move frequently," Farrell said.

"The bottom line is that we should be protecting every eligible voter's freedom to cast a ballot safely and privately — not creating new obstacles that make it harder for their voices to be heard," she added.

The California Democratic Party announced on Aug. 2 that it voted to oppose Prop 39 at its Summer Executive Board Meeting held in San Diego.

California Lawmakers and Advocates Push Voter Protection Measures Ahead of November Election

By Antonio Ray Harvey

California Black Media

With less than three months until the general election, Darius Kemp, executive director of California Common Cause, says California must protect both election security and voter access for the state's approximately 23 million eligible voters.

Kemp delivered that message during a June news conference at the State Capitol promoting Senate Bill (SB) 46 and SB 884, two measures that are part of the voter protection effort some lawmakers and advocates have dubbed the "Hands Off Our Elections" initiative.

"It's important that California continues to move forward. We have to progress and not regress," Kemp said. "Regression is going back in time, back to the 1950s and 1960s when Black people had to show extra identification, count jellybeans in a jar, and guess the number of clouds in the sky. That's regression."

SB 46, the "No Kings Act," authored by Sen. Tom Umberg (D-Santa Ana), would prohibit the California Secretary of State from placing a presidential candidate on the ballot if that candidate does not meet constitutional eligibility requirements, including the two-term limit for presidents.

SB 884, the "Protect Our Polls Act," was co-authored by Umberg and Sen. Sabrina Cervantes (D-Riverside). The bill would expand access to early-voting and ballot drop-off locations. It would also prohibit law enforcement officers — including federal immigration agents — from enforcing immigration laws or making arrests within 200 feet of a polling place while voting is underway.

Continued on page A2



Darius Kemp, executive director of California Common Cause, speaks at a State Capitol press conference announcing the "Hands Off Our Elections" initiative, highlighting Senate Bills 46 and 884. He was joined by Sen. Tom Umberg (D-Santa Ana) and Dora Rose, deputy director of the League of Women Voters of California. CBM photo by Antonio Ray Harvey.



Unique Green, funeral home director

Funeral Director Charged for Allegedly Stealing Dead Man's \$2 Million Estate is Released on Bond

Unique Green, a black funeral director from Houston, Texas, who was accused of stealing a dead man's \$2 million estate, has been released from jail after posting an \$800,000 bond. He faces multiple felony charges, including allegations that he falsely claimed to be the man's spouse.

Green, who is also identified as Michael in court records, was released shortly before 5 a.m. Tuesday, the Harris County Sheriff's Office confirmed, according to Click 2 Houston. The bonding company that processed his release did not disclose who provided the money for the bond.

Authorities had been investigating Green for months before Houston Police and the Harris County Precinct 1 Constable's Office searched A Community Funeral Home during a funeral service late last year.

The investigation started after the family of Lawrence Gammon said they hired Green to arrange funeral services, but never received the services they paid for. The family later contacted investigators after they believed Green may have used their personal information to carry out a scam.

Investigators said Green later filed documents in probate court claiming he was Gammon's spouse and the rightful owner of his estate. Attorneys for Gammon's family alleged that Green submitted a fake will that transferred control of the more than \$2 million estate to him.

Gammon's family said they did not know Green before Gammon's death and were unaware of any connection between the two. Green's attorney said he continues to claim he has rights to the estate, but did not provide details about their alleged relationship.

Green also faces accusations that he submitted fraudulent documents to the Texas Funeral Service Commission while applying for a funeral director and embalmer license. Prosecutors allege he falsely claimed military service and later operated A Community Funeral Home without a valid license.



Joniah Walker

15-Year-Old Black Teen Who Disappeared for 4 Years Was Abducted and Abused by a Man She Met Online

Joniah Walker, a black teen from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, who went missing at 15 and was found safe four years later, was allegedly abducted and held captive by a man she met online. Police said the man abused her throughout the years she was missing.

Walker disappeared in June 2022 after leaving her Milwaukee home to meet Owen Lars Anderson, a man she had been communicating with online for several years. Investigators said Anderson gained her trust by promising her a better life and telling her he would take care of her.

According to the Daily Mail, police said Anderson first contacted Walker through Facebook when she was 12 years old. The two continued communicating for about three years before Anderson convinced her to meet him in person when she was 15.

Authorities said Anderson arranged an Uber ride to pick Walker up from her family's home and take her to a movie theater in Chicago, Illinois. Police alleged that after meeting her there, he forced her to reset her iPhone and discarded both her phone and a burner phone he had previously given her.

Investigators said Anderson then drove Walker from Illinois to his home in Blacksburg, Virginia, where they alleged he kept her against her will. Police said Walker was sexually, physically, and verbally abused during the four years she was missing.

Police also alleged that Anderson recorded sexual acts and threatened to share the videos if Walker did not follow his demands. Investigators said he also prevented her from attending school while she was living at his home.

Walker was eventually found on May 23 after Blacksburg police responded to a 911 call about a reported domestic disturbance at Anderson's residence. During the investigation, Walker told officers she was the same teenager who had been reported missing in Wisconsin and said she had been held against her will.

Authorities arrested Anderson on May 27 and later searched his home, where they said they recovered electronic devices, flash drives, journals, and other potential evidence. The FBI is reviewing the digital evidence collected in the case.

Anderson, 37, faces kidnapping, child enticement, and child abduction charges in Wisconsin. He also faces Virginia charges, including abduction, child abuse, and 55 counts of possessing child sexual abuse material. He remains jailed without bond while awaiting extradition to Wisconsin.

The A Different World Sequel Returns to Hillman University with Original Cast Members



New series follows Deborah Wayne, daughter of Dwayne and Whitley, navigating college life. Premieres September 24 on Netflix, honoring legacy and exploring modern Black college experiences.



We're back at Hillman University with the sequel to A Different World, with a first look at the legacy cast returning for the series this September. The cast includes the return of Kadeem Hardison (Dwayne Wayne), Jasmine Guy (Whitley Gilbert), Cree Summer (Freddie Brooks), Darryl M. Bell (Ron Johnson) and Charnele Brown (Kim) hanging out in The Pit, where many of the major storylines when the show first aired in the 1990s took place. The newly released image is filled with nostalgia, instantly transporting longtime fans back to one of television's most beloved fictional HBCUs. More

than just a campus hangout, The Pit served as the heart of Hillman, where friendships were tested, romances blossomed, and conversations about race, politics, identity and young adulthood unfolded. Seeing the original cast reunited in the familiar setting signals that the new series plans to honor the legacy that made A Different World a cultural touchstone while introducing a new generation to Hillman's vibrant community. The sequel follows Deborah Wayne (Maleah Joi Moon, third from left), the daughter of Dwayne and Whitley, as she begins her own journey at Hillman University. While the spotlight shifts to a new class of students navigating college life, the returning



cast will help bridge the gap between generations, offering guidance, wisdom and, undoubtedly, a few laughs along the way. The new cast includes Alijah Kai, Chibuikem Uche, Cornell Young IV, Jordan Aaron Hall and Kennedy Reece. When A Different World premiered in 1987, it quickly evolved into far more than a college sitcom. The series became a defining portrait of Black campus life, inspiring countless students to pursue higher education and shining a national spotlight on Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Its

influence can still be felt today, with many HBCU graduates citing the show as part of their decision to attend one. With familiar faces back on campus and a new generation ready to make its mark, the sequel has the opportunity to celebrate the enduring legacy of Hillman while exploring what Black college life looks like today. If the first look is any indication, class is officially back in session. A Different World, the sequel, premieres September 24 on Netflix.

