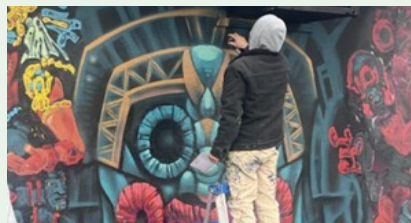


A community-inspired mural project aims to beautify and revitalize a neighborhood in East San Jose
SEE PAGE 6



Several bills signed into law by Governor Gavin Newsom have recently taken effect
SEE PAGE 10



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Lining the walls of the San Jose Viet Museum in this file photo are cases of artifacts, hundreds of photos, maps and commissioned art depicting the Vietnamese experience of escaping their homeland after the fall of Saigon in 1975.

Time is running out in San Jose Viet Museum dispute

By Brandon Pho
San José Spotlight

San Jose community leaders have until Wednesday to end a battle for control of the Viet Museum at History Park, or they'll be iced out of managing the cultural landmark for good.

Community members have been fighting over who has legitimate authority over the Immigrant Resettlement and Cultural Center, the nonprofit that operates the museum. History San Jose, a city-contracted nonprofit that

See MUSEUM, page 5



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Fligor wins race for Santa Clara County assessor

Kumar congratulates Fligor in a phone call

By William Bellou
Publisher

Los Altos Vice Mayor Neysa Fligor is the victor in a special election to become the next Santa Clara County assessor, defeating tech entrepreneur Rishi Kumar in the Dec. 30 runoff race.

Kumar conceded defeat late Tuesday night in a statement expressing gratitude to his supporters and volunteers.

Fligor apparently won over her voters with her deep-seated experience as the current assistant assessor. Now she is poised to succeed her former boss Larry Stone, who announced in June that he will be stepping down after three decades in the assessor's role.

Fligor garnered 66% of the vote, according



Neysa Fligor won the Dec. 30 runoff to become the new Santa Clara County assessor. Photo courtesy of Los Altos City Council.

to Santa Clara County Registrar's Office. Kumar, who finished second in the November 4 assessor election, picked up 35% of the vote. He formerly served on the Saratoga City Council.

He finished second in the Nov. 4 election for the assessor position. Because none of the four candidates in the race received more than 50% of the votes, the top two vote-getters squared off in the Dec. 30 runoff.

Early results showed Fligor with a commanding lead of more than 108,000 votes and Kumar with more than 56,000 votes.

"The people of Santa Clara County have spoken, and I respect the outcome. I have conveyed my congratulations to Neysa on a solid victory," Kumar wrote.

Fligor also thanked her supporters as she

See FLIGOR, page 5

Study shows food insecurity highest in East San Jose

By Joyce Chu
San José Spotlight

During the last 10 days of every month, Julia pulls together whatever scant meals she can produce from food banks and canned items until her food benefits renew.

The 28-year-old, who didn't provide her last name for privacy reasons, receives about \$600 a month in food stamps to feed herself and three children.

She uses that money to stock up on meat, enough to last about three weeks, and goes to the food bank for fruits and vegetables weekly. The produce usually lasts a couple days before going bad, she said.

Hunger — and planning for her family's next meals — are things that habitually consume her life.

"Sometimes at the end of the month, we come down to the last couple days, and I'm like, 'Oh my God, six more days until we get food stamps. What am I gonna do?'" Julia told San José Spotlight. "It feels like crap, not knowing if (I'm) going to be able to feed them next week."

Julia isn't alone in her experience. Many families in Santa Clara County continue to struggle with food insecurity even after food assistance,



Martha's Kitchen feeds about 8,000 people a day and provides meals every Tuesday and Wednesday at its Story Road location in San Jose. Photo by Joyce Chu.

according to a recent study by Santa Clara University.

The study was conducted in 2023-24 and examined food insecurity across 55 ZIP codes in the county. It found that neighborhoods in East San Jose, including Mayfair and Alum Rock, have the highest level of food insecurity, where about 30% of people struggle even after food assistance. Areas of downtown San Jose also showed a high risk, at 23.5%. Los Altos had the least amount of predicted food insecurity in the county, at 11.7%. Other cities such as Gilroy are estimated to experience 22.6% food insecurity.

