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## California's Antiquated 911 System About to Go Dark

*By Christopher F. Rufo and Haley Strack*

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By Christopher F. Rufo and Haley Strack

*Gavin Newsom spent more than \$450 million on a regional emergency call system that flopped and was canceled — meantime, the old system risks “catastrophic failure.”*

California once built massive infrastructure projects — dams, highways and aqueducts — that were the marvel of the world. During the Great Depression, engineers erected the Golden Gate Bridge in four years, ahead of schedule and under budget.



But those days are over.

Under Governor Gavin Newsom, California has been unable to complete, and hardly able to begin, construction on its high-speed rail system. Many other government projects are beset by delays, cost overruns and dreams that never materialize. Though the bullet train has become the most famous symbol of this dysfunction, Newsom has overseen an even more important system failure: the overhaul of California's 911 emergency line.

During his first year in office, the governor confidently projected that he would replace the state's emergency call system within three years, a goal that officials previously estimated would cost \$132 million. But nearly seven years later, the state has spent more than \$450 million on a regionalized “Next Generation” digital system that suffered such appalling failures and disruptions during its initial rollout that the Newsom administration scrapped it entirely. Meantime, the old system is hanging on by a thread — and it's only a matter of time, some believe, before it goes dark.

For years, California has needed to replace its old analog 911 system with a modern digital system that uses location, text and video services to identify people in need quickly. Other states, such as Pennsylvania and Massachusetts, have single statewide “Next Gen” systems, but in 2019, after years of planning, the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) adopted a regional approach, naming four contractors responsible for designing, building, deploying and operating the new technologies across four regions and a statewide backup provider.

*The buildout was glacial.*

Cal OES and contractors apparently spent months surveying sites and testing software in a lab. The pandemic, which should have deepened the developers' sense of urgency, “stopped a lot of progress,” according to a Cal OES official. It took more than two years for a single county to activate the technology fully.

By 2022, contractors had launched Next Gen in at least a couple of local dispatch centers. The results were disastrous. Dispatchers in Tuolumne County, the first to launch the technology at full capacity, were unable to process calls, identify locations, or immediately see callers' phone numbers. When they tried to transfer calls, the line on the other end would remain “silent.” A whistleblower claimed that citizens were “losing faith in the 9-1-1 emergency system.”

For good reason. Tuolumne's emergency system experienced multiple breakdowns. According to an internal document obtained by an NBC affiliate, the county's network suffered a blackout for some 12 hours straight. In another case, a man who attempted to call 911 five times to report that his garage was on fire couldn't get through. In yet another, dispatchers could not connect the lines after receiving a “911 call of an active heart attack.”

“Could you imagine making the scariest phone call of your life and thinking no one is coming?” the whistleblower said.

Another county saw similar problems around the time the contractor updated the police department's phone equipment. In Riverside County, Desert Hot Springs dispatchers reported more than 100 “trouble tickets” between 2023 and 2024, including dropped or abandoned calls, failed callbacks and bad audio. As an NBC News affiliate reported in a story about 911 rollout failures, one dispatcher told a woman who requested an ambulance for her boyfriend that the call-transfer system was “not working,” causing “a delay in emergency medical aid.”

In 2025, dispatchers from Desert Hot Springs received a call from a woman requesting an ambulance for her stepfather, who had fallen and was unresponsive. According to internal emails obtained via a public records request and conversations with a Desert Hot Springs dispatcher, the system logged out multiple dispatchers. Eventually, the system rebooted, and the woman was able to contact the dispatchers, who directed medical services to the home.

#### **Emergency personnel discovered a grim scene.**

There were “at least 1000 roaches” climbing on the walls, children living in mold-infested rooms, and a man “found on the floor of his bedroom on his back in the supine position.” Firefighters attempted to perform life-saving measures, but the stepfather had died.

One Desert Hot Springs dispatcher, who had firsthand knowledge of the incident and spoke with City Journal on condition of anonymity, blamed updates associated with the Next Gen system and NGA 911, the contractor responsible for managing them. The dispatcher sent a whistleblower complaint to Cal OES, arguing that the system failure might have caused the man's death. “This is NOT acceptable,” the dispatcher wrote. “People's lives are on the line, and your failed system may have just cost this person [his] life.”

An employee at NGA 911, also speaking on condition of anonymity, disputed the dispatcher's account, arguing that the router was part of a separate system, that the dispatchers “panicked,” and that the man could have died even if the system had worked as intended. “He didn't die because of delayed response,” the NGA employee said. “He died because he fell and he smacked his head and he died there on the spot. So, it's not a result of system failure.”

## Grass Roots Animal Shelter On Ballots



*Advocate DJ Becker hustles for more signatures to get a non-profit animal shelter on the November ballot.*

Residents are circulating petitions and gathering signatures to place a voter's initiative on November's ballot to build a new Madera County Animal Services Complex with an affordable, nonprofit veterinary clinic. Volunteers need to gather 5,000 valid voter signatures by the end of July and are currently at about 1,500.

“Madera is out of options. I've been volunteering, fostering and advocating our animals here for over 20 years and I have never seen it this bad,” said Measure sponsor, DJ Becker. “We have roaming, starving, and suffering animals everywhere. Some of them are dangerous.”

Madera County shelter has previously impounded 8,000 animals each year, now they take in under 3,000. Becker says they are not full. “It's a choice. Where do you think the animals they refuse end up?”

Becker says if 100 volunteers get involved and get 50 signatures each, the initiative will get on the November ballot, but it's going to take a community effort to solve this crisis.