Oprah Winfrey Reveals That She Was Born With a Different Name



Oprah Winfrey

Oprah Winfrey revealed that the name she became famous for was not the name written on her birth certificate. The media mogul said she was actually born Orpah, but a childhood spelling mistake changed the name the world knows today. Winfrey shared the story during an appearance on Keke Palmer's podcast, Baby, This Is Keke Palmer. She explained that people around her had trouble spelling Orpah, so they began calling her Oprah instead. According to the Daily Mail, the 72-year-old icon said she only learned about the difference when she was around 20 years old. By that time, Oprah had already become the name she used in her personal and professional life. Winfrey said her original name came from the Bible, specifically the story of Ruth and Naomi. The name Orpah appears in Ruth chapter 1, verse 14, where Orpah chooses to return while Ruth stays

with Naomi. During the conversation, Winfrey also pointed out that Palmer had a different name on her birth certificate. The actress and host was born Lauren Keyana Palmer, which surprised her when Winfrey mentioned it. Winfrey previously explained the story on The Oprah Winfrey Show in 2005. She said her aunt chose the biblical name Orpah, but the spelling confusion led to the name Oprah becoming permanent. Her famous name later inspired Harpo Productions, the company she founded in 1986. The name Harpo is simply Oprah spelled backward. Winfrey went on to become one of the most influential figures in media. She rose to fame as the host of The Oprah Winfrey Show, launched OWN, and became the first Black female billionaire.

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We Lived It: Why a Different World Still Matters Today — an Ode to HBCUs



Cast of *A Different World*. — Netflix.

Howard
Black Press USA Wire
Ain't That A VHIT
Some shows you watch. Others shape you.
A Different World did both. It gave us one of our first real glimpses into life at an HBCU, where Black excellence, growth, struggle, and purpose

all coexisted. It wasn't just entertainment; it was a vision. It showed us that college wasn't just possible; it was ours.
Von C. HowardAs the theme song reminded us, "I know my parents love me... stand behind me, come what may," grounding us in the importance of family and a sense of foundation as we stepped into new chapters of life.

That vision became real for me in the summer of 1997 when I arrived at Florida A&M University. Though I was nervous, being away from home for the first time, I quickly found myself at home on The Highest of Seven Hills. From 1997 to 2002, I didn't just attend FAMU... I lived what A Different World had been preparing me for.
It was a place for everybody. For those who walked across the stage Magna or Summa Cum Laude, and for those who fought through challenges and still made it by the grace of God, earning that degree designation: "Thank Ya Lawdy." No matter the path, the destination meant something.
It was also where family was built. Some found lifelong partners, while others created bonds through "play cousins" and friendships that became real family. And no matter how much time passes, every reconnection brings that feeling...
Homecoming.
Those experiences shaped me, late-night conversations, professors who poured into you, and moments that challenged you to grow. That wasn't television anymore. That was life.
Today, I carry that same spirit forward. I share it with my children, my nieces and nephews, and the young people I mentor, or even those I simply connect with for the culture. I'm not just telling them about college; I'm sharing what it feels like to be in a space that affirms who you are.
Because too many of our young people haven't seen that vision.
They see highlights, but not the depth. They don't always see that HBCUs are more than

institutions; they are environments that build confidence, culture, and community.
And in this day and age, that truth matters even more.
HBCUs continue to stand as pillars of access, opportunity, and cultural identity at a time when they are facing unprecedented and, at times, unfair political and systemic pressures. Challenges around funding, policy decisions, and shifting educational priorities make it critical that we not only remember their value but actively protect and sustain them. These institutions have always done more with less, yet continue to produce leaders, innovators, and changemakers who shape our communities and our country.
So, we must reintroduce and uphold that "Different World."
Parents, have the conversation.
Students, look deeper.
Alumni, tell your stories, invest, and stay connected.
Because as the song reminds us, "It's a different world from where you come from," and for many of us, it became exactly where we found ourselves.
This is more than a memory.
It is a world our ancestors built and a place where dreams and realities are made.
The post "We Lived It: Why A Different World Still Matters Today — An Ode to HBCUs" appeared first on The Westside Gazette.
Based on reporting by Westside Gazette.

Rev. Dr. Amos C. Brown Awarded the NAACP's 111th Spingarn Medal at the 117th National Convention

By Special to The Post
BlackPressUSA
Rev. Dr. Amos C. Brown, one of America's most distinguished civil rights leaders, pastors, and advocates for justice, was awarded the 111th NAACP Spingarn Medal, the organization's highest honor, during the 117th NAACP National Convention in Chicago on July 22.
The award recognizes Brown's more than seven decades of extraordinary leadership advancing civil rights, racial justice, voting rights, religious freedom, and human dignity.
Hosted by acclaimed actor Morris Chestnut, the ceremony brought together NAACP delegates, civil rights leaders, elected officials, clergy, business leaders, and advocates from across the nation.
Special tributes honoring Rev. Dr. Brown were delivered by former Vice President Kamala Harris, former San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown, former Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, California Governor Gavin Newsom, and Elder Holland from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints each recognizing his unwavering commitment to justice and his profound influence on generations of leaders.
Established in 1914 by Joel E. Spingarn, the Spingarn Medal is the NAACP's highest honor, presented annually to an African American whose achievements reflect the highest ideals of excellence, service, and leadership.
Previous recipients include Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Thurgood Marshall, Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison, Congressman James E. Clyburn, Dr. Hazel N. Dukes, and Vice President Kamala Harris.
Held under the convention theme "We, the People," the 117th NAACP National Convention convened thousands of activists, elected officials, business leaders, clergy, and community advocates committed to advancing civil rights, equity, and opportunity as the United States approaches its



Rev. Dr. Amos C. Brown speaks after receiving the Spingarn Medal from Rev. Dr. Frederick D. Haynes III, left, as actor Morris Chestnut, second from left and Brown's children, Kizzie Brown-Duah, second from right and David Brown, right, look on.

250th anniversary.
The medal was presented to Brown by Rev. Dr. Frederick D. Haynes III, a longtime friend, spiritual son, and fellow champion for justice and peace. In his heartfelt introduction, Haynes affectionately described Brown as "You the Birthday," a phrase from today's young culture meaning, "You are amazing. You are awesome."
Haynes celebrated Brown's extraordinary life of service, recounting his many accomplishments, enduring influence, and unwavering commitment to preserving history of African Americans. Haynes

praised Brown for using both his remarkable memory and his prophetic voice to uplift "the last, the least, and the left behind," noting that he has always understood the sacred responsibility of standing for those who cannot stand for themselves — to speak the truth.
Concluding his tribute, Rev. Dr. Haynes offered a powerful charge:
"Maybe it is both providential and prophetic that we are honoring Rev. Dr. Amos C. Brown today, because we need a Third Reconstruction in the face of a nation that is trying to dismantle the

hard-fought gains of the Civil Rights Movement. Thank you, Amos C. Brown, and thank you, NAACP, for showing us the way toward that Third Reconstruction. "You the Birthday."
During his acceptance remarks, Rev. Dr. Brown honored the women who helped shape his life and ministry—including his mother and father, sisters, his beloved wife, Jane Smith Brown, and Eliza Davis, founder of Third Baptist Church of San Francisco.
"I am deeply honored and humbled to receive the Spingarn Medal. This recognition is not simply about one individual—it represents the countless people who have dedicated their lives to the ongoing pursuit of justice, equality, and human dignity. Our work continues," said Brown.
He also recognized on stage his longtime friend and fellow prophetic voice, Rev. Dr. Jeremiah A. Wright Jr., urging that history faithfully preserve Wright's influence on a generation of leaders. Wright, the renowned Chicago pastor emeritus mentored then-Senator Barack Obama.
This year's Spingarn Medal recipient is a powerful reminder that we must continue to celebrate our own—to honor the women and men whose courage, sacrifice, and unwavering leadership have advanced the ongoing struggle for justice, equality, and democracy in America.
"This recognition celebrates not only our father's extraordinary life of service but also the generations of people he has inspired to believe that justice requires both faith and action," said Kizzie Brown-Duah, Brown's daughter.
"Our family is deeply grateful to the NAACP for honoring a lifetime devoted to advancing freedom, dignity, and opportunity for all people." Said Brown's son, David Brown.
This story came from the media relation department of the office of Rev. Dr. Amos C. Brown

