

# Disappearing the Poor of Fresno

BY BOB MCCLOSKEY

SB 634, introduced by State Senator Sasha Pérez (D-Alhambra), was recently signed into law. As introduced in the Senate, SB 634 would have prohibited the criminalization of people experiencing homelessness for normal human activity such as sleeping. The effort failed as that provision was removed due to pushback from cities such as Fresno and law enforcement. The final bill only prohibits the criminalization of those who assist people experiencing homelessness. Although a city can continue to arrest, harass and force people to move and throw away their property, a violation of the Fourth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, a city is not above the law. Currently, there is a class-action case on the Fourth Amendment issue, *Brown v. City of Fresno et al.*, pending in the Fresno Superior Court system.

**Lawsuits and Failed Policy**  
It is clear that enforcement of Fresno’s no camping ordinance has not solved anything.

It has only “disappeared” the unhoused into jail and into constant temporary hiding. Residents and businesses continue to call 311 to ask the Fresno Police Department (FPD) to endlessly force the homeless to move. Although they are moved temporarily, they often return to the same location soon thereafter, often without their survival gear because the FPD illegally confiscated it, in violation of the U.S. Constitution.

The mayor and the City Council should consider *Kincaid et al. v. City of Fresno*, a Fourth Amendment–based lawsuit that the City lost under the leadership of then police chief Jerry Dyer. *Kincaid* was a class-action lawsuit filed in 2006 on behalf of homeless residents whose personal property was unconstitutionally seized and destroyed by City workers during encampment “sweeps.”

The case ended in a settlement in 2008 (which concluded in 2013), with total damages awarded at \$1,485,000. In 2025, in total disregard of the law, and again under Dyer’s leadership, the City is facing a similar lawsuit.

**Misery and No Empathy**  
Besides creating a legal liability, the enforcement of the ordinance has made the poorest residents of Fresno more miserable. Fresno’s mayor and City Council seem to lack empathy for the unhoused residents of Fresno.

The City’s leadership has saddled more than 1,650 unhoused community members



A garbage truck enters an encampment, where it will be used to crush and haul away the possessions of the people who had been staying there. Unhoused community members live in constant fear of losing all of their possessions. *Photo by Bob McCloskey*

with permanent criminal records, and many with failure to appear bench warrants, making it almost impossible for them to ever get permanent housing.

Sweeps and harassment of homeless people often lead to severe negative health outcomes, including increased trauma, anxiety and depression due to displacement and loss of belongings, as well as higher risks of overdose and death from losing medications and harm reduction supplies. These actions also disrupt access

to healthcare, increase physical injuries and fragment social support systems.

Sweeps can be a traumatizing experience, causing residents to feel dehumanized. The constant fear of future displacement, coupled with sleep deprivation, worsens anxiety and other mental health conditions.

The unpredictability of sweeps leads to chronic stress and the “anticipatory anxiety” of a sweep occurring at any time.

Continued on page 5

# Farming Communities Protest Fumigant Regulations

BY VIC BEDOIAN

Californians for Pesticide Reform has launched an assault on the state’s regulation of agricultural fumigants 1,3-dichloropropene (1,3-D) and chloropicrin, calling on the Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) to issue stronger guidelines for the use of these extremely toxic chemicals, especially near schools and nearby farming communities.

Advocates for public health and farmworker safety gathered last month in Watsonville, Modesto, Oxnard and Fresno to protest the state’s recently issued rules at events that were livestreamed statewide.

Gabriela Facio of Sierra Club California kicked off the events with an overview of the problem at hand. “Our communities are more than alarmed about the weak regulation of 1,3-D recently finalized by the Department of Pesticide Regulation.”

She described the product as a “cancer-causing, lung-harming toxic air contaminant and a volatile organic compound fumigant that most of the world finds so dangerous it has been banned in 40 countries.”

But in California, Facio stressed, “DPR has not only refused to ban 1,3-D, but has refused to follow the findings of the state’s own cancer experts at the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment in setting the allowable exposure targets of its new regulations.”

Facio charged that the regulation allows schoolchildren to be exposed to 14 times more of the pesticide than the cancer risk threshold level established by the state toxicologist.

“California has created an environmentally racist regulation that sacrifices Latino and indigenous kids,” she said.

These products are marketed under common trade names Telone, Dedisol C and Vorlex, and are widely used to kill microorganisms that live in the soil, such as nematodes, in Central Coast strawberry fields and in San Joaquin Valley vineyards and almond orchards.

Although farmers depend on these chemicals to maintain productivity, their widespread application poses a health danger to farmworkers working in the fields and in neighboring farming towns. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has determined that 1,3-D is a probable human carcinogen.

How dangerous is it? Exposure can cause skin irritation and respiratory stress.

According to the National Library of Medicine, “Short-term exposure to a certain concentration of 1,3-D is harmful to the human body in a closed environment.

“Absorption through the respiratory tract may be followed by passage across the blood-brain barrier, deposition in the brain tissue, then inhibit the central nervous system and cause diffuse brain tissue edema, leading to acute damage to heart, lung and kidney function, and eventually leading to death.”

In 2023, a man working in a greenhouse in China died from 1,3-D exposure.

Chloropicrin is another universally applied fungicide and insecticide. It’s known commonly as tear gas and is sold under several brand names including Tri-Chlor and Larvacide.

Continued on page 14



Melissa Figueroa of the California Immigrant Policy Center addresses the media at a Nov. 18 press conference. *Photo by Peter Maiden*



SUPPORT LOCAL MEDIA | EMPOWER OUR COMMUNITY | FIGHT FOR DEMOCRACY



# COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

THE VOICE OF THE PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENT SINCE 1996

Saturday, December 6th | 5pm-8pm | Fresno City College | Room OAB-251

Local media supports a healthy democracy, an informed community, and a more just and equitable society. Ensuring that everyone has access to the information they need to make informed decisions, participate in their communities, and hold those in power accountable. This has been our mission since our inception in 1996, and that mission is more critical than ever in today's environment. **Buy your tickets today and help support the cause!**

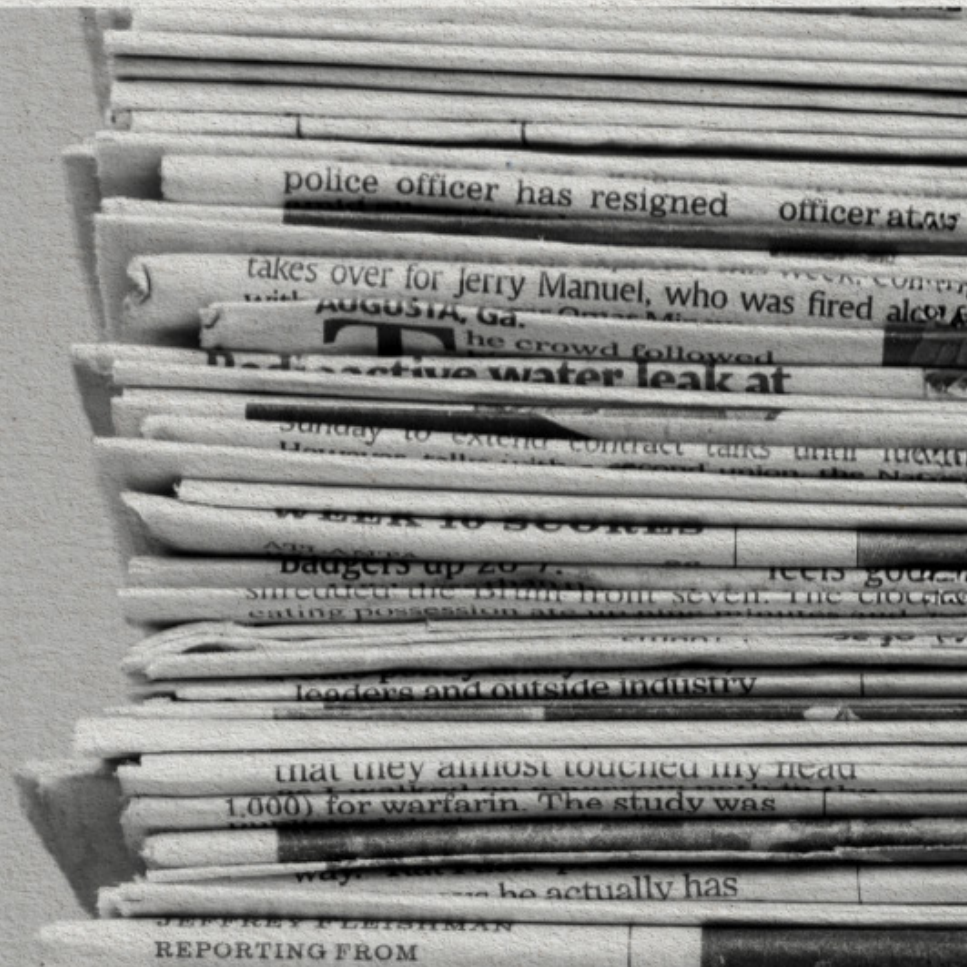
#### Featured Speakers:

*Effects of Sprawl*  
Gregory Weaver  
Fresnoland Reporter

*Independent Media*  
Joaquin Alvarado  
Co-founder of Studio To Be

*Palestine & Mutual Aid*  
Dr. Farah Karipineni &  
Dr. Mohammed Shaikh  
Community Activists

*Spoken Word Poetry*  
Aideed Medina  
Fresno Poet Laureate



**\$55 in advance | \$70 at the door | Students \$25**  
**Dinner included | Buy your tickets today at:**  
**[bit.ly/4q73mlf](https://bit.ly/4q73mlf)**



#### GET YOUR MESSAGE OUT!

Advertise in the



8,000 COPIES PUBLISHED AND DISTRIBUTED MONTHLY

All ads need to be camera ready  
(typesetting, layout and design are extra)  
Submit a black-and-white ad or upgrade to a full-color ad.  
Deadline is the 15th of the month preceding publication.

#### ADVERTISING RATES

	ONE MONTH	THREE MONTHS	SIX MONTHS	ONE YEAR
<b>Business Card</b> (3.375w x 2h)	\$44	\$99	\$165	\$297
<b>Eighth Page</b> (5.125w x 4.125h)	\$66	\$176	\$330	\$594
<b>Quarter Page</b> (5.125w x 8.25h)	\$132	\$352	\$650	\$1,188
<b>Half Page</b> (10.25w x 8.25h)	\$220	\$589	\$1,100	\$1,980
<b>Full Page</b> (10.25w x 16.5h)	\$440	\$1,177	\$2,200	\$3,960

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT  
I. smiley G. Calderon | 714-290-6651 | [smileycalderon@gmail.com](mailto:smileycalderon@gmail.com)  
Community Alliance | P.O. Box 5077 | Fresno, CA 93755





Hello. I’m Peter Maiden, interim editor of the *Community Alliance* newspaper. I’m stepping into the big shoes of Eduardo Stanley while the newspaper decides who will be the next editor.

We have a good issue for you this month, with more of the features and coverage of local news that you depend upon from us.

Leading off, Bob McCloskey brings you up to date on conditions for the homeless in Fresno.

Next, our reporter Vic Bedoian covers a press conference on pesticides that was focused on safety for children. In addition, one of the hosts of

the press conference, a writer who has been doing ongoing reporting on this issue for us, Cristina Gutierrez, gives us her perspective on the event.

Animal rights activism and organizing to replace PG&E are covered this month.

From Espi Sandoval, we have a report on low test scores among Central Valley junior high and middle school students.

And Debay Tadesse graces us with a story on the use of the water from the Nile River in Africa, which will resonate with our own experience with water issues.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we enjoyed putting it together for you.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Protect the People or Sell Us Out to CEMEX

The proposed Rockfield expansion isn’t just another project, it’s a direct threat to our health and our future. Fresno already has some of the worst air in the country. Families here breathe more pollution, kids have asthma at high rates and far too many die early from diseases tied to dirty air.

Expanding CEMEX’s Rockfield Project means piling on even more pollution to communities already overburdened. That’s not growth, it is negligence.

And the stakes couldn’t be higher. Cement is one of the dirtiest industries worldwide. Approving this expansion would lock in decades of carbon emissions, at a time when California is supposed to be cutting emissions. If Fresno County signs off on this, they’re not just hurting us locally, they’re setting us back for decades.

The Board of Supervisors has to decide whose side they’re on. Are they with the people of Fresno, who deserve clean air, safe water and a livable future? Or are they with CEMEX, a multinational polluter looking to cash in while we pay the price with our health and our kids’ futures?

That’s the choice in front of them. Protect us or sell us out. Fresno County’s legacy depends on what they do next.

Erika Guzman Cornejo  
California Environmental Voters

HAIKU

Demolition of Freedom 2025 Haiku

Fall White House East Wing  
Demolition Peoples’ House  
Wrecking Ball Freedom

2025 World Series Haiku

Fall’s Best World Series  
Won By Three Asian Pitchers  
History Was Made

Winter Haiku 2025–2026

Green And Bare Bonsai  
Stillness Reflection Of Life  
Rest Before Action

BY HOMER GEE GREENE JR.

Orwellian “Peace Prize” Winner

(Editor’s note: Letters to the editor for the print edition can be up to 200 words. An extended version of this submission is available online.)

Maria Corina Machado is an absurd choice as a recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. Her dedication of the prize to Trump is only the latest in a series of actions that demonstrate her focus on restoring a right-wing government to Venezuela—a government that will follow the dictates of the United States and allow U.S. access to the exploitation of Venezuela’s oil.

Machado has called for foreign military intervention in Venezuela repeatedly. She sent a letter to Netanyahu as prime minister of Israel and Macri as president of Argentina in 2028 asking for their assistance in “regime change.” She has made the same request of the U.S. government repeatedly.

She has expressed support for the U.S. attacks on small boats in international waters and off the coast of Venezuela. Jeffrey Stein, staff attorney with the ACLU’s National Security Project, said, “All available evidence suggests that President Trump’s lethal strikes in the Caribbean constitute murder, pure and simple.”

Machado is a supporter of U.S. unilateral coercive economic sanctions against the population of Venezuela, measures proven to have substantial effects on public health, with a death toll similar to that of armed conflict, disproportionately affecting children.

Leni Villagomez Reeves  
Auberry

Green Party Update

The Fresno County Green Party thanks all the Green Party candidates running on Nov. 4 throughout the country. More than a dozen won. This was a good result for an off-season election with little financial input but a lot of bold inspirational support from real people who care for the direction of our nation.

In California, the media focus was on Proposition 50—a \$285 million taxpayer-paid political advertisement for Gavin Newsom’s 2028 Presidential ambitions.

The Green Party advocates for proportional representation that ends the gerrymandering corruption of both major parties.

Other winners were Colorado voters who overwhelmingly passed a measure that adds \$95 million in assistance to the state’s Healthy School Meals program by lowering tax deductions on taxpayers making \$300,000 or more.

The biggest news was the election of Zohran Mamdani as mayor of New York City where anti-Trump, anti-corruption and anti-AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) feelings were at an all-time fever pitch.

When all is said and done, despite the hard work, it’s not about winning an election but how well you rule. We’ll find out soon enough for all the lucky candidates. Good luck, you’re going to need it.

Richard Gomez  
Fresno County Green Party

PROVIDE FEEDBACK. E-MAIL EDITOR@FRESNOALLIANCE.COM.

I’m joining the fight for truth and justice—choose your level of support:

☐ \$60  
**Progressive Movement Builder**  
I believe in bold, independent journalism and want to invest in building a stronger movement.

☐ \$40  
**Regular Subscription**  
I support real news that speaks truth to power.

☐ \$15  
**Fixed-/Low-Income Ally**  
I need a reduced rate but still want to stay informed and involved.

☐ Monthly Sustainer  
Charge me \$\_\_\_\_\_ per month to keep this vital work going strong.

☐ Additional Contribution  
I want to do more. Enclosed is \$\_\_\_\_\_ to help grow and expand this essential voice for justice.

Total enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Your support is power!  
Every dollar helps us resist censorship, amplify community voices and challenge the status quo.

Yes!

I want to stand with independent journalism and support the *Community Alliance* newspaper. I’m joining the fight for truth and justice.

P.O. Box 5077 • Fresno, CA 93755

**COMMUNITY ALLIANCE**

3  
COMMUNITY ALLIANCE  
DECEMBER 2025

Since 1996, the *Community Alliance* has been an independent progressive voice for the Central San Joaquin Valley. The *Community Alliance* advocates for

- Racial, social, environmental and economic justice
- Equal rights for all, including immigrants, the unhoused and the LGBTQ+ community
- Access to a free quality public education for all
- Access to healthcare for all
- A living wage for all working people

Our goal is to expose racial, social, environmental, economic and political injustices. We will help to build a powerful progressive movement that will make all our communities safer, healthier, more equitable and more livable.

**INTERIM EDITOR**  
Peter Maiden  
editor@fresnoalliance.com

**NONPROFIT BOARD**  
Olga Loza  
Norberto Gonzalez  
Michaelynn Lewis  
Bob McCloskey  
James Mendez  
Pam Whalen

**LAYOUT DESIGNER**  
Ashley Harper

**DISTRIBUTION MANAGER/  
PHOTOGRAPHY**  
Peter Maiden  
maidenfoto1@gmail.com

**ADVERTISING**  
I. smiley G. Calderon  
714-290-6651 (text)  
smileycalderon@gmail.com  
Yo también hablo español

**COPYEDITOR**  
Michael D. Evans

**EDITOR EMERITUS**  
Mike Rhodes

**TO SUBSCRIBE**  
Send \$60  
(progressive movement builder),  
\$40 (regular) or \$15 (low income) to  
COMMUNITY ALLIANCE  
P.O. Box 5077  
Fresno, CA 93755  
fresnoalliance.com

**SUBMISSIONS  
Deadline:**  
15th of the previous month.  
Articles 800–1,200 words.  
E-mail editor@fresnoalliance.com.

**Peace & Social Justice and  
Arts & Culture Calendars:**  
Please submit all activities to  
calendar@fresnoalliance.com  
by the 15th of the previous month,  
or you can post anytime online at  
fresnoliance.com (select Calendar).

**Letters to the Editor:**  
E-mail editor@fresnoalliance.com.  
Up to 200 words.

The *Community Alliance* newspaper, a 501(c)(4) entity, reserves the right to edit all articles for space and clarity. It is printed on recycled paper.