Andrew Starbird, a Santa Clara University information systems

See HUNGER, page 5

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EXECUTIVE EDITOR
WILLIAM D. BELLOU
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ADVERTISING SALES
WILLIAM D. BELLOU: 408-494-7000

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS:
DIANE BLUM, SUNAY SANGHANI,
SEAN EASTWOOD,
NIRBAN SINGH, FRANK SHORTT,
JUDY LY, EUGENE LUU,
APOORVA PANIDAPU, KELLY RAY

ART DIRECTOR
JEFF BAHAM:
graphics@timesmediainc.com

PUBLISHER / CEO
WILLIAM D. BELLOU:
williamb@timesmediainc.com

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER
SANDY BELLOU

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WATER-WISE

Bird Watching in San Jose:
A January Perspective

By Matthew Frazier

January is a fantastic time for bird enthusiasts, as the region offers a rich tapestry of year-round residents and wintering birds. Situated in the heart of Santa Clara County, San Jose features a diverse habitat that attracts a wide range of bird species. From raptors soaring high in the sky to the gentle flutters of sparrows and warblers, the birding opportunities are plentiful. Local birding alliances not only encourage the passion for birdwatching but also engage the community through events and annual reports detailing seasonal sightings.

Common Birds Seen in January

During January, a variety of birds can be observed, categorized into year-round residents and winter migrants. Understanding these categories is crucial for birdwatchers seeking to enhance their field experience.

Year-Round Residents

These birds are a constant presence, delighting birders throughout the year with their unique calls and behaviors. Among the most commonly spotted year-round residents in San Jose are:

Finches and Sparrows: The House Finch is a frequent visitor to backyards, often seen at feeders, while the Lesser Goldfinch captures attention with its vibrant colors. The California Towhee and Spotted Towhee are ground foragers, easily recognized by their distinctive calls and plumage. Meanwhile,

the Dark-eyed Junco, especially prevalent in winter, forages in flocks on the ground, adding to the seasonal ambiance.

Jays and Crows: The California Scrub-Jay, identifiable by its bright blue and gray coloring, is a familiar sight in parks and residential areas. The American Crow, with its intelligent and adaptable nature, frequently engages in vocal displays.

Woodpeckers and Nuthatches: Nuttall Woodpecker and Acorn Woodpecker can often be spotted working on trees, while the White-breasted and Pygmy Nuthatches provide curious observations as they flit around searching for insects.

Titmice and Chickadees: The Oak Titmouse, with its distinctive tuft, and the Chestnut-backed Chickadee, known for its playful demeanor and sweet calls, are seasonal highlights that often visit feeders.

Other Common Birds: Birdwatchers can also spot Anna's Hummingbird, Black Phoebe, Mourning Dove, American Robin, Bewick's Wren, Bushtit, and Wrentit throughout January, showcasing the region's vibrant birdlife.

Winter Residents and Migrants

As colder weather sweeps through, a variety of migratory species return to the San Jose area. These birds add a dynamic aspect to the winter birding experience:

Sparrows: The White-crowned Sparrow stands out with its striking head patterns, while the Golden-crowned Sparrow adds a touch of vibrancy. Fox Sparrows are known for their ground-feeding habits and melodious songs.

Warblers and Kinglets: Warblers such as the Yellow-rumped Warbler and Townsend's Warbler are frequently seen flitting among the branch-

es. The Ruby-crowned Kinglet, with its acrobatic movements, brings additional excitement as it hunts for insects.

Raptors: January is an excellent time for spotting raptors, including Cooper's Hawks, Red-tailed Hawks, Northern Harriers, and Merlins. Golden Eagles and Great Horned Owls may also grace the skies and parks, providing thrilling glimpses of these magnificent birds.

Other Winter Visitors: Look for Cedar Waxwings, Hermit Thrushes, and Northern Flickers. waterfowl, gulls, and shorebirds can also be found in suitable habitats, creating opportunities for varied birdwatching.

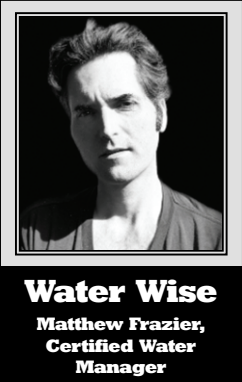
Birding Resources and Events

For enthusiasts eager to deepen their understanding, the Santa Clara Valley Bird Alliance is a vital resource. They provide community science opportunities, local checklists, and participate in monthly sighting reports. Engaging with this alliance can enrich birdwatching experience and connect individuals with fellow bird lovers.