Cyclospora Boosts Fears That Worse Foodborne Outbreaks Are Ahead

By Kate Wells and Stephanie Armour
The next foodborne illness outbreak could be much worse.
That's the concern of food safety leaders across the U.S. who are raising alarms over federal cuts they say have made it harder to detect and stop the spread of foodborne illnesses, such as the recent outbreaks of cyclospora, which has sickened thousands in dozens of states. And they're especially worried the next pathogen will be much more deadly.
Food safety in the U.S. is monitored by a piecemeal system of state and federal agencies. That network is in charge of detecting, investigating, and stopping outbreaks of foodborne illnesses. Key to the system is the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's FoodNet program, created after four children died from E. coli in hamburgers in the early 1990s. States participating in the program, officially called the Foodborne Diseases Active Surveillance Network, contact labs to get case data that can signal when a problem is emerging.
But in President Donald Trump's second term, his administration has slashed billions of dollars in public health funding and fired thousands of workers at federal health agencies. It has also curtailed FoodNet, stopping the program's mandatory tracking of cyclospora and five other pathogens that together kill hundreds of people in the U.S. each year.
"You're basically allowing for outbreaks to continue without being figured out. Invariably more people will get sick," said Bill Marler, a Seattle-area food safety lawyer and advocate who has filed lawsuits against Taco Bell on behalf of people who allege they were sickened by cyclospora after eating there.
Under the changes to the FoodNet surveillance system, the 10 participating states — meant to represent a cross section of the broader population — no longer have to report cases of listeria, for example. That bacteria kills as many as 30% of people who are diagnosed with it.
Complications from listeria infections can include convulsions, miscarriage, and sepsis that damage organs. It's much more rare than the type of E. coli bacteria still required to be tracked by FoodNet, but almost 95% of people infected with listeria wind up hospitalized. Listeria infections result in an estimated 170 to 260 deaths each year, according to numbers from the CDC and the Food and Drug Administration.
"It's very hard to identify listeria outbreaks," said Neal Fortin, the director of the Institute of Food Laws and Regulations at Michigan State University. Seeing it cut from FoodNet's mandatory surveillance "really does disturb me," he said.
Thirty-three people died and a pregnant woman had a miscarriage in 2011 after consuming cantaloupe contaminated with listeria. The FDA

identified the cause in less than two weeks.
States participating in FoodNet also no longer have to report illnesses caused by campylobacter, a bacteria often contracted from raw and undercooked poultry that afflicts an estimated 1.5 million people each year. The bacteria sickened about 60 people in Idaho this year in an outbreak linked to raw milk — a product Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has championed, even though pasteurization kills harmful bacteria.
HHS denies that the changes to FoodNet or Trump administration staffing cuts have elevated the risk that future outbreaks will be harder to identify and stop.
"FDA investigators were not affected by staffing changes or force reductions, and the FY 2027 President's Budget proposes a \$33 million increase for food safety activities," HHS spokesperson Emily Hilliard said in an email. And the CDC never stopped monitoring illnesses caused by cyclospora, she said.
The CDC has other, passive surveillance systems, but they rely on states to report problems.
"There's no requirement of how long it takes them to do that," said Barbara Kowalczyk, the director of the Institute for Food Safety and Nutrition

Security at George Washington University.
And the FDA meets only a fraction of the number of inspections mandated by Congress. The FDA hasn't met its mandated targets for domestic and foreign inspections since 2018, according to a report early last year by the Government Accountability Office.
Food safety inspections of manufacturers by the FDA plummeted from 10,641 facilities in 2011 to about 4,500 a decade later. The agency had 432 investigators for domestic and foreign inspections in 2024, according to a GAO report.
That was before the Trump administration cut 3,500 jobs at the FDA in a push to reduce federal spending.
Now, food safety leaders say the situation could get worse, because the Trump administration wants to push more routine food inspections to the states and further reduce the number of federal staffers that handle investigations and inspections.
State health departments are already overburdened from federal funding cuts and staffing shortages, forcing some to reduce or halt prevention programs so they can focus on more emergent concerns.
The cuts are being felt in Michigan, which has

reported more than 7,000 cases of cyclosporiasis, the most of any state. The cyclospora parasite can cause frequent diarrhea that can last for days or even weeks, as well as abdominal pain, nausea, and fatigue.
The health department in Washtenaw County, Michigan, already pulled some staff off other work, such as immunizations and sexual health, to handle a recent measles outbreak that sickened seven people, including five kids. Now those same nurses are spending hours on the phone with hundreds of people with cyclosporiasis, trying to trace the source of their illness through weeks-old takeout receipts, bank statements, and recollections.
"We are starting to see the consequences of an underfunded public health system in 2026," said Natasha Bagdasarjan, Michigan's chief medical executive. "Currently it's cyclospora. Eventually, we are going to lose the ability to detect something else."
KFF Health News is a national newsroom that produces in-depth journalism about health issues and is one of the core operating programs at KFF—an independent source of health policy research, polling, and journalism. Learn more about KFF.



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Political Playback



California Capitol News You Might Have Missed

By Bo Tefu and Antonio Ray Harvey
California Black Media

California Democratic Party Endorses 2026 General Election Candidates; Ballot Measures

The California Democratic Party (CADEM) has endorsed former attorney general of California and U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra for governor and announced its positions on the 14 statewide propositions appearing on California's Nov. 3 general election ballot.

The endorsements were finalized during the party's Executive Board meeting in San Diego and released Aug. 2.

Along with Becerra, CADEM endorsed Fiona Ma for lieutenant governor; Shirley N. Weber for secretary of state; Rob Bonta for attorney general; Eleni Kounalakis for treasurer; Malia Cohen for controller; Richard Barrera for superintendent of public instruction; and state Sen. Ben Allen (D-Santa Monica) for insurance commissioner.

The endorsement of Allen for Insurance Commissioner was particularly significant because the insurance commissioner's race had remained the only statewide contest in which CADEM had not endorsed a candidate following the June primary.

"Every endorsement we make is earned, not given," said CADEM Chair Rusty Hicks. "California Democrats take a deliberative approach to our endorsement process that puts our values first and ensures our members have a meaningful voice in shaping the future of our state."

The party's endorsement process includes participation from delegates and Executive Board members representing Democrats across California. Candidates generally must receive at least 60% of the votes cast to secure the party's endorsement. If no candidate reaches that threshold, the party may declare "no consensus" in the race.

CADEM also endorsed four candidates for the California State Board of Equalization: Nelson Esparza in District 1, Sally Lieber in District 2, state Assemblymember Mike Gipson (D-Carson) in District 3 and state Sen. Tom Umberg (D-Santa Ana) in District 4.

Gipson is a member of the California Legislative Black Caucus (CLBC).

On statewide ballot measures, CADEM announced its support for Propositions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 37, 38 and 40. The party opposes Propositions 39, 41, 42, 43, 44 and 45, according to its official endorsement list.

CADEM issues endorsements in statewide, congressional and legislative races, as well as on statewide ballot propositions. Democratic County Central Committees generally oversee endorsements in municipal and other local contests.

To find out more about your county's Central Committee and their endorsement process, please use the link below: Find your local County Central Committee

California Lawmakers Return for Final Month of Legislative Session

The California Legislature's summer recess has officially concluded, with lawmakers returning to Sacramento on Aug. 3 for the final four weeks of the 2025–2026 legislative session.

The packed agenda includes hundreds of active bills that cleared their initial policy committees before lawmakers began their summer break July 3.

Among the measures awaiting final action are several priorities of the California Legislative Black Caucus (CLBC), which advanced a sweeping "Road to Repair" reparations package in 2025.

One of the caucus's key bills this legislative session is Assembly Bill (AB) 2599, the Truth in Disclosure Act. Authored by Assemblymember Isaac Bryan (D-Ladera Heights), vice chair of the CLBC, the bill would make California the first state in the nation to require major corporations to disclose under oath whether they or their predecessor

companies profited from chattel slavery.

Earlier this year, the CLBC partnered with the California Legislative Women's Caucus on a broader equity package designed to support families, reduce economic disparities and strengthen the state's social safety net.

Other CLBC priority measures moving through the Legislature include AB 2434, the Visitor Protections and Safety Act, authored by Assemblymember Mia Bonta (D-Alameda); AB 1755, which would eliminate CalWORKs work-hour restrictions, authored by Assemblymember LaShae Sharp-Collins (D-La Mesa); and AB 1570, which would expand health insurance coverage for diagnostic imaging, authored by Assemblymember Lori Wilson (D-Suisun City).

Fiscal committees have until Aug. 14 to meet and send bills to the floor. From Aug. 17 through Aug. 31, lawmakers will focus on floor sessions, with no committee meetings scheduled except those of the Rules and conference committees.