The *Community Alliance* newspaper is published monthly by the San Joaquin Valley Media Alliance, located at 1584 N. Van Ness Ave., Fresno, CA 93728. The *Community Alliance* newspaper is distributed free of charge, or by subscription. Subscriptions are \$40 per year, \$60 per year for a movement builder subscription or \$15 per year for a low-income subscription.



# The Authoritarian Graveyard

BY BOB MCCLOSKEY

## Say Their Names

Say the names of some of those that have died in ICE custody this year: Ismael Ayala Uribe, Chao Feng Ge, Isidro Perez, Marie Ange Blaise, Maksym Chemyak, Brayan Rayo-Garzon and Huang Xie.

Xie, who died of an apparent seizure, was the 23rd person to die in ICE custody this year officially reported by Immigration and Customs Enforcement, marking 2025 as the deadliest for ICE detainees since 2004.

An American Immigration Council report found that “the rising fatalities this year are likely caused by several factors, including acute overcrowding, abysmal detention conditions, medical neglect, soaring mental distress and even gun violence.”

In addition, at least three people have died in accidents while fleeing ICE raids: Castro Rivera, Roberto Valdes and Jaime Garcia.

## Most Have No Criminal Records

ICE Raid and Deportation Tracker is a national database that helps communities stay alert and prepared for ICE raids. It tracks ICE raids, deportations and arrests using real-time reports from trusted sources, including public data, news coverage and community submissions.

To date, this website has documented 162,671 deportations, an average of 239 deportations a day. CBS News reports more than 66,000 total current detentions for immigration violations.

The Trump administration claims to have arrested more than 150,000 people for immigration violations, and the *Fresno Bee* reports that ICE has arrested an estimated 1,156 individuals in Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced and Tulare counties. Of those arrested and detained, 71.5% have no criminal record in the United States according to the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC).

## It's Racial Profiling

Across the nation, immigrant communities are under attack, racially profiled and targeted by raids, detention and dehumanizing policies that tear families apart. These tactics are being weaponized as part of a broader authoritarian crackdown that threatens the rights and freedoms of everyone, and the crackdown is deadly.

Although the government doesn't track how many citizens are held by immigration agents, a recent investigation by ProPublica found more than 170 U.S. citizens were racially profiled and detained at raids and protests this year, and more than 20 citizens have reported being held for more than a day without being able to call their loved ones or a lawyer. In some cases, their families couldn't find them.

ICE and Border Patrol agents have also arrested about 130 Americans, including a dozen elected officials, for allegedly interfering with or assaulting officers. These cases have often been dropped without any charges.



Protesters on Blackstone Avenue on Nov. 1, the Day of the Disappeared. Photo by Bob McCloskey

Many local community members are standing up. On Nov. 1, there was a local action as part of “The Disappeared in America Weekend.”

The organizers of the national action issued a statement that said “this is a nationwide mobilization to defend the shared values of dignity, freedom and justice for all. Together, we'll shine a light on the human toll of detention and demand an end to corporate and government complicity in this cruelty.”

## The People of Fresno Stand Up

Across the nation on the weekend of Nov. 1 there were dozens of “Day of the Disappeared” actions calling for an end to the arrests, deportations and racial profiling. About 75 people attended the local action, being vocal in their support of immigrants and their opposition to the Trump administration.

Leonel Flores, an organizer with the May 1 Coalition for Immigrant Rights, said, “We need to join together to send a strong message to our representatives [that] we need justice for immigrants, for workers, and we need immigration reform that protects farmworkers and all immigrant workers throughout the United States.”

A young woman from Fresno, Kayla Alexander, noted that “it's important we

raise our voices and make it clear that we do not agree with these policies. We don't agree with the administration. What they are doing is not constitutional, and we have to stand up for those who can't.”

Jose, a local resident, said, “It's important to stand for human rights, to save human life. What we do here has repercussions all over the world.”

Adam, an emergency room registered nurse, said, “We need a general strike, shut everything down. We need to point out where this is going. We need to shut everything down. When people start going hungry, they will speak out.”

Cielo Marquez grew up in Fresno and in the surrounding communities. She said, “I am here to stand with the hardworking people I grew up with. My parents were farmworkers, and they always had tired backs, tired hands, hands full of callouses and feet aching, and they did it because it's honest work and to give me a better life.”

Summing up the sentiment of the day, she added, “Without each other, we are nothing.”

\*\*\*\*\*

Bob McCloskey is an activist and Community Alliance reporter. Contact him at [bobmccloskey06@gmail.com](mailto:bobmccloskey06@gmail.com) or [bobmccloskey06.bsky.social](https://www.bsky.social/bobmccloskey06.bsky.social).



Community members at Home Depot during the Day of the Disappeared action in Fresno. Photo by Bob McCloskey

Valley Watch Network encourages community members to use and share the hotline number, 559-206-0151, to report ICE activities or any threatening actions toward immigrants or minorities. The hotline is crucial for timely interventions and is run by dedicated volunteers.

# COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

## INDEPENDENT JOURNALISM SINCE 1996.

32954 Rd. 222  
North Fork, CA  
(559) 877-8400  
[kernfamilyfarm.com](http://kernfamilyfarm.com)  
[kernfamilyfarm@netptc.net](mailto:kernfamilyfarm@netptc.net)



A local, natural,  
seasonally changing  
market

Open M-F 8-7  
weekends 10-6



**TACOS**  
**arquitos**  
*Antojitos Mexicanos*

Javier Rangel (559) 977-4413    Jesus Ibarra (559) 977-5481

1772 E. Barstow Ave. Fresno, CA 93710  
**(559) 447-5569**

We are located inside the Bulldog Plaza



**Unitarian Universalist**  
Church of Fresno  
Sundays 10:30 a.m.

2672 E. Alluvial Avenue  
(between Willow and Chestnut)  
Fresno, CA 93720  
(559) 322-6146 (9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.)

[www.uufresno.org](http://www.uufresno.org)



**Chase Flower Shop**  
(559) 233-8631  
1405 N. Van Ness Ave  
Fresno, CA 93728

World Wide Delivery  
[www.chaseflowershop.com](http://www.chaseflowershop.com)

Michael Butler  
Floral Design

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
OF FRESNO  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



Every Sunday  
9am: Exploration Hour  
10am: Worship  
*Bold. Proud. Progressive.*

[bigredchurch.org](http://bigredchurch.org)    2131 N. Van Ness Blvd.



**COMMUNITY**  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

WE ARE AN **OPEN AND AFFIRMING**  
CHURCH WHERE ALL ARE WELCOME.

5550 N FRESNO ST • FRESNO CA 93710  
559.435.2690 • [communityucc.com](http://communityucc.com)



# Tower District Crime Report

BY MIKE RHODES

On Nov. 7, Rych Withers, KFCF 88.1 FM station manager, was dropping off some mail at the Tower District Post Office when he noticed a man taking all the *Community Alliance* newspapers from the newsstand next to the Post Office. Withers asked the man why he was taking the newspapers. This thief identified himself as an ICE/INS agent and said he was going to distribute the papers at the Dollar Tree a short distance away. Withers asked why and, as the agent showed him his badge, was told that there is a \$1,500 bounty on each undocumented person he arrests.

Withers described the man as white or possibly Latino, a little under six-feet tall, with a brown/gray beard and wearing a hat. After doing some other business in the Tower District, Withers drove by the Dollar Tree and saw the guy with a stack of papers near the front entrance of the store. It is likely that he was handing the *Community Alliance* newspaper to persons entering the store and using that as an opportunity to question them about their legal status. The manager at Dollar Tree was asked about their video footage of this activity but said that their outside video surveillance camera was not working. The Post Office has a camera right above the location where the papers were taken, but the postal inspector told us that we would need a request from a law enforcement agency to access the relevant video footage. Mark Salazar, deputy chief at the Fresno Police Department, seems interested in the case. Salazar wonders if the thief is



The newsstand where the *Community Alliance* was taken. Photo by Peter Maiden

with ICE/INS, seeing it as one possibility. Another is that this guy is impersonating an agent, and a third possibility is that he has mental health issues. Salazar will investigate and let us know what he finds out. Keep in mind that it is illegal to steal our papers and that using our papers as a way to

approach people (giving them credibility) damages our reputation. \*\*\*\*\* *Mike Rhodes was a founder of the Community Alliance newspaper. He has also served as the editor and executive director during the newspaper's 29-year run. Contact him at mikerhodes@comcast.net.*

## Newspaper Theft: Reward Offered

Fresno City Council Member Annalisa Perea, who represents the Tower District, has offered a \$250 reward for information leading to the arrest of the person who stole *Community Alliance* newspapers from the Tower Post Office rack, as written about in the article on this page. If you have any information about the theft, contact Mike Rhodes at 559-978-4502 or mikerhodes@comcast.net.

# Sidestepping the Big Questions

BY RACHEL YUDELMAN

At the Nov. 4 Fresno County Board of Supervisors meeting, symbolic proclamations, vulgar humor and self-congratulation shared the dais with weightier matters—from homelessness management to executive salary hikes.

### Ignoring Federal Cuts in Services to Vets

District 2 Supervisor Garry Bredefeld sponsored a proclamation declaring Nov. 11 Veterans Day in Fresno County. Veterans Day is a federal holiday, so it was unclear why this proclamation was necessary, other than to afford Bredefeld the opportunity to boast, as he does regularly, that he worked at the Fresno VA Hospital for 27 years—as a psychologist. After making patronizing remarks in personal terms rather than on behalf of the County (e.g., “I extend my gratitude for their service”), and following Director of Department of Social Services Sanja Bugay’s comments on the tens of thousands of veterans accessing County services, Bredefeld said that he “urged veterans to find out about services on offer,” failing to mention that the Trump administration has curtailed or plans to curtail such services nationally, including cuts to staffing and funding. While paying lip service to veterans, Bredefeld managed to focus on himself and ignore the Trump/MAGA Republican threats to veterans’ well-being.

In a related agenda item, the Board voted unanimously to eliminate vehicle-entrance fees for veterans at all county-managed parks. Camping fees are to be reduced as well. Bredefeld and Supervisor Nathan Magsig (District 5) sponsored this proposal, and again, the spotlight was on Bredefeld, who was effusive about recognizing “the sacrifice and blood” of veterans. Magsig said that “we have to constantly celebrate veterans for allowing our freedoms and liberties.” Mendes was “totally in favor” of the proposal. Again, no mention of the MAGA Republican cuts to veterans’ services. But now in Fresno County, vets can camp for a reduced fee.

**Sikh Heritage Month**  
District 3 Supervisor Luis Chavez brought a proclamation declaring November “Sikh Heritage Month.” Gurminder Sangha, an administrator at Madera City College, was present along with Sikh colleagues to accept the proclamation. Supervisors Mendes and Magsig made ostensibly flattering comments: Magsig said “you are all leaders, you all lead with humility,” and Mendes said he “had a lot of Sikh friends” and that “the women” are very “elegant.” Chavez acknowledged the large Sikh community in Fresno, noting that they began immigrating here about 100 years ago, not just in the aftermath of the 1984 genocidal attacks on Sikhs in Punjab and other sites in India, perpetrated by Hindus said to be avenging the murder of Indira Gandhi.

**County to Manage Homelessness Programs**  
The Board unanimously agreed that the County will take over administering the Fresno Madera Continuum of Care (FMCoC) for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban

## BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Development (HUD) Continuum of Care (CoC) program, currently managed by Poverello House. The HUD CoC program entails the services of several nonprofits and local government agencies to manage homelessness. The 2024 HUD CoC program grant award of \$14,265,782 to the FMCoC is to support a variety of services and programs, such as supportive housing, street outreach and the like; there was no suggestion that this federal funding had been pulled back by Trump. Joined by Deputy CAO Amina Flores Becker, Dylan McCully, the County’s homelessness manager, gave a presentation and explained that there would be a transition period as duties switched from Poverello House to the County. In answer to a question from District 1 Supervisor Brian Pacheco, Becker said that the change, per a subcommittee that studied the matter, would be “in the interests of the County,” and would entail “strengthened accountability, alignment across systems of care and administrative consistency.” Becker acknowledged risks such as increased workload, exposure to liability and compliance issues. No one spoke explicitly about issues facing Poverello House, such as the Trump administration’s arbitrary and abrupt termination of its federal funding. Board comments included Magsig’s, who touted the “many fantastic nonprofits helping with homelessness” (reflecting an anti-government preference for charities in this role) even amid “disappearing resources” (a euphemism for revocation of government funding). Chavez acknowledged “risks” but said that there was “no choice.”

Continued to page 13

# Disappearing

Continued from page 1

Displacement disrupts routines, removes familiar social connections and can lead to a general deterioration of mental health.

**Fresno’s Dangerous Ordinance**  
Fresno’s no camping ordinance and the policy and practice of sweeping encampments is dangerous and even deadly. Sweeps are linked to a higher risk of overdose, partly because they cause people to lose vital medications for opioid use disorder, sterile injection equipment and naloxone. Studies show a significant increase in overdose deaths among those who are frequently displaced. People often lose critical medications for chronic conditions like HIV, hepatitis C or opioid use disorder, as well as essential medical equipment such as wheelchairs or walkers. Displacement can lead to a higher risk of contracting infectious diseases, and involuntary displacement is associated with a significant increase in hospitalizations.

The constant movement and lack of stable shelter can contribute to increased physical injuries. Sweeps lead to the disruption of care and services and the loss of access to services. Sweeps in Fresno frequently occur without connecting people to alternative services or housing, forcing them to disperse and lose access to support systems. The disruption of daily routines and relocation make it difficult for people to maintain connections with healthcare providers, leading to less effective management of chronic and infectious diseases. That leads to increased emergency room use, and, by disrupting ongoing care, sweeps can indirectly lead to increased use of hospitals.

**Ordinance Enforcement Costs**  
While the City has recently cut back all departments by 5%, except the police department, City leadership is willing to waste public dollars on a failed campaign to “disappear” the unhoused. The costs of the no camping ordinance enforcement to taxpayers is high and a total waste of public resources.

To date, Fresno police officers have arrested more than 764 unhoused community members and cited more than 905 unhoused community members for violations of the no camping ordinance. It has been costly for the taxpayers of Fresno, and the estimated cost to the court system and the prosecution (City Attorney’s office) for handling 1,600 misdemeanor (and criminal) cases in the Fresno Superior Court is difficult to determine due to a lack of publicly available, specific cost-per-case data for California prosecutors. The cost varies widely based on case complexity, whether the case goes to trial and other factors. Based on general legal cost estimates, a single misdemeanor case can cost anywhere from \$1,500 to more than \$5,000. Applying a conservative average of \$2,500 per case (assuming most are resolved without a full jury trial), the total estimated cost for 1,600 misdemeanors would be approximately \$4 million. These costs do not include police time for arresting and citing people, booking costs and arraignment costs. What is the City’s intent? Will the City continue to arrest and cite unhoused members of our community in a continued

effort to make the homeless “disappear” at great cost to the taxpayers of Fresno? Will the City prosecute the more than 1,669 pending no camping ordinance violations at great expense to the taxpayers? Will the City continue to violate the Fourth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution? (The Fourth Amendment prohibits “unreasonable searches and seizures,” meaning that the government generally needs a warrant to seize property. This warrant must be supported by probable cause, an oath and must specifically describe the place to be searched and the items to be seized.) Many in our community are saying that it’s time to end enforcement of the ordinance, comply with the U.S. Constitution and work toward a more humane and less costly solution. \*\*\*\*\* *Bob McCloskey is an activist and Community Alliance reporter. Contact him at bobmccloskey06@gmail.com or bobmccloskey06.bsky.social/.*



# Is Zohran Mamdani an African American?

BY HOMER GEE GREENE JR.

Congratulations to Zohran Mamdani for winning the New York City mayoral election and becoming the first Muslim, first South Asian American and third African American to become mayor of New York City.

The now elected mayor of New York City, Mamdani has claimed that he is both Asian, having South Indian heritage, and African American, having African heritage, being that he was born in Uganda, an East African country.

As a high school senior, on a Columbia University college application, he identified himself as Asian and Black or African American. To make his birth origin clear, he wrote in “Ugandan” on the form.

Mamdani is currently a state lawmaker from Queens, N.Y. He also has dual citizenship of the United States and Uganda. Hence, with his American citizenship and African heritage and nationality, he is an African American.

One does not have to be a descendant of enslaved Africans to make the claim that they are African American. Again, what is important is citizenship and place of birth or nationality.

Both of Mamdani’s parents are South Asian/Indian. His father’s family has lived in Uganda for decades. Mamdani spent his early years in Uganda to the age of five. Then the family moved to South Africa for two years and then settled in the United States.

Before going further, remember, race is a social construct. There is only one race, the human race in which we all are Homo sapiens sapiens.

Hence: We are all Homo sapiens sapiens and we share all this evolution. Homo sapiens sapiens evolved in Africa and then migrated throughout all the continents. Hence, in a biological sense, we are all from the African continent and therefore, we are all African.

I am glad that Mamdani has claimed that he is African American.

I wish he would claim his African Americanness more proudly. All he has to do is make the argument by means of his African heritage and his American citizenship, therefore he is African American. He is also a South Asian American. As well as a Muslim American.

We all have genetic and cultural roots that indicate the passage of our unique paths culturally and genetically.

Citizenship and nationality have objective legal and identity meanings. Nationality is based on where one is born. Citizenship is based on a country giving you citizenship by birth or through a legal process to become a citizen of that country, naturalization.

Let us now look at the culture and citizenship of individuals that can claim that they are African American.

I am an African American because I have American citizenship. I am a descendant from African enslaved people. My DNA test analysis, Ancestry.com, indicated that I am 70% Nigerian. Therefore, I am an African American or a Nigerian American.

One might ask: So you would have no problem with an Afrikaner immigrant to the United States describing himself as African American on a college application?

No, I would not. To remain consistent with my argument, if he/she were born on the African continent and came to America and obtained American citizenship, they would be African American and they could identify themselves that way on a college application as Mamdani did.

The issue is not the description one uses, the issue is African heritage and American citizenship.

Again, if he/she is an American citizen and has African heritage, I have no problem with an Afrikaner identifying as African American to improve their chances on a college application.

I make the argument that I think it is important to know the ethnic/racial heritage, citizenship and lineage of people immigrating to the United States and applying for American citizenship.

Again, a phenotypically presenting white person, who was born in Africa, and then obtains American citizenship, could apply for college, be identified as and seek employment as an African American.

And, consistent with my argument, he/she is an African American.