The measure would implement a one-quarter of one per cent (1/4 percent) sales tax increase, or about \$4 per month per person, to build, operate and fund the new animal complex and veterinary clinic.

According to Becker, there are no other realistic, consistent funding sources for improving the existing run down animal shelter facility, much less building a new one and stop the crisis of stray, suffering animals and improve public safety.

For more information go to Dee Jay Becker on Facebook.

Please see **911** on P. 4

*Click on “Local News” at*

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911 cont. from P. 2

Cal OES, for its part, insisted that the Desert Hot Springs incident had nothing to do with “the state’s implementation of NG 9-1-1,” and claimed the city’s call center “has not transitioned” to the new system.

Regardless, the failures in Tuolumne and elsewhere were apparently enough for Cal OES officials to pull the plug. After a series of warnings and delays, in November 2025, the Newsom administration officially terminated the regional approach. In a postmortem report, Cal OES indicated that the regional rollout overwhelmed dispatch centers and was ultimately too fragile and risky to work.

In total, California has spent \$502 million on Next Gen 911 since 2019 — nearly four times more than what the state estimated in 2018–19, about four years after the initial due date, for a system that was built out but never fully activated.

In the blame game that ensued, the Newsom administration has pointed the finger at the contractors — Atos Public Safety, NGA 911, Synergem Technologies and Lumen Technologies — and promised to “be actively involved” in the process moving forward. In response, some contractors blamed the state and claimed that the decision to scrap the Next Gen system was a mistake. “It’s going to be hundreds of millions ... to actually redo what they’ve already built,” said Jeff Schlueter, COO of Synergem Technologies, the firm responsible for the rollout in more than 250 dispatch centers.

For now, Cal OES plans to start from scratch and pursue a statewide, rather than regional, approach, estimating that the new system will take until 2030 to complete. Incredibly, Governor Newsom has encouraged all the current vendors who oversaw

Please see 911 on P. 16

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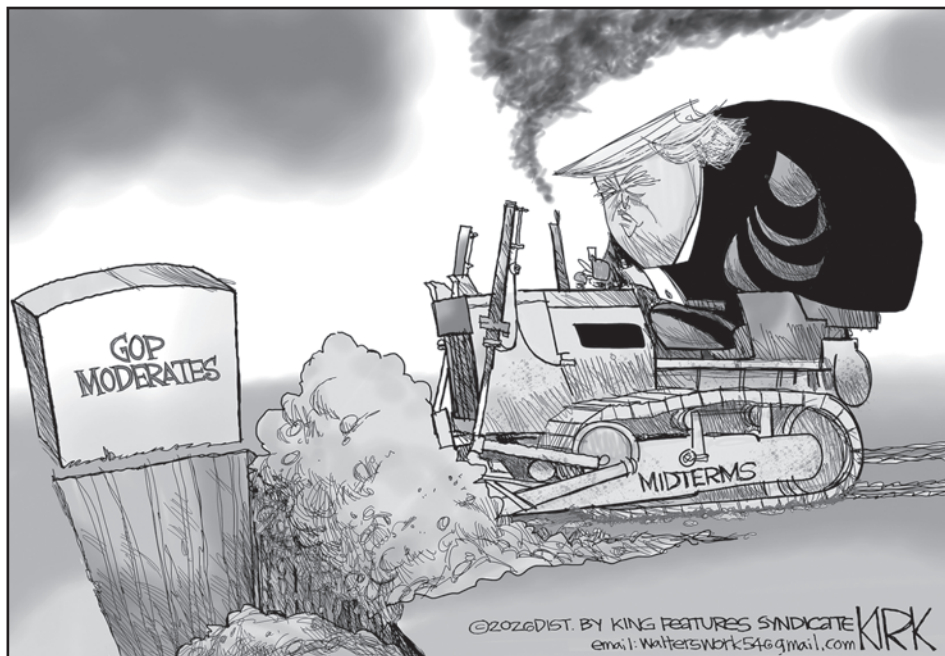
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**559-645-0634** 37167 Ave. 12, Suite 5C • Madera, CA 93636  
**ranchosnews@yahoo.com**

www.TheRanchos.com

## Guest Editorial

# Panicked Dems' Risky Strategy

By Maya C. Miller

Some California Democrats have a plan to avoid disaster in the governor's race: Wait until the last minute to vote.

With no one candidate emerging as a clear favorite and an open primary where the top two advance regardless of party affiliation, panic has set in for some who plan to vote Democratic.

To avoid a dreaded scenario in which Democrats are locked out of the November general election, many Democrats coalesced around former Rep. Eric Swalwell, who ultimately flamed out after multiple women accused him of sexual assault.

That fear has morphed into wariness, leading some party activists and influencers to encourage people to hold off on voting early, watch the polls, then vote for the candidate with the most support just before Election Day.

In a "normal year," Katie Evans-Reber of San Francisco said she would probably back former U.S. Rep. Katie Porter even though the Democrat is not likely to advance to November given her current polling. But this year

the stakes are higher, she said, and as a lesbian woman, any of the Democrats would be more aligned with her core values than a Republican.

She fears supporters of President Donald Trump who have soured on him could back Republican Riverside County Sheriff Chad Bianco, giving him enough of a boost to match the power of Trump's endorsement for Steve Hilton, the former Fox News host who is leading all other candidates in the polls. That would send both Republicans to the runoff.

*"I am going to cast the ballot at the very last possible moment," Evans-Reber said. "I'm going to wait until polling day."*

"The thing that flipped for me was going from, 'I don't really know what to do,' to, 'I strategically am not

making a decision," Evans-Reber said.