The deadline to amend bills on the floor is Aug. 21. Both the Senate and Assembly have until midnight Aug. 31 to pass legislation and send it to the governor.

The California Constitution prohibits lawmakers from passing bills after Sept. 1 during the second year of a two-year legislative session.

California Is Partnering With Cities to Remove Homeless Encampments Along Highways

California is expanding its partnership with local governments to remove homeless encampments along state highways, adding Ontario, San Bernardino and San Diego to a growing statewide program aimed at improving public safety while connecting people experiencing homelessness with housing and supportive services.

Gov. Gavin Newsom announced the three new Encampment Delegated Maintenance Agreements on July 28, bringing the total number of participating cities to 13. Under the agreements, the state reimburses local agencies that work with the California Department of Transportation, or Caltrans, to remove encampments and maintain state highway rights-of-way.

The partnerships are part of the state's broader strategy to address homelessness through coordinated efforts between state and local governments. Participating cities must follow state policies and reporting requirements to qualify for reimbursement of eligible cleanup costs.

"Our partnerships must continue delivering results, helping keep roadways clean and addressing the very real issues of homelessness in our state," said Newsom. "By pairing historic state investments with local-level coordination, we are helping communities across California create safer, healthier places for everyone."

Under the agreements, local governments can remove encampments, collect litter and debris, manage vegetation and remove graffiti along state highways. State officials said encampments that pose risks to public health and safety remain the highest priority during cleanup operations.

According to the governor's office, Caltrans has removed nearly 26,500 encampments and collected approximately 457,000 cubic yards of litter and debris from state highway rights-of-way since July 2021. Similar agreements are already in place with San Francisco, Claremont, Commerce, Fresno, Paramount, Riverside, Santa Ana, Santa Fe Springs, San Jose and Santa Monica.

California Transportation Secretary Toks Omishakin said partnerships between state and local agencies strengthen efforts to improve safety while expanding pathways to housing and supportive services. Caltrans Director Dina El-Tawansy said the agreements combine state resources with local expertise to improve conditions for people experiencing homelessness and the traveling public.

The announcement comes as the Newsom administration continues to highlight investments in homelessness programs, behavioral health services and permanent supportive housing. State officials said California recently recorded its largest

reduction in unsheltered homelessness in more than 15 years and continues to expand shelter and housing options as part of its long-term strategy to reduce homelessness statewide.

Why Supporters of California Voter ID Proposition Are Suing Attorney General Bonta

Supporters of California's Proposition (Prop) 39 have filed a lawsuit against Attorney General Rob Bonta, alleging his office's revised ballot title and summary for the voter ID initiative misrepresent the measure, which could mislead voters ahead of the November election.

The lawsuit, filed in Sacramento County Superior Court, asks a judge to order changes to the ballot language before voter information guides and ballots are sent to print. The plaintiffs argue the revised wording violates California law, which requires ballot titles and summaries to provide a true and impartial description of a measure.

Prop 39 would require voters to present government-issued identification when voting in person or provide the last four digits of a government-issued identification number when voting by mail. The initiative would also require the state to issue voter identification cards upon request and direct election officials to maintain voter rolls and report annually on citizenship verification efforts. California currently does not require identification for most voters casting ballots.

The legal challenge centers on Bonta's decision to change the initiative's title from "Establishes additional voter identification and citizenship verification requirements," which supporters used while gathering signatures, to "Prohibits citizens from voting unless they present government-issued identification."

Supporters argue the revised language inaccurately suggests eligible citizens would be prevented from voting. In their court filing, they contend the measure instead establishes verification requirements that determine whether a ballot is counted and that the new title omits key provisions related to voter roll maintenance and citizenship verification.

The lawsuit names both Bonta and Secretary of State Shirley Weber as defendants and seeks a ruling before the Aug. 10 deadline for finalizing ballot materials.

Assemblymember Carl DeMaio (R-San Diego), who is leading the Yes on 39 campaign, said the revised title is "designed to rig the election to produce a no vote" and argued it does not accurately describe the initiative. State Sen. Tony Strickland, a co-author of the measure, also criticized the changes, saying Californians should be able to evaluate the proposal without what he described as political influence in the ballot language.

Bonta defended the revisions, saying his office updated the language for all nine statewide ballot initiatives appearing on the November ballot. He said the Prop 39 title and summary are "more helpful to voters," "more accurate" and comply with the state's legal requirement to provide fair and impartial ballot descriptions.

A judge is expected to consider the case before election materials are finalized, though disputes over statewide ballot language may ultimately be reviewed by the California Supreme Court.

Report: Next to Latinos, Blacks Have Second Highest Poverty Rate in California

Black Californians had the second-highest poverty rate in the state in 2024, trailing only Latinos, according to a new report from the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) and the Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality.

The report found that 19% of Black Californians live below the California Poverty Measure, compared with 22% of Latinos, 15% of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and 13% of White Californians. Researchers said Latinos accounted for 51% of Californians living in poverty despite making up 41% of the state's population.

The findings come as California's overall poverty rate increased to 17.4% in 2024, up from 16.9% the previous year. The California Poverty Measure, which factors in the state's high cost of

living and the impact of taxes and public assistance, estimated that 6.7 million residents lived in poverty last year. Another 13.6 million Californians, or 35% of the state's population, were living in or near poverty.

The report also found that poverty disproportionately affected immigrants, single-parent households and residents with lower levels of education. Foreign-born Californians had a poverty rate of 22%, compared with 15% for U.S.-born residents, while undocumented immigrants experienced a poverty rate of 37%. Adults without a high school diploma had a poverty rate of 31%, nearly four times that of college graduates.

Researchers found that public assistance programs continue to reduce economic hardship across the state. Without safety net programs, including CalFresh, tax credits, housing subsidies and school meal programs, an estimated 2.5 million more Californians would have fallen below the poverty line. Social Security alone prevented an additional 1.3 million older adults from living in poverty.

The report also found that employment did not shield many families from financial hardship. Nearly four in five Californians living in poverty belonged to families with at least one working adult, highlighting the continuing challenge of affording basic necessities in one of the nation's most expensive states.

Health Advocates Warn Ending Medicare Drug Subsidies Could Raise Premiums in 2027

California health advocates and policymakers are raising concerns after the Trump administration announced it will end a federal subsidy program that has helped keep Medicare Part D prescription drug premiums low, a change expected to affect beneficiaries beginning in 2027.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services said the Medicare Part D premium stabilization program will expire at the end of 2026. The program currently provides federal subsidies to private insurance companies to help keep prescription drug plan premiums affordable for millions of older adults and people with disabilities enrolled in Medicare.

According to health policy nonprofit KFF, ending the subsidies could increase monthly premiums for some beneficiaries by as much as \$20. Trump administration officials, however, said about half of Medicare Part D enrollees will either see premium increases of less than \$10 a month or experience lower premiums, and that most beneficiaries will continue to have access to plans costing \$10 or less per month.

CMS Administrator Mehmet Oz defended the decision, saying the subsidies are no longer needed.

"We are stabilizing the market so this bailout is no longer needed," Oz wrote on X. "Premiums will go up by less than \$10 for most Medicare recipients, with many even seeing LOWER premiums."

The administration has argued the subsidies primarily benefited insurance companies and criticized the Biden administration's Inflation Reduction Act, which created the temporary premium stabilization program while also allowing Medicare to negotiate prices for certain high-cost prescription drugs.

Health care advocates warn that ending the subsidies could increase out-of-pocket costs for some seniors who rely on Medicare Part D to afford prescription medications.

The announcement also comes after enhanced Affordable Care Act premium subsidies expired, adding to broader concerns about health care affordability.

Oz said the administration will continue pursuing policies aimed at lowering prescription drug costs, including expanding access to certain medications and advancing "most favored nation" pricing, which seeks to align U.S. drug prices with those paid in other countries.

The premium changes are expected to take effect in 2027, with Medicare beneficiaries receiving information about their plan options and monthly costs during the upcoming fall enrollment period.

Closing the Gap: What the Data and Frontline Experiences Reveal About Cancer in Black California

By **Charlene Muhammad**
California Black Media

Kris Benz, a disabled Black veteran, is no stranger to cancer. In 2012, he was diagnosed with salivary duct carcinoma, a cancer so rare it strikes only about 1 in a million people each year.” But he beat it after six weeks of radiation and removal of his right salivary gland.