Additionally, the alliance organizes events that encourage participation and foster awareness of local bird populations. These are not only fun but also informative, as they allow participants to share their findings and learn from seasoned birders.

To enhance field identification skills, the Merlin Bird ID app from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology offers an innovative approach to real-time bird recognition. Using this app helps users accurately identify species in the field, making every birding outing more productive.

Local Christmas Bird Counts, typically held in January, offer a comprehensive snapshot of the bird populations across the region. These counts engage community members and provide critical data for understanding trends in avian populations.



Water Wise
Matthew Frazier,
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Times **Local News**

Fligor

Continued from page 1
celebrated her election victory.
“Thank you so much to everyone who voted and who helped with this campaign. Your support means so much to me and my team. I look forward to being your next Santa Clara County Assessor!” Fligor said in a statement.
The Santa Clara County Assessor’s office is responsible for assessing the property values that make up the county’s more than \$700 billion real estate rolls. Such assessments — which determine property taxes — have profound implications for residents as well as the county’s schools and social safety net programs that rely on property tax revenue.
Fligor’s campaign has fundraised \$420,000, according to campaign finance filings. Kumar has raised \$50,000, with nearly \$20,000 raised after the Nov. 4 special election, according to his campaign’s latest Dec. 28 fundraising dis-

closures.
The turnout for the runoff election was relatively low, with the registrar estimating that about 15.5% of the county’s roughly 1 million voters casting ballots.
Matt Moreles, the county’s registrar of voters, said in a statement that the election was “unique in many respects, not least of which was the challenge of conducting an election during the holiday season.”
“This was the first time in our county’s history that voting locations were open for voting on Christmas Day,” Moreles said in the statement. “The timing of this election was also challenging because it followed so closely after the November statewide special election.”
Kumar said he’ll continue to campaign for a ballot initiative to exempt seniors from property taxes.
“Our commitment does not waver,” Kumar said. “We will remain a fearless voice for truth, accountability and good governance.”

Hunger

Continued from page 1
professor who led the study, said the high level of food insecurity surprised him despite available food assistance from nonprofit organizations such as Martha’s Kitchen and Second Harvest of Silicon Valley.
“Accessing food assistance can be difficult in some neighborhoods,” Starbird told San José Spotlight. “We need more distribution sites in the communities with the highest risk.”
Julia relies on public transportation to get to food banks and community centers, after a car accident last year left her without a vehicle and six broken ribs. It’s put the single mom out of work for the past year, and it’s the first time she’s had to rely on food assistance.
Catching a bus isn’t always easy when carrying bags of produce with three children, she said. And waking up late and missing the bus could mean not being able to get food for that day or week.
“It’s always easier to get junk food, and that sucks, because then you face health problems (like) obesity,” Julia said. “I have diabetes. It runs like in our family.”
Mayfair, the area with one of the highest risks of food insecurity in the county, also grapples with a high level of poverty. As the cost of living continues to rise, it forces families into a difficult choice between paying for a roof over their heads, medication, food and other necessities, Jose Murillo, director of place-based initiatives for nonprofit Amigos de Guadalupe, said.
“Our community has very little money left over to be able to absorb those extra costs,” Murillo told San José Spotlight. “So I think that (puts) us in a much more precarious situation.”
The Latino-dominant neighborhood has historically been underinvested, from poor infrastructure that led to frequent flooding to federal redlining policies that indiscriminately marked Mayfair as a “hazardous” area to invest in, Murillo said.
Some of the divestment stems from people in the community not having a seat at the table and being underpaid, he added.
“We have built Silicon Valley in a way that has been dependent on the low cost labor of our folks,” Murillo said. “We need to make sure that we invest in opportunities for folks to earn more money, which means making sure folks are paid a living wage. Until we do that, we’re not going to be able to change how things are in East San Jose.”
Bill Lee, executive director for Martha’s Kitchen which was a sponsor for the study, said the findings show where the greatest need is in the county. Martha’s Kitchen provides home cooked meals for the community every Tuesday and Wednesday

at its Story Road location. It is also one of the main meal providers for homeless shelters across Santa Clara County and produces meals for about 8,000 people daily.
“We were more interested in where the gaps (are), because that’s where we want to put our energy,” Lee told San José Spotlight.
“What this shows is that with all the work that we’ve all been doing over the last number of years, there were still a lot of people struggling to not starve,” Lee said. “Now you add to it the (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) cuts and all the other things that are going on, I can’t imagine in another two years what this report’s going to look like. These percentages will indubitably go up.”