America is a multicultural and multiethnic democracy, and it is important to document



the different ethnic, racial and related cultures that make up the diversity of North America or the United States of America.

Yes, Zohran Mamdani is an African American.

\*\*\*\*\*

Homer Gee Greene Jr. is a freelance writer and a ninth-generation practitioner of Seven Star Praying Mantis Wu Shu (kung fu).

## Direct Action Downtown

BY ARTHUR UTECHT

On Nov. 5, a small group of local activists gathered to deliver a letter to California Attorney General Rob Bonta. Outside the Attorney General’s Fresno satellite office, they shouted their pleas for Bonta to prosecute animal cruelty at factory farms across California. Their signs advertised perdueabuse.com and pleaded that Bonta “Prosecute Perdue’s Petaluma Poultry.”

Petaluma Poultry is owned by Perdue Farms, the fourth largest poultry supplier in the nation. It supplies chicken that Trader Joe’s sells under its own brand. Fresno County animal rights activists have previously protested at the Trader Joe’s locations in Fresno and Clovis, calling for Trader Joe’s to drop Petaluma Poultry.

The letter was delivered to an employee at the satellite office at the start of the protest and expressed “serious concerns about criminal animal cruelty going unaddressed at factory farms and slaughterhouses across California, particularly in Sonoma County and related to Perdue’s Petaluma Poultry.”

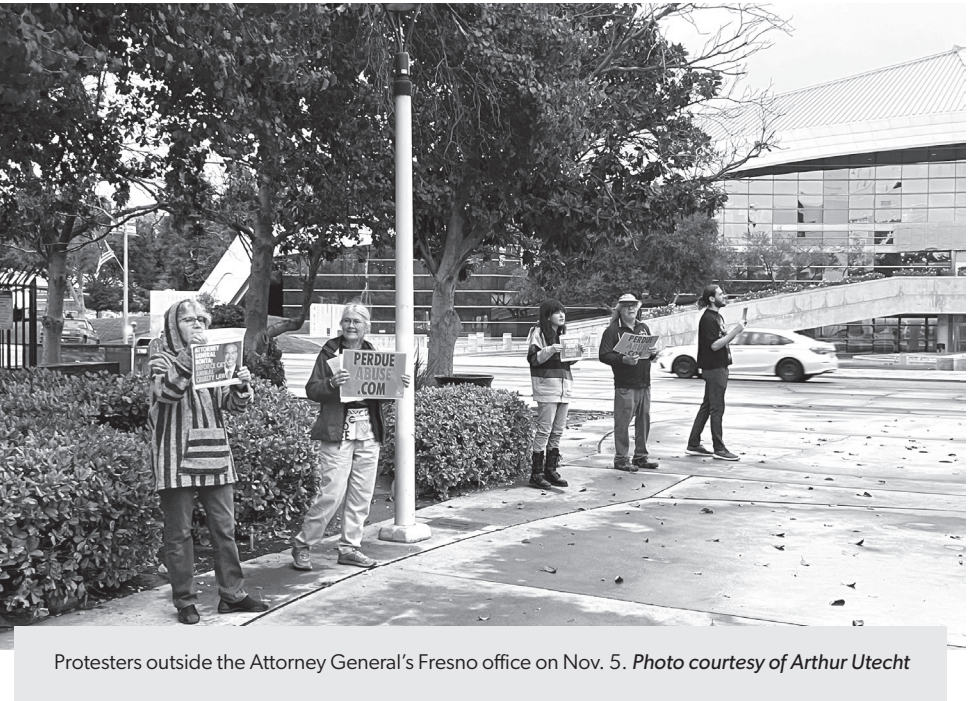
Attached was a report documenting conditions uncovered from years of investigations at Petaluma Poultry farms and slaughterhouses, including evidence of chickens being boiled alive, unable to walk, suffering from several infections, and covered in wounds and feces. It called on Bonta’s office to “take action however you can to uphold California’s animal cruelty laws.”

The Nov. 5 protest was organized by grassroots animal rights organization Direct Action Everywhere (DxE) as part of a statewide series of actions at the Attorney General’s offices in San Diego, Los Angeles, Fresno and Sacramento. It came in response to the Oct. 29 conviction of 23-year-old animal rescuer Zoe Rosenberg. Along with other DxE investigators, Rosenberg documented the conditions of chickens in Petaluma Poultry farms and slaughterhouses.

In 2023, Rosenberg openly took four chickens from a Petaluma Poultry slaughterhouse truck in Sonoma County. She immediately found veterinary care for the birds and brought evidence of the conditions at Petaluma Poultry farms and slaughterhouses to the Sheriff’s Office so that Petaluma Poultry could be prosecuted for illegal animal cruelty under California Penal Code 597(b). Instead, the Sonoma County district attorney chose to prosecute Zoe. On Oct. 29, after a seven-week trial, she was convicted of felony conspiracy and three misdemeanors.

In a statement posted on the Sonoma County District Attorney’s website, District Attorney Carla Rodriguez said, “While we respect everyone’s right to free expression, it is unlawful to trespass, disrupt legitimate businesses, and endanger workers and animals in pursuit of a political or social agenda.”

Herb Frerichs, general counsel to Petaluma Poultry, said in an online statement, “The jury’s verdict makes it clear: personal beliefs don’t justify breaking the law.”



Zoe, on the other hand, maintains that she took the chickens in order to help them. According to Zoe in an interview with *The Guardian*, “My ideal outcome is honestly just whatever is best for the animals.”

Her legal team intended to use the necessity defense, arguing that the otherwise illegal act of trespassing was necessary in order to prevent further harm to the chickens. The judge blocked this defense, noting that allowing the necessity defense in this context would set a precedent for rescues at other farms and slaughterhouses.

Unsurprisingly, there is no mention of animal cruelty in the statements of the Sonoma County district attorney and Perdue Farms. As it stands, corporate interests are upheld, and exploitation deeply unpopular with the public rages on.

Fresno activists envision a better world. And so, on the misty afternoon of Nov. 5, they gathered and hoped for the top law officer in the state to hold Petaluma Poultry and other factory-farming corporations accountable.

\*\*\*\*\*

Arthur Utecht, an organizer for the Fresno chapter of Direct Action Everywhere, is a dedicated activist for animal rights, peace, immigrants and democracy.

## CENTRAL VALLEY BRIEFS

**Latino Voters Speak**  
UnidosUS, the nation’s largest Latino civil rights and advocacy organization, released its “Bipartisan Poll of Hispanic Voters: The Road to 2026” in early November.

Here are some key takeaways from the California sample:

- Half (50%) of Latino voters in California fear political violence could affect them or someone close.

- 82% say Congress is failing to check executive power and want stronger oversight of the presidency.
- 60% feel their rights and freedoms are less secure today—a signal of institutional distrust.
- Top priorities remain economic: cost of living, housing, jobs and healthcare.
- Most voters disapprove of how Republicans are leading Congress and blamed them for the shutdown.

“Even in a state like California, where we’ve worked hard to pass strong protections for immigrants and expand opportunity, families are still afraid,” says

Esmeralda Lopez, UnidosUS California policy director. “That tells us the fear is not just about policy, it’s about the erosion of trust in our institutions

“Californians are demanding more from Congress. They want leaders who will put aside the political theater and focus on keeping communities safe, making life affordable, and defending the democracy we all depend on.”

Latinos are the nation’s second-largest voting-age population and a critical group whose priorities should carry significant weight, particularly in an environment of razor-thin margins.

Learn more at [unidosus.org](https://unidosus.org).





# FRESNO WILPF

Womxn's International  
League for Peace & Freedom



## MONTHLY HAPPENINGS

You may have noticed we've been rolling out some fresh new branding lately. Let's break it down!

- ✦ We've replaced "women's" with "womxn's." Our membership is open to all human beings who agree with, live by, and promote our values.
- ✦ The olive branch in the dove's mouth has been replaced with a sprout, a nod to Fresno's agriculture industry.
- ✦ Butterflies (specifically monarchs) are often used to symbolize immigrants. Not only are immigrants welcome in WILPF, they're protected. F\*ck ICE!
- ✦ A rising sun signifies new beginnings. Let's shake some things up, Fresno!

### FRIENDS OF WILPF

#### FREE AME MINISTRIES 806 COLLINS AVE

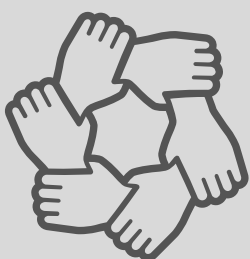
- Rudy's Soup Kitchen  
Every Thursday @ 12-4pm
- World AIDS Day  
Sun, Dec 7 @ 2pm
- Kwanzaa Opening  
Sat, Dec 27 @ 4pm

559-485-5145  
FRESNOWILPF@PM.ME

#### CHICANO YOUTH CENTER 1515 E DIVISADERO ST

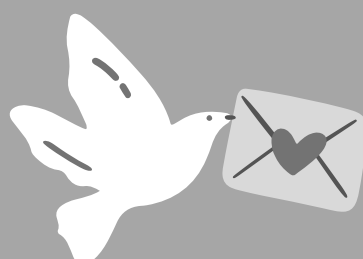
- Elders Day  
Sat, Dec 6 @ 2pm
- Dia de Tonantzin  
Fri, Dec 12 @ 6-8pm
- Tea Remedy Workshop  
Sat, Dec 13 @ 12-2pm

WWW.CHICANOYOUTHCENTERFRESNO.ORG  
IG: @CHICANOYOUTHCENTERFRESNO



### IT'S THAT TIME OF THE YEAR: RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP NOW!

Membership is \$35/year at  
the normal rate and \$20/year  
for those with low income.



For questions, or to be added to  
our email list, please reach out to:  
kyla.noelle@gmail.com or  
nhatcher46@gmail.com.



Find us on  
social media!  
@FresnoWILPF  
Email our  
president, Cam:  
FresnoWILPF@pm.me

Send dues to:  
WILPF Fresno  
P.O. Box 5114  
Fresno, CA 93755



A gaggle of  
WILPFers at the  
recent KFCF  
banquet.

PHOTO BY MICHAEL KURNOSOFF, JR.



Fresno WILPF:  
Linking roots,  
growing futures.

THE CONTENT IN THIS SECTION IS PAID FOR BY FRESNO WILPF.



# Half of Farmworkers Are Food Insecure

BY JANETTE MEJIA PLAZA

The Central Valley is a fertile farm belt that expands for about 20,000 square miles and supplies one-fourth of the nation’s food. Fresno County alone is considered one of the most agriculturally productive counties in the country and is home to the region’s largest farmworker population. Despite robust agriculture in Fresno County, more than half of the farmworkers living there are food insecure. *Food insecurity* is defined as the “limited access or lack of access to a nutritionally sound and culturally appropriate diet from reliable mainstream sources.”

In the United States, where our current food system provides 4,000 calories per person, which is one and a half times more than the amount needed, the production of hunger is the result of intentional policies that exclude immigrants from basic necessities like food.

Sociologist Tanya Maria Golash-Boza states that the position of farmworkers in America resulted from job restructuring after neoliberal reforms in the Global South pushed many to migrate to the United States.

Moreover, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) forced subsistence farmers from Mexico into farming jobs in the United States when U.S. crops flooded the market in Mexico at lower prices made possible by subsidies from the U.S. government, making it impossible for Mexican farmers to compete.

From its beginning, the agrarian capitalism of California was reliant on the influx of farmworkers from Mexico to create the highest profits while farmworkers survived on the thinnest margins. The U.S. Farm Bureau and California farmers fabricated the need for cheap Mexican labor by first legalizing the supply through the Bracero Program in 1943 to increase agricultural output needed during World War II, allowing for 200,000 Mexican nationals to enter the United States legally.

A year after the Bracero Program ended, the Hart-Celler Act of 1965 capped immigration from the entire world to 120,000 people. This was a slap in the face for many farmworkers who had toiled on U.S. farms only to be treated as disposable.

In the words of President Harry S. Truman, Mexican braceros were “ready to go to work when needed; to be gone when not needed.”

Agrarian capitalism continues to devalue the labor of farmworkers by underemploying the labor force. There are approximately 882,000 farmworkers to fill 412,300 jobs, creating an environment ripe for exploitation where excess farmworkers can be deported “when not needed.”

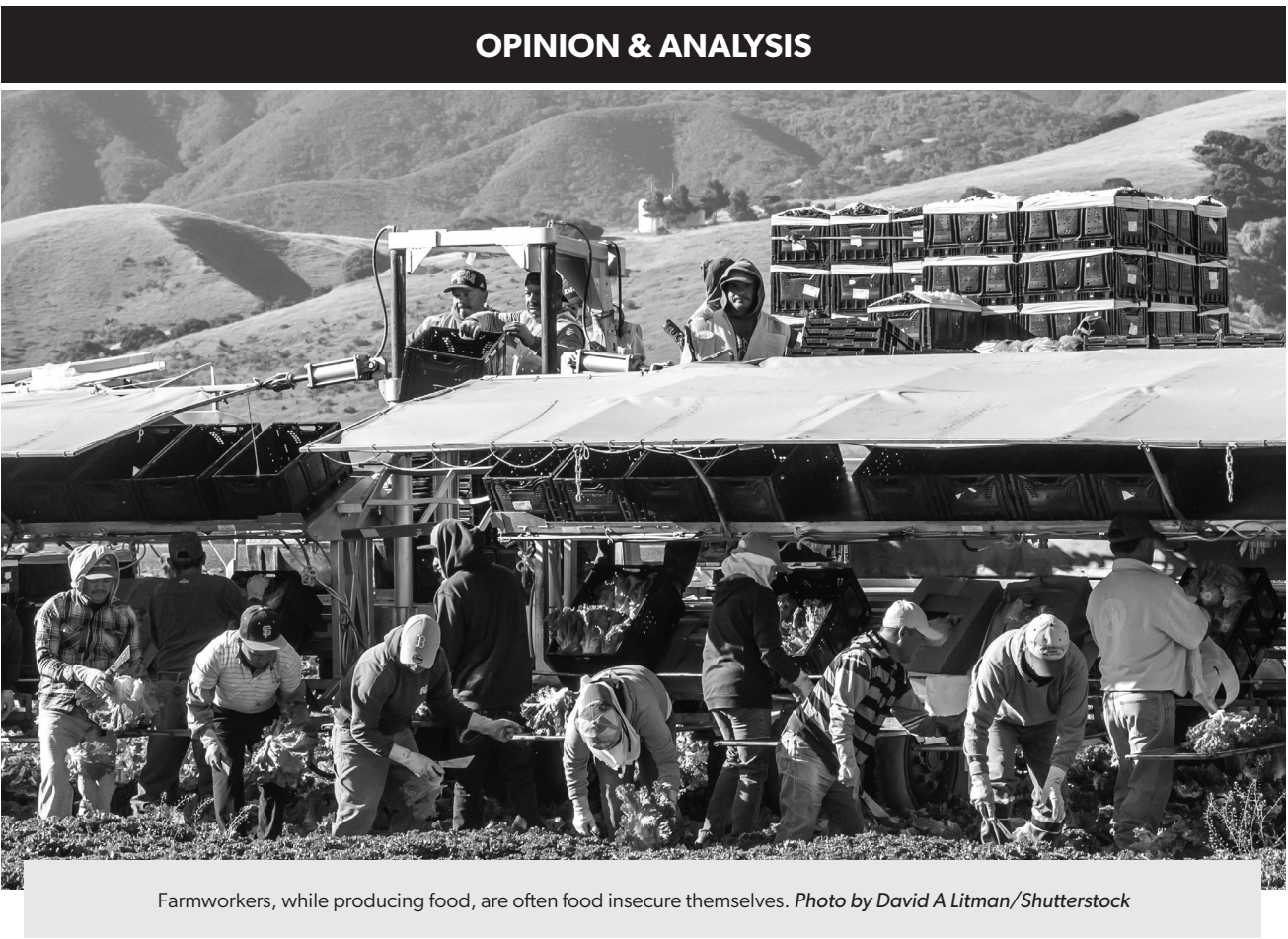
Furthermore, farmworkers are responsible for the reproduction of their own labor. The oversupply of farmworkers to jobs forces farmworkers to perennially look for work.

Farmworkers are prone to higher levels of food insecurity because they are not employed throughout the year. It is estimated that farmworkers are employed at rates only half those of regularly employed workers.

For the transgression of being “illegal,” farmworkers are sanctioned by being denied access to means-tested programs and the food from the farms where they work. Without year-round employment and access to CalFresh (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), food insecurity among farmworkers persists.

Food insecurity in Fresno County is defined by its persistent poverty—a state of poverty affecting at least 20% of the population.

Due to the large presence of farmworkers in the Central Valley, the solutions to address food insecurity should focus on the expansion of CalFresh benefits to all, regardless of



Farmworkers, while producing food, are often food insecure themselves. Photo by David A Litman/Shutterstock

legal status. In Fresno County, there are approximately 72,000 farmworkers, 82% of whom come from Mexico. Farmworkers are likely to be male, single and approximately 39 years old.

Compared to different geographical regions, immigrants in the Central Valley are least likely to have a path toward citizenship, and it is estimated that 75% of farmworkers in California are undocumented. During the Covid pandemic, undocumented farmworkers were excluded from receiving stimulus checks and immigrant women were among those most likely to lose their employment.

The low naturalization rate in Fresno County (44.2%) and overrepresentation of Mexican nationals in the farmworker population are examples of how agrarian capitalism’s demand for a reserve army of labor relies on the exploitation of immigrants who have little legal protection.

Rep. Brandon Gill, a MAGA Republican from Texas, recently shared on social media that “cotton was still harvested after slavery ended, and our food will continue to be picked after mass deportation.”

According to Golash-Boza, threats of mass deportation are messages that keep labor compliant through fear. Farmworkers are beholden to the legal landscape shaped by the U.S. Farm Bureau, which favors the interests of farmers. The Farm Bureau has historically opposed farmworker protections, including the Farm Workforce Modernization Act, which proposed a legal pathway to citizenship for farmworkers.

Efforts to solve food insecurity by the California Department of Food and Agriculture’s Office of Farm to Fork (CDFA-F2F) exclude farmworkers. CDFA-F2F created a working group with different stakeholders in the Central Valley to address the issues affecting the most marginalized communities. Included among the working group was the Farm Bureau but not the United Farm Workers (UFW).