In pole position is Xavier Becerra, the former Health and Human Services secretary who surged from single digits to the top of the polls following Swalwell's downfall. As his popularity soared, so has the scrutiny of his record at HHS and as California's former attorney general.

Behind Becerra are progressive Democratic challengers Tom Steyer, a former businessman turned billionaire activist and Porter. San Jose Mayor

Matt Mahan has also positioned himself as a tech-friendly moderate and ally of Silicon Valley.

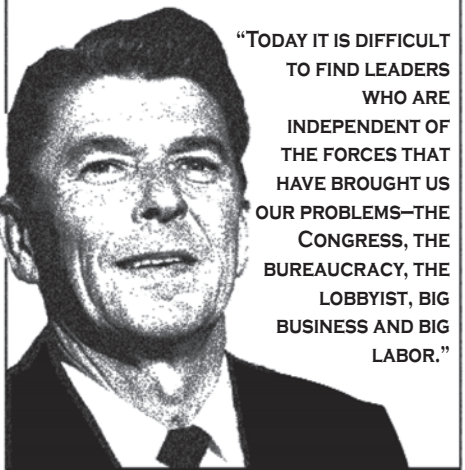
Evans-Reber and other impassioned Democrats have been urging others to follow the same "wait and see" strategy by sharing videos and posts on social media.

One post even falsely attributed the strategy to Heather Cox Richardson, a political historian and popular Democratic influencer who writes the substack "Letters from an American." That erroneous post was the first one Evans-Reber saw and forwarded. She later had to follow up with a disclaimer that Cox Richardson was not the author.

"It's not like, bad advice, but it's 100 percent not coming from me," Cox Richardson told CalMatters in an interview. Democratic political con-

Please see **EDITORIAL** on P. 12

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# What Mother's Day Becomes

This was my tenth Mother's Day without my mom.

Ten years since this particular Sunday carried anything other than bitter-sweet memories, grief weighing on my soul and tears blurring the edges of the day. It's been 10 long years, and somehow it still feels impossible that I can no longer hear her laugh, see her smile or call her just to tell her something insignificant that only she would care about.

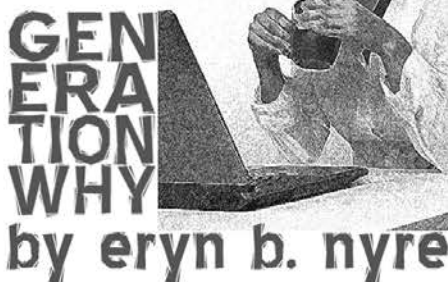
Mother's Day has a way of making nostalgia feel heavier. Even before she passed away, my mother and I didn't always get to spend the holiday together. As adults we lived two states apart, which meant many Mother's Days were celebrated through phone calls, mailed gifts and a million "I miss you." But distance never really changes the shape of love. It just changes the way you carry it.

And if there was one thing my mother carried well, it was love. Just a few years before she passed away, Dad decided he was going to surprise her with an extravagant Mother's Day gift.

By extravagant, I mean he flew me home. My flight landed the Saturday before Mother's Day, and Dad carefully orchestrated the entire thing like he was planning a covert military operation instead of simply bringing his adult home from the airport. He told Mom he needed to run to the store, which was not even remotely suspicious. At that point, Home Depot had practically become a secondary residence.

He picked me up at the airport, and when we pulled into the driveway, I slouched down low in the passenger seat even though we had no reason to think she had suspected anything. She didn't. She was truly, blissfully unaware that I had flown in. Still, I didn't want her to see me just in case she was staring out the front window waiting for Dad to get home – like the Gladys Kravitz she was at heart. Dad went inside and casually told her he needed help bringing her Mother's Day gift in from the car.

I still have the video on my phone. You can see her round the corner



looking mostly unfazed about being recruited for manual labor, only to suddenly freeze when she sees me crouched at the truck's back bumper holding my phone and grinning like an idiot. Then she charges toward me with this look of pure joy and disbelief that still gets me every time I watch it.

And I watch it a lot.

I think one of the cruelest things about losing someone is realizing how

precious ordinary moments become afterward. At the time, it was just a happy surprise on a Saturday afternoon. Now it feels like a priceless moment I thought to get on video. How lucky am I?

Some of my favorite memories with my mother are much less polished. One Mother's Day when I was around 10 years old, I decided I was going to make her breakfast in bed. Dad was traveling for work, so I boldly took over the kitchen completely unsupervised, which in hindsight was an absolutely terrible decision for everyone involved. I had never actually paid attention to how French toast was made. I just knew it existed and involved bread and a frying pan. So naturally, I soaked bread in melted butter and fried it.

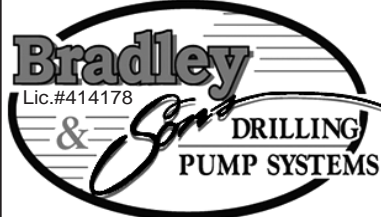
That was it. That was the recipe.

No eggs. No cinnamon. No nutmeg. No milk. Just butter-soaked bread sizzling away while I confidently destroyed breakfast.