Museum

Continued from page 1
oversees History Park and its historic buildings and resources on Phelan Avenue, gave both sides last late month to resolve their dispute. In the meantime, History San Jose has kept the museum closed for a year amid a quarrel that’s now playing out in civil court.
“To our knowledge, the (Immigrant Resettlement and Cultural Center) dispute remains unresolved,” Michelle Duncan, History San Jose’s director of operations, told San José Spotlight. “We are hopeful to hear directly from a group in the coming days and remain committed to a prompt and civil outcome. The Viet Museum has been closed for too long, and we are excited to reopen it in partnership with an operator who understands the parameters outlined by the city and our board of directors.”
The dispute has split dueling board members along two groups, each alleging they’re the true board. On one side are board members Quinn Tran — recognized by her side as executive director of the Immigrant Resettlement and Cultural Center — along with Minh Le, Tana Bui, Nhu-Hanh Ton-Nu and Phi Ha. The other side is comprised of the museum’s former director Hong Cao, alongside board members Cuong Nguyen, Nhut Ho, Tue Quang Phan and My Linh Pham.
Tran confirmed the dispute hasn’t changed and the situation is still in limbo.
“We suggested arbitration, the other side did not want arbitration,” Tran told San José Spotlight.
Tran has bristled at History San Jose’s intervention in the dispute. She has previously said the consequences would be deeper than a change of hands over the museum. The Immigrant Resettlement and Cultural Center is seen as an extension of its highly-protective late architect, Loc Vu, a war veteran and refugee who also founded the immigrant nonprofit. Before his death, Vu announced his retirement as president in January and proposed his son-in-law, Minh Le as his successor. The idea opened a major rift.
Several board members objected over nepotism concerns, prompting dueling accusations between them and Vu of wrongdoing and a fight over which board members were legitimate. Vu died Nov. 29 after months in hospice care.
“It’s our museum. It’s our place of community. It’s our place of memories,” Tran said. “The experience we went through and stories we want our younger generations to learn from. It’s our stories and our experience. For History San Jose to decide on that — that is an insult.”
The Viet Museum opened its yellow Victorian doors in 2007 and wel-

comed tens of thousands of visitors a year prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. It’s located more than two miles from downtown San Jose and is among the few cultural landmarks in Silicon Valley that honor the Vietnamese boat people and their descendants. San Jose is home to more than 140,000 Vietnamese residents, making it the city with the largest Vietnamese population in the U.S.
District 7 Councilmember Bien Doan previously requested History San Jose extend its deadline for both sides to come to an agreement. His office did not respond to requests for comment Monday.
Tran said a protest against History San Jose’s decision seems to be the only other recourse.
“We have to bring the strength of the community to voice our displeasure,” Tran said



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Times **Local News**

East San Jose paints its stories on neighborhood walls

By Lorraine Gabbert
San José Spotlight

A community-inspired mural project aims to beautify and revitalize a neighborhood in East San Jose.

Artists gathered for the East Side Stories mural painting festival Saturday, complete with a DJ and lowrider cars around Tropicana Liquors on Story Road. Muralists created images of the Virgin Mary, lowriders and Mesoamerican symbols on the liquor store's exterior walls. They also transformed the exteriors of Car & Truck Auto Clinic, East Hills Veterinary Clinic and Wash America on Story Road and S&S Market on Capitol Expressway. The festival, curated by 1Culture art gallery owner Andrew Espino, celebrated the heritage and traditions of immigrant cultures in the area.

After getting permission from Tropicana Liquors owner Gursharan Singh to paint his walls, Espino talked to other nearby struggling businesses who agreed to support the mural project by donating wall space.

"It went from an idea of being one property with five murals to over two dozen murals with five different locations," Espino told San José Spotlight. "We could really beautify something. This is a working-class neighborhood and we're changing their thought process and sparking imagination."