At the state level, the economic interests of big agriculture trump the human rights of farmworkers. State Senator Melissa Hurtado (D–Bakersfield), who represents the southwest Central Valley, proposed the Food4All Act (SB 245) to extend CalFresh benefits to undocumented immigrants. However, the bill was modified to allow only undocumented immigrants 55+ to be eligible for services, even though the average age for farmworkers is 39.

## OPINION & ANALYSIS

CDFA-F2F operates from the position of promoting food with dignity, but dignity is not extended to farmworkers. Our appreciation for farmworkers is based on moral grandstanding; we seemingly understand that they provide for our meals while commodifying their labor.

Cal/OSHA heat protection enforcements have declined 30% over the past seven years even as we continue to have climate-related heat waves. In response to the UFW requesting workers’ compensation for heat-related accidents, Governor Gavin Newsom decided it was not in the fiduciary interest of the state to do so.

In our current political climate of protectionism and nativism, we have scapegoated immigrants as the reason for our economic hardships although they contributed \$8.5 billion to California’s economy in 2022.

To address food insecurity in Central Valley farmworker communities, we should first decommodify their labor by advocating for work protections from the environment and employer retaliations. The contributions of farmworkers are vital to our existence although their existence is out of sight, out of mind.

Expansion of CalFresh benefits should include all people as our food system is robust enough to feed everyone. Employers should face legal sanctions if Cal/OSHA heat protections are not enforced.

To ensure that farmworkers are considered in legislation that addresses food insecurity in the Central Valley, the relevant state-level departments should be audited for any conflicts of interest.

If food insecurity can only be solved within the current framework through government programs such as CalFresh, a path to citizenship should be considered to afford farmworkers access to means-tested programs and eligibility to employment that provides year-round employment with benefits.

Solutions within the current framework will only reproduce the conditions that create hunger among farmworkers if they exclude people on the basis of legal status.

\*\*\*\*\*

Janette Mejia Plaza is a graduate student at Cal State Stanislaus. She is completing an MSW and is currently interning with the Social Justice Collaborative to advocate for immigrant rights.



## FRESNO CENTER FOR NONVIOLENCE

centerfornonviolence.org

- Dedicated to Peace and Social Justice since 1992
- Catch our radio program, *Stir it Up*, on KFCF 88.1 FM every 2nd Wednesday at 3:00 p.m.
- Please consider supporting our work with a DONATION —>
- Scan the QR code to contribute today and stand with us for peace

1584 N. VAN NESS AVE  
FRESNO, CA 93728



## FRESNO

National Women’s Political Caucus (NWPC) is a multi-partisan, multi-racial, prochoice grassroots organization dedicated to increasing women’s participation in the political process and creating a true women’s political power base to achieve equality for all women. Dinner meetings are the 1st Tuesday of each month at 5:30 pm social and dinner at 6:00 pm. For location, please check our website: [nwpcfresno.org](http://nwpcfresno.org).

PO Box 5553  
Fresno, CA 93755-5553  
[nwpcfresno.org](http://nwpcfresno.org)

Contact: Cathy Brass 559-225-5433 (home) or 559-288-8973 (cell)

Women are the largest untapped reservoir of talent in the world.  
— Hillary Clinton

In memory of our past president, Carol Bequette





# SIERRA CLUB

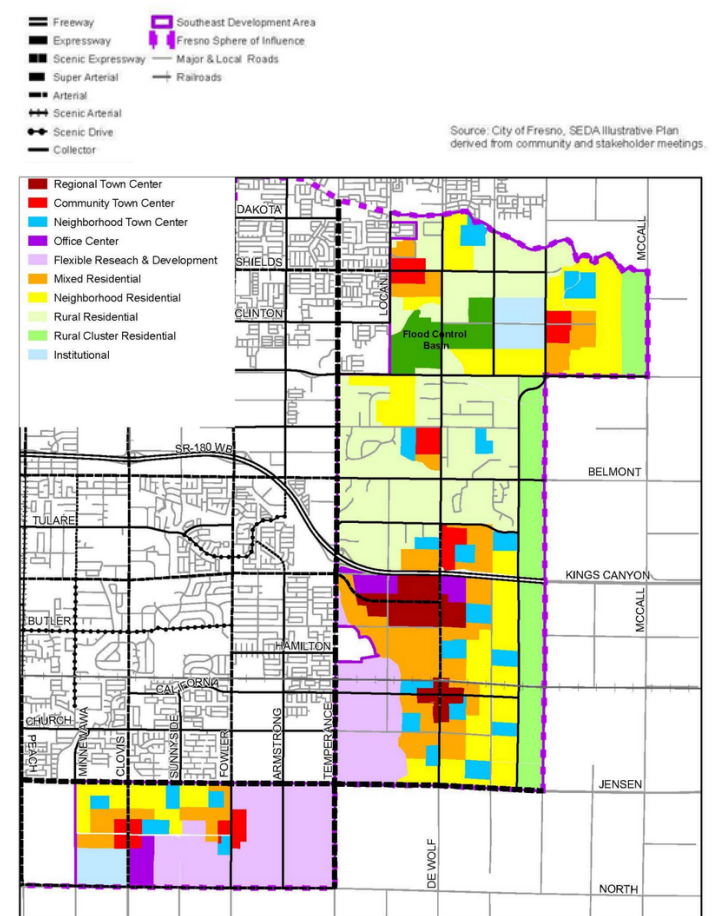
## TEHIPITE CHAPTER

# Every Fresno neighborhood needs repair.

# NO ON SEDA\*

# Let's choose a better path.

### SEDA PROPOSED LAND USE MAP



\* Learn More  
[greenfieldcoalition.org](https://greenfieldcoalition.org)

Over 150 residents attended the Nov. 19 City Planning Commission meeting to express their concerns about the SEDA project. Next, attend the Fresno City Council public meeting at City Hall on **Thursday, Dec. 4, at 9:00 am.**

### SEVEN REASONS TO STOP SEDA:

1. **SEDA fundamentally shifts all city resources for the next 25 years**, away from your neighborhood's overdue investment needs, and commits your tax dollars to \$4 billion to build new sewers and streets—with no plan to repay residents.
2. **City leaders are claiming SEDA will "pay for itself" with developer fees and property taxes**, but they refuse to release the research that shows a \$3 billion gap.
3. **Corrupt politicians tell us Fresno has a housing shortage**, but 70,000 new houses are already being planned in Fresno, more than enough for the next 30 years of growth.
4. **Cookie-cutter housing developers stand to make hundreds of millions in profits from our public tax dollars**, while our city officials fail to invest in our sidewalks, streets, and firefighters.
5. **The State of California has publicly criticized Fresno for the massive increase in traffic congestion and vehicle pollution in SEDA**, while city leaders claim that SEDA will be "more walkable than San Francisco" (!!).

6. **The draft Environmental Impact Report for SEDA demonstrates a serious potential for citywide bankruptcy**, and loss of city services as California continues to decline in population growth.

7. **Mayor Dyer admitted that higher water rates and city taxes for inner city residents are the only way to fund billions in new spending over the next 25 years.**

### WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- **Email Mayor Jerry Dyer ASAP at [jerry.dyer@fresno.gov](mailto:jerry.dyer@fresno.gov).** URGE the Mayor to request the City Council to hold a special **EVENING** public hearing on SEDA. Mention your personal situation (example: you work until 5:00 pm). Include your *name, address or neighborhood, contact info, and organization* (if applicable).
- **Copy your email to Council President Mike Karbassi at [mike.karbassi@fresno.gov](mailto:mike.karbassi@fresno.gov) and [district2@fresno.gov](mailto:district2@fresno.gov).**
- **Copy [TehipiteSierraClub@gmail.com](mailto:TehipiteSierraClub@gmail.com)** if you wish to stay up to date on news and actions from the No on SEDA community coalition.
- **Attend the City Council meeting on Dec. 4** to show your concern that the City is subsidizing developer sprawl instead of investing our taxes in our existing Fresno communities.



# Educational Alarm

BY ESPI SANDOVAL

An educational crisis is spreading quietly across Fresno County, and it begins long before high school. The latest 2024–2025 CAASPP (California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress) results for middle schools reveal a disturbing truth: Our students are falling far behind in both English and math—and few are paying attention.

Across the county’s 37 middle schools, only a handful of campuses show students performing at or above grade level. At the top are schools like Computech Middle (85.75% in English, 67.74% in math), Granite Ridge Intermediate (83.52%, 67.51%) and Alta Sierra Intermediate (79.01%, 60.09%). These are success stories—models of what’s possible when schools set high expectations, invest in teacher development and create a culture of achievement.

But the rest of the story is grim. Schools across rural and low-income communities are performing at crisis levels. Huron Middle School (13.76% English, 9.34% math), Gaston Middle (13.48%, 7.73%), Parlier Junior High (20%, 6.31%) and Firebaugh Middle (27.42%, 15.23%) show proficiency rates so low that most students are entering high school already academically defeated.

Even in cities with greater resources, the picture is bleak. Kerman Middle (33.76% English, 22.26% math), Mendota Junior High (41.27%, 18.60%) and Coalinga Middle (21.12%, 10.92%) show that nearly three-quarters of their students lack foundational skills in reading, writing and arithmetic.

When students are failing at these rates, it’s not an individual problem—it’s a system failure. These scores show that the achievement gap begins years before high school and widens with every grade.

By the time students reach ninth grade, many are already two to three years behind. That means high school math and English teachers are expected to perform miracles in just four years—with students who were never given a fair chance to begin with.

This is not about blaming teachers. Most educators are doing extraordinary work under challenging conditions. The issue is a lack of system-wide urgency and accountability.

When less than one-quarter of students are proficient, where are the press conferences? Where are the public forums? Where are the school boards demanding an action plan?

Too often, low performance in rural schools is accepted as inevitable—“that’s just the way it is.” But that mindset is destroying futures.

Our children in Firebaugh, Mendota, San Joaquin, Huron and Kerman are every bit as capable as students in Clovis or north Fresno. The difference isn’t intelligence—it’s opportunity, expectation and consistent instructional leadership.

When our middle schools fail, the entire region pays the price. The Central Valley’s future economy relies on preparing workers for jobs in agtech, clean energy, health sciences and logistics. None of that will be possible if our public schools continue graduating students who struggle with basic math and literacy.

Without math, we cannot produce doctors, scientists, engineers and innovators in our rural schools. We are closing doors before our students even have a chance to open them.

Businesses will not invest in communities where the majority of young people cannot compete academically. And those who do succeed will often leave for better opportunities elsewhere, deepening the region’s brain drain and weakening the local economy.

If Fresno County is serious about change, it must start by confronting reality. That means transparent data reporting, clear accountability for results and targeted investment where the needs are greatest.



Gaston Middle School has had low test scores for its students. Photo by Peter Maiden

Leadership matters. District superintendents and principals must set measurable goals, track progress and celebrate schools that improve—not just those that maintain.

Teachers need support, not blame. Intensive coaching in math instruction, data-driven teaching strategies and smaller class sizes in struggling schools can change outcomes.

Parents must be empowered and informed about what proficiency really means so they can advocate for their children and demand better from local leaders. Families deserve clear explanations of test results, not just report cards filled with confusing abbreviations. When parents understand the data, they become powerful allies for change.

Community partnerships must also play a central role. Higher-education institutions, nonprofits and civic organizations can help bridge the gap between schools and real-world opportunities for students.

The middle-school years are the critical bridge between childhood and the challenges of high school. They are the years when students either discover confidence in their learning or internalize failure as their destiny.

The 2024–2025 CAASPP results tell us that far too many are walking the latter path. We cannot afford another year of silence or complacency. Every data point represents a child—a life, a potential engineer, teacher, nurse or community leader whose dreams are being deferred by a broken system.

Fresno County’s middle schools are sending a message, and the question is: Will anyone listen?

\*\*\*\*\*

Espi Sandoval has 30 years of experience as an educator in the San Joaquin Valley K-12 school system. In the K-14 system, he has been a dual enrollment advocate/consultant for years. His accomplishments include being nominated for Educator of the Year by Golden Plains in the past and receiving the Dolores Huerta Award in 2023. He continues to work with vulnerable and at-risk youth in Fresno County.



*Are you anti-Trump  
and anti-genocide?  
Join us at our protests!*

 Saturdays 3 - 4:30pm  
N Blackstone Ave  
& E Nees Ave

 Wednesdays 11am - 1pm  
2500 Tulare Street

 Find us on social media!  
[www.peacefresno.org](http://www.peacefresno.org)  
559 - 513 - 0199

*Holiday Potluck,  
Monthly Meeting,  
& Annual Board Retreat*

Sunday, December 14  
12 noon

Fresno Center  
for Nonviolence  
1584 N Van Ness Ave

To receive our updates:  
[ken.hudson@peacefresno.org](mailto:ken.hudson@peacefresno.org)

**Got CBD?**

**100% Effective  
Natural  
0% THC**

**100% Affordable**



**Contact: smiley**  
[smileycalderon@gmail.com](mailto:smileycalderon@gmail.com)

**STRATEGY + VISION**

**PAUL E. PIERCE**



**BOARD/STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

**PRODUCTIVE MEETINGS**

**STRATEGIC PLANNING**

**PAUL@PAULEPIERCE.COM**

**559 246 7236**



**Join KFCF  
during our  
December  
Pledge Drive!**

**KFCF 88.1 FM**

KFCF brings you the voices of Richard Wolff, Amy Goodman, Mumia, Ralph Nader, Davey D, Dennis Bernstein, The Struggle, Speaking Truth to Empire, Climate Politics, It’s A Queer Thang, Down on The Farm and much more!

Plus KFCF has great music, and arts too.

**Program guide at [www.kfcf.org](http://www.kfcf.org)**



# Nile Water Disputes and Regional Solutions

BY DEBAY TADESSE

The Nile River has served as the backbone of life and civilization. Flowing through northeastern Africa, the Nile River is the longest river in the world, spanning approximately 6,650 to 6,850 kilometers (4,132 to 4,258 miles).

Originating near the Equator, it travels northward across 11 countries before emptying into the Mediterranean Sea. For thousands of years, its fertile banks and seasonal flooding have sustained agriculture and human civilizations along its course.

Today, it remains an indispensable resource for the countries it flows through—primarily Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia. As rainfall becomes increasingly unpredictable and agriculture remains central to local economies, the Nile has become more than a river; it is a symbol of survival, political power and economic potential.

However, the way its waters are distributed is steeped in historical agreements that favor downstream countries—particularly Egypt—leaving upstream nations at a disadvantage. This imbalance has led to rising tensions among riparian states.

As climate change, population growth and resource scarcity worsen, cooperation among Nile Basin countries is not only necessary but also urgent.

Recent tensions between Egypt and Ethiopia over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) have intensified, with Egypt accusing Ethiopia of exacerbating recent flooding through unilateral dam operations. Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has called for international intervention and a legally binding agreement to regulate the dam’s use.

Ethiopia, however, insists it is operating the dam responsibly and accuses Egypt of maintaining a “colonial-era mindset” that hinders regional cooperation. The dispute remains unresolved, with both sides blaming each other for escalating the crisis and undermining mutual trust.

### Echoes of the Past: Rising Tensions Today

The geography of the Nile Basin is complex, spanning 10 countries with varying degrees of dependency on the river. For countries such as Ethiopia, Uganda, Rwanda and Sudan, the Nile flows through substantial portions of their territories.

In contrast, Egypt, though almost entirely reliant on the Nile for freshwater, contributes little to its flow. More than 97% of Egypt’s irrigation water comes from the Nile, while most of its sources lie upstream—in nations that have historically had limited access to its use.

The foundation of this unequal usage lies in colonial-era treaties. The 1929 agreement between Egypt and Britain granted Egypt veto power over any upstream water projects.

Later, the 1959 bilateral agreement between Egypt and Sudan divided the Nile’s total flow between the two countries, allocating 55.5 billion cubic meters to Egypt and 18.5 billion to Sudan, leaving no allocation for upstream states like Ethiopia, Kenya or Uganda. These nations were not only excluded from the negotiation process but also prevented (via treaties) from using even a drop of the Nile’s water without downstream approval.

Projects like Egypt’s High Aswan Dam and the unfinished Jonglei Canal were launched to cement Egyptian control over the river. Although these projects stabilized Egypt’s water supply and energy generation, they also symbolized the country’s unwillingness to share resources.

Ethiopia, for instance, was explicitly targeted through diplomatic and economic pressure to halt any development plans involving the Blue Nile. Egypt strongly opposed Tanzania’s plan to build a pipeline from Lake Victoria and warned Kenya against withdrawing from the colonial treaties, calling such actions a violation of international law and even an act of aggression.

The reaction from upstream nations has grown stronger over time. Many reject the colonial agreements, arguing that they were imposed without consent and do not reflect modern-day needs.

Ethiopia, in particular, has become more assertive in developing the GERD to address its own water and energy challenges. The dam was officially inaugurated on Sept. 9, after its completion in July. Situated on the Blue Nile, it is the largest hydroelectric dam in Africa, with a capacity of 5.15 gigawatts, aimed at meeting Ethiopia’s domestic energy needs and supporting electricity exports.

Although Ethiopia views the project as a catalyst for regional development, the dam’s launch has intensified tensions—particularly with Egypt, which remains concerned about potential impacts on its water security. Egypt continues to view such projects as existential threats, reinforcing a “zero-sum” mindset in which any gain for upstream countries is seen as a loss for Egypt.

### Strengthening Regional Ties to Tackle Mutual Issues

While tensions continue to simmer, the broader reality is that all Nile Basin countries face similar developmental challenges: food insecurity, energy shortages, growing populations and environmental degradation. These shared struggles should serve as a basis for cooperation rather than a source of conflict.

Regional initiatives, such as the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI), and international principles, including the Helsinki Rules, promote the equitable and reasonable use of transboundary water resources. These frameworks promote mutual respect, shared benefits and collaborative management of water resources. However, progress has been slow due to mistrust, lack of enforcement mechanisms and unilateral actions that undermine collaboration.

In addition, environmental threats—such as desertification, deforestation and drought—affect the entire region. As the Sahara Desert expands southward, fertile lands are lost, and communities are forced to relocate. Only through basin-wide planning, improved water harvesting and sustainable land-use practices can these challenges be effectively addressed.

### From Policy to Partnership: Keys to Regional Progress

Despite strong declarations from global institutions, Africa remains plagued by poverty, underdevelopment and lack of infrastructure. These problems are intensified in regions like the Nile Basin, where water scarcity limits agricultural productivity and hinders economic growth. To reverse this trend, political will and international cooperation are critical.