“I was cancer-free after six months,” he said.

Now, a new concerning mass has appeared in his neck despite months of scans. His doctor suspects it is cancerous, but Benz, who lives near Palm Springs, will not know for certain until a biopsy.

Compounding that uncertainty is a gap in his coverage. Benz is two work credits short of qualifying for Medicare, but returning to work could jeopardize his Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability status and funding. Buying Medicare Part A would cost \$568 a month, leaving him “winging it.”

Benz is also frustrated that the VA will not schedule his scan and biopsy before his consultation, requiring another round of appointments afterward.

“It’s about money,” he said. “Doctor’s appointments, they get the money. There’s no preventive medicine here anymore.”

Although he calls the VA “a great organization,” he believes it is hampered by bureaucracy. For now, he remains “in limbo” waiting to complete his appointments.

His experience reflects one of the most persistent health equity challenges facing Black communities: access to care.

According to a UC Davis study, “The Burden of Cancer Among Black/African Americans in California,” Black cancer patients were more likely than White patients to be diagnosed at a later stage and to have multiple health conditions, making treatment more difficult. They were also far more likely to live in low-income communities and rely on public insurance—evidence that economic inequality and barriers to care are helping drive

disparities in the state’s cancer crisis.

That same study reports that between 2014 and 2018, the ten cancers most frequently diagnosed among Black/African American women in California were, from one to ten, breast, lung, colorectal, uterine, pancreatic, kidney, non-Hodgkin lymphoma, thyroid, myeloma, and ovarian cancers. During the same period, the ten most commonly occurring cancers among Black/African American men in California were, from one to ten, prostate, lung, colorectal, kidney, bladder, liver, non-Hodgkin lymphoma, pancreatic, myeloma, and oropharyngeal cancers.

Researchers attribute the gaps not to biology but to social and economic inequality connected to structural racism. An American Cancer Society analysis found educational attainment was a stronger predictor of the mortality gap than race alone.

“These disparities are not because Black people are inherently less healthy,” said Rhonda Smith, executive director of the California Black Health Network. “They are the result of decades of inequitable policies, structural racism, unequal access to quality care, and chronic underinvestment in our communities.”

Dr. Flojaune Cofer, an epidemiologist and public health policy expert, said health outcomes are shaped as much by circumstances as by biology. She traced her understanding of disparities to her father’s death from heart disease at age 47. He began smoking as a child when tobacco companies marketed cigarettes aggressively and disproportionately to Black communities.

“My father’s story is not about individual choices,” Cofer said. “My father’s story speaks to institutional and systemic harm.”

“Health is not just what happens in the doctor’s office,” she added. Social determinants include neighborhood conditions, housing stability, nutritious food, transportation, and the ability to take time off work for care.

At federally qualified health centers, tight

appointment schedules can make it difficult for medical providers to detect cancer early and earn the trust patients need to discuss troubling symptoms.

“We have only 15 minutes when you are working in a federally qualified health center—you have 15 minutes to assess, diagnose, treat, and write your note per patient,” said Jamie Garcia, a registered nurse who has been certified in oncology nursing for more than a decade and works at AdventHealth White Memorial in East Los Angeles.

Garcia said the rushed pace, driven partly by billing requirements tied to federal funding, leaves little time for providers to build relationships with patients. It can also allow health care professionals’ implicit biases to go unrecognized and unchallenged.

For Garcia’s patients, who are predominantly Black and Latino residents of surrounding communities, the consequences can be immediate and alarming. Many arrive with visibly advanced tumors after going without insurance, adequate coverage, a primary care physician or routine screenings.

Garcia recalled treating one patient whose tumor had grown large enough to be visible through the skin.

“The fact that I even got to see that is a failure and an atrocity,” she said.

Assemblymember Lori D. Wilson (D-Suisun City) sought to reduce another barrier through Assembly Bill 1570, which would have eliminated out-of-pocket costs for medically necessary diagnostic and supplemental breast imaging. It passed the Assembly Health Committee 16-0 but died in the Appropriations Committee. Wilson plans to reintroduce it during the next legislative session without biopsy coverage.

Wilson announced her breast cancer diagnosis in April 2023. She received timely, quality care but “saw others with similar diagnoses face different outcomes.”

“Some people who got diagnosed at the same time as me -- their timing of their surgeries and treatment was delayed in comparison to my own,”

she said. “Watching people go through and suffering unnecessarily was heartbreaking to me.”

Her follow-up imaging required only a \$10 copay. “I’ve had friends have to pay \$1,000 to get that secondary screening,” Wilson said. “That’s more than your typical car payment.”

Smith warned that policy changes could further erode access. California’s Every Woman Counts screening program is losing funding and being scaled back, she said. About one in three Black Californians relies on Medi-Cal, according to the state.

Smith also cited federal Medi-Cal work requirements projected to cause 1.1 million Californians to lose coverage by 2029-30. “Health equity is no longer simply about improving outcomes,” she said. “It’s about protecting access.”

Californians seeking low-cost cancer screening can contact a local federally qualified health center or the California Department of Public Health’s Every Woman Counts program. The California Black Health Network also offers referrals and advocacy resources.

Supported by the California Health Care Foundation (CHCF). Visit www.chcf.org.



Kris Benz, a disabled Black veteran, was diagnosed with salivary duct carcinoma, a rare cancer that strikes only about 1 in a million people each year. Photo courtesy of Kris Benz.

Newsom Reverses on Long-Sought Paid Leave Benefit for Teachers in California

By **Annie Sciacca**

California public school teacher Mollie Blustein planned her pregnancy so that her daughter would arrive during summer break. But when the elementary school teacher went into premature labor and delivered her baby two weeks before the end of school, she faced another stressor: a huge pay cut.

The majority of California’s roughly 300,000 teachers don’t have access to the state-funded paid leave program that most new parents in the private sector do. Instead, many local school districts deduct the cost of a substitute teacher from educators’ pay during parental leave.

Because her daughter arrived before the school year ended, Blustein used 10 of her accrued sick days — paid time off she wanted to bank for later to bond with her baby or to care for her if she got sick.

Now, California lawmakers have given public school and community college employees up to 14 weeks of paid pregnancy leave in the education bill accompanying the state’s new budget, after Gov. Gavin Newsom endorsed the provision this year.

It’s a reversal for Newsom in his final year in office. In 2019, the governor vetoed a bill that would have given school employees at least six weeks of paid leave, and he did not publicly support a similar Assembly bill that died on the Senate floor in 2024. Several analysts said the issue appeals to voters on both sides of the aisle, ahead of Newsom’s potential 2028 presidential run.

State Department of Finance spokesperson H.D. Palmer said in an email that “educator workforce recruitment and retention has been a priority for the administration since the governor’s first day in office” but that the funding was not previously available.

Paid leave policies for educators and other state workers have garnered bipartisan support in recent years, including in conservative-led states such as Alabama, Louisiana, and Georgia, and blue states such as New Jersey, Washington, and Oregon, said Vicki Shabo, a senior fellow specializing in gender equity and paid leave at the think tank New America.

After the Supreme Court’s 2022 Dobbs decision overturned the constitutional right to abortion, some conservative lawmakers in states that banned



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abortion embraced paid leave for public employees to signal support for babies after they were born, Shabo said. Many limited the benefit to state employees and framed it as a tool to recruit and retain them.

Elizabeth Gedmark, a vice president at A Better Balance, a nonprofit that advocates for workplace equality, said paid leave “polls incredibly well across all political lines, because everyone agrees that you shouldn’t have to go back to work a day after you had a baby.”

In 2019, President Donald Trump signed into law a bill that gave federal workers 12 weeks of paid leave. But Shabo said the current administration hasn’t made any moves to expand paid leave.

Palmer, of the Department of Finance, said the state can now afford the roughly \$218 million leave program because of billions of dollars in unexpected tax revenue, largely from personal income taxes tied to tech workers’ stock options. Much of that revenue is constitutionally guaranteed to schools, so it can’t cover other public workers who are also shut out of California’s paid leave system.

Many school district administrators have largely opposed paid leave in the past because of the cost. The state’s plan calls for districts to pay for the leave out of their annual cost-of-living raise, which this year is bigger than the law requires.