Espino wants residents to feel empowered and see themselves reflected in the artwork. He brought Bay Area artists together for the



Muralists created images of the Virgin Mary, lowrider cars and Mesoamerican symbols on the walls of Tropicana Liquors as part of East Side Stories. Photo by Lorraine Gabbert.

festival, including many from East San Jose. He said the name East Side Stories was selected to pay homage to an album cover by East Side hip hop artist Richard Hoffman.

Graffiti artist King157, who grew up in East San Jose, took part in the festival. He said he wants to inspire youth.

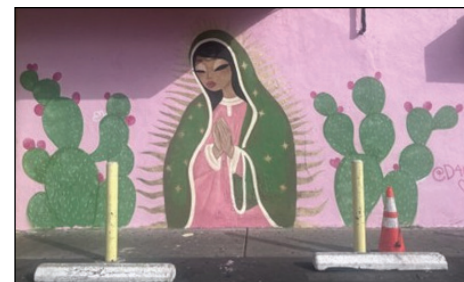
"I was one of them little kids looking at murals and thinking, 'One day I would like to paint something,'" he told San José Spotlight. "It's a full circle moment for me to help create that ... from a young kid's perspective dreaming about art, to one day becoming a full-time artist."

In addition to instilling community pride and revitalizing the area, the artwork is an attempt to attract shoppers. Foot traffic has declined 30% to 40% at local small businesses following a January immigration raid by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) at Target on Story Road, District 5 Councilmem-

ber Peter Ortiz said.

ICE actions have stoked fear in the community and led to students not attending class and some undocumented residents choosing to self-deport.

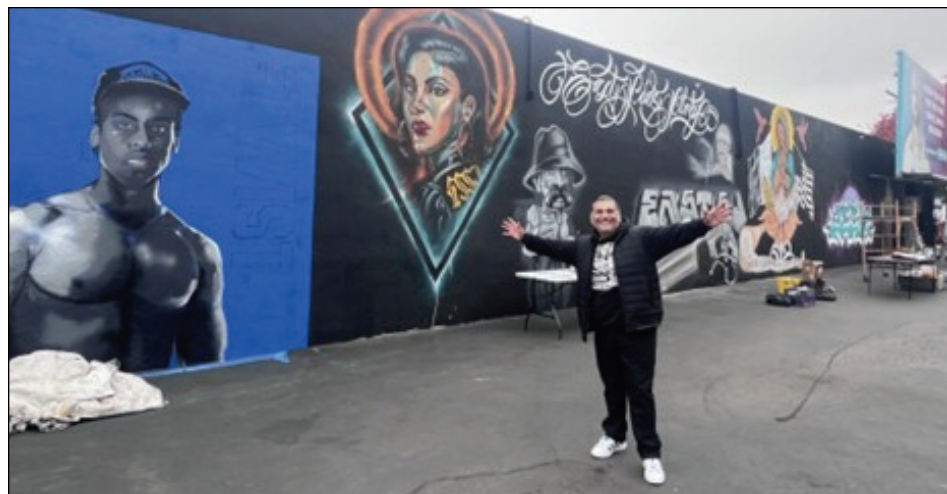
"Our small businesses right now on the East Side are hurting because of the immigration



San Jose artist DAWLL creates murals and art with characters inspired by femininity and local culture. Photo by Lorraine Gabbert.

enforcement," Ortiz told San José Spotlight. "A lot of immigrant families, they're not coming out of their homes. People unfortunately don't feel safe. But this area belongs to our community, especially our immigrant families, and they should come out and celebrate our heritage."

Ortiz's office is investing \$10,000 to \$15,000 toward the community mural at Tropicana Liquors, reflecting the vision of residents on Kollmar Drive, which will be completed in February. Ortiz said he also secured a grant of \$100,000 from the city budget to invest in additional murals and cultural markers in District 5.



Curated by 1Culture art gallery owner Andrew Espino, East Side Stories celebrates the rich spirit, heritage and traditions of immigrant cultures. Photo by Lorraine Gabbert.



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IN REMEMBRANCE

Sam Henry Edward Seibert

August 26, 1919 - November 30, 2025

Sam Henry Edward Seibert, born August 26, 1919 in Molson, Washington, passed away peacefully at his residence in San Jose on November 30, 2025, at the age of 106.

Sam honorably served in the United States Navy during World War II and subsequently had a distinguished 30-year career with the San Jose Fire Department, retiring at the rank of Captain. Following his retirement, he remained actively involved with the San Jose Fire Museum, which encourages donations in his memory.