All riparian states must work toward establishing a legal and institutional framework that ensures fair water allocation and protects the rights of both upstream and downstream users. These frameworks should include mechanisms for dispute resolution, capacity building, technical training and the development of joint water projects. Such collaboration would not only reduce tensions but also promote economic integration and regional stability.

Egypt’s current strategy—based on maintaining dominance and opposing upstream development—is no longer sustainable. Geopolitical shifts and the declining influence of external allies, such as the United States, mean that Egypt must adapt.

A cooperative and inclusive approach would enable Egypt to secure its water needs while supporting the development of its neighbors, while, on the other hand, continuing to oppose equitable water-sharing risks regional instability, potential conflict and the loss of international goodwill.



Map of the Nile River. Courtesy of The Commons

### Policy Recommendations

The Nile Basin countries stand at a pivotal crossroads. They can either persist with unilateral actions and reliance on outdated agreements, risking further conflict, or choose a path of collaboration to secure long-term water sustainability and regional stability. With the region’s population projected to rise from more than 400 million today to more than 556 million by 2050, the decisions made now will shape the future well-being and prosperity of generations to come.

To move forward, three major steps are essential:

- Reject outdated colonial treaties and negotiate a new, basin-wide water-sharing agreement based on international legal principles, such as the Helsinki Rules.
- Prioritize joint development projects in irrigation, hydropower and flood management that benefit both upstream and downstream states.
- Build strong institutions and leadership, supported by international partners, to promote transparency, accountability and sustainability.

Water is not just vital for life; it also serves as a cornerstone for peace and sustainable development. With mutual respect, strong political will and visionary leadership, the Nile River has the potential to transform from a source of conflict into a unifying lifeline for all the nations that share its banks.

\*\*\*\*\*

Debay Tadesse has a Ph.D. in African studies focusing on public policy and development from Howard University in Washington, D.C., and an M.A. in African history and a B.A. in world history from Georgia State University in Atlanta. He currently lectures at Fresno State and Fresno City College.

## THE LAW OFFICE OF KEVIN G. LITTLE

30+ Years Fighting for the Underdog!

- Civil Rights
- Employment
- Personal Injury
- Medical Malpractice



- Criminal Defense
- Juvenile
- Dependency
- Family Law

1225 East Divisadero Street, Fresno, CA 93721  
Tel. (559) 342-5800, E-Mail: kevin@kevinglitttle.com  
www.kevinglitttle.com

With a record of success over more than two decades, the **Law Office of Kevin G. Little** is one of the preeminent small firms in **Fresno** and surrounding areas. We represent our clients in a variety of matters, including civil rights, employment, personal injury, general civil litigation, family law, bankruptcy, and criminal cases. Our firm also offers excellent mediation services in civil and family law matters. We approach each case with dedication, aiming to protect you and exceed your expectations. Call us today for a consultation and let us help.



AUTO • HOME • BUSINESS

Worker's Comp  
Life Insurance

LICENSE #0608912 / 0C13433

RioMesaInsurance.COM

292-2490

3134 Willow Ave., Suite 102 • Clovis, CA 93612

Good driver?  
GREAT RATE!



RMI



# Happy holidays from the board and staff of West Fresno Family Resource Center

We wish you JOY this holiday season and throughout the coming year!

For many, the holiday season brings feelings of joy and connection with loved ones. But we know that many families are experiencing hardship, and it is difficult to celebrate when they are simply trying to survive.

West Fresno Family Resource Center offers essential services including:

- Weekly Food Distribution at 1825 S Delno Ave, Fresno, CA 93706 on Thursdays ( December 4, 11, 18, 30)
- Family Matters Support Group-offering free diapers
- Workforce and Job Readiness Support
- Housing Assistance
- Health and Wellness
- Support for Agricultural Workers, and More!

We will be closed December 22-26, and January 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>. We will reopen on January 5<sup>th</sup>.



(559)-374-5750



700 Van Ness  
Avenue Suite 201  
Fresno, CA 93721



<https://www.wfresnofrc.org/>

## Upcoming Events:

Weekly Food Distribution  
December 4, 11, 18, 30 at 1825 S  
Delno Ave, Fresno, CA 93706 1-3pm

12/9- Family Reading Night at Kirk  
Elementary School - 200 East  
Belgravia Avenue, Fresno CA 93706  
5:30-7:30pm

12/3 and 12/17- Wellness  
Wednesdays at 1515 E Annadale  
Avenue Fresno, CA 93706 10AM-  
12PM

12/3- Arts And Mental Health  
12/17- How to combat Seasonal  
Depression

12/13- Santa's Village at Gaston  
Middle School: 1100 E Church  
Avenue Fresno CA 93706. Come  
stop by our booth for Holiday  
activities for kids!



# SCRUBCAN INC

CLEANING SOLUTIONS

## PROFESSIONAL CLEANING SERVICES FOR YOUR HOME



### Our Services

- ✓ Trash Can Cleaning
- ✓ Solar Panel Cleaning
- ✓ Pressure Washing



SCAN HERE

**BOOK YOUR SERVICE NOW!**



@scrubcan\_inc  
info@scrubcan.com  
559.375.5252

## WWW.SCRUBCAN.COM

**VISIT OUR WEBSITE TO DISCOVER OUR RESIDENTIAL CLEANING SERVICES!**



EXPERTISE AND  
RELIABILITY



PROFESSIONAL  
CLEANING SERVICES



TRUSTED AND  
GUARANTEED



# Garbage into Gold

BY MAIA BALLIS

Managing biological waste in a new way that might cost a third less and produce higher value compost could help fight climate change, improve food quality and security, and create increased income opportunities. As one composting enthusiast puts it, “It’s only waste if you waste it.”

Australian entrepreneur Ken Bellamy, founder of VRM BioLogik®, has developed HumiSoil®, a method that enhances soil health and even produces water as a byproduct. His innovative composting technique can quickly restore soil, even in arid desert regions.

Trials have shown impressive results, including nutrient-rich, higher-yield crops, like potatoes grown in desert sand, and drought-devastated rangeland that is now suitable for grazing cattle without irrigation and with rainfall one month a year. This system can also turn dairy manure into a low-odor, high-quality soil enhancer. This is possible due to improved soil fertility and the moisture this system creates.

This method offers a promising way to convert green waste from farms and landfills into rich soil more efficiently, helping to revitalize depleted lands while producing higher dollar value compost that also produces highly nutritious and flavorful food for people and livestock.

The innovative VRM system eliminates standard composting inputs and physical turning, which reduces the cost of materials, labor, energy, fuel and pollution. Both composting systems capture carbon but while standard composting can ideally lower methane emissions 39%–84% more than landfills, making HumiSoil® produces none.

The United States faces significant soil loss, endangering food supplies. Transforming biological waste into HumiSoil® presents a better alternative to the current practice of burying retired orchard wood, which depletes nitrogen in the soil. Experts believe that widespread adoption could



HumiSoil® compost piles. Photo courtesy of Maia Ballis

substantially reduce carbon emissions while improving soil health and food quality.

Unlike expensive high-tech carbon sequestering proposals, continuous fermentation composting is the most exciting low-cost, low-tech, green multiple benefit solution.

HumiSoil® can be produced affordably in six months using Bellamy’s unique Groundswell® system. It’s currently being implemented in Australia, China, Africa, the Middle East and parts of the United States such as Florida and Texas, with plans to expand to California.

This innovative approach not only restores soil health but also holds the potential for sustainable farming and food security. Increasing self-reliance is a good thing.

\*\*\*\*\*

Maia Ballis is a retired grower and executive director of SunMt Environmental Research Center. In her forthcoming book, *Climate Solutions: Current and Emerging Hopeful Options*, she describes innovations that collectively have the potential to improve life on Earth. Contact her at [maiaballis@gmail.com](mailto:maiaballis@gmail.com).

## Sidestepping

Continued from page 5

### Ag Report for 2024

Agricultural Commissioner Melissa Cregan presented highlights of the 2024 Crop and Livestock Report. Fresno County is again the No. 1 agricultural region in the world, a position determined by revenue generated; this year’s total gross production value was more than \$9 billion.

The No. 1 crop was almonds, at \$1.45 billion; grapes were second and pistachios third. Top export destinations were Mexico and South Korea.

Many impromptu comments were made about owing much to “farmworkers,” the men and women in the fields who “make it all possible.” But no one broached the subject of ICE abducting workers from the fields. That the comments were impromptu and made by several people seemed to reflect anxiety over workers’ vulnerability to abduction by ICE, but no one explicitly mentioned it.

Fresno County Farm Bureau CEO Ryan Jacobsen was present to call Fresno County the “food capital of the nation” and noted that California was home to nine of the 10 top agricultural regions in the world. However, he cautioned that “good numbers” were not a sign of “health,” and said that 2024 had been a “good water year,” while future years were unpredictable.

He and others throughout the discussion expressed a sense of victimization: “Forces outside don’t want us to do ag,” he lamented without offering details. He was likely referring to state attempts to manage severe water shortages, interpreted by agribusiness as an act of hostility.

During the discussion, Mendes delighted in scatological witticisms: prices of some products discussed went from “really shitty” to “kind of shitty,” he said, grinning and looking around to see who else was smiling.

When the subject of manure as an agricultural product came up, Chavez asked if manure was a crop—“Who eats that?” he said. Mendes saw his chance for another riposte: “We are fed a lot of those sandwiches all the time!” Only Chavez laughed, and Mendes grinned, looking pleased with himself.

Self-described “city boy” Bredefeld called the numbers “eye-popping” and made a few patronizing remarks before getting to what he really wanted to talk about: solar farms were “eating up ag land,” something he frowned upon.

The Board got “a lot of requests” for such uses, he told Cregan, asking her if she would like to “address” the issue. Effectively calling out Bredefeld’s rhetorical move, Cregan’s answer was a wry, “Oh, you want to drag me into politics!”

Bredefeld’s disingenuous reply was, “I was just curious,” and he suggested that solar farms would interfere with big crop profits. Cregan explained that water availability is a bigger concern, and “if we had all the water we needed,” she would probably be against solar farms, “but that’s not the case,” and building on land where there is no water lets family farmers stay in business, she said.

Next, Bredefeld wanted to tout his copper-wire ordinance, enacted a few months earlier, intended to prevent theft of the wire found on farm equipment—was that having an effect for farmers? Cregan said that it’s not an issue her department gets reports on; those go to the Sheriff’s Office. With that, Bredefeld’s attempt to hijack the discussion was kaput.

Pacheco praised Cregan’s remarks about solar farms and reiterated that they are “going in on those marginal grounds that don’t have the water” and that they provide “another source of revenue” for farmers.

“We’re always No. 1 when we have water,” he said, expressing appreciation of Cregan’s remarks about the volatility of water availability.

Pacheco then broached the subject of Trump’s interference in the ag business, noting that when “the President” said he’d import Argentinian beef, “the beef market plummets for two weeks.” Then Trump “goes to China, and our feed prices go up.” Trump starts a tariff war with Canada, and “our milk price plummets.” To Cregan, he said that “you’re accurate” about volatility—it’s not only year to year, it’s “day to day”—but he referred to more than water.

Mendes blamed the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) for a lack of water, again interpreting the water-conservation rules as an act of hostility; he resented that farmers are “held to the actual pumping they can do,” per SGMA mandates, which require that local agencies create sustainability plans to stop overdrift and maintain a balance between pumping and replenishment.

“A lot of coastal people don’t want us to even farm!” he complained, whining that “they” don’t care “as long as the grocery store is full of food.”

He droned on, moaning that among his Board colleagues, no one but fellow dairy farmer “Brian” [Pacheco]



District 4 Supervisor Buddy Mendes laughs at his own joke. Screenshot from Livestream

understands. Pacheco quipped that Mendes was a “Debbie Downer” and reiterated that “we are No. 1.”

Magsig’s coda to the discussion evoked a few chuckles: “I’m really excited that eggplant has shot up in value. I love eggplant.”

### Salary Increases for Elected County Officers

The Board unanimously approved salary increases for elected department heads—including the district attorney, the county clerk, the sheriff and others—ranging from 18% to 38%. Riley Talford with SEIU 521 was present to object to the increases, citing recent staffing cuts and the budget deficit, and saying that employee morale would be eroded. Magsig remarked that “we are too poor to afford cheap.”

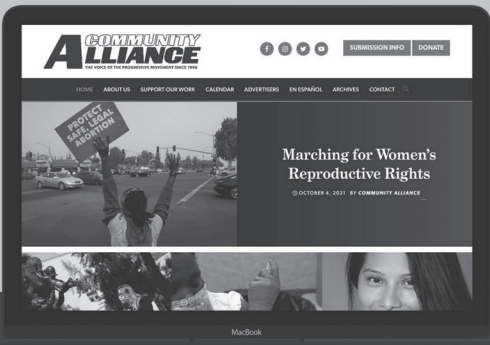
\*\*\*\*\*

Rachel Youdelman is a former photography editor and lives in Clovis. She attended UC Berkeley, CalArts and Harvard University. Contact her at [rachel27@berkeley.edu](mailto:rachel27@berkeley.edu).

## VISIT OUR WEBSITE!

All of our content is available  
online for you to read

<https://fresnoalliance.com/>



## root access

Community Hackerspace  
and Makerspace

3D Printing • Laser Cutting • Electronics • Technology  
Sewing & Fiber Arts • Workshop • ...and more!

Proudly located in the Tower District at 1476 N. Van Ness Ave.  
Check us out online at [rootaccess.org](http://rootaccess.org)





# Pesticides

Continued from page 1

Chloropicrin is a toxic irritant that can cause severe respiratory damage, eye irritation and skin burns. It is often applied in combination with 1,3-D products as a fungicide. Historically, it has been and continues to be used as a chemical warfare and crowd control agent.

At the Watsonville protest, Salinas elementary school teacher Oscar Ramos said his job is to protect his students, and he pulled no punches. “Our schoolchildren are required to go to school where they’re exposed to highly hazardous pesticides. Let’s call it what it is, they are being poisoned.

“While the rest of the world has been banning fumigants like 1,3-D and chloropicrin in the past decade, California regulators have allowed more and more fumigants to be used near our schoolchildren. Anyone with a heart, a conscience or a soul knows that’s just plain wrong on so many levels.”

Facio stated that in 2014 the California Department of Public Health published a first of its kind study on the use of highly hazardous pesticides within one-quarter mile of public schools in the 15 counties with the highest pesticide use.

“What we found is an alarming overall increase in these 15 counties,” she noted. “1,3-D use climbed from over 149,000 pounds to nearly 190,000 pounds, a 27% increase.

“The other toxic fumigant, chloropicrin, is among the most heavily used synthetic pesticides in the state. It is a lung-damaging agent, and its use grew from 161,000 pounds to 259,000 pounds within one-quarter mile of California schools. That is a 61% increase altogether.

“The combined use of these two fumigants increased 45% between 2010 and 2022.”

In Modesto, Dr. Michelle Ryan, a family nurse practitioner and public health expert, emphasized that children are the most vulnerable to poisoning.

“As healthcare providers, we constantly remind parents to keep cleaning products, medications and poisons safely locked away out of reach of children,” states Dr. Ryan. “And we do this because children are curious and because, unfortunately, they like to put things in their mouth.

“So why then at the same time, can we be okay with intentionally placing poisons on the very food they eat, right in the soil where they live, and in the air around their schools and playgrounds?”

Dr. Ryan underscored that children are not miniature adults. “Their brains, lungs and immune systems are still developing. They breathe faster and take in more air, and their body surface area is larger, allowing for increased absorption through their skin. All of this increases their risk of taking in more toxins when they are exposed.

“They also spend more time near the ground where pesticide residues accumulate and may play on grass contaminated by pesticides, [as] volatilization drift from nearby fields where pesticides were used just the night before.

“And for children living or going to school near treated fields, exposure is not a one-time event. It is daily cumulative and lifelong, beginning even before birth in the womb.

“Exposure to pesticides like 1,3-D have been linked to increased risks of cancer, brain and nervous system disorders, and respiratory diseases including asthma and gastro-intestinal and kidney disorders.”

John Mataka is a community advocate who works closely with residents impacted by pollution and environmental hazards across Stanislaus County. He insisted that school districts cannot wait for the state to do something.

“The Department of Pesticide Regulation has shown that it will compromise community health,” says Mataka. “State-level protections remain weak and scientifically outdated.

“Counties, cities and school districts have the authority to go beyond the state minimum requirement. Waiting for Sacramento to do something is accepting continued harm to our residents and our children.

“We demand a one-mile buffer. That is supported by low-income communities. It is supported by evidence, science and community experience. Anything less is knowingly exposing our children and our residents to health issues and harm.”

In Fresno, Rocio Madrigal, a community organizer with the Central California Environmental Justice Network, said that the new proposed rule is a racist regulation that sacrifices Latino communities.

“In a current pesticide monitoring study CCEJN has conducted in West Park and other areas of south Fresno,

1,3-D has been detected in a monitor that was placed inside of West Park Elementary,” said Madrigal.

“The pesticide was detected even when there are no close-by permitted applications. West Park is home to a school where 90% of the students are Latino.

“It is also home to Latino elders who spend hours outdoors taking care of the yards, sometimes after decades of being farm laborers and being exposed at their place of work.”

Facio called into question the state’s regulatory policy. “If the individual pesticide regulation process can give us the unscientific and racist policy we have now with 1,3-D, then the whole process is broken.

“Our attorney friends are already working on a legal challenge. But the problem is not just 1,3-D, it is the entire class of highly drift prone and highly hazardous fumigants.”

Speaking on behalf of the coalition of advocate organizations, Facio issued a demand for immediate action.

## 1,3-D Policy Endangers Our Children

BY CRISTINA GUTIERREZ

Across California, farmworker communities are sounding the alarm: The state’s regulation of the cancer-causing fumigant 1,3-dichloropropene (1,3-D, brand name Telone) is not only dangerously unscientific but environmentally racist. This chemical, used extensively on almond, walnut, berry and grape crops, is a known carcinogen, a lung irritant and a toxic air contaminant banned in 40 countries. Yet California allows exposure levels far higher than what the state’s own scientists have determined are safe.

On Nov. 18, communities across Fresno, Modesto, Watsonville and Oxnard, along with an online statewide event, held press conferences to express outrage over 1,3-D and other hazardous fumigants near schools and daycares.

