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SATURDAY, JANUARY 31, 2026

VOLUME 20 NO. 5

## CITY COUNCIL CONSIDERS GANN LIMIT INCREASE MEASURE FOR JUNE BALLOT

By Kevin McGuire

City Council is being asked to consider placing a Gann Appropriations Limit increase measure on the June 2, 2026, statewide primary election ballot, as Sierra Madre approaches its constitutional spending limit and faces growing fiscal constraints in the coming years.

During the regular meeting on Tuesday, January 27, City Manager Michael Bruckner presented in his report that while Sierra Madre has remained in compliance with the Gann Appropriations Limit for the past five fiscal years, the margin between allowable spending and actual appropriations has narrowed significantly. Projections indicate that, without voter authorization, the City could exceed the limit as early as fiscal year 2027–28, even without adding new services or programs.

The Gann Appropriations Limit, named after political activist Paul Gann, was established under Article XIII B of the California Constitution in 1979 and restricts how much revenue from certain taxes a city may spend each year. The limit increases annually based on population growth and inflation. While it does not cap total revenues or reserves, it constrains the amount of tax revenue that can be allocated to public services.

According to the City’s analysis, rising costs for labor, pensions, healthcare, and routine capital needs are outpacing the growth permitted under the constitutional formula. In fiscal year 2024–25, the City’s available margin under the Gann Limit dropped to less than one percent. Although one-time capital expenditures in FY 2025–26 temporarily increased the calculated limit, long-term forecasts show continued pressure.

Using conservative assumptions, staff projections show that under a baseline scenario (see Table 2) of four percent annual growth in tax-funded appropriations, the City would reach the Gann Limit by FY 2028–29. Under higher-cost stress scenarios, the limit could be exceeded one to two years earlier, potentially triggering mandatory refunds or reductions in appropriations under state law, as set forth in the California Constitution.

Table 2: Scenario A - Baseline Forecast Fiscal Year Gann Limit Growth

Fiscal Year	Gann Limit Growth @ 2.5%	Scenario A: Appropriations Growth @ 4.0%	Margin (A)
2025-26 Base Year	\$ 14,622,105	\$ 14,201,403	\$ 420,702
2026-27	\$ 14,987,658	\$ 14,769,299	\$ 218,359
2027-28	\$ 15,362,349	\$ 15,360,471	\$ 1,878
2028-29	\$ 15,746,258	\$ 15,974,890	\$ (228,632)
2029-30	\$ 16,139,464	\$ 16,613,485	\$ (474,021)

Exceeding the limit could constrain the City’s ability to deliver services and capital planning and reduce the City’s ability to respond to community needs, according to the City Manager. “Because we are doing less with less money,” Bruckner noted.

To avoid those outcomes, Bruckner recommends that the City Council seek voter authorization to temporarily increase the Gann Limit by approximately 16 percent, or about \$2.4 million, over a four-year period. The proposed increase is designed to accommodate normal economic variability and unavoidable cost pressures, not to authorize new taxes or expand services, according to the staff report.

Bruckner emphasized that a Gann Limit increase does not raise tax rates or create new taxes. Instead, it allows the City to spend revenues it already lawfully receives but would otherwise be prohibited from using under the constitutional cap. Any increase approved by voters would automatically expire after four years unless renewed through another election.

Placing the measure on the June 2026 statewide primary ballot is expected to cost approximately \$60,000, according to Los Angeles County estimates. City staff noted that a statewide election typically results in higher voter turnout and lower incremental costs than a standalone municipal election. If the Council moves forward, a supplemental budget request would be included in the FY 2025–26 midyear budget, according to the report.

The deadline to place a measure on the June 2026 ballot is March 6, 2026.

Bruckner noted that pursuing a Gann Limit increase aligns with the City’s Strategic Plan goal of maintaining long-term fiscal stability and ensuring the City can continue to deliver services and plan capital improvements without disruption.

City Council unanimously agreed on the placement of a Gann Appropriations Limit Increase Ballot Measure at the June 2, 2026, Statewide Primary Election.

### A MESSAGE FROM CITY MANAGER MIKE BRUCKNER

Dear Sierra Madre,

*As we begin the new year, I want to wish everyone in the Sierra Madre community a happy and healthy 2026.*

Over the past seven months it has been an honor to serve as your City Manager. In that short time, I have come to learn what many of you already know: Sierra Madre is a truly special place—a charming, engaged, and deeply caring community with a strong sense of identity and pride in its traditions and hope for its future.

As we look to the year ahead, the City is entering an important financial planning period.

In October 2025, the City’s newly retained financial advisory firm presented a ten-year financial forecast showing projected budget deficits in the years ahead. These projections reflect rising costs, limited revenue growth, and long-standing fiscal pressures that many local governments are facing across California.

While the City continues to meet its obligations, the adopted budget for the current fiscal year includes a \$1.4 million deficit, and longer-term projections indicate continued fiscal stress in the General Fund.

The City Council will be considering recommendations from the Ad Hoc Revenue Committee at its February 10th meeting as part of the midyear budget review and will be deliberating on a fiscally responsible framework for development of the FY 2027 budget. These conversations will help guide future budget priorities and how City services are aligned with available resources.

As we begin this deliberative process, community input is essential. Sierra Madre’s strength has always been its residents’ willingness to engage, volunteer, share ideas, and help define what matters most. I encourage community members to share their thoughts and priorities as we work together to understand how best to align limited resources with the services and investments our community values.

I look forward to working closely with the City Council, staff, and the community as we navigate these decisions together. With open dialogue, shared responsibility, and a focus on what makes Sierra Madre unique, we can preserve, protect, and enhance the qualities that make this community such a special place to live.

Thank you for your engagement and your continued commitment to Sierra Madre.

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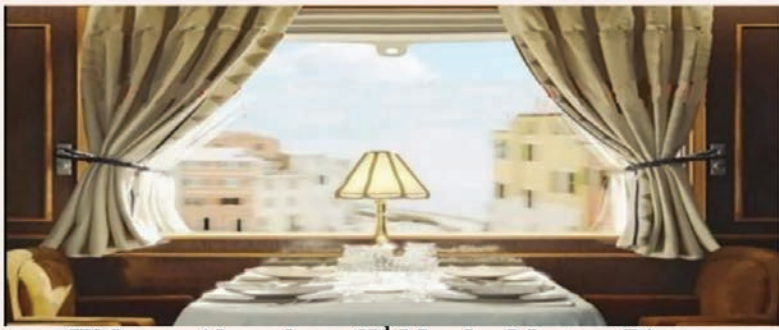
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## Weather Wise

6-Day Forecast Sierra Madre, Ca.

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Tues:	Sunny	Hi	70s	Lows	50s
Wed:	Sunny	Hi	70s	Lows	50s
Thur:	Sunny	Hi	80s	Lows	50s
Fri:	Sunny	Hi	80s	Lows	50s

Forecasts courtesy of the National Weather Service



## SIERRA MADRE CITY COUNCIL MEETING

Februray 10, 2026 5:30 pm

THIS MEETING WILL BE HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS!

As part of the City of Sierra Madre's COVID-19 transparency efforts and The Brown Act provides the public with an opportunity to make public comments at any public meeting. Public comment may also be made by e-mail to [PublicComment@CityofSierraMadre.com](mailto:PublicComment@CityofSierraMadre.com) by 3:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting.

Emails will be acknowledged at the Council meeting and filed into public record. The public may also comment in person at the meeting.

The meetings will be streamed live on Foothills Media website at [foothillsmedia.org/sierramadre](http://foothillsmedia.org/sierramadre) and broadcast on Government Access Channel 3 (Spectrum)..

### 1630 AM EMERGENCY RADIO & Free on-air publicity for local events

Sierra Madre's EMERGENCY radio station is now accepting scripts for Public Service Announcements (PSAs) about community events. PSAs will be broadcast on the air at no charge. The station operates 24/7 and can be heard at 1630 on the AM dial.

Any local non-profit or non-commercial organization can have their event information broadcast to the public on Sierra Madre Community Information Radio. The station covers the city of Sierra Madre, plus surrounding areas of Pasadena, Arcadia, and Monrovia.

Your event must:

- Benefit a non-commercial or non-profit entity
- Be open to the public
- Be of general interest to local citizens

Just write a Public Service Announcement that describes your event and e-mail it to [radio@cityofsierramadre.com](mailto:radio@cityofsierramadre.com).

## WALKING SIERRA MADRE: The Social Side

by Deanne Davis

*"While it is February, one can taste the full joys of anticipation. Spring stands at the gate with her finger on the latch!" Patience Strong*

*"Roses are red, Violets are blue. February is cold and so are you."*

*"Welcome, February! It's the finale of the football season and the time when we let a rodent forecast our future."*

I realize it's not quite February yet, but tomorrow it will be. Also, the full moon will be best seen tomorrow night. The 2026 Snow Moon (February's full moon) will peak on Sunday, February 1, 2026. It is considered the first, or a "super," full moon of the year, appearing in the constellation Leo near the star Regulus, and will be visible throughout the night. Start watching for it tomorrow at 2:09 p.m. although the best viewing will be immediately after sunset as the moon rises in the east. It will appear full for several nights around this date, starting today, the 31<sup>st</sup>, through February 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Goodbye January, hello February! The month of Valentine's Day and Groundhog Day, which is Monday! According to legend, if a groundhog sees its shadow on this day, there will be six more weeks of wintry weather. If it doesn't, spring is right around the corner. For the people in the Midwest, all we can do is hope they can dig themselves out before April. We can be glad we don't live there.

Speaking of Groundhog Day, I'm hoping one of the cable channels will show Groundhog Day, the 1993 movie with Bill Murray. You remember, the weather guy who hates everybody is sent to observe Punxsutawney Phil, the most famous groundhog, who lives year-round in his burrow at Gobbler's Knob in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, and ends up stuck there day after day, reliving the day until he finally quits being so cynical and turns into a fairly decent person.

The 2026 Superbowl is February 8<sup>th</sup>, Seattle Seahawks vs. New England Patriots. This is the game where the best part of it is the commercials and the food. A 30-second commercial for Superbowl LX is priced at approximately \$8 million! Due to high demand, this rate marks a continued increase from the \$7 million range seen in 2024 and 2025, proving once again that this is the most expensive advertising spot on television and these fabulously expensive spots are more interesting than the game! I'll be watching for the Budweiser Clydesdales, just love seeing those guys. Chili sounds so good. Guacamole and chips. Bon appetit!