Sam will be missed by many but forgotten by none. Services were held on January 6, 2026, at the San Jose Fire Museum.



San Jose is weighing implementing a shopping cart retrieval program that would charge retailers for abandoned carts. File photo.

San Jose shopping cart crackdown could be costly

By Keith Menconi
San José Spotlight

As part of a year-long effort to rein in San Jose's problem with abandoned shopping carts, the city has been reviewing proposals to hire a company to retrieve and return carts to grocery stores.

A three-month pilot program shows such a retrieval service could easily recoup its costs through fees charged to grocers. However, the hundreds of thousands of dollars in projected upfront expenses has made some council members squeamish.

"We have a challenging budget year, next year. We're going to be in service preservation mode as a council," District 8 Councilmember Domingo Candelas said during Tuesday's City Council meeting.

While Councilmembers didn't approve any specific action during the pilot program review, officials are working on proposals for a permanent program that could launch as soon as next summer — if approved.

It would mark the latest effort to deal with the vexing shopping cart abandonment problem that has plagued San Jose for decades.

"The thousands of carts that are lost every year and scattered across sidewalks and parks and our trails and waterways are not just a visible quality of life issue for our residents, not just an eyesore, but they actually really damage the environment," Mayor Matt Mahan said at the meeting.

The \$32,000 pilot program, carried out between August and November, saw the city partner with the company carTrac to retrieve 734 carts strewn about certain target areas. Officials project scaling up the program across the entire city would cost \$686,000 each year and likely pull in more than 12,800 carts.

Earlier this year, city staff warned state regulations would make it hard for San Jose to recoup the expenses from such a program. Those include rules that limit the fees California cities can charge retailers for cart

retrievals.

However, state Sen. Dave Cortese's Senate Bill 753, signed into law in October with backing from San Jose, has loosened those regulations. The measure has increased the maximum fines cities can impose on grocers with lost carts from \$50 to \$100 for each cart retrieved. It also removed the state's requirement that cities maintain an impound lot for recovered shopping carts.

If San Jose were to set its retrieval fine at \$100, staff estimated that a city-wide recovery program would draw in \$1.3 million each year, far more than the program's projected expense. However, the city would still face upfront costs to get the program up and running, including the need to pay for staff to oversee the effort, officials said.

"That's really the value in the pilot is being able to dig through the couch cushions to find resources, so we could experiment and see what it looked like," Chris Burton, director of Planning Building and Code Enforcement, said at the meeting. "And it is a successful program."

Councilmembers already passed a policy in May that strengthens oversight regulations for the city's retailers. The new rules require stores with 76 or more shopping carts to carry out enhanced measures to prevent cart losses, such as installing theft-prevention devices, requiring customers to pay a deposit for using a cart or paying a cart retrieval service directly to recover their lost carts.

The city's shopping cart crackdown has faced opposition from local retailers and industry groups. They have warned that by tightening regulations, the city is imposing added costs on grocery stores that will be passed along to residents.

San Jose grocer Lupe Lopez, who owns Arteaga's Food Center, argued in an op-ed piece for the Mercury News that Cortese's state law fails to address the root problems that lead some people to steal carts, including a lack of transportation.

"It's a shame the city couldn't have focused its efforts on legislation to offer support to those in need, not drive up grocery costs," Lopez wrote.



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NEWS

Times **Local News**



Saratoga Symphony presents 'Psychology Tonight'

By **Sean Eastwood**
Times staff writer

Enjoy a classical music orchestra concert free to the public with exciting rhythms and beautiful melodies Saturday, January 17, at 7:30 p.m. at West Val-

ley Presbyterian Church, 6191 Bollinger Rd., Cupertino, CA.

The music program features two composers, with a waltz (Valse Chevaleresque) and Symphony No. 4 by Sibelius, and Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2.

Internationally acclaimed pianist Tamami Honma is the special soloist for the piano concerto. This program's music was composed in the late Romantic Music Period.

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Saratoga Symphony: <https://saratoga-symphony.org>

Tamami Honma, Piano Soloist <https://tamamihonma.com>

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New California state laws now in effect

By William Bellou
Publisher

Happy Diwali - Californians will get the day off to celebrate Diwali on November 9, 2026, one of the most important holidays of the year for Indian Americans and South Asian Americans.