Farmworker families, who are overwhelmingly Latino and Indigenous, described the risks their children face when attending schools and living near heavily fumigated fields. The Department of Pesticide Regulation’s (DPR) recent regulations allow schoolchildren to be exposed to 14 times more 1,3-D than the safe exposure level calculated by the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA).

This isn’t just a regulatory failure—it’s environmental racism. In the 10 California counties with the highest 1,3-D use, eight are majority Latino, and pesticide exposure in these communities is 10 times higher than in counties with smaller Latino populations. Farmworker communities are the backbone of California agriculture, yet their children are being sacrificed to protect corporate profits.

Gabriela Facio, senior policy strategist with Sierra Club California, summarized it plainly: “California has created an environmentally racist regulation that sacrifices Latino and Indigenous kids for the profits of 1,3-D manufacturer Dow Chemical.”

The problem is compounded by weak assumptions in DPR’s “occupational bystander” regulations. The rules assume farmworkers only work from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., that children and residents outside the fields are not exposed before or after work, and that retired adults are not at risk in homes where chemicals drift. These assumptions ignore real-world exposure and rely on a computer model that has consistently underestimated 1,3-D levels in communities.

Public health nurse and Safe Ag Safe Schools member Erika Alfaro explained that “when science is ignored, injustice thrives.”

The impact is clear. Fumigant use near schools has increased dramatically over the past decade. In 2010, Fresno County saw 9,371 pounds of 1,3-D and chloropicrin applied within one-quarter mile of schools; by 2022, that figure had jumped to 14,648 pounds, a 56% increase. Across the 15 counties with the highest pesticide use, combined 1,3-D and chloropicrin use within one-quarter mile of schools rose 45% between 2010 and 2022.

These chemicals are not only harmful to children but also highly volatile, making even brief exposure dangerous.

Despite previous California policies requiring one-quarter mile buffer zones around schools and limiting fumigant applications to weekends, monitoring data show that air concentrations near schools remain far above safe levels. The OEHHA-established cancer risk thresholds are routinely exceeded by 2.3 to 30 times.

“We call on the state and specifically DPR to phase out fumigants entirely.

“In the meantime, our county ag commissioners must step up to protect our kids. The buffer zones have not been big enough to reduce fumigant exposure from extremely high levels.

“We call for the expansion of buffer zones from the current one-quarter mile to at least one full mile around schools and daycares.

“Finally, we call on ag commissioners and DPR to get together to fund and implement pilot projects to infill school buffer zones with organic farming.”

\*\*\*\*\*

*Vic Bedoian is the Central Valley correspondent for KPFA News and a Community Alliance reporter specializing in natural history and environmental justice issues.*



Cristina Gutierrez at the Nov. 18 press conference. Photo by Peter Maiden

Teachers, parents and community leaders continue to witness children playing outside while hazardous chemicals drift through the air. Second grade teacher Oscar Ramos commented, “This is a policy of environmental racism...We must stop attacking and sacrificing our schoolchildren in farmworker communities.

“We’re supposed to protect our children. Let’s protect them from these invisible but truly harmful pesticides.”

The solution is clear and urgent. Californians for Pesticide Reform (CPR) and its allies are calling for three immediate actions:

- The State of California must phase out fumigants entirely.
- School buffer zones must be expanded from the current one-quarter mile to at least one full mile to reduce children’s exposure.
- Agricultural commissioners and DPR must fund and implement pilot projects to replace fumigated areas with organic farming in and around school buffer zones.

These measures are achievable, cost-effective and essential to protecting public health. The problem is not limited to 1,3-D; it extends to the entire class of drift-prone fumigants that disproportionately affect farmworker communities. California has the resources, expertise and moral obligation to correct this injustice.

Farmworker families are not asking for charity—they are asking for basic protections that every child deserves: clean air, healthy schools and the ability to grow up free from unnecessary chemical exposure.

Communities from Fresno to Oxnard are mobilizing, attending press conferences and demanding action. Public support for stronger pesticide regulations is growing, but state leadership must act decisively.

Every child in California deserves a safe environment to learn, play and grow. We cannot continue to allow unscientific regulations, influenced by industry interests, to endanger children in Latino and Indigenous communities.

It is time for DPR and local agricultural commissioners to prioritize health over profit and implement policies that genuinely protect all Californians.

The health of our children and the future of our communities depend on it.

\*\*\*\*\*

*Cristina Gutierrez was a farmworker and is a mother of four. She advocates for voter rights here and in Mexico. Currently, she is the San Joaquin Valley regional environmental justice coordinator of Californians for Pesticide Reform.*



Affordable Eastern style yoga  
for all levels of experience  
6 classes per week  
both online and at  
Community United  
Church of Christ  
5550 N Fresno Street

www.yogacenteroffresno.com current schedules available on  
California non-profit our website & our Facebook page

Join us for a quiet time in a busy day.

KENNEDY CLUB OF THE SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY

Founder: Lawrence J. Kelly



The Kennedy Club  
of the San Joaquin Valley

Meeting and Discussing  
Democratic Ideas Since 1997

Kennedy Club meets 1st Saturday of each month.  
9:00am to 11:00am. Please Join Us!  
More Information: fresnocountydemocrats.org

Helping to Preserve  
Fresno’s Pictorial History  
HOWARD K. WATKINS  
Fresno’s Photo Laureate  
www.watkinsphotoarchive.com

(559) 355-7040  
howardkwatkins@gmail.com



## DECEMBER 2025 CALENDAR

**Submit arts-related events to [calendar@fresnoalliance.com](mailto:calendar@fresnoalliance.com) by the 15th of the month preceding publication, or you can post anytime online at [fresnoalliance.com](http://fresnoalliance.com) (select Calendar).**

**Arte, Pero Later** (Thursdays) 6 p.m.–8 p.m. Arte Américas.  
From live music to bilingual book club.

***Shrek: The Musical*** (~Dec. 14) Veterans Memorial Auditorium. \$25

**17 Why Not Wednesday?** 5 p.m.–9 p.m. Fulton St. (Mono to Fresno). Vendors, food trucks, artists and live music.

**Deorro 8 p.m.** Rainbow Ballroom. Electrifying beats. \$54+



**FRESNO  
ARTS  
COUNCIL**

**MEASURE P**

**EXPANDED ACCESS TO  
ARTS & CULTURE**

*The San Joaquin Valley Media Alliance is funded in part by the City of Fresno Measure P Expanded Access to Arts and Culture Fund administered by the Fresno Arts Council.*

## VENUES

2nd Space Theatre • 928 E. Olive Ave. • gcplayers.simpletix.com	Club One Casino • 3950 N. Cedar Ave. • clubonecasino.com	Frank's Place • 1432 Fulton St. • 559-264-2848	OAB Auditorium • Fresno City College • 559-442-8221	Santa Fe Basque Restaurant • 3110 N. Maroa Ave.	The Grand 1401 • 1401 Fulton St. • thegrand1401.com	Vista Theater • 1298 N. Wishon Ave. • 559-222-7464
African American Museum • 1857 Fulton St. • 559-724-9533	DiCicco's Italian Restaurant • 1071 E. Shaw Ave., Clovis • 559-229-7811	Fresno Art Museum • 2233 N. First St. • fresnoartmuseum.org	Paul Shaghoian Concert Hall • 2770 E. International Ave. • 559-327-5000	Saroyan Theatre • 700 M St. • 559-445-8100	Tower Theatre • 815 E. Olive Ave. • towertheatre.com	Warnors Theatre • 1400 Fulton St. • warnorscenter.org
Arte Americas • 1630 Van Ness Ave. • arteamericas.org	Dulce UpFront • 2026 N. Van Ness Blvd. • 559-202-3099	Fulton 55 • 875 Divisadero St. • fulton55.com	Rainbow Ballroom • 1725 Broadway St. • 559-354-1017	Shinzen Friendship Garden • 114 W. Audubon Dr. • 559-478-4848	University Presbyterian Church • 1776 E. Roberts Ave. • upc@upcfresno.org	Woodward Park Regional Library • 944 E. Perrin Ave. • fresnolibrary.org
Bullard High School Auditorium • 5445 N. Palm Ave. • 559-451-4320	FCC Theatre • Fresno City College • 559-442-8221	Harmony House • 2516 N. Van Ness Blvd. • ginalenee.com	River Park's Art Groove Event Center • 80 E. Via Del Oro • 559-840-8886	St. Anne's Chapel • Roman Catholic Diocese • 1550 N. Fresno St.	Valdez Hall • 702 M St. • 559-445-8100	Note: All locations are in the city of Fresno unless otherwise noted.
California Catering • 1603 E St. • 559-222-4202	Fort Washington Shopping Center • 559-490-3600	La Boulangerie • 730 W. Shaw Ave. • 559-222-0555	Roger Rocka's Dinner Theatre • 1226 N. Wishon Ave. • rogerrockas.com	Strummer's Bar & Grill • 833 E. Fern Ave. • strummersclub.com	Veterans Memorial Auditorium • 2425 Fresno St. • 559-621-2916	



# Utility Bills Going Higher

BY EMI YOKO-YOUNG

Everyone deserves safe, clean and affordable energy. But right now Fresno residents have the highest utility bills in the United States. And they're about to get a whole lot higher.

On Nov. 7, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) held hearings in Fresno to consider a request by Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) to raise rates significantly in the near future. There was strong community opposition, and dozens of residents rallied before the hearings, speaking out about the harms of skyrocketing utility bills.

Fresno's bills are four times the national average, rising at a rate that far outpaces inflation. For customers of PG&E, the energy provider for Fresno, electricity bills have jumped more than 56% in the past three years, including six rate hikes in 2024 alone. The story is similar in the rest of the state.

As a result, today more than 20% of all ratepayers—nearly 8 million Californians—are behind on their bills. And in 2024 more than 317,000 households had their power shut off for nonpayment. Low-income, Black and Brown communities bear the brunt of these shutoffs, even as PG&E reported a record \$2.5 billion in profits last year. Less than 3% of shareholders' profits could have prevented all these shutoffs.

Now PG&E has asked the CPUC for another massive rate increase that will raise residential bills by an average of \$42 per month—or \$500 per year. The cost will likely be much higher in Fresno. By 2030, the average PG&E bill could be 14% higher than it is today.

## Act Now!

Reclaim Our Power exists to build the movement to abolish PG&E and replace it with a safe, reliable, renewable, regenerative, decentralized utility (or multiple utilities) that is community and worker controlled. For more info, visit [reclaimourpowerca.org](https://reclaimourpowerca.org). Follow Reclaim Our Power on Instagram and Facebook: @UtilityJustice.

Participate in an upcoming workshop, sign up for the Reclaim Our Power newsletter and/or follow Reclaim Our Power on social media. Also, call your State Senator and Assembly Member and tell them affordability is a matter of life and death in Fresno. Tell them you support a not-for-profit alternative to PG&E in Fresno.

This new rate hike would be a disastrous burden on lower-income and vulnerable communities who are already dealing with sky-high bills. It comes at a time when healthcare premiums are going up, public benefits are being cut, many workers are unable to work because of ICE raids and our communities are struggling. Most California households simply don't have an extra \$500 in the bank.

Add to all of this the specter of energy-hungry data centers coming to Fresno to power the AI bubble. If California follows trends we've seen around the country, our bills will likely shoot up even further, as the cost of data centers' energy "demand" gets passed on to us, the consumers.

With climate change making every year hotter than the last, our power usage keeps going up, especially during the summer when it's impossible to survive without air conditioning and swamp coolers. Energy is a necessity, a human right, but these perpetually rising rates show that in California, it's treated as a privilege for those who can afford it.



Rally at a CPUC hearing in Fresno on Nov. 7.  
Photo by Bernadette Del Chiaro, Environmental Working Group

Why are rates so high to begin with? The root cause lies in the profit incentives of investor-owned utilities (IOUs). The more they spend on capital assets the more profits they extract from us, the ratepayers. Unless we change that, costs will keep climbing.

People often think utilities make money by selling electricity, but they don't. PG&E actually charges you what it pays to generate or buy the power, with no profit attached.

PG&E's real profits come from something else entirely: building infrastructure. Under state law, investor-owned utilities earn a guaranteed rate of return—currently around 10%—on every mile of wire, every substation upgrade and every pole they add to the "rate base." The more they build, and the more expensive the project, the more money they make—regardless of whether the infrastructure is needed.

And we are the ones who pay for both the work itself and those profits. Every dollar of return is added directly to our bills, so long as the CPUC approves the spending. That's how PG&E walked away with record profits last year, even as families fell behind on their bills.

Everything the IOUs propose building follows the same logic: maximize capital expenditures to maximize profits. Take transmission lines, for example. A 2024 study found that publicly built lines would cost half as much as those built by IOUs because they don't carry a profit margin. That would amount to \$28 billion in savings for ratepayers—a sum that under the status quo is simply transferred from working families to utility executives, Wall Street shareholders and financiers.

The good news is sky-high rates aren't inevitable, even in the Central Valley. Alongside the three big investor-owned utilities (PG&E, Southern California Edison and San Diego Gas & Electric), California also has many publicly owned utilities like the Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD) and the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, as well as rural electric cooperatives like Plumas-Sierra in eastern California, near Reno.

On average, publicly owned and cooperative utilities charge 50% less than the IOUs. SMUD's rates are 58% lower than PG&E's even though it was originally a part of PG&E.

Continued to page 17

# America the Great?

BY RUTH GADEBUSCH

Almost from its beginning the United States of America has been considered great, the hope of oppressed people on the rest of the planet with the possible exception of the indigenous people of what we now know as North America. Currently, we have a political party that for its own reasons—power?—decided to denigrate all that the nation was and capitalize on the political phrasing of "Make America Great Again." Oh how we would be thrilled to return to that previous greatness!

What they have created is great?

- A nation of immigrants categorizing many of those long settled here as well as those begging for refuge from the travesties of their home countries is mistreating them horribly, actually inhumanely, not even a mild unwelcome regardless of their reasons for being here or aspiring to enter the country.
- Separating children from parents including nursing mothers.
- Building a holding place for these unfortunate people based on Alcatraz, heretofore known for its most dangerous prisoners, in the Everglades of Florida?

More greatness?

- Eliminating Congressionally approved funding for various serious needs throughout the country.
- Pardoning those legally found guilty in trial of attempting to overthrow the government.

Still more greatness?

- Demanding that a state come up with extra votes by gerrymandering the voting district boundaries off the normal 10-year Census. Clearly not the intent of the law but perhaps a bit better than calling a governor after a legal election and demanding that he find a certain number of additional votes to change the electoral outcome.
- Not swearing in as a duly, correctly elected member of the House of Representatives leaving her citizens unrepresented because she has promised to vote differently from the power party. Her voters knew her intent, so what right does the Speaker of the House have to discount them? The same speaker adjourned the house to avoid losing a vote on other serious national matters.

Many who have sworn an oath to follow those documents so carefully created instead choose to stay quiet, thereby

following a leader arguably of the most maniac ego ever known. They fail to realize that it does no good to hold public office if they don't serve beyond their own personal desires.

Likewise, they miss that his loyalty to them disappears with the least deviation of bowing to him. In other words, his needs for worshipers at his feet will never be sufficiently satisfied.

Accordingly, with a compliant Supreme Court, this so-called leader has a free hand to become the king he intends to be. Appointing and getting confirmation from the Congress of people for more loyalty to the appointer than for any qualification whatsoever.

We are already well on our way to allowing the collapse of democracy as we have known it. One man (or woman if we ever elected such to the high office of President of the United States) is exercising action by simply signing a proclamation for whatever idea creeps into his head without regard to our Constitution designed for protecting with its long accepted principles of full rights for all.

He has even had the gall to attempt to change birthright citizenship long accepted by every nation on the planet. If you have tinted skin you had certainly better lay low from the agencies meant to enforce the law for cause but directed to ignore it. Nor are they clearly identified or identifiable for their actions. Worse yet, the military in the form of the National Guard is being misused against citizens, clearly forbidden by our Constitution.

Where does it stop, particularly with our Defense Department now being designated as the War Department? High military officers were called from their duties in worldwide military operations to hear a propaganda presentation by the President and his war secretary.

Many are being unexpectedly removed from their positions because they did not clap and praise sufficiently, bow low enough, for the ego maniac. No doubt their minds were more on what lower, less experienced, less knowledgeable officers were managing duties in the positions they left to attend this pep rally.

Tariffs? Is this making America great? Eliminating management departments designed to coordinate various existing needs or unexpected ones such as FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency). FEMA is not helping California's recovery from the devastating fires of last season because it votes Democratic.

Plain incompetence why North Carolina still is in such bad shape following the floods of the last hurricane season as another approaching hurricane season damage is likely.



## ONE WOMAN'S VIEW

Neither action or lack of such makes us "Great Again."

At this writing, we are in the second week of a government closure because the Congress could not make a budget by the deadline. It is beyond the comprehension of why they are fighting over which is the need of the country: tax cuts for the already filthy rich or healthcare for the multitudes.

I for one would not worry about citizens or illegal. After all, injuries and contagious diseases are not confined to one group, but even one has its effect on society as a whole.

Unfortunately, this government shutdown gives the egotistical leader even greater power for his most egregious ideas. The military and essential workers of all kinds are expected to work without salaries in the past to be paid afterward, but this time threatened along with the many fired for no reason except to destroy the department.

And that is long before we have even thought about how the Department of Justice affects the nation's justice system by going after those officials who have somehow irritated the "leader" in carrying out their duties according to law. How this makes America greater escapes me. We really should not be surprised when the President is a convicted criminal who shows no regret for his actions.

For a while, it appeared that the MAGAs might be embarrassed about the Epstein list of sexual crimes against young girls/women but even that seems buried. Nevertheless, we would not have to look far for that and other actions not exactly Making America Great Again so far as many of us are concerned.

We could go on but all this is becoming more discouraging, and we are not becoming greater unless and until we get a grip on civil matters in an ethical way. In short, is it to be healthy for the normal ordinary citizens or more money than the rich accepting these tax gifts know what to do with other than buy elections?

What kind of country do we want? What are we doing to make it happen? It certainly does not seem to be happening under the party abusing the system under the leadership of this elected official and his cohorts.

\*\*\*\*\*

*Ruth Gadebusch, a former naval officer, Fresno Unified School District trustee and member of the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, is a longtime community activist in a variety of civil and social efforts.*



Peace & Social Justice Calendar

December 2025

Sponsored by the Fresno Center for Nonviolence

Weekly

KFCF 88.1 FM: Nuestro Foro (Tuesdays; Spanish) 7 p.m.–8 p.m. News, commentaries and music with a Latino touch hosted by Eduardo Stanley. For more info, visit [kfcf.org](#).