David Roth, superintendent of Buckeye Union School District in El Dorado County, said the math still isn’t great for some schools, and that “the real value reaching the classroom is smaller than the

headline number suggests.”

The California Association of School Business Officials had opposed previous related legislation, saying it would create an “unfunded mandate,” but largely supports the new plan now that the start date has been pushed from July 1 to January 2027. The organization’s chief governmental relations officer, Sara Pietrowski, said concerns remain but that the group would work with the state to avoid additional fiscal challenges.

The proposal would close a gap that many Californians don’t realize exists. The state was one of the first to offer paid family leave — under its current program, eligible workers get up to 90% of their pay for up to 20 weeks of combined leave and disability benefits.

But most California teachers, 72% of whom are women, are shut out. The program is funded through a payroll deduction for state disability insurance, and public agencies are exempt from it. Districts can opt in, but the move must be bargained collectively, as recently happened in the Los Angeles Unified School District.

Most educators must use up their accrued sick days before receiving a fraction of their pay for the remainder of their leave, under a provision of the education code.

Because of that, it’s not uncommon for teachers to plan their pregnancy leave for summer breaks to try to avoid burning up their sick leave. But that can be challenging for those who have pregnancy complications or early deliveries, like Blustein, or those who experience challenges getting pregnant.

Erika Jones, an elementary school teacher in Los Angeles and the secretary-treasurer of the California Teachers Association, said her colleagues routinely teach until they go into labor, which can be disruptive.

It took one colleague around seven years to bank 77 sick days to use for a single pregnancy.

“Women go back sooner than they should have, because they don’t have the days,” Jones said. “You end up in this deficit zone.”

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On Your November Ballot: Proposition 43 Would Require Two-Thirds Approval for Citizen-Proposed Local Special Taxes

By **Antonio Ray Harvey**
California Black Media

California voters will decide this November whether to make it more difficult to approve local special taxes proposed through the citizen initiative process.

Proposition (Prop) 43 would amend the California Constitution to require two-thirds voter approval for all local special taxes, including those placed on the ballot by citizens. Special taxes generate revenue dedicated to specific purposes, such as affordable housing, public transit, libraries, parks, emergency response and infrastructure.

The measure has sparked debate over taxpayer protections, majority rule and the ability of local communities to generate revenue for public services.

A “yes” vote would establish the two-thirds requirement beginning Jan. 1, 2027. A “no” vote would preserve current law, under which citizen-proposed local special taxes generally may pass with a simple majority.

Prop 43 originated as Assembly Constitutional Amendment (ACA) 22, authored by Assemblymember Buffy Wicks (D-Oakland). The Legislature approved the measure June 25 by votes of 68-2 in the Assembly and 35-1 in the Senate, placing it on the ballot without requiring the governor’s signature.

The measure emerged from an eleventh-hour compromise reached before the ballot certification deadline between legislative leaders and the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association (HJTA). Under the agreement, HJTA withdrew a broader tax-limitation initiative from the November ballot in exchange for lawmakers placing ACA 22 before voters. Legislative leaders also withdrew ACA 13, a competing constitutional amendment that would have changed the approval requirements for future voter initiatives.

Under existing law, special taxes placed on the ballot by local governments already require two-

thirds voter approval. However, court decisions stemming from the California Supreme Court’s 2017 ruling in California Cannabis Coalition v. City of Upland established that the same threshold does not necessarily apply to taxes proposed by citizens.

Subsequent appellate court decisions held that citizen-initiated special taxes could be approved by a simple majority. Prop 43 would eliminate that distinction by applying the two-thirds threshold to local governments and citizens exercising their initiative power.

Supporters say the measure would close a legal

loophole and ensure that all special taxes face the same voter-approval standard, regardless of who places them on the ballot.

The Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association (HJTA), Reform California and several taxpayer and business organizations support the measure. HJTA President Jon Coupal described its advancement as a victory for Proposition 13’s taxpayer protections.

“It’s a tremendous turnaround,” Coupal said. “In 2024, the California Legislature sought to make it easier to raise taxes with Proposition 5, which the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association defeated at the ballot. [On June 25], the Legislature voted to make it harder to raise taxes by advancing a constitutional amendment, ACA 22, to close a loophole that had allowed some special taxes to pass with less than the two-thirds vote required by Proposition 13.”

Sen. Tony Strickland (R-Huntington Beach) also praised the agreement, arguing that Californians need stronger protections against tax increases.

“I stand with the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association in defending Proposition 13 and the protections it provides for taxpayers and homeowners,” Strickland said. “Californians deserve the certainty of knowing these constitutional protections will remain in place.”

Opponents argue that the measure would give a minority of voters the power to block revenue proposals supported by most residents. They contend that the higher threshold could hinder future efforts to fund affordable housing, healthcare, fire protection, public transportation and other locally determined priorities.

Opponents include Wicks, despite her authorship of ACA 22, and public-service and transportation advocates, including Seamless Bay Area. Wicks said she introduced the amendment as part of a compromise to persuade HJTA to withdraw a broader tax-limitation initiative from the ballot.

“I’m the author of ACA 22. I’m also adamantly

opposed to it,” Wicks posted on Bluesky on June 29. “That deserves an explanation — so I want to tell you what went down [with] the ACA, and the fight over transfer taxes and the Taxpayer Protection Act.”

The withdrawn initiative would have imposed additional restrictions, including limits on certain real estate transfer taxes and provisions affecting previously approved taxes. Legislative leaders also withdrew ACA 13, a competing constitutional amendment that would have applied heightened approval requirements to some future ballot initiatives.

Wicks said the compromise prevented the broader proposal from reaching voters but left them with a narrower measure she still considers harmful.

“I authored ACA 22 not because I wanted it to become law — but because it was the only path left to get the more dangerous initiative off the ballot before time ran out,” she said.

Wicks has said she viewed the compromise as choosing what she believed was the less harmful of two options, even though she ultimately opposes Proposition 43.

Seamless Bay Area argues that Prop 43 could impede future local efforts to fund transit, affordable housing and other public investments.

The organization points to previously approved measures supporting healthcare, fire protection and open-space preservation that received majority support but fell short of two-thirds.

The California Democratic Party announced on Aug. 2 that it voted to oppose Prop 43 at its Summer Executive Board Meeting held in San Diego.

The debate over Prop 43 centers on whether special taxes should require a broad public consensus or whether a simple majority should retain the authority to approve locally proposed investments.

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Dodgers Add 2X Cy Young Award Winner Tarik Skubal, But the Losing Streak Continues

By Earl Heath
Contributing Sports Writer

It was a week of both excitement and frustration for the Los Angeles Dodgers.

The good news came at the trade deadline, when the Dodgers landed two-time Cy Young Award winner Tarik Skubal in a blockbuster deal with the Detroit Tigers. To acquire one of baseball's premier left-handed pitchers, Los Angeles sent three highly regarded prospects to Detroit: outfielder Zyhír Hope, ranked No. 25 on MLB Pipeline's Top 100 list; right-hander River Ryan, ranked No. 68; and right-hander Brady Smith, the Dodgers' No. 17 prospect before the trade.

The move reinforced the organization's commitment to winning now, but Skubal's arrival was not enough to halt the Dodgers' recent struggles.

The Chicago Cubs spoiled Skubal's Dodgers debut at Wrigley Field, defeating Los Angeles 5-1 and handing the reigning Cy Young winner his first loss in a Dodgers uniform. The Cubs have been one of baseball's hottest teams, winning 31 of their last 46 games and sitting comfortably atop the National League wild-card standings.

For the Dodgers, the defeat marked a season-high fifth consecutive loss. Los Angeles has gone 8-12 over its last 20 games, a rare slump for one of baseball's elite teams.

Despite the skid, the Dodgers remain comfortably in first place in the National League West with a nine-game lead. Recent history also suggests there is little reason to panic. Last season, Los Angeles endured a seven-game losing streak in

July and went 22-32 over a 54-game stretch before rebounding. The club also experienced a 10-14 stretch during the middle of the season and another rough patch in September before regrouping.