My mother, bless her, was an incredible actress. She smiled. She thanked me repeatedly and took several determined bites while trying not to physically recoil from whatever culinary crime I had placed on that plate. Then, when I proudly ran back

*And maybe that's really what Mother's Day becomes after loss ... gratitude that someone loved you so well that 10 years later you can still feel the shape of it in your life.*

Please see **GEN WHY** on P. 13



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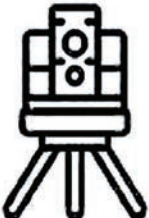
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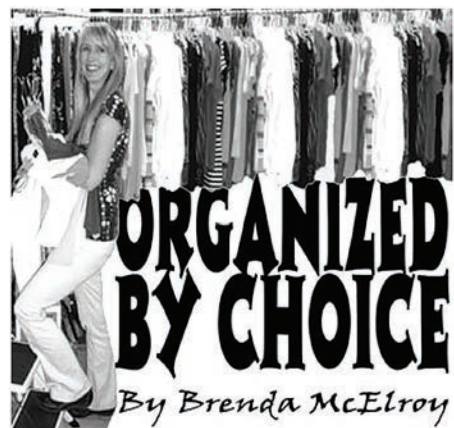
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*Do the Math!*

When I was in school, I wanted to do anything but math. I would have checked out when they introduced long division, but peer pressure forced me to hang in there through Algebra 2. Little did I know I'd end up with a career that parallels mathematical operations, concepts and problem-solving methods.

**ADDITION:** Addition is where it all begins.  $A+B+C+D+E \dots =$  too much

stuff! When's the last time you went a week without bringing something into your home? Granted, much of what we bring in is consumable, but even those items often stay on the shelves partly used or forgotten.

A m a z o n made the addition of things exponentially easier. Things arrive daily with extra packaging and boxes that also invade our space. For many, the place to begin is to end the addition equation. Put on the brakes and become intentional about what and how much you're adding.

**SUBTRACTION:** My personal favorite. When my clients say, "There's no space," I look into a closet and see space. But first comes subtraction.

Cluttered storage areas cause blindness to what's there. Everything seems of

*I may not have mastered long division, but I can Boolean with the best of them!*

equal value because at the time it went in, it was important. "I might use these extra Christmas card envelopes someday." Five years later they're at the back of the closet taking the space of more important things. But

since you can no longer see what's in there, you assume you need it all.

Sometimes we discover treasures, but often, the longer things are stuffed in a closet, the less valuable they become. Subtracting them creates space for items of true value.

**STATS & PROBABILITY:** Many people get stuck when attempting to subtract. By analyzing the statistics of the frequency of use, we can predict the likelihood of future use, providing more than just feelings to go on. Ask statistical questions like — how many times did I use this in the past year? If not at all, can I replace it in 20 minutes for under \$20? If so, you can probably subtract it.

**BOOLEAN LOGIC:** Another method to aid in subtraction is Boolean Logic — a precise rule-based way of making decisions. When subtracting from your closet, ask: Does this item look good on me AND feel good? Does it look good AND feel good AND NOT need repairing? By determining ahead what to include and exclude, the decision making is easier.

**TESSELLATION:** In math, a pattern of shapes that fit

together without any gaps is called a tessellation. My favorite tessellation is the one that transforms a "junk drawer" into a "supply drawer." Visit Target to pick up an assortment of plastic drawer dividers. Subtract the junk from your drawer. Create a divider tessellation and insert your supplies.

**SET THEORY:** I don't recall studying this branch of mathematics, but I'm pretty sure I would have mastered it. Creating sets of things that share a common property or rule. In organizing terms, we call it "putting like things together." This is the best way to retrieve and maintain things efficiently. If you have one place to look when you need a battery, light bulb, or vase — you've achieved it.

**PERCENTAGES:** When it comes to available space in our closets, pantries and drawers, there's no 150 percent. All we have is 100 percent. Organizing requires making choices about how to use the space. Appliances may take up 15 percent of the pantry. Food may take 70 percent. That doesn't leave 30 percent of the space for paper goods. Living within the 100 percent rule means choosing to subtract until it comfortably fits.

I may not have mastered long division, but I can Boolean with the best of them!

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Senior Report

# Seniors Enjoy Summer Indoors

By Melanie Williams

June is on our doorstep and the heat wave of summer is here. The Ranchos/Hills Senior Center is planning some fun indoor activities as the summer months are upon us.

We have a new Chair Yoga Class available at the Senior Center every Thursday at 10 a.m. Molly Ohanian is a Ranchos resident and an experienced Yoga instructor. Her classes are structured with movements that are adapted for seniors. The Yoga Class is open to any senior who wishes to attend and if you are interested in joining in, please call the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center at 1-559-645-4864 for more information.

The June Potluck is on the calendar for Thursday, June 11 at 6 p.m. Any senior from the community is welcome to attend. Please call the Senior Center at 559-645-4864 so we can set up enough tables to accommodate everyone.

Seniors can also hang out on the patio or inside our air-conditioned facility for the Senior Lunch Program. The free senior lunches are served every weekday at 11:30 a.m. but you must sign up for the Senior Lunch program before

attending.

The Madera County Department of Social Services is hosting a luncheon at the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center on June 16 at 10 a.m., providing lunch and a raffle with prizes for seniors and adults aged 50 or older. Being discussed will be ways to protect yourself from financial scams and fraud, managing stress and maintaining positive mental health and what local resources are available. This event is free and members of the Senior Center encourage community involvement to inform older adults of how to navigate financial safety and emotional wellbeing. If you can attend the seminar, please call the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center at 559-645-4864 for your reservation before the deadline on June 12.

The Senior Exercise Class is every Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 10



The Ranchos/Hills Seniors are doing Yoga and they've got room for one more stretcher — You!

a.m. to 11 a.m. Seniors from the community can come anytime and participate in the exercise class held at the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center.