February is when a lot of famous folks made their appearance on the planet, among them: Clark Gable, Norman Rockwell, Farrah Fawcett, Charles Lindbergh, Rosa Parks, Babe Ruth,



Ronald Reagan, Jules Verne, Jack Lemmon, James Dean, Burt Reynolds, Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, Jack Benny, to name but a few, and my mother, Betty Jane Sessions, who was born February 23, 1920.

President's Day will be celebrated February 16<sup>th</sup> when all the Government offices will be closed, which means no mail. All the children can sleep late that day as there will be no school. February is a really busy month! Winding up with a solar eclipse on February 17<sup>th</sup>. February is also Black History Month. There now, enough to keep you totally busy for this nice short month. Oh! And I almost forgot...Winter Olympic Games, which will be held in Milan and Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy, from February 6 to February 22. Figure skating!!

Let's take a moment to chat about Valentine's Day, which is February 14<sup>th</sup>, just two weeks away. A splendid opportunity to tell all the people you love that you love them. Send an email, a text, a card, make a dinner reservation, just do something.

*"Love doesn't make the world go round. Love is what makes the ride worthwhile."*

Franklin P. Jones

*"Where there is love, there is life."* Charles Spurgeon

*"The best and most beautiful things in this world cannot be seen or even heard but must be felt with the heart."* Helen Keller

*"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."* John 3:16

Have a wonderful week and start thinking what you want to do for Valentine's Day. Surprises are always nice. So are flowers. A little champagne can't hurt, either!

My book page: [Amazon.com: Deanne Davis](https://www.amazon.com/Deanne-Davis/e/B000APR084)  
There are wonders to be found there.  
Take a look!

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## A PERFECT VALENTINE'S DATE:

### WINE, CUISINE, AND COMMUNITY

Looking for a memorable Valentine's gift? The Friends of the Sierra Madre Library invite couples and friends to sip, savor, and celebrate at their 51st Wine & Cuisine Tasting on Saturday, February 7, 2026, from 6:30 to 9:00 p.m.

Held just days before Valentine's Day, the event offers an ideal evening out, whether you're planning a romantic night with a partner or a stylish gathering with friends. The tasting takes place at the Baldwin Avenue Gallery (The BAG), located at 12 N. Baldwin Avenue in the heart of Sierra Madre, where art-filled surroundings set the mood for conversation and connection.

Guests will enjoy a thoughtfully curated selection of wines paired with cuisine tastings, creating a relaxed yet elegant experience that feels tailor-made for a special night. With Valentine's Day just around the corner, it's a chance to toast love, friendship, and community all in one place.

Beyond the romance, the Wine & Cuisine Tasting is an important fundraiser supporting the Sierra Madre Public Library. Proceeds help fund library programs, collections, and services that benefit residents of all ages, making this an evening that feels as good as it tastes.

The Friends of the Sierra Madre Library are known for events that blend culture, community, and celebration, and this annual tasting continues that tradition—offering a meaningful way to enjoy a night out while giving back.

Community members are encouraged to secure tickets early for this popular event. All proceeds benefit the Sierra Madre Public Library. Learn more about the 51<sup>st</sup> Wine and Cuisine Tasting, and learn about the library's Grand Reopening June 6, 2026 at [www.sierramadrelibraryfriends.org](http://www.sierramadrelibraryfriends.org). Tickets are \$100 each and can be purchased at: <https://auctria.events/51stWineCuisineTasting>

Wine lovers and Valentine's planners alike are encouraged to secure tickets early for this popular February event, as tickets are limited. All proceeds benefit the Sierra Madre Public Library. Learn more at [www.sierramadrelibraryfriends.org](http://www.sierramadrelibraryfriends.org).



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# Pasadena Altadena

News From Your Community For Your Community

## Free Radon Test Kits for Residents

Pasadena Director of Public Health, Manuel Carmona, is educating the public about breathing air that contains radon increases the risk of lung cancer, especially for people who do not smoke. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States, after smoking. To help residents check radon levels in their homes, the Pasadena Public Health Department ("PPHD") received a supply of free test kits from the California Department of Public Health, Indoor Radon Program and is offering the kits to Pasadena residents.

The California Department of Public Health recommends considering home modifications if radon levels are above 2 pCi/L (picocuries per liter). The EPA and the U.S. Surgeon General strongly advise fixing a home if radon levels reach 4 pCi/L or higher. Testing is the only way to know whether you and your loved ones are at risk.

### Sources of Radon

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas. It is colorless, odorless, and tasteless, and forms when uranium breaks down in soil, rock, and water. It can seep into buildings and accumulate indoors. Radon levels vary based on weather, soil moisture, and air pressure.

Differences in air pressure between the inside and outside of a home can pull radon indoors. Everyday activities—such as running a furnace or bathroom fan—can increase these pressure differences. Radon levels often rise in winter, increasing the importance of testing during colder months.

Radon can affect any type of home. It can be present in old or new homes, well-sealed or drafty homes, homes with basements, homes built on slabs, and homes with crawl spaces. About one in fifteen homes is estimated to have elevated radon levels.

The PPHD is offering a short-term radon test designed to run for 2–3 days.

### Before and during testing:

Keep windows and exterior doors closed as much as possible, starting at least 12 hours before the test.

You may use heating and air-conditioning systems that recirculate indoor air.

Avoid using fans or equipment that bring in air from outside.

### Where to place the test kit:

Use the lowest level of your home that you regularly occupy (such as a basement or first floor).

Choose a frequently used room – living room, playroom, den, or bedroom.

Avoid kitchens and bathrooms. Place the kit at least 20 inches above the floor, in a spot that will not be disturbed and is away from drafts, heat sources, humidity, and exterior walls.

After the testing period, reseal the kit and mail it to the designated laboratory as soon as possible. Results are typically available within a few weeks.

Pasadena residents can pick up one free radon test kit while supplies last. PPHD has received 50 kits, so availability is limited. Proof of residency, such as a valid ID or utility bill, will be required at the time of pickup. The Health Department is located 1845 N. Fair Oaks Avenue, Suite 1200.

Kits are available during business hours. For more information Visit: [CityOfPasadena.net](http://CityOfPasadena.net)



## Bill Nye Steps Down as Planetary Society CEO

After 15 years of transformative leadership, Bill Nye announced that he will step down as CEO of The Planetary Society and transition into two new roles: Vice Chair of the Board of Directors and the newly created role of Chief Ambassador, the organization announced today. Jennifer Vaughn, the Society's longtime Chief Operating Officer, will become Chief Executive Officer on February 17, 2026, marking a seamless transfer of leadership.

According to Nye, his announcement comes on the 15th anniversary of becoming CEO, a role he accepted in 2010 after serving on the organization's Board of Directors — and more than four decades after joining as a charter member in 1980. Over the past decade and a half, Nye helped guide The Planetary Society through a period of historic growth and scientific impact, advancing its mission to empower people everywhere to advance space science and exploration.

"After 15 years as The Planetary Society's chief executive officer, I'm stepping down — or aside. I will transition out of my role as CEO — but I won't be stepping away from The

Planetary Society," said Bill Nye in a statement published on The Planetary Society's website. "Jenn Vaughn has been my closest partner in leading the organization. She helped craft our mission, and she is a natural leader with a clear vision for the future. We could not be in better hands."

As Chief Ambassador, Nye said he will continue to serve on the organization's board as Vice Chair and represent The Planetary Society publicly through media, advocacy, and events — most notably continuing his work in Washington, D.C.

Incoming CEO Jennifer Vaughn has been with The Planetary Society since 1996 and has served as Chief Operating Officer since 2011. Her leadership spans strategy, membership growth, fundraising, education and outreach programs, science funding initiatives, and organizational operations. She is also a proud Planetary Society member.

"This is a moment of both reflection and renewal," said Vaughn. "Bill's vision, energy, and belief in our mission have helped shape who we are today. I'm honored to carry that legacy forward and lead the Society into its next chapter."

## PWP Community Meeting on Proposed Landscaping

Pasadena Water and Power (PWP) announced Thursday that they are inviting the community to attend a public meeting to provide input on proposed landscaping plans on Wednesday, Feb. 11, 6 p.m. at Allendale Branch Library, 1130 South Marengo Avenue. The landscaping, along Glenarm Street and at the intersection of Raymond Avenue, is associated with the 25-megawatt Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) project planned within the Glenarm Power Plant Complex.

The meeting is intended to gather community feedback specifically on the proposed landscaping and visual screening elements of the project, including plant selection, buffering, and aesthetic considerations along Glenarm Street. PWP staff and project representatives will be available to present preliminary concepts and answer questions.

The city values public participation and encourages residents to share their perspectives to help ensure the proposed landscaping aligns with community character, environmental considerations, and neighborhood compatibility. This meeting will focus solely on landscaping aspects of the project and is part of the city's ongoing commitment to transparency and community engagement.



For accessibility information or to request an accommodation, please contact (626) 744-7311 or [CSC@CityOfPasadena.net](mailto:CSC@CityOfPasadena.net). Providing at least 72 hours advance notice will help ensure availability.

For more details on the meeting, visit [PWPweb.com/GlenarmLandscaping](http://PWPweb.com/GlenarmLandscaping). PWP provides electricity to more than 65,000 customers within Pasadena. PWP delivers water to nearly 38,000 households and businesses in Pasadena and adjacent communities in the San Gabriel Valley. As a community-owned utility, PWP is a not-for-profit public service owned and operated by the City of Pasadena for the benefit of its customers and the community.

## Barger Issues Statement on Executive Order for Wildfire Rebuilding

Los Angeles County Supervisor Kathryn Barger issued the following statement Tuesday in response to President Trump's Executive Order on wildfire rebuilding:

"I welcome any effort to responsibly accelerate rebuilding. Los Angeles County already has a local self-certification process to help expedite rebuilding, along with streamlined approvals for modular, factory-built homes, and pre-approved plans. Permits currently spend just over 30 business days in the County's plan check, with additional delays stemming from the complex multi-party work of architects, engineers, and builders.