Several bills signed into law by Governor Gavin Newsom have recently taken effect.

The 2026 roster of new California legislation includes measures addressing artificial intelligence chatbot regulation, a prohibition on declawing cats, and the observance of a new state holiday.

California's New State Holiday

Beginning in 2026, Californians will observe Diwali as an official state holiday. Diwali, one of the most significant annual celebrations for Indian Americans and South Asian Americans, is scheduled according to the lunar calendar, resulting in a variable date each year. In 2026, Diwali falls on November 8, with the holiday observed on Monday, November 9. The Bay Area hosts the largest Diwali celebration in North America.

Food Delivery Services

Assembly Bill 578 introduces consumer protections impacting food delivery platforms such as DoorDash, Uber Eats, and Grubhub. Under this law, companies must provide full refunds via the original payment method for orders that are late, incorrect, or unfulfilled, rather than issuing credit towards future purchases. Additionally, platforms are required to offer customer support through human representatives, not solely automated responses. Itemized breakdowns of pay and fees must be presented, and tips or gratuities can no longer be used to offset driver base pay.

Limits on Immigration Enforcement at Schools

The Safe Haven Schools Act (Assembly Bill 49) enhances protections for students and their families by restricting immigration enforcement activities on K-12 campuses. School officials may only permit access to non-public areas by immigration agents when presented with a judicial warrant or court order. The sharing of student or family records with immigration authorities is also limited to instances with appropriate legal authorization.

Parking Fine Relief

Local governments in California now have the authority to reduce, suspend, or waive parking penalties for individuals demonstrating financial hardship, including those experiencing homelessness. Assembly Bill 1299, effective January 1, allows for applications for parking citation payment plans and applies statewide to local parking

enforcement.

Assemblymember Al Muratsuchi stated, "California is home to over 750,000 K-12 students with undocumented parents, and fear of immigration enforcement disrupts their ability to learn and thrive. AB49 ensures that schools continue to be safe havens where all students, regardless of their family's immigration status, can pursue their education without the looming threat of deportation."

Folic Acid Fortification in Corn Flour

A new statute requires most commercially sold corn masa flour and corn tortillas to be fortified with folic acid. Nutritional experts highlight the role of vitamin B in reducing birth defect risks during pregnancy. This change aims to help prevent severe birth defects annually, particularly among Latino households, which were previously exempt from federal fortification requirements. Exemptions apply to certain small producers and fresh masa made on-site.

Regulation of AI Chatbots

Senate Bill 243 mandates clear disclosure to users interacting with AI chatbots designed to simulate personal relationships. Platforms must implement safeguards against self-harm, including protocols for responding to suicidal ideation and providing crisis resources. Lawmakers characterize this bill as a pioneering effort to regulate emerging consumer AI technologies.

Insulin Price Cap

Effective January 1, large health insurers in California must cap copayments for insulin at \$35 for a 30-day supply. This requirement will extend to individual and small-group plans in 2027. Approximately two million Americans rely on insulin for diabetes management. The American Diabetes Association praises the legislation, stating it will offer critical financial relief to those dependent on insulin.

"For far too long, many Americans with diabetes have made the difficult decision to ration this lifesaving medication to pay for other necessities, such as groceries or rent," the organization said in a statement. "This legislation will provide much-needed financial relief for people living with insulin-dependent diabetes."

Requirements for Landlords

Assembly Bill 628 stipulates that, after January 1, tenants signing, amending, or extending leases are entitled to a stove and refrigerator in good working condition, unless otherwise agreed upon at lease signing. Landlords are also required to repair or replace these appliances within 30 days if subject to recall.

Employee Protections for Tips

Senate Bill 648 expands protections for employees receiving tips. Employers are prohibited from deducting credit card processing fees from tips and must disburse credit card tips no later than the next regular payday following the authorization of payment. Violations may be investigated by the state Labor Commissioner's Office, which is empowered to issue citations or initiate civil litigation.

Comprehensive Ban on Single-Use Plastic Bags

Legislation has closed loopholes in California's previous ban on single-use plastic bags. Thicker plastic bags, previously considered reusable, are now prohibited from supermarkets. Customers are encouraged to bring reusable totes on shopping trips.

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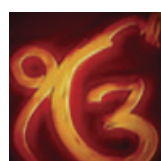


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