The 31st Annual Home and Garden Festival was an enjoyable success. The coordinator, Judy Sears, did a wonderful job planning the successful event hosted by the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center. We wish to thank all our local vendors for their participation in the Home and Garden Festival this year. A big hurrah to our members who coordinated and volunteered at the event.

Madera Ranchos Boy Scout Troop #118 and Boy Scout Leader, Ed Duarte, donated their time to help vendors set up and breakdown booths, help with transporting plants, tables and chairs for the event.

To all of our wonderful vendors and

volunteers who participated in the Home and Garden Festival, thank you for your enthusiastic support in making this event successful. Thank you all for helping to keep the Ranchos/Hills Senior doors open to our community.

Brown Bag Day is Wednesday, June 17. Pick up your Brown Bag at the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center from 10:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Participants must register with the Madera County Food Bank before picking up a Brown Bag. The Senior Center has applications for Brown Bag Day at the front desk.

If you are new to the Senior Center, come by and pick up our monthly calendar filled with information about each activity and event. If you would like more information about the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center events or activities, please call 1-559-645-4864 or drop by the Senior Center. We are open weekdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Quote for Father's Day: "My father gave me the greatest gift anyone could give another person: He believed in me."

Happy Flag Day June 14, Happy Juneteenth Day June 19 and Happy Father's Day June 21.

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## Veggie BBQ Anyone?

(May 2016)

*Editor's Note: With the passing of Aunt Jean, I have decided to bring you a "Best Of" of her recipes over the past 10 years. Good recipes are timeless and I hope you enjoy them all over again.*



Pull back remaining husks from cob, but do not remove from end of corn. Remove as much of the silk as possible.

Season the cob as you like. Melted butter, salt and pepper, or you can add whatever herb or seasoning your family likes. Those can be garlic powder, rosemary, oregano, or even dill. Since the corn is cold, the melted butter may not stay melted when you brush it on but don't worry because when the corn is grilled the butter will melt.

After the corn is seasoned the way you want it, pull the

remaining husks back on the cob, covering the cob completely. Using one of the previously discarded husks, tie the end of the corn so that while grilling the husks will stay on the cob.

Cook on medium to medium high heat for 10 or 15 minutes. Pull back the husks that are covering the corn and serve. You can serve with additional butter.

If you purchase the corn without husks, you can wrap it in aluminum foil for the same effect.

One last thing: If you want the corn to be hot when you serve dinner, be sure

that the corn is the last thing you cook.

### BBQ Potatoes

To cook potatoes whole, after scrubbing or peeling place on a piece of foil large enough to cover the potato. Using a brush or your fingers put oil on the foil and wrap the foil around the potato, sealing well. Grilling on a medium high heat will take about 45 minutes.

To cook potatoes faster and tastier slice them into about quarter inch slices, cut them into wedges or cube the scrubbed potato. Place on a piece of foil large enough to cover the potato that you have brushed with oil. Brush the potatoes with oil, salt and pepper and seasoning or herbs of choice. You can use

*Do you only cook hamburgers, hot dogs and an occasional steak on your barbecue? How about corn on the cob, potatoes and just about any other vegetable from the garden or a farmers market?*

sliced red onions, green onions, bacon pieces (cooked), chopped bell pepper or just about anything that you would want on a potato except cheese because the cheese might burn while grilling. Seal the bundles tight and place on a

medium hot grill. These packages should cook in 20 to 30 minutes. When you take these off the grill, poke a little hole in the foil with the tip of a paring knife to let some of the steam out. Be real careful opening these packages as the steam is extremely hot.

### Grilled Vegetables

3 bell peppers (red or green) seeded and halved

3 yellow squash\*\*

3 zucchini\*\*

3 Japanese eggplant\*\*

12 cremini mushrooms

1 pound asparagus, trimmed

12 green onions, roots cut off and

trimmed

¼ C plus 2 T olive oil

Salt and Pepper

3 T balsamic vinegar

2 garlic cloves, minced

1 tsp. chopped parsley leaves

1 tsp. chopped fresh basil leaves

½ tsp. finely chopped fresh rosemary leaves

\*\* Sliced lengthwise into ½ inch thick rectangles.

Prepare the barbecue to medium high heat. Place the vegetables on a baking pan and brush them with the ¼ C olive oil and salt and pepper. Working in batches, grill the vegetables until tender and lightly charred all over – about 8-10 minutes for the bell peppers, 7 minutes for the yellow squash, zucchini, eggplant, and mushrooms, and 4 minutes for the asparagus and green onions. Arrange the grilled vegetable on a platter. The key to getting the grill marks is don't move them very much once they've been put on the grill.

While the vegetables cook, mix the remaining 2 T oil, balsamic vinegar, garlic and herbs in a small bowl. Blend with whisk, adding salt and pepper to taste. Drizzle this mixture over the vegetables.

I was going to do fruits and vegetables in this article, but space has just about gotten away from me so I will have to do grilled fruit some other time. I never thought of grilling fruit, but I have found some great ideas. Next month the fruit should be ready to be picked.

*Although this article appeared 10 years ago, it originally appeared in the May 2012 issue of the Ranchos Independent.*

-- Editor

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# SEE YOU SUNDAY!

EDITORIAL cont. from P. 5

sultant Paul Mitchell disagrees.

“It’s just a bad message,” he said. “I think they should always have a message of, ‘As soon as you get your ballot, fill it out, turn it in, mail it in and get it done.’”

Mitchell said although activists might talk about and push for a strategic voting plan, trying to organize a movement like that at scale would likely not produce significant results.