I appreciate the Administration's acknowledgement of the important role FEMA plays in disaster recovery. The most urgent need in the Altadena region is financially driven. Families lack the capital to kick start or continue their rebuilding plans. Our County will soon face a mass sheltering crisis as survivors' insurance and emergency



relief funds run out.

As FEMA's role expands into this new recovery function, I'm hopeful that the federal government will collaborate with our County to implement a mass housing and sheltering program and offer long-term disaster aid (such as Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery funds) so we can accelerate recovery. All survivors deserve full support from all levels of government so they have a fair shot at rebuilding their lives."

## City of Pasadena Black History Festival Returns

Pasadena's Black History Committee announced they are inviting the community to save the date for the 2026 Black History Festival, taking place Saturday, February 21 at Robinson Park. This year's event reflects a powerful moment of renewal as the community continues to move forward one year after the Eaton Fire.

The fire's devastating impact forced major changes to the 2025 celebration, including the cancellation of the parade and car show out of respect for local car and bike clubs whose classic vehicles were damaged or destroyed. In its place, the festival shifted its focus to recovery and connection, providing space for healing and community support in the face of tragedy.

For 2026, the Black History Committee has decided to cancel the traditional parade and instead will once again focus its efforts on fire recovery and honoring the community's current landscape. The Committee is very excited, however, to return with an expanded festival experience—including the much-anticipated return of the classic car show and a variety of activities that will honor the tradition of

Pasadena's historic parade.

Robinson Park is located at 1081 North Fair Oaks Ave.

### Festival Highlights

- Youth performances showcasing local middle and high school talent
- Live entertainment from artists representing Pasadena's vibrant cultural community
- Food trucks offering a diverse selection of delicious food options
- Community resource booths staffed by numerous local organizations providing information, services, and support

While the beloved event is not yet fully back to its full form, organizers are excited to incorporate several parade elements directly into the festivities, creating a lively, meaningful, and celebratory atmosphere. There will be special acknowledgements of our Grand Marshall honorees and youth performances.

### Honoring Resilience, Celebrating Community

Organizers encourage the public to join in this year's celebration, which continues to uplift Black history, highlight community strength, and honor the spirit of resilience that defined last year's recovery-focused festival.

## Free Rides on Transit Equity Day



Pasadena Director of Transportation, Joaquin Siques, is informing the public that Pasadena Transit and Dial-A-Ride are offering free rides system wide on Wednesday in honor of Transit Equity Day, celebrated in honor of Rosa Parks's birthday.

Transit Equity Day is a National Day of Action to commemorate the birthday of Rosa Parks by declaring that public transit is a civil right. Ms. Parks, an iconic civil rights leader, refused to give up her seat on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama in protest and to demand an end to segregation on transit systems.

Everyday Pasadena Transit and the Pasadena Department of Transportation ("DOT") aim to honor the tenets of this day by offering accessible and affordable transit. DOT is committed to achieving the safe, efficient and convenient movement of people and goods within Pasadena, while concurrently ensuring a balance between land use and transportation to maintain a livable community in which cars are not necessary to travel within the city.

Metrolink, LA Metro, LA DOT and Foothill Transit are also offering free rides system wide in honor of Transit Equity Day.



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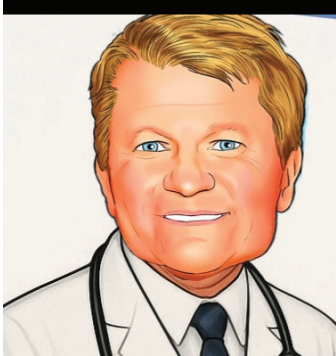
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Peter A. Dills  
<https://podlink/1116885432>

can learn a lot about a restaurant in the first thirty seconds.

Before the food ever hits the table, I usually notice something unglamorous but important: the restrooms. My father used to say, clean bathroom, clean kitchen. Over the years, I've found very little reason to argue with that logic.

Then there's value—and value is not the same thing as price. A \$28 beef dip at Houston's can absolutely be a value if it delivers. What I tend to shy away from are the little things that add up fast: \$25 valet parking, \$10 chips and salsa, charges that show up before you've even decided if you're comfortable.

I pay close attention to the staff. Not how polished they are, but how present. Do they know the menu, or are they reading it back to me? Can they suggest something with confidence? Even better—do they let me try a small taste before I commit? That usually tells me the kitchen believes in what it's serving.

And yes, the food matters. A lot. But great food is rarely just about the recipe. It's execution. It's consistency. It's whether the kitchen is paying attention that day.

But if I had to narrow everything down to one thing, I'd borrow an idea from the movie City Slickers with Billy Crystal. That one thing.

Did a manager—or someone in charge—stop by the table? I call it table touching, and it's muy importante. Not hovering. Not interrupting. Just checking in. Asking how things are going. Letting you know someone is minding the store.

Restaurants that do this almost always run better. Problems get caught early. Guests feel seen. And when someone takes the time to stop by your table, it sends a simple message: we care.

One of my favorite moments—and it doesn't happen often enough—is when I walk in and they already know my drink. That doesn't happen by accident. That comes from paying attention.

Cheeseburger Week brings excitement, debate, and plenty of opinions. That's part of the fun. But when the votes are counted and the banners come down, these are the things that linger.

I'm not just reviewing what's on the plate. I'm reviewing how it feels to walk in the door—and whether anyone noticed I was there.

[thechefknows@yahoo.com](mailto:thechefknows@yahoo.com) check out my podcast DiningwithDills

THE LITTLE THINGS THAT AREN'T SO LITTLE

As Cheeseburger Week winds down, the Chamber of Commerce is busy counting votes. By the time you read this, the usual suspects will probably rise to the top—and that's okay. Consistency has a way of being rewarded.

This past week, someone asked me a question I appreciated more than Who's going to win?

They asked: What do you actually look for when you review a restaurant?

I don't walk in with a clipboard. I walk in through the front door, just like everyone else.

The first thing I notice isn't the menu—it's the room. Does someone look up and say hello, or do I feel like I've interrupted something? You

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## SENIORS TAKE TO THE SKIES, NAVIGATING NEW REALITIES OF AIRLINE TRAVEL

As the population ages, more seniors are choosing to travel by air, whether to visit family, explore long-postponed destinations, or enjoy retirement adventures. Airline travel offers speed and accessibility, but for older passengers it also brings unique challenges and changing expectations.

Many seniors value the convenience of flying, especially as long road trips become tiring. Nonstop routes, senior discounts, and loyalty programs make air travel attractive, while improved aircraft design has increased overall safety and reliability. For retirees with flexible schedules, mid-week flights and off-season travel often provide a calmer, more affordable experience.

Still, navigating modern airports can be daunting. Larger terminals, longer security lines, and digital-only check-ins may pose difficulties for travelers with limited mobility or unfamiliarity with smart-phone technology. Carry-on restrictions and crowded cabins can add physical strain, particularly for those with arthritis or balance issues.

Airlines and airports have begun responding to these concerns. Wheelchair assistance, early boarding, clearer signage, and Transportation Security Administration (TSA) screening accommodations help ease the journey. Some carriers now offer more accessible seating options and improved customer support for passengers with medical needs. Travel experts also encourage seniors to request assistance in advance, arrive early, and choose aisle seats for easier movement.

Health considerations are another key factor. Seniors are advised to stay hydrated, move during longer flights to reduce circulation risks, and consult physicians before extended or international travel. Travel insurance, once optional, has become a common safeguard.

Despite the hurdles, seniors continue to fly in growing numbers. For many, the rewards outweigh the inconveniences. Airline travel enables independence, connection, and discovery—qualities that do not diminish with age. As airlines adapt and awareness grows, the skies may become even more welcoming for older travelers seeking to make the most of their golden years.




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## HOW TO NAVIGATE INHERITING AN IRA FROM A PARENT

Dear Savvy Senior,

*What are the rules regarding inherited IRAs? My brother and I recently inherited our father's IRA when he passed away late last year and would like to know what we need to do to handle it properly.*  
Oldest Sibling



Dear Oldest,

I'm sorry to hear about the loss of your father, but you're smart to be planning ahead. Inheriting an IRA from a parent comes with a unique set of rules. Understanding them can help you make the most of the money you inherit and avoid an unpleasant surprise at tax time. Here are some basics you should know.

Setting It Up

Many people assume they can roll an inherited IRA into their own IRA, but that's not allowed for most beneficiaries. If you inherit an IRA from a parent, sibling, or anyone other than a spouse, you cannot treat the account as your own. Instead, your share must be transferred into a newly established inherited IRA, properly titled in the deceased owner's name—for example, John Smith, deceased, for the benefit of Jane Smith.

If your father named multiple beneficiaries, the IRA can be split into separate inherited accounts. This allows each beneficiary to manage withdrawals independently, as if they were the sole beneficiary.

You can open an inherited IRA at most banks or brokerage firms, although the simplest option is often to set it up with the firm that already holds your father's account.

The 10-Year Withdrawal Rule

Under the SECURE Act, signed into law in December 2019, most non-spouse beneficiaries must withdraw all the money from an inherited IRA by the end of the 10th year following the original owner's death. This rule applies if the owner died in 2020 or later.

If your father had already begun taking required minimum distributions (RMDs), you generally must continue taking annual RMDs while also emptying the account within 10 years. If he had not yet started RMDs, annual withdrawals aren't required, as long as the entire IRA is withdrawn by the end of the 10-year period.

You may take withdrawals faster if you choose, but distributions from a traditional IRA are taxable as ordinary income in the year taken. Roth IRA withdrawals, however, are usually tax-free, provided the account has been open at least five years.

If you fail to take a required RMD, or don't withdraw enough, the penalty is 25 percent of the amount you should have taken. That penalty can be reduced to 10 percent if the mistake is corrected within two years.

Exceptions to the Rule

Several beneficiaries are exempt from the 10-year rule, including a surviving spouse, a minor child, a disabled or chronically ill beneficiary, or someone who is within 10 years of age of the original IRA owner. These beneficiaries may be allowed to stretch withdrawals over a longer period.