Raza Against War/Women in Black (Wednesdays) 11 a.m.–1 p.m. Federal Courthouse, 2500 Tulare St., Fresno. For more info, contact [comworkeradvocate@gmail.com](#).

Stop Trump’s Wars, End Genocide (Saturdays) 6 p.m.–7:30 p.m. Blackstone and Nees avenues, Fresno. Yokuts’ Land. Connect, build community and stand for all oppressed and occupied people.

MON 01

Mass Blackout (~Dec. 2) Countrywide economic blackout protest. Before and after the blackout, purchase goods needed from community-owned stores. Coordinated national pushback. Maximum local impact. For more info, visit [blackoutthesystem.com/](#).

TUE 02

National Women’s Political Caucus (NWPC) 5:30 p.m. Los Amigos Restaurant, 5088 N. Blackstone Ave., Fresno. Holiday party. For more info, contact [joanne@pbyoga.com](#).

WED 03

California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA) 1 p.m. Via Zoom. Regional meeting. Link: [us06web.zoom.us/j/2284684729](#).

KFCF 88.1 FM: *Stir It Up!* 3 p.m.–3:30 p.m. *Community Alliance* radio show hosted by Daren Miller. For more info, visit [kfcf.org](#).

Screening: *Motel Drive* 6 p.m. Warnors Theatre, 1400 Fulton St., Fresno. In this documentary, within a community of motels infamous for illicit activity, the Shaw family grapples with housing insecurity and addiction while trying to raise their young son. When California’s High-Speed Rail project displaces them, a glimpse of stability appears within reach. Followed by a panel discussion on resilience, community and the road ahead. For more info, contact 559-442-8200.

THU 04

Community Needs Public Hearing and Survey 9 a.m. 2600 Fresno St., Fresno City Hall. Public hearing for input on which eligible activities residents would like to see funded in the 2026–2027 Annual Action Plan for Housing and Community Development Needs and how those activities can be most effectively implemented. Learn more at [fresno.gov/housing](#).

Soup for My Family Gathering 3 p.m.–8 p.m. LGBT EOC Sanctuary, 1252 Fulton St., Fresno. Potluck and community meet-up for nourishment of mind, body and soul.

Cultivating Activism: Inspiring Stories from the Field 5:30 p.m.–6:30 p.m. Central Valley Matters supports six grassroots organizations to reach low-turnout Congressional District 22 voters through innovative solutions and trusted communication. Learn more at this fundraiser featuring the steadfast voices of moderator Camila Chavez (director, Dolores Huerta Action Fund), Dolores Huerta (world-renowned activist) and Rosario Dawson (creator, Voto Latino). For more info, contact [shannonedwards14@gmail.com](#).

Tulare Democratic Club 7 p.m. For more info, contact [tularedemocraticclub1@gmail.com](#).

SAT 06

Kennedy Club of the San Joaquin Valley 9 a.m.–11 a.m. Los Amigos Restaurant, 5088 N. Blackstone Ave., Fresno. For more info, contact 559-435-4043 or [claval@comcast.net](#).

Protest/Visibility Event 9 a.m.–9:30 a.m. Corner of Buttonwillow and Manning avenues, Reedley. Bring your signs with whatever is on your mind this week. For more info, contact [reedleypeacecenter.com](#).

Community Alliance Fundraiser 5 p.m.–8 p.m. OAB 251, Fresno City College. See ad on page 2.

MON 08

Fresno County Democratic Women’s Club 11 a.m.–1 p.m. Democratic Party HQ, 1033 U St., Fresno. Holiday potluck. Collecting grocery store gift cards (\$20 minimum). Speaker: Yolanda Moore on good personal care. For more info, contact [claval@comcast.net](#).

Black Women Organized for Political Action (BWOPA) 5 p.m. Democratic Party HQ, 1033 U St., Fresno. For more info, contact [swgamble@aol.com](#).

Tulare County Stonewall Democrats 6 p.m. Me-n-Ed’s Pizza, 1331 W. Henderson Ave., Porterville. For more info, contact [tcstonewalldems@gmail.com](#).

Housing Justice for Collective Liberation 6 p.m.–8 p.m. Via Zoom. Learn about the fight for housing justice since the colonization of Turtle Island to present tenant- and land-based movements. Presented by Tenants Together. Register at [bit.ly/41U7iUf](#).

TUE 09

Black American Political Association of California (BAPAC) 6 p.m. Via Zoom. For more info, contact [bapacfresno@gmail.com](#).

Kings County Democratic Central Committee 6 p.m. Democratic Party HQ, 621-A N. Irwin St., Hanford. For more info, contact 559-858-0852.

Porterville Democratic Club 6 p.m. Pizza Factory, 879 W. Henderson Ave., Porterville. For more info, contact [contactportervilledems@yahoo.com](#).

Town Hall on Education 6 p.m.–7:30 p.m. Room 251, OAB, Fresno City College. Education is a public trust—a shared investment that shapes the moral and economic fabric of our region. Hosted by State Center Federation of Teachers.

WED 10

Pilgrimage of Hope 6 a.m.–9 p.m. A public witness of faith, love and justice. Journey from San Joaquin County to Kern County to bear witness to the many struggles facing communities and to help ensure that no one stands alone. For more info, visit [faithinvalley](#) on Instagram.

KFCF 88.1 FM: *Stir It Up!* 3 p.m.–3:30 p.m. Fresno Center for Nonviolence radio show hosted by Josh Shurley. For more info, visit [kfcf.org](#).

KFCF 88.1 FM: *Speaking Truth to Empire* 3 p.m.–3:30 p.m. Hosted by Dan Yaseen. For more info, visit [kfcf.org](#).

Annual Human Rights Day 5 p.m.–7:30 p.m. Keynote speaker: Abdi Soltani, executive director of Northern California ACLU. Video message from Attorney General Rob Bonta. Moderated by Blake Zante, executive director of the Maddy Institute. For more info, contact [bvazz5@comcast.net](#).

San Joaquin Valley Democratic Club 6:30 p.m. Round Table Pizza, 3710 W. Shields Ave., Fresno. For more info, contact [sjvdemclub@gmail.com](#).

THU 11

KFCF 88.1 FM: *Valley Rising* 3 p.m.–3:30 p.m. Hosted by Daren Miller and Daniel O’Connell. For more info, visit [kfcf.org](#).

Organizing Series: Unionize! 5:30 p.m.–7:30 p.m. Room 188, OAB, Fresno City College. A power-building workshop for workers seeking a union election. Sponsored by the Empowerment Institute. For more info, visit [powerwithpeople.org](#).

Screening: *Fremont* 6 p.m. Forum Hall 101, Fresno City College. Donya works for a Chinese fortune cookie factory. Formerly a translator for the U.S. military, she struggles to put her life back in order. In a moment of sudden revelation, she decides to send out a special message in a cookie. Screening followed by a panel discussion. Free.

Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) 7 p.m. Fresno Center for Nonviolence, 1584 N. Van Ness Ave., Fresno. Online/in person. For more info, contact [taca\\_03@ymail.com](#).

SAT 13

Fresno Stonewall Democrats 6 p.m. Holiday party. For location and more info, contact [info@fresnostonewalldemocrats.org](#).

SUN 14

PFLAG Fresno 2 p.m. Fireside Room, Wesley United Methodist Church, 1343 E. Barstow Ave., Fresno. Supporting, educating and advocating for LGBTQ+ people and their families. For more info, contact [pflagfresno@gmail.com](#).

CAIR Central California Banquet 4 p.m. Guest speaker: Imam Tom Facchine, a Muslim intellectual, community organizer, political strategist and research director for Islam and society at the Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research. Buy tickets at [galabid.com/centralcalifornia](#).

Central Valley Indivisible 6 p.m. The Big Red Church, 2131 N. Van Ness Ave., Fresno. For more info, contact [pattycapp@gmail.com](#).

TUE 16

Central Valley Partnership 5:30 p.m. Room 251, Old Administration Building, Fresno City College. For more info, contact [admin@centralvalleypartnership.org](#).

Kings County Jimmy Carter Club 6 p.m. Lemoore. For more info, contact [kcjimmycarterclub@gmail.com](#).

THU 18

Clovis Democratic Club 6 p.m. Holiday gathering and installation of officers. For more info, contact [clovisdemocraticclub@gmail.com](#).

Peace Fresno 6:30 p.m. Fresno Center for Nonviolence, 1584 N. Van Ness Ave., Fresno. Monthly meeting to plan antiwar strategies. For more info, contact [president@peacefresno.org](#).

Tulare County Democratic Central Committee 7 p.m. In Tulare and via Zoom. For more info, contact [tcdccsecretary@gmail.com](#).

FRI 19

KFCF 88.1 FM: *It’s a Queer Thang* 5 p.m.–6 p.m. Covering local and national LGBTQ+ issues and events. Hosted by Chris Jarvis and Kaylia Metcalfe Armstrong. For more info, visit [kfcf.org](#).

SAT 20

Protest/Visibility Event 9 a.m.–9:30 a.m. Corner of Buttonwillow and Manning avenues, Reedley. Bring your signs with whatever is on your mind this week. For more info, contact [reedleypeacecenter.com](#).

SUN 21

Homeless Persons’ Memorial Day 2 p.m.–4 p.m. Eaton Plaza Amphitheater, 2400 Mariposa St., Fresno. Remembering unhoused people who died while living on the streets.

WED 24

KFCF 88.1 FM: *Stir It Up!* 3 p.m.–3:30 p.m. WILPF radio show hosted by Jean Hays. For more info, visit [kfcf.org](#).

Submit upcoming community activities to calendar@fresnoalliance.com by the 15th of the month preceding publication, or you can post anytime online at [fresnoalliance.com](#) (select Calendar).

# Utility Bills

Continued from page 16

Why such a big difference? Because they’re not-for-profit. They don’t make choices based on maximizing dividends. Every dollar goes back into operations and reliability.

Let’s be clear: As long as utilities profit by spending more, the system will keep producing unaffordable bills. You cannot regulate away the structural profit incentives that drive IOUs to overspend, overcharge and underperform. You cannot tweak an energy system that is forcing millions into poverty just so a handful of shareholders on Wall Street can get richer. It’s unconscionable, but it doesn’t have to be this way.

California desperately needs structural change to its energy system, which only the legislature can accomplish. This year, SB 332, the Investor-Owned Utilities Accountability Act, was introduced. SB 332 would have tasked University of California researchers with creating a road map for transformation: moving the state away from the profit-centered

status quo toward a not-for-profit alternative that centers the needs of working families, rather than Wall Street shareholders.

The study would have considered many options—public ownership, a cooperative structure, a not-for-profit public benefit corporation—with the aim of creating a more affordable, safer and more reliable energy system.

Unfortunately, lobbyists for the utilities have succeeded in killing every viable piece of legislation that tries to take the profits out of the energy system. The insult in the injury? They use money from our own electric bills to pay those lobbyists to fight against our interests.

But the movement to transition away from PG&E and profit-driven energy is growing. For example, Reclaim Our Power is organizing across the state to transform our energy system so that it puts people and the planet over profits. In Fresno, workshops are being hosted to hear from the community about what a people’s utility could and should look like—one that works for us, not the shareholders.

\*\*\*\*\*

*Emi Yoko-Young is a policy organizer with the Reclaim Our Power: Utility Justice Campaign.*

PATIENCE MILROD

LAWYER/LICENCIADA EN LEYES

985 NORTH VAN NESS AVENUE

FRESNO, CALIFORNIA 93728

559.246.7239 PM@PATIENCEMILROD.COM

Parents, Families & Friends

Allied with the LGBTQ+ Community



Meetings the 2nd Sunday of the month @2PM

At Wesley UMC

1343 E. Barstow Ave

Fresno CA 93710

[www.PFLAGFresno.org](#)

(559) 434-6540

[pflagfresno@gmail.com](#)

MEDITATION FOR INNER PEACE & HAPPINESS

Raja Yoga is the most ancient form of meditation. You can learn to maintain stability of mind in stressful situations and gain more control over your life. Both individual and group instructions are available. No charge.

Monthly events:

Women of Spirit & World Meditation Day.

Call Veena Kapoor: (559) 435-2212

Website: [www.bkwsu.com](#)



17

ALLIANCE

COMMUNITY

DECEMBER 2025



El periódico Community Alliance (Alianza Comunitaria) se publica mensualmente por San Joaquín Valley Media Alliance, ubicada en 1584 N. Van Ness Ave., Fresno, CA 93728. El periódico Community Alliance (Alianza Comunitaria) se distribuye gratis o por suscripción. Las suscripciones son de \$40 por año; \$60 por año para activistas; y \$15 para personas de bajos ingresos.

Desde 1996, Alianza Comunitaria ha sido una voz progresista independiente para el Valle Central de San Joaquín. Alianza Comunitaria aboga por la justicia racial, social, ambiental y económica; igualdad de derechos para todos, incluidos los inmigrantes, las personas sin hogar y la comunidad LGBTQ+; Acceso a una educación pública gratuita y de calidad para todos; Acceso a la atención sanitaria para todos; Un salario digno para todos los trabajadores. Nuestro objetivo es exponer los problemas raciales, sociales, medio-ambientales y económicos e injusticias políticas. Ayudaremos a construir un poderoso movimiento progresista que hará que todas nuestras comunidades sean más seguras, más sanas, más equitativas y más habitables.

EDITOR INTERINO

Peter Maiden

editor@fresnoalliance.com

MESA DIRECTIVA,

Olga Loza

Norberto Gonzalez

Michaelyn Lewis

Bob McCloskey

James Mendez

Pam Whalen

Ashley Harper

COMPAGINADORA

Ashley Harper

DISTRIBUCIÓN/

FOTOGRAFÍA

Peter Maiden

maidentfoto1@gmail.com

PUBLICIDAD

I. smiley G. Calderón

714-290-6651 (texto)

smileycalderon@gmail.com

(También hablo español)

CORRECTOR DE PRUEBAS

Michael D. Evans

EDITOR EMÉRITO

Mike Rhodes

SUSCRIPCIÓN

Envíe \$60

(constructor del movimiento pro-

gresista), \$40 (regular) or \$15 (bajo

ingreso) a:

COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

P.O. Box 5077

Fresno, CA 93755

fresnoalliance.com

ENVÍO DE ARTÍCULOS

PARA PUBLICACIÓN

Fecha límite:

El 15 de mes previo.

Artículos 800–1,200 palabras.

E-mail editor@fresnoalliance.com.

Calendarios de Paz y Justicia

Social y de Arte y Cultura:

Por favor envíe sus eventos

para anunciarlos a:

calendar@fresnoalliance.com

el 15 de mes previo.

Cartas al Editor:

E-mail editor@fresnoalliance.com.

Hasta 200 palabras.

El periódico Alianza Comunitaria

se reserva el derecho de editar los

artículos por razones de espacio

y claridad. Alianza Comunitaria se

imprime en papel reciclado. Alianza

Comunitaria es una entidad 501(c)(4).

# Juan Esparza, Una Vida Dedicada al Periodismo del Valle

POR EDUARDO STANLEY

Después de casi medio siglo reportando una gran variedad de noticias y aportando punzantes columnas de opinión en inglés y español, Juan Esparza Loera se jubiló de su puesto en el periódico The Fresno Bee. Esta cadena, que incluye periódicos en Fresno, Modesto y Sacramento, fue su casa durante más de 40 años.

“Al principio yo quería ser abogado, pero tenía pocos recursos y pensé que me llevaría mucho tiempo lograrlo”, dijo Esparza durante una entrevista telefónica. Esparza nació al sur de Ciudad Juárez, México, “en el rancho de mis abuelos”. Su madre era mexicana y su padre estadounidense. A los dos años sus padres lo trajeron a Texas. Luego de una breve residencia en Nuevo México, llegó a Earlimart siendo un adolescente.

Después de graduarse de la Preparatoria Delano High, donde escribía para el periódico escolar y sacaba fotos, ingresó al Bakersfield College. “Allí empecé a escribir crónicas deportivas. Me pagaban 25 centavos por pulgada. O sea que por un artículo de 20 pulgadas yo recibía \$5 dólares. Nada mal en esa época. Para mí estaba bien porque mi renta era de \$50 dólares al mes porque compartía vivienda con dos amigos”, recuerda Esparza.

Ingresó a la escuela de periodismo de Fresno State. Siendo estudiante colaboró con The Fresno Bee cubriendo deportes. Después de graduarse regresó dos años a Bakersfield para trabajar en The Californian y el 1980 ingresó al periódico The Modesto Bee, donde desarrolló una extensa carrera de periodista en distintas capacidades.

En 1990 fue nombrado editor y director del nuevo periódico bilingüe Vida en el Valle, orientado a la comunidad latina. Este periódico tuvo ediciones en Fresno, Modesto, Merced y Sacramento. Llegó a publicar más de 165.000 ejemplares semanales y recibió numerosas distinciones. Hace aproximadamente dos años dejó de publicarse como parte de la crisis social y económica que padecen los periódicos impresos en Estados Unidos.

## Alarma Educativa

Continúa de página 20

Las alianzas comunitarias también deben desempeñar un papel central. Las universidades, organizaciones sin fines de lucro y grupos cívicos pueden ayudar a cerrar la brecha entre la escuela y las oportunidades reales para los estudiantes. Los años del 7.º y 8.º grado son el puente crítico entre la niñez y los retos de la preparatoria. Son los años en que los jóvenes descubren la confianza en su aprendizaje o internalizan el fracaso como su destino. Los resultados del CAASPP 2024–2025 nos indican que demasiados están recorriendo el segundo camino.

VISITE NUESTRO SITIO WEB  
Todo nuestro contenido está disponible en línea para que lo lea  
https://fresnoalliance.com/

Espi Sandoval tiene 30 años como educador en el sistema K-12 del Valle de San Joaquín. En el sistema K-14, el Sr. Espi Sandoval ha sido defensor/consultor de inscripción dual durante años. Sus logros incluyen haber sido nominado Educador del año por Golden Plains en el pasado y recibió el premio Dolores Huerta el 3 de junio de 2023. El Sr. Espi Sandoval continúa trabajando con los jóvenes más vulnerables y de alto riesgo en el condado de Fresno.