“I think people vote for whoever they were going to vote for anyway,” said Mitchell, whose company tracks how many ballots are turned in each day statewide.

The push to vote late flies in the face of recent pleas from election officials and Gov. Gavin Newsom for voters to get their ballots in early in the hopes of speeding up California’s notoriously slow vote-counting process. Attorney General Rob Bonta, a fellow Democrat, told reporters last week that the social media posts urging late voting could be misinformation, disinformation and “potentially unlawful,” and Secretary of State Shirley Weber said her office would “look into” those social posts.

“Time is of the essence in preventing election lies from taking hold,” Newsom wrote in a recent letter addressed to all 58 county registrars urging them to “tabulate and release results quickly and accurately.”

Turning in a mail-in ballot on Election Day, as some activists propose, is the worst possible scenario for election administration officials.

It creates what Kim Alexander, president of the California Voter Foundation, calls the “pig in the

python effect.” County election offices are inundated with in-person ballots on Election Day, as well as mail-in ballots that require a meticulous process of signature matching, envelope opening and extracting the ballot before it can be counted.

Returning ballots even a few days earlier can give counties a head start, Alexander said at a recent CalMatters forum on election integrity.

Mark DiCamillo, who runs polling for the Berkeley Institute of Governmental Studies, said pollsters are doing their best to produce accurate results, but in an election with so many variables, even the best surveys could be off-base.

The past trend of low voter turnout in gubernatorial primaries, plus a potentially confusing array of 61 candidates for governor alone, make it difficult to determine who the likely voters will be and account for that in their surveys.

“This election’s got all the elements you have to deal with,” DiCamillo said. “It’s a challenge for the polling profession.”

Despite the concerns about a slow vote count and imprecise polling, Evans-Reber says she still plans to stick to her last-minute voting strategy. She doesn’t trust that mailing her ballot will reach the county elections office in time. She plans to bring her completed ballot to the office or one of the county’s vote centers and hand it directly to an election official.

“I am going to cast the ballot at the very last possible moment,” Evans-Reber said. “I’m going to wait until polling day.”

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## GO FIGURE!

The idea of Go Figure is to arrive at the figures given at the bottom and right-hand columns of the diagram by following the arithmetic signs in the order they are given (that is, from left to right and top to bottom). Use only the numbers below the diagram to complete its blank squares and use each of the nine numbers only once.

	+		-		= 3				
+			-	+					
	+		÷		= 1				
×			-	+					
	+		+		= 16				
=		=		=					
21		1		22					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

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# SEMUCU speaks

## *The Future of Madera: A Guide to the 2026 Local Election Landscape*

By Dov Adler

As the 2026 election cycle heats up, voters in Madera County are preparing to head to the polls to decide on several critical administrative and leadership roles. From the oversight of multi-million dollar budgets to the management of our local schools, these down-ballot races will shape the county's trajectory for years to come. Here is a look at the key contests and the candidates vying for your vote.

This guide focuses exclusively on Madera's local governance, intentionally omitting state-level or general California

legislative races to prioritize the candidates who directly manage our county's streets, schools and safety. The following summaries have been extended from the total 2026 candidate filing list to ensure voters have a clear, concentrated look at the individuals vying for the offices that impact our immediate community.

### *Supervisor District 1: Public Safety vs. Grassroots Defiance*

Perhaps the most watched race this cycle is the contest for County Supervisor, District 1.

#### • **Jordan Wamhoff (Incumbent):**

A police officer and Madera Ranchos resident, Wamhoff has focused on "meat and potatoes" governance: public safety, fiscal accountability, and cost-of-living concerns. His seat on the Groundwater Sustainability Agency also makes him a central figure in the county's water management challenges.

• **Benjamin J. Martin (Challenger):** A local business owner, Martin offers a starkly different approach. Known for his involvement in national political movements, he is running as a "fighter" for

individual and property rights, demanding radical transparency in county government.

### *Law and Order: Sheriff*

The 2026 cycle also sees the county's top law enforcement on the ballot.

#### • **Sheriff-Coroner (Incumbent):**

Tyson Pogue seeks to maintain his lead of the Sheriff's Office. Pogue has been vocal about staffing shortages and the impact of state-level criminal justice reforms on local safety.

#### • **Michael Salvador (Challenger):**

Michael Salvador is a , a seasoned law enforcement veteran and current Chowchilla Police Chief, who touts his administrative experience and "out-of-the-box" thinking for modernizing the department.

### *The Guardians of Finance:*

#### *Auditor-Controller*

The Auditor-Controller race features a clash of professional philosophies.

• **David E. Richstone (Incumbent):** A CPA, Richstone touts a record of "clean" audits and strict internal controls.

• **Anthony R. Forestiere (Challenger):** Forestiere is a financial services manager who is campaigning on a promise

of modernization and making financial data more accessible to residents.

SEMUCU is a nonprofit organization that represents the interests of the residents, property owners and businesses in Southeastern Madera County. Its concerns, among other issues, are our community, safety, water, traffic, schools, future parks and energy. We invite our community to join and help make a difference for our families and youngsters. We invite community members to join SEMUCU as board members to help shape the Southeast Madera County area. Together we can build a stronger, more vibrant community.

SEMUCU meets once per month. To join online, go to [www.semcu.org](http://www.semcu.org) for a link and simple instructions. Or if you prefer, you can call in on your cellphone at 669-900-6833 then enter the ID# 83632424343 followed with the access code 85422. Make your voice heard!