Minimize Your Taxes

As tempting as it may be to cash out an inherited IRA in a lump sum, or take large withdrawals over just a few years, proceed carefully. Doing so could trigger a hefty tax bill. Withdrawals from a traditional IRA are generally taxed as income at your regular tax rate.

For many heirs, spreading distributions over the 10-year period can help manage taxes and reduce the risk of being pushed into a higher tax bracket. Other strategies may make sense if your income fluctuates or you're nearing retirement.

To help navigate these decisions, consider working with a financial advisor. If you don't have one, you can find a fee-only, fiduciary financial planner through the National Association of Personal Financial Advisors at [nafa.org](http://nafa.org).

Send your questions or comments to [questions@savvysenior.org](mailto:questions@savvysenior.org), or to Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070.

## OUT TO PASTOR

A Weekly Religion Column by Rev. James Snyder

### PUNXSUTAWNEY PHIL IS NO POLITICIAN....OR IS HE?



Growing up in Pennsylvania, one of my yearly attractions was Punxsutawney Phil. According to the legend, Punxsutawney Phil could predict the future. If he sees his shadow and returns to his hole, it means he has predicted six more weeks of winter-like weather. If Phil doesn't see his shadow, he has predicted an early spring.

I don't know who came up with this story, but it started on February 2, 1887. It's hard to believe people would get advice from some animal. But then again, we often take advice from politicians.

Punxsutawney Phil changes his prediction every year, just like politicians do, making it hard to trust either one consistently.

The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage grew up in northern New York. She had no experience with Punxsutawney Phil, so I filled her in on what it was all about. When I explained to her that Punxsutawney Phil can predict the weather, she looked at me with one of 'those looks', clearly skeptical about the weather-predicting groundhog.

She cleared her throat and said, "You don't really believe that nonsense, do you?" That put me into a predicament. If I say I did, she's going to think that I don't know what I'm talking about. So, I just replied by saying, "I'm just saying what other people are saying. I don't have any clear proof."

I paused and said, "According to the statistics, Punxsutawney Phil has been right almost 60% of the time."

"Well," she replied firmly, "this Punxsutawney Phil you talk about has been right more times than you have. Is that really true?"

There are times in life when you should respond to someone, and times when you should not. I had to decide whether to respond. You can guess which one I chose this time, and you can guess why.

Someone once told me, "You can tell when a politician is lying by their lips moving." I'm not going to comment on that, but it might have some element of truth to it.

Thinking along these lines, I wondered how nice it would be if the politicians did what Punxsutawney Phil did. They could make a declaration, and then go back into their hole. I'm not very political, but I just can't understand how politicians can do what they do. How can they say one thing one year and in two years say something exactly the opposite? But they never go into a hole.

When Punxsutawney Phil sees his shadow, he makes a prediction and goes back into his hole.

I should learn from that. Everything that Punxsutawney Phil says is based on a shadow. I think that's rather interesting. He sees a shadow and then makes a declaration. I'm not quite sure what his shadow has to do with predicting the future, but it's interesting.

After supper, my wife said, "Do you think Punxsutawney Phil will see his shadow? How much are you willing to bet on it?"

There's no way that I'm going to bet against The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. Later, as I thought about it, it did seem like an interesting proposition. Because what if I win? That one win would last for the rest of my life. Imagine beating her on some bet.

Although it was tempting, I declined for several personal reasons.

While researching Punxsutawney Phil, I realized how much influence we give to animals and politicians, often trusting what they say without question.

In giving this some thought, I realized how vital honesty is. Without it, most people would have little to say, and that thought makes me value sincerity more. As a high school student, I put a lot of trust in him. I assumed that what they said about Punxsutawney Phil was absolutely correct. Why would people lie about something like this?

I realized how important lying is for some people. If it weren't for lying, most people wouldn't have anything at all to say.

I know I have been caught up in some lies. Some of them are unintentional, but there's also a side of lying that helps you get out of trouble. At least I think it will.

I have tried Punxsutawney Phil's strategy on The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. Although he can get away with lying, I have yet to get away with lying. Lying to The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage opens the door for some unfortunate times. She does not like lying and usually does something to the person who is lying... Me.

I'll take a cue from Punxsutawney Phil and hide in a hole before I say anything, because sometimes, silence is the best way to avoid trouble and keep things right.

I was reminded of what the Apostle Peter said along this line.

"For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it" (1 Peter 3:10-11).

As a Christian, I have a serious responsibility to "refrain his tongue from evil." I am the only one who can control my tongue. If it's out of control, I will suffer tremendously, and I have only myself to blame.

Not only will my tongue create evil for me, but also those people around me. I must be aware of the damage I can do to family and friends.

Dr. James L. Snyder lives in Ocala, FL with the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. Telephone 1-352-216-3025, e-mail [jamesnsnyder51@gmail.com](mailto:jamesnsnyder51@gmail.com), website [www.jamesnsnyderministries.com](http://www.jamesnsnyderministries.com).

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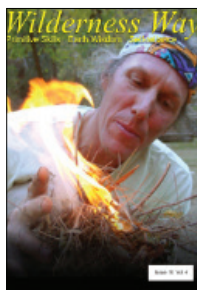
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## CHRISTOPHER Nyerges

[Nyerges is the author of "Guide to Wild Foods," "Foraging California," "How to Survive Anywhere," and other books. He can be reached at Box 41834, Eagle Rock, CA 90041, or [www.SchoolofSelf-Reliance.com](http://www.SchoolofSelf-Reliance.com).]

### ARE EUCALYPTUS TREES - NATIVE TO AUSTRALIA - A DESIRABLE SPECIES?

Eucalyptus is a tree with a mixed reputation. This stately tree is renowned for the "forest effect" due to its rapid growth and the high transpiration rate of its leaves. According to one report, "In Sydney, a large gum tree [eucalyptus] transpires up to 200 litres of water a day. A well-maintained garden in Sydney will transpire nearly twice the volume of water as the total rainfall."

The tree was included in my Guide to Wild Foods book since it was so useful in its native Australia by the Aboriginal people: the leaves for various medicines (mostly upper bronchial issues), the bark for infections and many other uses, and even the little psyllid bugs can be harvested and eaten like a backwoods sugar. And the honey produced from eucalyptus flowers is a dark almost-medicinal honey.

So is it wise to remove the eucalyptus trees and replace them with native trees? In order to fully grasp the effects of eucalypti on the environment, let's look at its effect in other parts of the world.

Eucalyptus is a fast-growing tree. When you cut them down, they will sprout right back up again. Because of this, there have been major plantations in various countries throughout the world from Europe to China to Africa in order to supply the wood for lumber, paper products, and firewood. If the eucalyptus trees are planted in non-agricultural areas where nothing else will grow, they survive quite well. A eucalyptus tree in a plantation can be cut for wood or timber in as short a time as every four years.

Around the time that the U.S. was experiencing long gas lines during the 1970s "energy crisis," many countries around the world discovered that the eucalyptus tree seemed like a miracle tree. It grew easily anywhere, and could be regularly harvested for fuel wood, building materials, and pulp for paper. It was also a financial boom to the public and private businesses in various countries who grew these plantations. Today, eucalyptus is the number one tree planted in plantations around the world. With so many undeniable benefits, what could go wrong? Over the last 30 to 40 years, countless business, governmental, and academic studies have been done to weigh the pros and cons of the largescale use of the eucalyptus tree.

There were very real worries about deforestation and desertification that began in the 1980s. Eucalyptus trees, with its obvious economic benefits, were planted in ever-greater numbers. Today we can analyze the ecological effects of over 30 years of eucalyptus plantations.

Because the eucalyptus tree is such a great transpirer, it follows that it generally consumes far more water than other native or non-native trees. In fact, one of the stated reasons that eucalyptus is planted in certain countries is to dry up swamps and wet areas, either for development or because the wet area was believed to be a source of malaria. The deep roots of eucalyptus, and their extensive network of small surface roots, has been noted to extend deep to the water table.

Although a eucalyptus plantation does very well in dry areas where nothing else is growing, in areas as diverse as China, Ethiopia, Vietnam, etc, local villagers of these diverse places have noted that their water wells run dry. In fact, this seems to be one of the main objections to eucalyptus plantations: it dries up the local water sources since it generally consumes more water than is received by rain in any given area, which then means there is far less water for agricultural crops and orchards.

In studies done to determine if the leaf drop from eucalyptus is "allelopathic" (exuding soil toxins), various plants grown in a mixture of eucalyptus mulch and soil have exhibited a germination rate as low as 3%, compared to normal rates of germination with an oak mulch.

Another argument against the eucalyptus plantations is that there is a great depletion of soil nutrients. In general, eucalyptus take up more nutrients (and water) from the soil than other native or non-native trees because they are fast-growing. And, in theory, if all the leafy matter was left on the ground (as opposed to cleaning it up), those nutrients would degrade and enrich the soil. But unfortunately, eucalyptus mulch takes a very long time to be degraded by bacteria and fungus due to its oils, and so in actual practice, the soils around eucalyptus tend to be very desert-like due to the unavailability of nutrients. [Source: The Effect of Eucalyptus and Oak Leaf Extract on California Native Plants, Kam Watson, UC Berkley]

This effect results in the lack of biodiversity and understory that is commonly observed under and around eucalyptus trees, in stark contrast to native forests.

One study was also done with soil under the eucalyptus trees, along with a soil sample not influenced by eucalyptus. Soil samples from under eucalyptus trees proved to be less able to absorb water. This meant that though eucalyptus trees have been planted in areas to reduce runoff and flooding, this result is not usually successful because of the effect of the tree's oil on the soil. These same results have been documented in eucalyptus plantations in China, Kenya, Ethiopia, Vietnam, and other sites.

Kenya Forest Service has published guidelines, basically aimed at promoting eucalyptus plantations in the country, called "A Guide to On-Farm Eucalyptus Growing in Kenya", December 2009. They advise not growing eucalyptus in wetlands and marshy areas, and riparian areas. They advise not growing eucalyptus closer than 30 meters from rivers, and ideally 50 meters, so that the trees do not adversely interfere with the water source.

They add that other areas where eucalyptus should not be planted include around lakes, ponds, swamps, estuaries and any other body of standing water. They advise that eucalyptus not be planted closer than 50 meters to farm lands, and other measures. In other words, even those who are pro-eucalyptus recognize the adverse effects of eucalyptus on the environment, and offer ways to minimize those effects.