No podemos permitirnos otro año de silencio o indiferencia. Cada número en estos reportes representa a un niño — una vida, un posible ingeniero, maestro, enfermero o líder comunitario cuyos sueños están siendo retrasados por un sistema roto. Las escuelas del 7.º y 8.º grado del Condado de Fresno están enviando un mensaje y la pregunta es: ¿Alguien está escuchando? \*\*\*\*\*

Eduardo Stanley es periodista independiente de Fresno.

El movimiento Chicano tuvo una importante influencia en la formación cultural y ética de Esparza no descansaba. Podía viajar a Los Angeles para cubrir una nota y regresar ese mismo día a Fresno para participar en otro evento. “Bueno, creo que ahora tendré tiempo para descansar”, dice riéndose—aunque es difícil creerle. “Cuando haces lo que te gusta no te cansas”. El movimiento Chicano tuvo una importante influencia en la formación cultural y ética de Esparza. Sin embargo Esparza dice sentirse feliz por su larga trayectoria profesional y por las oportunidades que le fueron ofrecidas. Por ahora, asegura, quiere descansar y luego pensará cuál será su próximo proyecto.. “Durante mi carrera, he tenido la oportunidad de entrevistar a muchas personalidades, como Shakira, Los Tigres del Norte, Selena, Little Joe... Hillary Clinton, Alex Padilla, Kamala Harris, Antonio Villaraigosa, y políticos locales”, recuerda Esparza. “Cubrí muchos partidos de fútbol en distintas ciudades, también reporté sobre las convenciones del Sindicato de Campesinos (UFW, por sus siglas en inglés), y más. Pero lo más emocionante para mí fue conocer gente del Valle, gente trabajadora, que sueña con hacer lo mejor para sus hijos.

“Recuerdo esa chica que en su ceremonia de graduación le entregó una placa a sus padres en agradecimiento por su apoyo para estudiar, o las personas que participan en la cabalgata anual de Joaquín Murrieta; o aquel trabajador que empleaba y entrenaba en restaurantes”, dice emocionado Esparza. Precisamente Esparza destaca que en Vida en el Valle, él le pedía a sus reporteros no caer en estereotipos y enfocarse en la versatilidad y diversidad de intereses y talentos de nuestra comunidad.





la débil regulación del 1,3-D recientemente finalizada por el Departamento de Regulación de Pesticidas”. Describió el producto como un “contaminante tóxico del aire, carcinógeno y dañino para los pulmones”, y un fumigante compuesto orgánico volátil que la mayor parte del mundo considera tan peligroso que ha sido prohibido en 40 países”.

Pero en California, Facio recalcó: “El Departamento de Regulación de Pesticidas no solo se ha negado a prohibir el 1,3-D, sino que también se ha negado a seguir las conclusiones de los propios expertos estatales en cáncer de la Oficina de Evaluación de Riesgos Ambientales para la Salud al establecer los niveles de exposición permitidos en sus nuevas regulaciones”.

Facio afirmó que la regulación permite que los escolares estén expuestos a 14 veces más pesticida que el umbral de riesgo de cáncer establecido por el toxicólogo estatal. Facio declaró: “California ha creado una regulación ambientalmente racista que perjudica a los niños latinos e indígenas”.

Estos productos se comercializan bajo las marcas agrícolas vecinos. El Departamento de Salud y Servicios Humanos de los Estados Unidos ha determinado que el 1,3-D es un probable carcinógeno para los seres humanos. ¿Qué tan peligroso es? La exposición puede causar irritación cutánea y dificultad respiratoria. Según la Biblioteca Nacional de Medicina, “la exposición a corto plazo a cierta concentración de 1,3-D es perjudicial para el cuerpo humano en un ambiente cerrado. La absorción a través de las vías respiratorias puede ir seguida del paso a través de la barrera hematoencefálica, la deposición en el tejido cerebral, la inhibición del sistema nervioso central y el edema cerebral difuso, lo que provoca daños agudos en la función cardíaca, pulmonar y renal, y finalmente la muerte”.

En 2023, un hombre que trabajaba en un invernadero en China falleció a causa de la exposición al 1,3-D.

La cloropicrina es otro fungicida e insecticida de uso común. Se la conoce comúnmente como gas lacrimógeno y se comercializa bajo diversas marcas, como Tri-Chlor y Larvacide. La cloropicrina es un irritante tóxico que puede causar graves daños respiratorios, irritación ocular y quemaduras en la piel. A menudo se aplica en combinación con productos de 1,3-D como fungicida.

Históricamente, se ha utilizado y se sigue utilizando como arma química y agente antidisturbios. En la protesta de Watsonville, Oscar Ramos, maestro de primaria en Salinas, afirmó que su trabajo es proteger a sus alumnos y no se anduvo con rodeos. “Nuestros niños están obligados a ir a la escuela, donde están expuestos a pesticidas altamente peligrosos. Digámoslo claro: los están envenenando. Mientras que el resto del mundo ha prohibido fumigantes como el 1,3-D y la cloropicrina en la última década, los reguladores de California han permitido que se utilicen cada vez más cerca de nuestros alumnos. Cualquiera con un mínimo de sensibilidad sabe que esto es simplemente inaceptable en muchos sentidos”.

Gabriela Facio, del Sierra Club, declaró que en 2014, el Departamento de Salud Pública de California publicó un estudio pionero sobre el uso de pesticidas altamente peligrosos en un radio de 400 metros de las escuelas públicas en los 15 condados con mayor consumo de pesticidas. “Lo que encontramos es un alarmante aumento general en estos 15 condados. El uso de 1,3-D aumentó de más de 149,000 libras a casi 190,000 libras, un incremento del 27 %.

El otro fumigante tóxico, la cloropicrina, se encuentra entre los plaguicidas sintéticos más utilizados en el estado. Es un agente dañino para los pulmones y su uso aumentó de 161,000 libras a 259,000 libras en un radio de un cuarto de milla de las escuelas de California. Esto representa un aumento total del 61 %”. El uso combinado de estos dos fumigantes aumentó un 45 % entre 2010 y 2022.

En Modesto, la Dra. Michelle Ryan, enfermera de familia y experta en salud pública, enfatizó que los niños son los más vulnerables al riesgo de intoxicación. “Como profesionales de la salud, constantemente les recordamos a los padres que mantengan los productos de limpieza, los

## La Política Sobre el 1,3-D Pone en Peligro a Nuestros Hijos

POR CRISTINA GUTIERREZ

Las recientes regulaciones del Departamento de Regulación de Pesticidas (DPR) permiten que los escolares estén expuestos a 1,3-D 14 veces más que el nivel de exposición segura calculado por la Oficina de Evaluación de Riesgos para la Salud Ambiental (OEHA).

Esto no es solo un fallo regulatorio, sino racismo ambiental. En los 10 condados de California con mayor uso de 1,3-D, ocho tienen una mayoría de población latina, y la exposición a pesticidas en estas comunidades es diez veces mayor que en los condados con menor población latina. Las comunidades de trabajadores agrícolas son la columna vertebral de la agricultura californiana, sin embargo, sus hijos están siendo sacrificados para proteger las ganancias corporativas.

El problema se agrava por las débiles premisas de las regulaciones del DPR sobre “espectadores ocupacionales”. Las normas asumen que los trabajadores agrícolas solo trabajan de 8 a.m. a 4 p.m., que los niños y los residentes fuera de los campos no están expuestos antes ni después del trabajo, y que los adultos jubilados no corren riesgo en hogares donde se dispersan sustancias químicas.

Estas suposiciones ignoran la exposición en el mundo real y se basan en un modelo informático que ha subestimado sistemáticamente los niveles de 1,3-D en las comunidades. Erika Alfaro, enfermera de salud pública y miembro de Safe Ag Safe Schools, explicó: “Cuando se ignora la ciencia, la injusticia prospera”.

A pesar de las políticas previas de California que exigían zonas de amortiguamiento de 400 metros alrededor de las escuelas y limitaban la aplicación de fumigantes a los fines de semana, los datos de monitoreo muestran que las concentraciones en el aire cerca de las escuelas siguen estando muy por encima de los niveles seguros. Los umbrales de riesgo de cáncer establecidos por la OEHA se superan habitualmente entre 2,3 y 30 veces.

medicamentos y los venenos bajo llave, fuera del alcance de los niños. Y hacemos esto porque los niños son curiosos y porque, lamentablemente, les gusta llevarse cosas a la boca. Entonces, ¿por qué al mismo tiempo podemos aceptar que se coloquen intencionalmente venenos en los alimentos que consumen, en el suelo donde viven y en el aire que rodea sus escuelas y parques infantiles?”

“Sus cerebros, pulmones y sistemas inmunitarios aún se están desarrollando. Respiran más rápido, inhalan más aire y su superficie corporal es mayor, lo que permite una mayor absorción a través de la piel. Todo esto aumenta su riesgo de ingerir más toxinas al exponerse. Además, pasan más tiempo cerca del suelo, donde se acumulan los residuos de pesticidas, y pueden jugar en césped contaminado, debido a la volatilización proveniente de campos cercanos donde se aplicaron pesticidas la noche anterior.

“Para los niños que viven o asisten a una escuela cerca de campos tratados, la exposición no es un hecho aislado, sino campos tratados, la exposición no es un hecho aislado, sino diaria, acumulativa y de por vida, que comienza incluso antes del nacimiento, en el útero. La exposición a pesticidas como el 1,3-D se ha relacionado con un mayor riesgo de cáncer, trastornos cerebrales y del sistema nervioso, y enfermedades respiratorias, como asma, trastornos gastrointestinales y renales”.

John Mataka es un defensor comunitario que trabaja estrechamente con los residentes afectados por la contaminación y los riesgos ambientales en todo el condado de Stanislaus. Insistió en que los distritos escolares no pueden esperar a que el estado tome medidas.

“El Departamento de Regulación de Pesticidas ha demostrado que perjudicará la salud de la comunidad. Las protecciones estatales siguen siendo débiles y científicamente obsoletas. Los condados, las ciudades y los distritos escolares tienen la autoridad para ir más allá del requisito mínimo estatal. Esperar a que Sacramento actúe es aceptar que nuestros residentes y nuestros niños sigan sufriendo daños. Exigimos una zona de amortiguamiento de una milla. Esta exigencia cuenta con el apoyo de las comunidades de bajos ingresos y está respaldada por cualquier requisito menor expone deliberadamente a nuestros niños y residentes a problemas de salud y daños”.

Maestros, padres y líderes comunitarios siguen viendo cómo los niños juegan al aire libre mientras sustancias químicas peligrosas flotan en el aire. Oscar Ramos, maestro de segundo grado, comentó: “Esta es una política de racismo ambiental... Debemos dejar de atacar y sacrificar a nuestros escolares en las comunidades agrícolas. Se supone que debemos proteger a nuestros hijos. Protejámoslos de estos pesticidas invisibles pero verdaderamente dañinos”.

La solución es clara y urgente. La organización Californians for Pesticide Reform (CFR) y sus aliados exigen tres acciones inmediatas:

- El Estado de California debe eliminar por completo los fumigantes.
- Las zonas de amortiguamiento escolar deben ampliarse de los actuales 400 metros a al menos 1,6 kilómetros para reducir la exposición de los niños.
- Los Comisionados de Agricultura y el Departamento de Regulación de Pesticidas (DPR) deben financiar e implementar proyectos piloto para reemplazar las áreas fumigadas con agricultura orgánica dentro y alrededor de las zonas de amortiguamiento Escolar.

Estas medidas son viables, rentables y esenciales para proteger la salud pública. El problema no se limita al 1,3-D, abarca a toda la clase de fumigantes con tendencia a la deriva que afectan desproporcionadamente a las comunidades de trabajadores agrícolas. California cuenta con los recursos, la experiencia y la obligación moral de corregir esta injusticia.

Las familias de trabajadores agrícolas no piden caridad; piden protecciones básicas que todo niño merece: aire limpio, escuelas saludables y la posibilidad de crecer libres de exposición innecesaria a químicos. Comunidades desde Fresno hasta Oxnard se están movilizando, participando en conferencias de prensa y exigiendo acción. El apoyo público a regulaciones más estrictas sobre pesticidas está creciendo, pero el gobierno estatal debe actuar con decisión.

*Cristina Gutierrez, quien fuera trabajadora agrícola y madre de cuatro hijos, defiende el derecho al voto tanto en West Park y otras zonas del sur de Fresno, se detectó 1,3-D en un monitor colocado dentro de la escuela primaria West Park.*

El plaguicida se detectó incluso en zonas sin aplicaciones autorizadas cercanas. West Park alberga una escuela donde el 90% del alumnado es latino. También es el hogar de ancianos latinos que pasan horas al aire libre cuidando los jardines, a veces después de décadas trabajando como jornaleros agrícolas y expuestos a estos plaguicidas en su lugar de trabajo.

Gabriela Facio cuestionó la política regulatoria del estado. “Si el proceso de regulación individual de plaguicidas puede dar lugar a la política anticientífica y racista que tenemos ahora con el 1,3-D, entonces todo el proceso está viciado. Nuestros colegas abogados ya están preparando una demanda. Pero el problema no es solo el 1,3-D, sino toda la clase de fumigantes altamente peligrosos y con alta tendencia a la deriva”.

En nombre de la coalición de organizaciones defensoras, Facto exigió medidas inmediatas. “Exigimos al estado, y en particular al Departamento de Recursos Naturales (DPR), que actualmente alcanza niveles extremadamente altos. Solicitamos que se amplíen las zonas de amortiguamiento de los actuales 400 metros (un cuarto de milla) a por lo menos 1.6 kilómetros (una milla) alrededor de las escuelas y guarderías. Finalmente, instamos a los comisionados de agricultura y al DPR a que colaboren para financiar e implementar proyectos piloto que permitan cultivar productos orgánicos en las zonas de amortiguamiento de las escuelas”.

ENVÍE SUS COMENTARIOS. CORREO ELECTRÓNICO: EDITOR@FRESNOALLIANCE.COM.

*Vic Bedoian es el corresponsal del Valle Central para KPFA News y reportero de Community Alliance, especializado en historia natural y temas de justicia ambiental.*



LA VOZ DEL MOVIMIENTO PROGRESISTA DESDE 1996

COMUNITARIA

LLAMAZA

Comunidades  
Protestan Contra  
las Regulaciones  
de Fumigantes

POR VIC BEDOIAN

La organización Californians for Pesticide Reform (Californianos por la Reforma de los Pesticidas) ha lanzado una ofensiva contra la regulación estatal de los fumigantes agrícolas 1,3-dicloropropeno y cloropicrina, exigiendo al Departamento de Regulación de Pesticidas (DPR, por sus siglas en inglés) que emita directrices más estrictas para el uso de estos químicos extremadamente tóxicos, especialmente cerca de escuelas y comunidades agrícolas. Defensores de la salud pública y la seguridad de los trabajadores agrícolas se reunieron en Watsonville, Modesto, Oxnard y Fresno para protestar contra las normas estatales recientemente emitidas en eventos transmitidos en vivo a nivel estatal.

Gabriela Facio, de Sierra Club California, dio inicio a los eventos con una descripción general del problema. “Nuestras comunidades están sumamente alarmadas por

Continúa en página 19

La Alarma Educativa en  
el Condado de Fresno

POR ESPI SANDOVAL

Una crisis educativa se está extendiendo silenciosamente por todo el condado de Fresno y CAASPP 2024–2025 de las escuelas del 7º y 8º grado revelan una verdad alarmante: nuestros estudiantes están quedando muy rezagados en inglés y matemáticas, y pocos

están prestando atención. De las 37 escuelas de 7.º y 8.º grado del condado, solo unas pocas muestran que sus

estudiantes alcancen el nivel académico esperado. En los primeros lugares están Computech Middle (85.75% en inglés y 67.74% en matemáticas), Granite Ridge Intermediate (83.52% y 67.51%) y Alta Sierra Intermediate (79.01% y 60.09%). Estas escuelas son ejemplos de lo que se puede lograr cuando se establecen altas expectativas, se invierte en la capacitación docente y se fomenta una cultura de logros académicos.

Pero el resto de la historia es preocupante. En comunidades rurales y de bajos ingresos, los resultados muestran niveles de crisis. Huron Middle (13.76% en inglés, 9.34% en matemáticas), Gaston Middle (13.48%, 7.73%), Parlier Junior High (20%, 6.31%) y Firebaugh Middle (27.42%, 15.23%) presentan porcentajes tan bajos que la mayoría de los

estudiantes ingresan a la preparatoria ya derrotados académicamente. Incluso en ciudades con más recursos, el panorama no es alentador. Kernan Middle (33.76% en inglés, 22.26% en matemáticas), Mendota Junior High (41.27%, 18.60%) y Coalinga Middle (21.12%, 10.92%) muestran que casi tres cuartas partes de sus estudiantes carecen de las habilidades básicas en lectura, escritura y aritmética.

Cuando los estudiantes fracasan a este nivel, no se trata de un problema individual, sino de un fracaso del sistema educativo. Estos resultados demuestran que la brecha académica comienza años antes de la preparatoria y se amplía con cada grado escolar. Para cuando los estudiantes llegan al noveno grado, muchos ya están atrasados dos o tres años. Esto significa que los maestros de preparatoria deben realizar milagros en solo cuatro años con jóvenes que nunca tuvieron una oportunidad justa desde el principio.

Esto no es para culpar a los maestros. La mayoría trabaja incansablemente en condiciones difíciles. El problema es la falta de urgencia y responsabilidad a nivel del sistema. Cuando menos de una cuarta parte de los estudiantes son competentes, ¿dónde están las conferencias de prensa? ¿Dónde están los foros públicos? ¿Dónde están las juntas escolares exigiendo un plan de acción? Con demasiada frecuencia, el bajo rendimiento en las escuelas rurales se acepta como inevitable — “así son las cosas”, “ Pero esa mentalidad está destruyendo el futuro de miles de jóvenes.

Nuestros niños en Firebaugh, Mendota, San Joaquin, Huron y Kernan son tan capaces como los estudiantes de Clovis o del norte de Fresno. La diferencia no es la inteligencia, sino la oportunidad, las expectativas y el liderazgo académico constante. Cuando nuestras

escuelas de 7.º y 8.º grado fracasan, toda la región paga el precio. El futuro económico del Valle Central depende de formar una fuerza laboral preparada para los empleos del siglo



Estudiantes en Parlier Junior High han tenido resultados de las pruebas bajos. Foto de Peter Malden



Angel García, de la organización Californianos por la Reforma de los Plaguicidas, habla frente al Edificio Estatal de Fresno. Foto de Peter Malden

Continúa en página 18