*SEMUCU is "By the community, for the community"*

GEN WHY cont. from P. 6

to the kitchen to get her some milk, she quietly scraped the rest into the trash. I didn't learn this until years later when she finally confessed through tears of laughter. To be fair, by then I had eventually learned how to make actual French toast, though I suspect she never fully trusted me in the kitchen again after the Butter Bread Incident of the early 90s.

That was my mother, though. She had this remarkable ability to make people feel loved, even in moments that were imperfect, chaotic, or slightly ridiculous. Especially those moments, actually.

One Mother's Day when I couldn't be with her, I sent her a necklace that she kept with her until the day she died. It was a small silver heart with another heart wrapped around it and a tiny cross tucked into the design. I had it engraved with her favorite scripture and my nickname for her: "The Mama." I t never took much to make my mother cry. Commercials could take her out if they were emotional enough. Actually, commercials would take her out if there was a dog involved. But she was particularly blubbery when she called me after opening that gift. I can still hear her voice cracking through happy tears as she told

me how much she loved it.

She wore it constantly.

It's in my jewelry box now.

Every once in a while, I'll open the box looking for something else and see it lying there. And for just a second, before grief catches up to me, it almost feels like she's still close by somehow.

That's the strange thing about losing your mother. The grief changes shape over time, but it never really leaves. It settles into the quiet corners of your life. Into holidays. Into old voicemails you can't delete. Into recipes. Into jewelry boxes. Into memories you replay on random Tuesday afternoons for no reason at all.

Ten years later, I still miss her voice. I still catch myself wanting to call her when something funny happens. I still think about the way she laughed so hard she cried, the way she made holidays feel warm, and the way she loved people so openly and effortlessly.

And maybe that's really what Mother's Day becomes after loss.

Not just sadness. Not just longing. But gratitude. Gratitude that someone loved you so well that 10 years later you can still feel the shape of it in your life.

I think that's a pretty remarkable thing to leave behind.

• John Wycliffe's first translation of the Bible from Latin Vulgate into English so angered the Catholic Church (because it bypassed priests) that it had his corpse exhumed and burned.

• A year on Neptune lasts approximately 165 Earth years.

• For six months, filmmakers Jenny Rustemeyer and Grant Baldwin survived on food salvaged from dumpsters, finding so much that friends were invited to help them consume it, and recorded their experience in "Just Eat It: A Food Waste Story."

• The Hopi consider the Grand Canyon to be the gateway to the afterlife.

• Polar bear mamas gain around 400 pounds during pregnancy. If the mother doesn't double her weight, her body will simply reabsorb the fetus.

• Research has suggested that when a twin engages in criminal activity, it increases the likelihood that the other twin will do the same.

• The orbicularis oris muscle allows lips to pucker for a kiss.

• Words in tonal languages such as Mandarin and Hmong can have up to eight meanings, depending on their tone and pitch.

• Zeng Jinlian, of China, holds the world record for tallest woman in history, measuring an astounding 8 feet 1 3/4 inches tall -- more than a foot taller than basketball star Shaquille O'Neal.

• Globally, male babies are 25% more likely to die in infancy than girls.

• n December 1955, artist Salvador Dali borrowed a friend's Rolls Royce, filled it to the roof with cauliflower, and drove it to the Sorbonne in Paris, where he delivered a lecture titled "Phenomenological Aspects of the Paranoiac Critical Method."

• The Leaning Tower of Pisa was already sinking on one side when the second floor was added.

Thought for the Day: "Work eight hours and sleep eight hours, and make sure that they are not the same eight hours." -- T. Boone Pickens

**Strange  
BUT TRUE**

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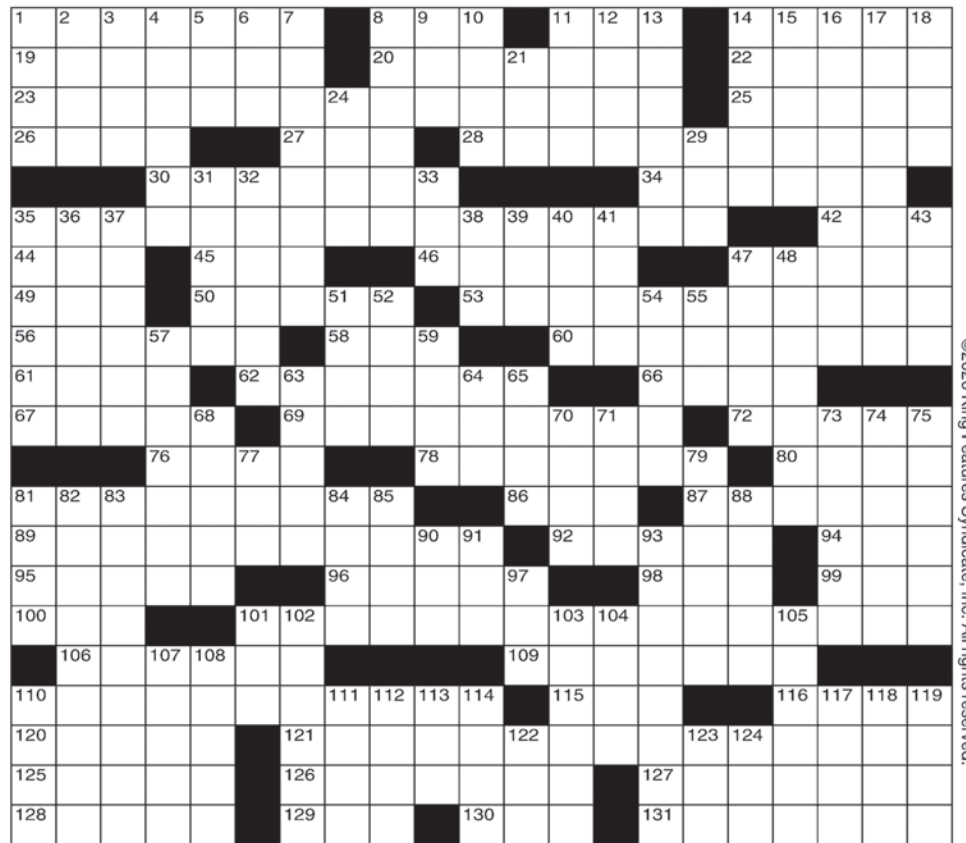