Though there are medicinal benefits to the eucalyptus tree, there are better native trees to plant which provide the same benefit.

## RESTORATION CONCERT

February 8, 2026

Italian-born pianist Rodolfo Leone will be performing a solo recital of Beethoven and Chopin at the Restoration Concerts on Sunday, February 8, 2026 at 4:00 p.m. Mr. Leone was the first-prize winner of the 2017 International Beethoven Piano Competition Vienna, and is described as "a true sound philosopher" (Oberösterreichische Nachrichten). Tickets will be available at the door for \$25 or online at <https://www.friendsofsopaslibrary.org/restoration-concerts> for \$26. The concert is presented by the Restoration Concerts Committee of the Friends of the South Pasadena Public Library and will be held in the beautiful historic Library Community Room at 1115 El Centro St. in South Pasadena.

Pianist Rodolfo Leone is acclaimed for his powerful technique and poetic expression. His performances have taken him to venues such as Walt Disney Concert Hall, Vienna's Musikverein, and the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing.

Recent concerto highlights include appearances with the San Diego Symphony, Pasadena Symphony, and Borusan Istanbul Philharmonic, performing works by Beethoven, Liszt, and Ravel. A passionate chamber musician and recitalist, Leone has collaborated with Demarre McGill, appeared on Performance Today, and recorded albums for Gramola and Naxos.

He serves on the Piano Faculty at the Colburn Music Academy in Los Angeles and has held residencies and masterclasses across the U.S. Leone holds both a Master of Music and Artist Diploma from the Colburn Conservatory, and previously studied in Berlin and Pesaro, Italy.

The Restoration Concerts Committee, a committee of the non-profit organization, The Friends of the South Pasadena Public Library, has a goal to bring world-class music at an affordable price to the concertgoers in South Pasadena and surrounding communities. As the name suggests, net proceeds from the concerts provide for restorations, enhancements and other benefits to the South Pasadena Library and Community Room. For more information about Restoration Concerts, contact [restorationconcerts@gmail.com](mailto:restorationconcerts@gmail.com) or go to <https://www.friendsofsopaslibrary.org/restoration-concerts>.



## February Events Around Town!

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### One Time Events

**February 8**  
**Historic Old Pasadena Walking Tour – Dayton Street**  
Explore the rich history of Dayton Street and Pasadena's earliest Black-owned businesses. 10am – 11:30am

**February 14**  
**A Vintage Valentine at the Queen Anne Cottage**  
Enjoy an elegant afternoon sipping champagne and discovering Victorian secrets of courtship. 2 – 4pm

**February 14**  
**Romance Along the Arroyo – A Valentine's Day Event**  
The Gamble House and Pasadena Museum of History celebrate Valentine's Day in vintage style with romantic music, treats and more. 4pm – 7pm

**February 18**  
**Little Songbirds at Descanso Gardens**  
Join the Pasadena Conservatory of Music for a nature-themed musical story time. 10am – 11am

**February 21**  
**Floriography Wreath Family Workshop at the Arboretum**  
Hands-on family workshop on Victorian art of sending messages through flowers. 2pm – 3:30pm

**February 21**  
**Black History Festival in Robinson Park, Pasadena**  
This festival offers live performances, community booths and more. 10am – 3pm

**February 22**  
**Lunar New Year Festival in Downtown Arcadia**  
Lunar New Year Festival with a day of tradition, food and community spirit. 11am – 4pm

**February 26**  
**Caltech History and Architectural Tour**  
Explore Caltech's historic original campus and its architectural footprint on the community. 10:30am

**February 28 - 9am – 2pm**  
**Lunar New Year at the Arboretum**  
Family crafts, cabbage planting, live performances, red envelope seed giveaway and food trucks.

### Ongoing Events

**January 23 – February 6**  
**Dine LA Restaurant Week**  
Enjoy special Dine LA lunch and dinner menus at hundreds of participating local restaurants.

**February 5 – 16**  
**Circus Vargas Presents "Masquerade" at Santa Anita Park**  
The circus comes to Arcadia with a spellbinding journey of pure artistry and family fun.

**February 8 – March 8**  
**Richard III at A Noise Within**  
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## FITNESS FOR LIFE



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chips and tortilla chips are also eaten, along with millions of pounds of popcorn, nuts, bacon, and ribs. Pizza is another game-day favorite, with many households ordering multiple pies to feed crowds.

All these foods are high in calories, fat, and salt, and they are designed to be eaten by the handful. A few chips or wings rarely feel like enough, so people keep reaching for more. This combination makes Super Bowl Sunday a perfect setup for overeating.

The calories add up quickly. Six fried chicken wings with sauce and dip can contain more than 550 calories. Two small slices of pepperoni pizza can add another 600 calories. A few handfuls of potato chips can easily reach 400 calories. Add sugary drinks or beer, and a single afternoon of snacking can exceed 2,000 or even 3,000 calories before the game ends.

Of course, one day of overeating will not ruin a person's health. However, Super Bowl Sunday often comes during a time of year when people are already less active and eating heavier foods. It's easy to see how quickly calories can pile up without much nutrition to show for it.

The good news is that enjoying the Super Bowl does not mean giving up snacks or fun food. Small changes can make a big difference without making people feel deprived. Swapping just a few traditional party foods for lighter options can save hundreds of calories and still keep guests satisfied.

Crunchy snacks are one of the hardest habits to break on game day. Potato and tortilla chips are popular because they are salty and easy to eat. Try making them in an air fryer to cut the fat. For popcorn, there are lots of lower calorie choices. A large bowl of air popped popcorn can come in under 100 calories, compared to several hundred calories from a similar amount of chips. Roasted chickpeas can also satisfy the desire for crunch while adding fiber and protein, which help people feel full sooner.

Dips are another major source of hidden calories. Instead of pairing dips with chips, using vegetables like bell peppers, cucumbers, carrots, or celery can dramatically cut calorie intake. Salsa paired with vegetables provides strong flavor for very few calories, and even guacamole goes farther when eaten with vegetables instead of chips.

Nuts are often seen as a healthy snack, but portion size matters. A small bowl can contain hundreds of calories. Lower-calorie alternatives like roasted edamame or seasoned popcorn still offer a satisfying snack experience without the heavy calorie load. These foods allow people to snack longer without consuming as much fat.

Desserts and drinks can quietly add even more calories. Sugary sodas, cocktails, and beer can contribute hundreds of calories with little nutritional value. Switching to sparkling water with fruit, flavored water, or diet drinks can save a significant number of calories over the course of the game. For dessert, fresh fruit provides sweetness and color without the heavy calorie punch of cookies or brownies.

Super Bowl Sunday will always be about celebration, community, and fun. Food is part of that tradition. The goal is not to eliminate favorite snacks, but to balance them with smarter choices. By making a few simple swaps, it is possible to save thousands of calories while still enjoying the game.

When the game is over, the real win is waking up the next day feeling good instead of weighed down. Super Bowl memories should be about the game and the people, not regret over what was eaten.

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## ALL THINGS

by Jeff Brown

### THE NATURAL BLISS OF BEING

by Jackson Peterson



The author designed his book to be a transformative journey that conclusively reveals one's own "enlightened self-nature" directly, leaving no room for doubt or uncertainty. For those who are serious about self-realization, this book offers explanations, insights and practical methods that can easily be applied without prior knowledge or experience with meditation or Eastern practices. The key teachings originate in the Tibetan wisdom tradition known as the "The Great Perfection", but are inclusive of other traditions such as Zen, that offer insights and methods into discovering our True Nature immediately and directly, not after months or years of study, meditation and practice. The author also studied deeply the teachings of the Sufis in Kashmir, India which revealed the wisdom of the Heart and Love, both necessary qualities in realizing one's true nature.

The approach shared is very direct and capable of revealing immediate benefits. The overall goal is the acquisition of a completely new perspective on life that is grounded in spontaneity, freedom, joy and unconditional love for the benefit of oneself and others.

The journey includes delving into the nature of thought, mind and ego-self to learn how we create our own suffering. From there we are introduced to our own inner jewel of enlightened awareness and knowingness that has always been present but never or rarely noticed. We then learn methods of how to broaden the "recognition" and how to stabilize and integrate this wisdom awareness into all aspects of our lives. Finally we are introduced to the nature of our spiritual Heart the seat of unconditional love and True Being. We learn how we are all just "one life", and with this recognition we find joy for ourselves and love for all beings.

The author has spent over forty-seven years in pursuit of the wisdom teachings that can bring about enlightenment and liberation from personal suffering. As a result his travels to meet actual masters who were themselves accomplished in this path, took him to India, China, Nepal, Japan, Korea, Israel, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. This book represents the essence of those teachings yet are presented in a completely generic and unique approach that anyone can benefit from.

The author shares: "It is my hope that seekers of all types may find the realization of their goals fulfilled through the reading and application of the teachings as offered in this book and are able to realize the immediate presence of the Natural Bliss of Being for themselves as I have, and realize: 'Relishing and celebrating life's journey is the realization of Enlightenment itself!'" Jackson Peterson (nonduality) has videos on youtube.

## SUPERBOWL SNACK STATS

Super Bowl Sunday is not just about football. It is one of the biggest eating days in the United States, second only to Thanksgiving. On this one day, Americans consume tens of millions of pounds of snack foods. Studies and food industry estimates suggest that the average person eats at least 1,200 calories just from snacking during the game, not counting regular meals. If attending parties or watching all afternoon, total intake can climb much higher.

Surveys show that many fans eat two to three times their normal daily calories on Super Bowl Sunday. In extreme cases, people report eating four times their usual amount, which can add up to more than 8,000 calories in a single day. That amount is more than most people need over several days. Because the food is spread out over hours of watching, grazing, and socializing, it is easy to keep eating without realizing how much has been consumed.

Nationwide, Americans eat about 1.3 billion chicken wings on Super Bowl Sunday alone. That is enough wings to give every person in the country several each. Millions of pounds of potato chips are also eaten, along with millions of pounds of popcorn, nuts, bacon, and ribs. Pizza is another game-day favorite, with many households ordering multiple pies to feed crowds.