"There just aren't that many star-level players in the game, and any time one is available, we're always going to participate in those conversations," Dodgers president of baseball operations Andrew Friedman said. "We've traded a lot of really talented young players, but we're able to be in those conversations because of the incredible work by our scouts, our front office and our player development group that has our farm system in such a strong spot to be able to talk to any team basically about any player."

Manager Dave Roberts said the key is moving on quickly.

"I think that you just got to kind of reset," Roberts said after Tuesday's loss. "Flush it, find a way to win a game, and not let it just compound. But it never feels good to lose. My focus right now is just forget about these last five games and be ready for tomorrow."

Veteran shortstop Mookie Betts echoed that message.

"It's a long season. Just a rut. We're going to be OK," Betts said. "I just know I've got to be better. I can't speak for anyone else."

The Dodgers are hoping Skubal's addition will strengthen an already talented rotation and provide the boost needed as the club looks to put its recent struggles behind it and continue its march toward another postseason appearance.



DODGERS Tommy Edmonds shows life during losing streak.

Chargers Turn Up the Intensity as Padded Practices Begin

By Earl Heath
Contributing Sports Writer

The Los Angeles Chargers entered their second week of training camp this week, with Tuesday marking the first padded practice of the 2026 season. As the intensity increased, several of the team's eight draft picks from the 2026 NFL Draft continued to make strong impressions, while others now face the challenge of proving themselves in full-contact drills. The first padded practice also signaled the beginning of a heated competition for the starting left guard position. Head coach Jim Harbaugh has opened the battle to five offensive linemen—Kayode Awosika, Jake Slaughter, Branson Taylor, Trevor Penning and Trey Pipkins III—and plans to let the competition play out over the coming weeks. Practicing in pads is expected to quickly separate the contenders from the rest of the field as the Chargers evaluate who will earn the starting role before the regular season. Left Guard Battle Takes Center Stage

The competition for the starting left guard spot has become one of the biggest storylines of training camp. All five candidates have rotated with the first-team offense, but early reports indicate that Kayode Awosika has emerged as one of the frontrunners for the job.

The offensive line remains a key focus for the Chargers as they work to provide quarterback Justin Herbert with improved protection heading into the



El Segundo, CA, USA; Los Angeles Chargers coach Jim Harbaugh during camp-The Bolt. Mandatory Credit: Kirby Lee-Imagn Images | IMAGN IMAGES via Reuters Connect

season.

Rookies Making Early Statements

Among the newcomers, rookie wide receiver Brenen Thompson has been one of the early breakout performers. Thompson's blazing 4.26-second speed has drawn praise from Herbert and the coaching staff, with his ability to stretch the field adding another dimension to the Chargers' offense.

First-round edge rusher Akheem Mesidor has also impressed during the opening days of camp. General manager Joe Hortiz described the rookie as "polished" as he continues to earn valuable repetitions in the Chargers' pass-rush rotation.

The Chargers did receive a brief scare when Pro Bowl offensive tackle Rashawn Slater appeared to suffer an injury during the first day of padded practice. Fortunately for Los Angeles, the injury was considered minor, and Slater was able to return to the field shortly afterward.

The Chargers also spent a couple of days practicing at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar before returning to their training facility in El Segundo to continue preparations for the upcoming preseason schedule.

With padded practices now underway, competition across the roster is expected to intensify as Harbaugh and his coaching staff continue evaluating players ahead of the 2026 season.

Rams Wrap Up Training Camp, Shift Focus to Preseason Opener



Myles Garrett's with Rams head coach Sean McVay (Kiyoshi Mio-Imagn Images)

By Earl Heath
Contributing Sports Writer

The Los Angeles Rams are wrapping up their 2026 training camp this week at Loyola Marymount University before transitioning to their permanent practice facility in Woodland Hills. From there, the team will turn its attention to its first preseason game against the Kansas City Chiefs on Aug. 15.

Fine-Tuning for the Season

Under head coach Sean McVay, the Rams have emphasized joint practices and competitive "ones versus ones" repetitions as they continue refining their offensive and defensive schemes. The coaching staff has also carefully managed the workloads of veteran players, including quarterback Matthew Stafford and linebacker Byron Young.

Quarterback Stetson Bennett IV has received significant work with the second-team offense and has connected on several highlight-reel plays with wide receiver Mario Williams. Veteran wide receiver Davante Adams has continued to show the dependable hands and consistency that made him one of the NFL's premier receivers.

Revamped Defense Making an Impact

The Rams' revamped defense has been one of the biggest storylines of camp, with intense "iron sharpens iron" matchups against the starting offense.

Among the new additions, cornerback Trent McDuffie has challenged the Rams' talented receiving corps, including standout wide receiver

Puka Nacua. Defensive end Myles Garrett has also made an immediate impression, although the team has managed his workload with scheduled rest days.

Garrett missed a couple of practices because of leg soreness, but the newcomer has quickly earned the respect of his teammates and coaches.

"The defender's arrival definitely lived up to the excitement," defensive coordinator Chris Shula said.

Veteran safety Quintin Lake praised Garrett's professionalism and commitment to preparation.

"His presence or aura in general—he's a workhorse, taking down notes in the meeting room," Lake said. "But even more so than that, what he does to take care of his body. Your body is your resume, and your best ability is availability. The attention to detail that he takes to take care of his body really stands out."

According to Yahoo Sports, Garrett may not match his 23-sack total this season, but his role within the Rams' defensive scheme could create more opportunities for the rest of the defensive front. Regardless of the statistics, Garrett is now part of one of the NFL's most talented rosters and a defensive unit built to capitalize on his disruptive presence.

With training camp coming to a close, the Rams will soon shift from preparation to competition as they begin the preseason with high expectations for the 2026 campaign.

Local



Biscuits and Gravy Live (Photo by Ricky Richardson)

Morris Day & The Time Headlined the 15th Annual Uptown Jazz Festival

By Ricky Richardson
Contributing Writer

Long Beach, CA- The City of Long Beach and Office of Ninth District Councilmember Dr. Joni Ricks-Oddie presented the 15th Annual Uptown Jazz Festival. The celebration was held on Saturday, August 1, 2026, from 2- 7 PM at Houghton Park (6301 Myrtle Ave., Long Beach, 90805).

“For 15 years, the Uptown Jazz Festival has showcased the very best of Long Beach, bringing together neighbors, families and visitors through the universal language of music,” Mayor Rex Richardson said in a public statement. “As we celebrate this milestone year, we’re excited to welcome an outstanding lineup of artists for an afternoon that reflects the culture, creativity and community spirit that makes our city so special.”

A large crowd of music aficionados, foodies and concertgoers arrived early to secure a prime spot for this year’s milestone iteration of the festival.

Houghton Park lawn served as the perfect canvas for the colorful array of blankets, beach towels, and lawn chairs. Parasols and umbrellas came in handy due to the tropical heatwave the region is experiencing. Yes, fans served a dual purpose: to aid in cooling oneself and as a prop for the popular track “Boots on the Ground.”

It should have been apparent that the party people, aka grown folks, were in for a festive treat. DJ Mr. Quick (DaShaun E. Quick) played an eclectic soundtrack in between live performances that kept the energy on the dance floor at a high level.

This popular annual free, family-friendly festival featured a tasty selection of food vendors and beverages for purchase. Vendors sold a variety of clothing, jewelry, hats, and accessories. Local community organizations and a couple of



Dr. Joni Ricks-Oddie (Photo by Ricky Richardson)

Departments from the LBC provided information and other resources. The little ones were engaged and entertained in the dedicated kids’ zone.

The city went all out to present a stellar lineup for the 15th Annual Uptown Jazz Festival. The festival got underway with a set by La Verdad. The tropical heat accelerated up a notch throughout their fiery set. The ensemble is led by Grammy-winning singer/songwriter Gabriel “Gabrielito” Gonzalez. Salseros quickly utilize the dance floor at the sound of the first note. La Verdad set the tone for the day with their captivating set of salsa, boogaloo, cha-cha, and Latin funk, to the delight of the dancers. Their set featured the tracks “Ahi Nama,” “Ain’t No Sunshine,” a Willie Bobo Medley, “I Don’t Know,” “Fried Neckbones and Some Home Fries,” and “Guajira.” They concluded their set with “You Don’t Love Me (No, No, No)” a Salsa/Latin jazz arrangement by the Boogaloo Assassins. The original version is by Dawn Penn, a classic reggae and dancehall staple. Check out both versions on YouTube. You can catch LA Verdad performing at Vibrato Grill, on August 21, 2026, and around town throughout the summer.

Ain’t no party like a Biscuits and Gravy Live party! I’ve lost track of the number of times they have performed at the Uptown Jazz Festival. Their return engagement is a testament to their patented crowd-pleasing performances. The party people, aka grown folks, were groovin’ and moving throughout their energetic set of classic old school funk, R&B, and soul. Their opening and closing tracks could serve as an Anthem for this year’s Uptown Jazz Festival. They opened their set with “Funky Good Time” by James Brown and concluded their set with “Funky Good Stuff” by Kool and the Gang. They continued to entertain the crowd with “We Want the Funk” by George Clinton and “Dream Maker” by Rick James. “Wildflower” by Doug Edwards and Dave Richardson, followed by “I’m Every Woman” by Chaka Khan. Biscuits and Gravy Live have a couple of upcoming gigs if you can’t get enough of that funky stuff, and you want to have a funky good time. They will be serving up a generous portion of funk, R&B and soul during the Jazz on the Grass in Compton, on Saturday, September 26, 2026, and at Jazz at Drew, Saturday, October 10, 2026.

Who would have guessed that attendees would experience a Sig Alert! in Houghton Park. This Sig Alert was of a musical nature. Rush Hour Orquesta is a high-octane Los Angeles Salsa band founded by Raúl Membrano and Jonathan Patterson. The party people returned to the Caribbean for another dance-inducing performance of classic Salsa Dura with a modern edge. The stage was percolating with explosive percussion, vibrant brass, and infectious grooves. Needless to say, there was No Parking on the Dance Floor. I’m looking forward to seeing



Morris Day & The Time (Photo by Ricky Richardson)

this tight band at other summer concert series that feature salsa and Latin jazz. Rush Hour Orquesta will be heating up the festivities during the San Jose Summer Fest, Saturday, August 8, 2026.

Pandemonium coupled with a crowd frenzy



DJ Mr. Quick (Photo by Ricky Richardson)

atmosphere was the order of the day during the headlining set by Morris Day & The Time. This popular band from back in the day kept the party people, aka grown folks, on their feet and the dance floor with a classic medley of their biggest hits (not in this particular order). “Cool,” “Girl,” “Get It Up,” “777-9311,” “Jungle Love,” “Wild, and Loose,” “Gigolos Get Lonely Too,” “Fishnet,” and “What Time Is It?” to name a few. The 15th Annual Uptown Jazz Festival concluded on a good note. You can follow Morris Day & The Time on Facebook or Instagram to find out about future performances. You might be lucky to catch them live during your travels for business or leisure in the few months.

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, the 15th Annual Uptown Jazz Festival is one for the history and record books. It’s my educated observation that this year’s festival might have broken an attendance record, or it came very close to the attendance for past iterations of the festival. You can view photos and videos on Facebook, Instagram or YouTube to see what a great time was had by all!!!

Extreme Heat Bakes L.A. County as 29,000 Unsheltered Angelenos Are Directly Impacted

By Marion Apio
Contributing Writer | California Local News Fellow

Officials are urging thousands of unsheltered Angelenos to seek refuge in cooling centers and to take advantage of other outreach services amid an extreme heat warning issued by the National Weather Service.

For unsheltered Angeleno Tef Ejigu, 47, following such suggestions remains an ongoing challenge.

“It’s been very difficult,” Ejigu said. “I try to make sure I hydrate a lot and stay out of direct sun as much as I can. But you know, there’s certain times of the day you can’t be inside a tent.”

The National Weather Service forecasts highs of 90s downtown and soaring past 100 degrees across inland valleys, triggering the extreme heat warning.

Local officials urge residents to take cover indoors, keep air conditioning units set between 75 and 80 degrees and seek refuge in public cooling centers.

The heat wave presents an immediate survival challenge for thousands of unsheltered Angelenos, a number that continues to rise.

According to city and county data, unsheltered homelessness in Los Angeles rose 7.9% this year to an estimated 29,115 people, while countywide unsheltered numbers climbed 3.3% to 49,002.

Adults comprise 64.3% of the unsheltered population. Youth represents 2.7%.

On the street, environmental conditions remain perilous.

Places where the unsheltered tend to congregate have under 3.5% tree canopy coverage, creating an urban heat island where dark asphalt and concrete trap heat during the day and radiate high temperatures well into the night.

Standard nylon tents and plastic tarps act as ovens, driving internal temperatures 10 to 15 degrees higher than the surrounding air and elevating the risk of heatstroke for anyone inside.

To cope, Ejigu makes seemingly minor, but critical, decisions throughout the day to keep cool while on Skid Row in downtown Los Angeles.

“I’ll choose a spot in the shade, you know,” he said. “If I walk on one side of the street, I try to walk on the shady side of the street and just take care of myself that way.”

While municipal cooling centers can be difficult to reach without abandoning personal belongings, Ejigu noted that access to drinking water downtown has been manageable thanks to community resources.

“They have watering stations where you can go up and get a cup of water,” Ejigu said. “They have bottles of water at their different resource centers. There’s plenty of water, thank God.”

Still, the relentless temperature takes a psychological and physical toll.



The St. John's Street Medicine team provides care at Skid Row in downtown Los Angeles. Photo by The Marion Apio



Dr. Bukola Olusanya with the St. John's Street Medicine team treats an unsheltered patient in Los Angeles. Photo by Marion Apio

“I don’t like it. It makes me a little irritable. Makes me uncomfortable,” Ejigu shared, gesturing toward a sun-exposed pavement block. “I’d rather be doing this interview in the shade, but I ended up in the sun.”

Grassroots mutual aid groups like Water Drop LA, SELAH, and Ktown for All continue delivering ice, bottled water, and electrolyte packages directly to sidewalk encampments,

supplementing local watering stations.

While county emergency management officials stress that heat-related illnesses are entirely preventable through public cooling centers and indoor air conditioning, homeless advocates and outreach providers point out that emergency advisories often fail to account for the mobility and property barriers faced by unsheltered residents.

In a public health advisory, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health noted that unsheltered Angelenos remain among those at “significantly higher risk of severe heat illness,” prompting the county and partner agencies to deploy mobile outreach teams with emergency hydration supplies during extreme weather activations.

Frontline healthcare workers are also working to fill the vital gap in care.

Dr. Bukola Olusanya, a clinician and street medicine team leader with St. John’s Community Health, noted that L.A.’s extreme weather swings create distinct physical challenges for patients on the street.

While mornings and nights offer brief cool periods, temperatures surge sharply in the afternoon.

“What we’re doing is we ice the water—so solid iced bottles, that’s what we give to them, plus the ones at room temperature,” said Olusanya,



A blue nylon tent belonging to an unsheltered person along a street in Los Angeles. Photo by Marion Apio

whose mobile team distributes multiple bottles at a time alongside Vitamin C to support hydration. “The moment we see them, we give them that ice water so that they can cool off.”

Yet mobile outreach teams face inherent structural limits, typically visiting specific encampments once or twice a week.

“When we’re not there, I wonder how they survive that kind of weather, being on the street, being on the sidewalk, when we’re not there,” Olusanya said. “That’s the gap that we have.”

Healthcare providers emphasize that extreme heat outdoors presents complex medical risks beyond simple dehydration.

Many unsheltered individuals take prescription medications for mental health or blood pressure that impair the body’s natural thermal regulation and suppress sweating. Also, critical warning signs of heatstroke—including confusion, slurred speech, and delirium—are frequently misidentified by passersby or law enforcement as substance intoxication, delaying life-saving emergency medical responses.

While mobile clinics provide iced water, oral rehydration, and basic care, severe cases must be escalated immediately.

“If we see a patient who is extremely dehydrated, we do what we have to do and send them to the ER where they can get an IV infusion or something that can make sure that they are safe,” Olusanya said. “We will make sure that they get to the right place.”

For immediate heat safety resources, cooling center locations, or non-emergency assistance, Los Angeles County residents can visit ready.lacounty.gov/heat or dial 2-1-1. In cases of severe heat distress, unresponsiveness, or medical emergencies, dial 9-1-1.