## UNLOCK YOUR LIFE



Lori A. Harris

**WHAT IS YOUR LIFE COSTING YOU?**  
**Decision-Making, Intuition, and the Quiet Wisdom Within**

*"The cost of a thing is the amount of what I will call life which is required to be exchanged for it, immediately or in the long run."*  
— Henry David Thoreau

That line from Thoreau has stayed with me for years because it asks a question most of us don't pause long enough to answer: What is this choice costing me—not in money, but in life energy, time, joy, or regret?

Every life is shaped by decisions. Some are dramatic and obvious. Others are small, repeated daily, and quietly powerful. Over time, these choices begin to form an internal operating system, habits, and beliefs that guide us automatically. In psychology, this is often called a paradigm. Paradigms aren't good or bad. They exist to help the brain conserve energy and keep us safe. But left unexamined, they can also keep us stuck.

This is why awareness matters.

When our hidden beliefs go unchallenged, we can find ourselves living out of alignment with our stated values and deepest intentions. We may say we want peace, freedom, or connection—while making decisions rooted in fear, old conditioning, or the need to please.

Improving your decision-making skills isn't about perfection. It's about learning to notice why you choose what you choose.

**Listening Beyond Logic**  
Many of us were trained to trust logic alone. Make a pros-and-cons list. Be reasonable. Push feelings aside.

And yet, ancient wisdom traditions and modern neuroscience tell a fuller story.

The primary cells of the nervous system are neurons, and while we tend to think of them as living only in the brain, they are also found in the heart and the gut. These neural networks communicate with the brain through the vagus nerve, sometimes called the "soul nerve" because of its role in emotional regulation and felt sense.

The heart contains roughly 40,000 neurons. The gut contains an astonishing 100 million neurons.

So when people talk about "gut feelings," "heart knowing," or butterflies in the stomach, they're not being poetic; they're describing real biological signals.

Intuition isn't mystical. It's information.

Writer Alexandra Franzen playfully refers to this integrated wisdom of heart, gut, and head as the "HUT." When these systems are aligned, decisions tend to feel steadier, even when they're challenging.

**A Simple Inner Check-In**  
One of the most reliable guides is the body itself.

Before making a decision, pause. Take a breath. Scan your body gently.

Does this choice feel expansive or constricting? Does it carry a sense of growth, learning, or quiet excitement? Or does it feel heavy, rushed, or fear-driven?

This is sometimes called the inner mentor or inner knower—a voice that becomes clearer through stillness, reflection, and practice. Many traditions refer to it as the "still small voice." It's not loud. It doesn't argue. It simply notices.

**Memories or Regrets**  
At the end of the day, our lives are the sum of our decisions. The purpose of life, as Thoreau reminded us, is not merely to survive—but to live fully, vibrantly, and awake. To "suck the marrow of life."

A useful question when you're standing at a crossroads is this: Will this choice help me create memories—or regrets?

That single pause can change everything.

A gentle invitation:  
This week, choose one small decision, what you say yes to, what you postpone, what you let go of, and practice listening a little deeper. Notice what your body knows. Notice what costs you life, and what gives it back.

Sometimes the most powerful change begins with one honest moment of awareness.

*Lori A. Harris is an Integrative Change Coach and Life Mastery Consultant. Learn more about her at [loriaharris.com](http://loriaharris.com).*

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## MOUNTAIN VIEWS NEWS

**PUBLISHER/ EDITOR**  
Susan Henderson

**PASADENA CITY EDITOR**

Dean Lee

**SALES**  
Patricia Colonello  
626-355-2737  
626-818-2698

**WEBMASTER**  
John Avery

**DISTRIBUTION**  
Peter Lamendola

### CONTRIBUTORS

Lori A. Harris  
Michele Kidd  
Stuart Tolchin  
Harvey Hyde  
Audrey Swanson  
Meghan Malooley  
Mary Lou Caldwell  
Kevin McGuire  
Chris Leclerc  
Dinah Chong Watkins  
Howard Hays  
Paul Carpenter  
Kim Clymer-Kelley  
Christopher Nyerges  
Peter Dills  
Rich Johnson  
Rev. James Snyder  
Katie Hopkins  
Deanne Davis  
Despina Arouzman  
Jeff Brown  
Marc Garlett  
Keely Totten  
Dan Golden  
Rebecca Wright  
Hail Hamilton  
Joan Schmidt  
LaQuetta Shamblee

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Letters to the editor and correspondence should be sent to:

Mountain Views News  
80 W. Sierra Madre Bl.  
#327  
Sierra Madre, Ca.  
91024  
Phone: 626-355-2737  
Fax: 626-609-3285  
email:  
mtnews@aol.com



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### Mountain Views News Mission Statement

The traditions of community newspapers and the concerns of our readers are this newspaper's top priorities. We support a prosperous community of well-informed citizens. We hold in high regard the values of the exceptional quality of life in our community, including the magnificence of our natural resources. Integrity will be our guide.

## STUART TOLCHIN PUT THE LIGHTS ON YOU DON'T HAVE TO CLIMB SKYSCRAPERS TO FEEL SOMETHING



Yesterday, after my strength class I was able to stand on one foot. I was thrilled and imagined that I would be able to put my shoes on today without having to lean against something. I tried to do it this morning and succeeded, which felt damn great. I know you readers, imaginary, and those few of whom I can identify, do not really appreciate the importance of this accomplishment.

So why do I bother to bring it to your attention at all? This article will be an attempt to describe the present human inability to communicate emotion from one person to another. I'll leave you to speculate on the causes and consequences of this inability.

First of all, why was being able to stand on one foot such a big deal? As any reader of my previous columns knows, I constantly complain about the difficulties I encounter which I attribute to ageing and the isolation of retirement. Yes, I am happy to still be alive, but I have trouble balancing and am constantly in fear of falling. A few weeks ago, a neighbor handed me a card entitling me to one free twenty-minute program at a nearby Strength class. I tried the one free twenty-minute session and was told that the process is supposed to help with balancing and weight loss. Of course, there is a cost, but it is much more workable than having my wife drive me to a gym every day where I would compare myself to others who look healthier and thinner and younger. So, I tried the first series of once a week twenty-minute programs which really didn't seem to help much. What did impress me was that on a table I saw three books that explained the whole process. I mentioned to the young woman who had acted as my trainer for the day that I would like to look at the books, but I could not read them there as my wife was waiting to drive me home.

The young woman said, "not to worry" and said that she had some copies of the books at home and would bring them to my house for me to read or at least look at. I cautioned her that I live way up in the canyon in Sierra Madre and the place was hard to find. I gave her my address and amazingly, a few days later, there on my doorstep were the three books. I felt appreciative and, as you can guess, I am much more comfortable reading than exercising and I dutifully glanced at the books. This was motivation and I did four more once a week twenty-minute sessions. At first, I really did not notice much difference; but liked having someone to go on Mondays and it felt good having someone to talk to who was obligated to be nice and encouraging to me. I signed up for more sessions and yesterday, as I said above, was able to stand on one foot and to balance putting on my shoes. All right still this still does not seem like such a big deal to you but I was encouraged enough to ask my wife to drive me to a nearby library where I put a hold on a large-print copy of Moby Dick.

As we drove my wife told me that on the news this morning there was presented the video of several thousand people gathered in Taipei watching a man climbing without assistance a 1,667-foot skyscraper. This bit of news for me emphasized how dead people often feel inside and why they are willing to risk their life or watch someone else risk their life as a way of feeling something inside. I think of this as an explanation of why so many people engage in risk-taking activities just to feel something and to avoid depression.

I now understand that I don't have to climb skyscrapers—I can now stand on one foot! I am alive and experience something inside encouraging me to work to make things better and not just be an observer of my own decay. How do you feel about that? Do you realize that maybe there are things each of us can do to improve whatever we might wish to improve?



## HOWARD Hays As I See It

*"a town looks better when you have military people. These are big, strong guys, bad guys. Look at them and say, 'We're not gonna mess with them'."*

— President Trump on Washington, DC after he'd deployed the National Guard

It's hard to think of anything as horrific as the killing of Alex Pretti in Minneapolis, an ICU nurse at a veteran's hospital, described as simply a great guy, killed less than three weeks after the killing of Renee Good. But I can think of a couple things horrific in their own way: the "official" response to the killing, and an AI-altered photo released just days prior.

The facts are clear in videos and witness accounts. Pretti joined others protesting an ICE operation. He was recording on his phone and directing traffic. Another protestor was shoved to the ground by an ICE agent, and Pretti went over to help her up. They were pepper-sprayed, a half-dozen agents took Pretti to the ground, beat him and took away a holstered gun he had under his jacket. Pretti was then shot four times in the back, with another agent adding more rounds. As with the killing of Renee Good, a physician was at the scene but blocked from rendering aid. When he did approach, he saw federal agents counting the bullet holes.

Just eighty minutes later, DHS had already issued a statement. Pretti "wanted to do maximum damage and massacre law enforcement". While videos showed no sign of a gun until agents took the one Pretti had holstered, right before killing him, DHS Secretary Kristi Noem accused Pretti of being a "domestic terrorist", later that he'd "brandished" his weapon. Vice President JD Vance blamed it on "far left agitators". Trump aide Stephen Miller posted, "An assassin tried to murder federal agents."

As with the Renee Good killing, ICE barred police from the crime scene. But this time, Minneapolis Police Chief Brian O'Hara refused to comply and ordered his officers to preserve whatever evidence they could. By the end of the day, Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison had gotten a judicial order barring the feds "from destroying or altering evidence related to the fatal shooting".

In his filing, Ellison acknowledged that the request was unusual, in that federal agents normally cooperate with state investigators in preserving evidence – rather than trying to destroy it. But "What happened today was not normal." DHS announced that they, not the FBI, would be handling the investigation. NYU Law Professor Ryan Goodman posted, "Looks like the fix is in at the federal level. DHS does not have any prosecutorial authority." DHS had already announced their conclusion before any "investigation" had begun.

Minnesota Governor Tim Walz assured they'd be keeping "a log of evidence for the future prosecution of ICE agents and officials responsible for this." Trump responded by accusing Walz of "inciting insurrection". The day after the killing, CBP chief Greg Bovino said border patrol agents were the "victims". Attorney General Pam Bondi blamed it on sanctuary cities. She offered to withdraw some forces, though, in return for the state's voter rolls - with unredacted personal information.

Sen. Ruben Gallego (D-AZ) said of Secretary Noem, "she didn't wait to see what the video (showed). . . automatically said that this man was brandishing a weapon, which we now know is not true." He added, "She lied about a citizen to justify his murder". Former CNN anchor Jim Acosta vented frustration that mainstream media was reluctant to suggest more than that official statements were "contradicted" by evidence. "The reality is that the eyewitness footage revealed that the administration was flat out lying to the public."

Minnesota is now in federal court against the Trump administration, arguing Tenth Amendment violations in having armed, masked agents in their communities not to enforce federal laws, but to coerce the state into changing policies Trump doesn't like. The administration's case isn't helped by Trump's public statements of, basically, "Yeah, and what of it?"

Our government rejecting the truth about a horrific crime in order to push a false, self-serving narrative is horrific in itself. And then there's this AI-altered photo:

The White House and Bondi's DOJ released a photo of civil rights lawyer and former Minneapolis NAACP president Nakima Levy Armstrong, one of three arrested protesting at a St. Paul church over a pastor being a regional director for ICE. The photo showed her sobbing while being led away in cuffs.

The same photo was released earlier by DHS – but this showed her serious, stoic and determined. The White House wanted confirmation of Trump's narrative; if you're "gonna mess with them" - they can arrest you, cuff you and make you cry. The original pic didn't convey that, so they put it through AI and had it changed.

Armstrong's principles are shared by tens of thousands in the streets of Minnesota, tens of millions throughout the country – so the regime responds by rejecting the truth about the murder of Alex Pretti and putting out an AI-altered pic of the arrest of Nakima Levy Armstrong.

Trump hopes we're sufficiently intimidated by armed, masked "big guys, strong guys" deployed in our communities. We remain mindful of Bill Clinton's warning, in response to the murder of Alex Pretti, that if "we give our freedoms away after 250 years, we might never get them back."

## RICH JOHNSON



### FRIENDS, ENEMIES, AND A FEW RELATIVES

Who are the experts who determine how many friends we have? Anthropologists. Anthropology, AKA the science of humanity, is the study of what makes us human.

Expert anthropologists tell us in America nearly half of us have 3 people we would call best friends. A third of us bipods have 4 to 9 friends or so they say. They also tell us we probably have 100 to 150 friends we would call acquaintances.

Even celebrities tend to have only a few close friends. Oprah says she has 3. So says Selena Gomez. Of course, we know Matt Damon and Ben Affleck are buddies. Many celebrities first cross paths in college. For example, Al Gore and Tommy Lee Jones are chums? They attended Harvard together. Christopher Reeve and Robin Williams became "besties" as graduate students at Julliard. Other strange bedfellows? Actors Stanley Tucci and Ving Rhames. Ving wasn't born Ving. He was born Erving, Stanley shortened "Erving" to "Ving". Apparently Ving wouldn't have looked quite so tough if he had kept the name Erving.

Brad Pitt and Sheryl Crow initially crossed paths at the University of Missouri. Sheryl admits she dreamt she would marry Brad. They never married and are apparently, still good friends.

Best buddies Richard and Bruce went to St. Augustine by the Sea School in Santa Monica. Later they introduced their daughters to each other. They became besties. Who are we talking about you ask? Bruce's daughter you would know better as Gwyneth Paltrow and Richard's daughter is Maya Rudolph. The gals also both went to St. Augustine by the Sea School. Personal note: A casting director friend of mine worked on several television shows for Gwyneth's dad Bruce. My friend told me she met daughter Gwyneth when Miss Paltrow was 10 years old. They became good friends and are still friends to this day.

Two guys you probably would never ever put together as "buds" met at the beach in 1967. If you run into them you would have no trouble telling them apart. Their names? Michael Douglas and Danny DeVito.

Go back seventy-five years or so and you might run into George Burns hanging with Jack Benny. Best buds for 50 years. 1930s actresses Jean Harlow and Myrna Loy hung around together. Met in a movie with actor William Powell.

Of course, the big duo was Spencer Tracy and Katherine Hepburn. Did nine films together. Their relationship was complicated by Spencer's estranged marriage to wife Louise. Mrs. Tracy never would grant Spencer a divorce. So, since Louise lived 15 years longer than Spencer Tracy and Hepburn never married.

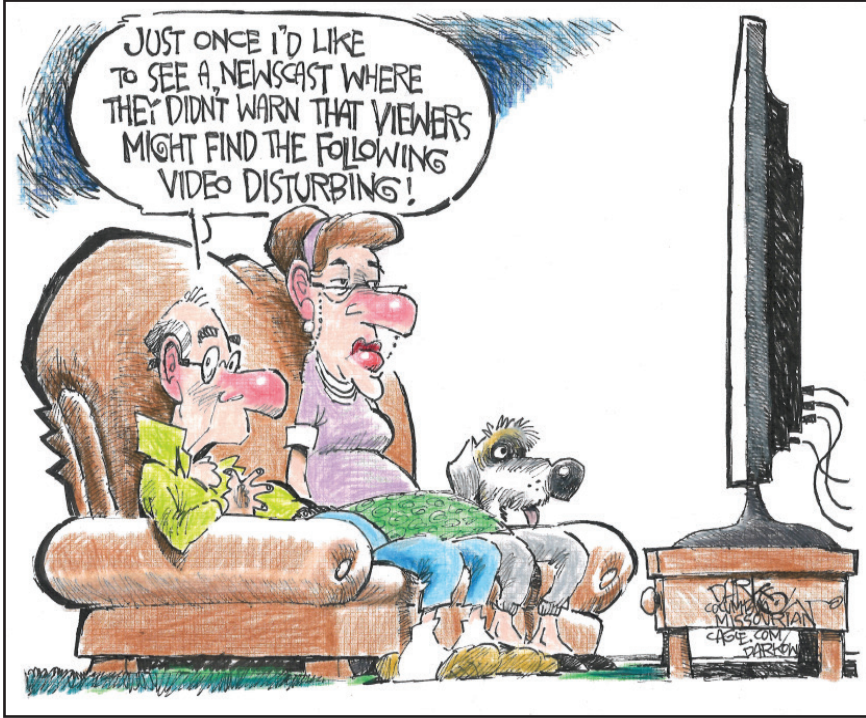
Ella Fitzgerald and Marilyn Monroe became friends in the 1950s. Marilyn played a big part in Ella's rise to stardom. Ella wanted to perform at the Mocambo nightclub in Hollywood, but the owner didn't want to book Ella. Marilyn called the owner and said she would come sit in the front row if Ella performed there. Not only was the show a sellout, tons of press came by and that day Ella became a big star. Yay!

Really strange relationships in history. Ulysses S. Grant and James Longstreet. Grant was commander of the Union Army during the Civil War and Longstreet was one of Confederate General Robert E. Lee's most trusted officers. Grant and Longstreet became friends at West Point. Their friendship undoubtedly saved thousands of lives as near the end of the war, Longstreet convinced Lee to surrender, convincing General Lee that General Grant would be generous in his terms.

What about celebrity friends who became celebrity enemies?

Since this is a family publication I will spend very little space on enemies. Gwyneth Paltrow and Winona Ryder were great friends until Gwyneth discovered Winona's "Shakespeare in Love" script. Ms. Paltrow sped down and auditioned for the role Winona was going after. You would know if you saw the movie, that not only did Gwyneth get cast for the role...she scored an Oscar for her performance. At the same time Ms. Paltrow was getting her Oscar, Winona was getting arrested for shoplifting in Beverly Hills. Maybe Gwyneth could play Winona in a movie version of her heist. Finally, relatively speaking, it's no surprise Chris Hemsworth and Liam Hemsworth are related. Duh! Did you know Shirley Maclaine and Warren Beatty are brother and sister? And Senator Cory Booker and RuPaul are cousins.

A really scary movie would be the retelling of my brothers and sisters. You see, my twin sister, Ruth and I, were born on the same day...Halloween. A year later, on Thanksgiving, my other brother and sister were born. Now that's scary!









SUMMONS  
(CITACIÓN JUDICIAL)

SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

NOTICE TO DEFENDANTS: (AVISO AL DEMANDADO):

CASE NO. 26STCV00821  
Complaint filed: January 9, 2026

ALTADENA WILDFIRE RECOVERY INFRASTRUCTURE FINANCING DISTRICT,

Plaintiff,

v.

ALL PERSONS INTERESTED IN THE MATTER OF THE VALIDITY OF THE FORMATION OF THE ALTADENA WILDFIRE RECOVERY INFRASTRUCTURE FINANCING DISTRICT, THE ADOPTION OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE FINANCING PLAN, THE ALLOCATION OF TAXES TO THE DISTRICT, THE AUTHORITY OF THE DISTRICT TO ISSUE BONDS SECURED BY THE ALLOCATION OF TAXES TO THE DISTRICT PURSUANT TO THE INFRASTRUCTURE FINANCING PLAN, AND ALL OTHER MATTERS AND PROCEEDINGS RELATING THERE-TO

Defendant.

**NOTICE!** You have been sued. The court may decide against you without your being heard unless you respond by March 5, 2026. Read the information below.  
**¡AVISO!** Lo han demandado. Si no responde para el 5 de marzo, 2026 la corte puede decidir en su contra sin escuchar su versión. Lea la información a continuación.  
ALL PERSONS INTERESTED IN THE VALIDATION OF: all proceedings conducted by each of the Altadena Wildfire Recovery Infrastructure Financing District Public Financing Authority, which serves as the governing body of the District (the “District Board”), and the Board of Supervisors of the County of Los Angeles relating to: (i) the formation of the Altadena Wildfire Recovery Infrastructure Financing District (“District”); (ii) the Adoption of the Infrastructure Financing Plan (“IFP”) for the District; and (iii) the Allocation of Taxes to the District; (iv) the authority of the District to issue bonds secured by the taxes allocated to the District pursuant to the IFP; and (v) all other matters and proceedings related thereto have until March 5, 2026 to appear and file a written answer to the complaint at this court and have a copy served on the plaintiff. A letter or phone call will not protect you. Your written response must be in proper legal form if you want the court to hear your case. There may be a court form that you can use for your response. You can find these court forms and more information at the California Courts Online Self-Help Center (<https://selfhelp.courts.ca.gov/>), your county law library, or the courthouse nearest you. If you cannot pay the filing fee, ask the court clerk for a fee waiver form. If you do not file your response on time, you may lose your rights, default will be entered against you upon application by the plaintiff, and the plaintiff may apply to the court for the relief demanded in the complaint. Contesting the legality or validity of this matter will not subject you to punitive action, such as wage garnishment or seizure of your real or personal property.

You may seek the advice of an attorney in any matter connected with the complaint or this summons. Such an attorney should be consulted promptly so that your pleading may be filed or entered within the time required by this summons. If you do not know an attorney, you may want to call an attorney referral service. If you cannot afford an attorney, you may be eligible for free legal services from a nonprofit legal services program. You can locate these nonprofit groups at the California Legal Services Web site ([www.lawhelpca.org](http://www.lawhelpca.org)), the California Courts Online Self-Help Center (<https://selfhelp.courts.ca.gov/>), or by contacting your local court or county bar association. NOTE: The court has a statutory lien for waived fees and costs on any settlement or arbitration award of \$10,000 or more in a civil case. The court’s lien must be paid before the court will dismiss the case. The District has brought this action to determine the validity of the formation of the Altadena Wildfire Recovery Infrastructure Financing District (“District”); (ii) the Adoption of the Infrastructure Financing Plan (“IFP”) for the District; and (iii) the Allocation of Taxes to the District; (iv) the authority of the District to issue bonds secured by the taxes allocated to District pursuant to the IFP; and (v) all other matters and proceedings related thereto.

(EN ESPAÑOL)

TODAS LAS PERSONAS INTERESADAS EN LA VALIDACIÓN DE: todos los procedimientos llevados a cabo por cada una de las Autoridades de Financiación Pública del Distrito de Financiación de Infraestructuras para la Recuperación tras el Incendio Forestal de Altadena, que actúa como mesa directiva del Distrito (la “Mesa Directiva del Distrito”), y el Consejo de Supervisores del Condado de Los Ángeles en relación con: (i) la constitución del Distrito de Financiación de Infraestructuras para la Recuperación tras el Incendio Forestal de Altadena (“Distrito”); (ii) la adopción del Plan de Financiación de Infraestructuras (“IFP”, por sus siglas en inglés) para el Distrito; y (iii) la asignación e impuestos al Distrito; (iv) la autoridad del Distrito para expedir bonos garantizados por los impuestos asignados al Distrito de conformidad con el IFP; y (v) todos los demás asuntos y procedimientos relacionados con los mismos tienen hasta el 5 de marzo, 2026 para comparecer y presentar una respuesta a la demanda por escrito en esta corte y hacer que se entregue una copia al demandante. Una carta o una llamada telefónica no lo protegen. Su respuesta por escrito tiene que estar en formato legal correcto si desea que procesen su caso en la corte. Es posible que haya un formulario que usted pueda usar para su respuesta. Puede encontrar estos formularios de la corte y más información en el Centro de AutoAyuda de las Cortes de California (<https://selfhelp.courts.ca.gov/>), en la biblioteca de leyes de su condado o en la corte más cercana a usted. Si no puede pagar la cuota de presentación, pida al secretario de la corte que le dé un formulario de exención de pago de cuotas. Si no presenta su respuesta a tiempo, puede perder sus derechos y el demandante podrá solicitar al tribunal el remedio solicitado en la demanda. Impugnar la legalidad o validez de este caso no le expondrá a medidas punitivas, como la confiscación de su salario o de sus bienes o su propiedad personal.

Puede buscar el consejo de un abogado en cualquier asunto relacionado con la queja o esta citación judicial. Debería consultar a dicho abogado puntualmente de modo que su alegato pueda presentarse o registrarse dentro del tiempo requerido por esta citación judicial. Hay otros requisitos legales. Es recomendable que llame a un abogado inmediatamente. Si no conoce a un abogado, puede llamar a un servicio de remisión a abogados. Si no puede pagar a un abogado, es posible que cumpla con los requisitos para obtener servicios legales gratuitos de un programade servicios legales sin fines de lucro. Puede encontrar estos grupos sin fines de lucro en el sitio web de California Legal Services, ([www.lawhelpca.org](http://www.lawhelpca.org)), en el Centro de Ayuda de las Cortes de California, ([www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp)) o poniéndose en contacto con la corte o el colegio de abogados locales. AVISO: Por ley, la corte tiene derecho a reclamar las cuotas y los costos exentos por imponer un gravamen sobre cualquier recuperación de \$10,000 o más de valor recibida mediante un acuerdo o una concesión de arbitraje en un caso de derecho civil. Tiene que pagar el gravamen de la corte antes de que la corte pueda desechar el caso. El Distrito ha presentado esta demanda para determinar la validez de la constitución del Distrito de Financiación de Infraestructuras para la Recuperación tras el Incendio Forestal de Altadena (“Distrito”); (ii) la adopción del Plan de Financiación de Infraestructuras (“IFP”, por sus siglas en inglés) para el Distrito; y (iii) la asignación de impuestos al Distrito; (iv) la autoridad del Distrito para expedir bonos garantizados por los impuestos asignados al Distrito de conformidad con el IFP; y (v) todos los demás asuntos y procedimientos relacionados con ello.

CASE INFORMATION  
(INFORMACIÓN DEL CASO)

- The name and address of the court is: (El nombre y dirección de la corte es):  
Superior Court of the State of California  
County of Los Angeles – Central District (Stanley Mosk Courthouse)  
111 N. Hill Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012-3014
- The Court department is (El departamento la Corte es): Department 71,  
the Honorable Daniel M. Crowley presiding
- The case number is (el número de caso es): 26STCV00821
- The name, address and telephone number of plaintiff’s attorney is: (El nombre, la dirección y el número de teléfono del abogado del demandante, es):

Allison E. Burns  
Gregory J. Maestri  
STRADLING YOCCA CARLSON & RAUTH LLP  
660 Newport Center Drive, Suite 1600  
Newport Beach, California 92660  
Telephone: (949) 725-4000

PETER M. BOLLINGER  
MICHAEL S. BUENNAGEL  
DEBBIE Y. CHO  
Office of the County Counsel  
County of Los Angeles  
Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 West Temple Street #648  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
Telephone: (213) 974-1811



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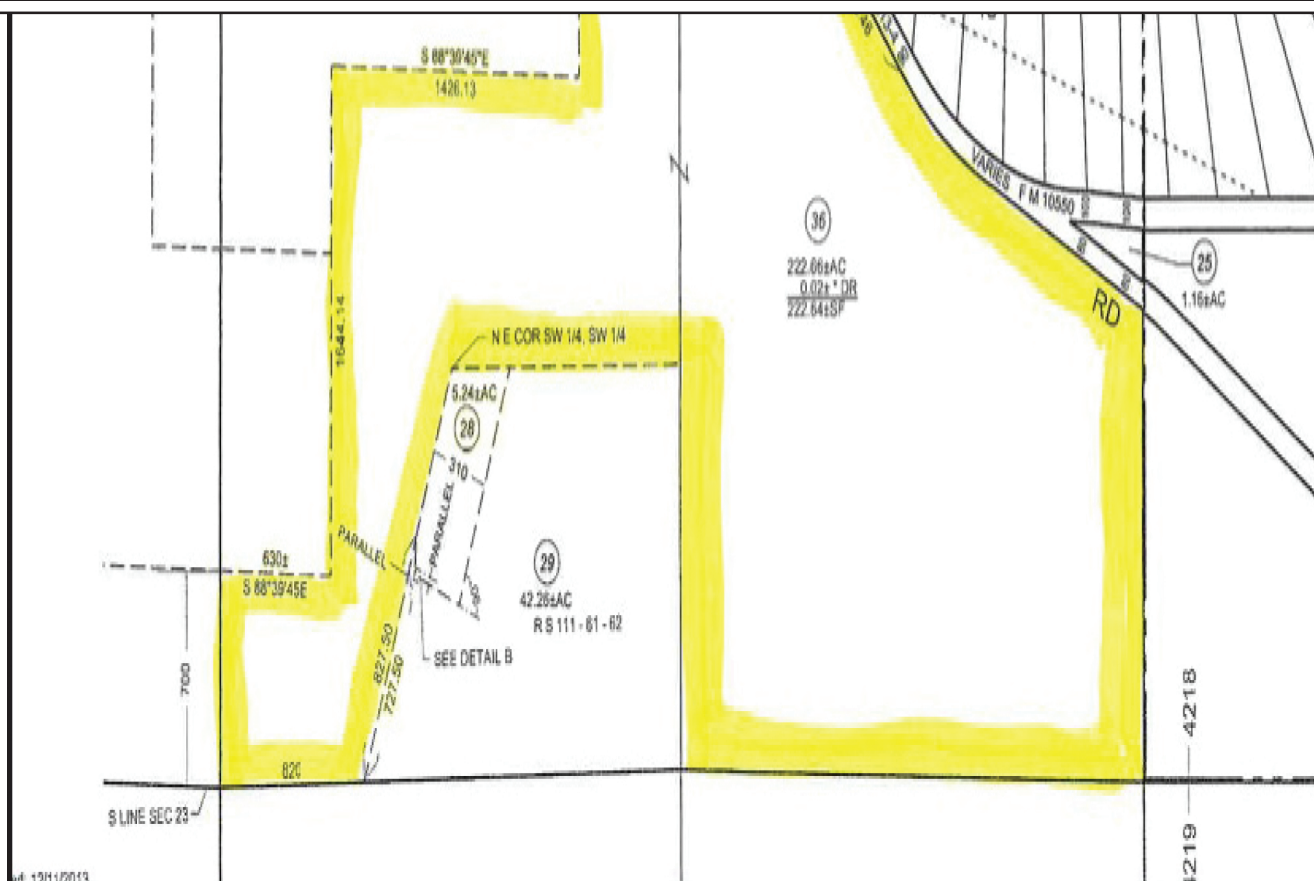
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