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# Super Crossword



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**WORD SEARCH**

21	=	1	=	=		
16	=	9	+	4	+	3
	+		-		X	
1	=	8	÷	2	+	6
	+		-		+	
3	=	5	-	7	+	1

**WORD SEARCH**

6	4	1	3	5	8	2	9	7
3	2	8	1	9	7	6	4	5
5	7	9	2	6	4	3	1	8
9	8	6	4	7	3	5	2	1
7	3	4	5	2	1	9	8	6
2	1	5	9	8	6	7	3	4
8	6	2	7	4	9	1	5	3
4	5	3	6	1	2	8	7	9
1	9	7	8	3	5	4	6	2

**WORD SEARCH**

L	A	P	D	E	S	K	W	I	L	A	J	A	M	I	E							
I	N	T	E	R	A	N	C	A	L	E	A	N	B	R	E	A	K	E	R	N	S	T
A	S	E	A	V	A	S	K	M	I	S	S	I	N	G	A	C	U	E				
M	I	C	H	A	E	L	N	A	S	S	E	R										
U	S	E	S	P	L	A	I	N	G	L	I	S										
P	O	X	A	R	S	I	R	E	N													
R	U	T	S	M	I	N	G	L	U	G	A	G	E	A	C	K						
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R	E	T	A	G	B	A	B	A	R	K	A	V	E	N	U	E	B					
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E	L	O	P	E	A	D	E	N	O	I	D											
S	L	O	P	E	A	D	E	N	O	I	D											

- ACROSS**
- 1 Clipboard's larger relative
  - 8 Nintendo game system
  - 11 Styled after
  - 14 Funny Foxx
  - 19 Law of motion topic
  - 20 Behind bars
  - 22 Fabric design
  - 23 Execute the opening pool shot perfectly?
  - 25 Iowa senator Joni
  - 26 Behind-voyage
  - 27 Inquire
  - 28 Unable to find your pool stick?
  - 30 Actor Caine
  - 34 1950s-'60s Egyptian president
  - 35 Puts spin on a pool ball with no further tricks?
  - 42 Animal throat
  - 44 Chicken —
  - 45 River of Bern
  - 46 "Cops" sound
  - 47 Office scribe
  - 49 Road furrow
  - 50 Basie's music
  - 53 Pool triangle packed in a suitcase?
  - 56 Ultimatum end
  - 58 Assist
  - 60 Anticipates a treat, maybe
  - 61 Stridex target
  - 62 Some schlumpy physiques
  - 66 Bits of land in the ocean, in French
  - 67 Label anew
  - 69 Toddler who's a whiz at pool?
  - 72 Really heavy herbivore
  - 76 Lackluster
  - 78 Street in Manhattan's Alphabet City
  - 80 Scandinavian thunder god
  - 81 Having a trio of components
  - 86 Alex and — (jewelry brand)
  - 87 "Quickly" or "slowly," e.g.
  - 89 Perimeter of a pool table that people have plopped down on?
  - 92 Habituate (to)
  - 94 Org. for cavity fillers
  - 95 In spite of the fact that, in brief
  - 96 Itty-bitty
  - 98 Scot's refusal
  - 99 Ocasek of the Cars
  - 100 Put a tear in
  - 101 Resume play after accidentally sinking the white pool ball?
  - 106 "Othello" victim
  - 109 Pool variety with 22 balls
  - 110 Observe a hole in a pool table?
  - 115 La mer filler
  - 116 Love god
  - 120 Jetson boy
  - 121 Last shot of a pool game?
  - 125 Be at a slant
  - 126 Mass in the throat
  - 127 Admiral Nelson
  - 128 Liv of "Super"
  - 129 Riddle-me —
  - 130 Facial locale
  - 131 Frightful flies
  - 3 Certain small pooch
  - 4 Reveries
  - 5 Zeta follower
  - 6 [not my top]
  - 7 Desert region in Africa
  - 8 Devitalize
  - 9 Vacation stop
  - 10 Long-range nuke carrier
  - 11 Gets mature
  - 12 Grasslands
  - 13 Last name of singer Adele
  - 14 Many PC pics
  - 15 Alcove-hiding tapestry
  - 16 Mixture baked in pies
  - 17 Aetna offering
  - 18 Kin of -ess
  - 21 Grande of pop, for short
  - 24 "Ozark" actor Morales
  - 29 "Uh-uh"
  - 31 "No bid"
  - 32 Attacked as a cat might
  - 33 The, to Jules
  - 35 Hoopla
  - 36 Info provider
  - 37 Breadth
  - 38 Not a one
  - 39 "Despicable Me" antihero
  - 40 Thigh locales
  - 41 Actress Swenson
  - 43 Pad thai pans
  - 47 Cut, as ties
  - 48 Reality shows, to some people
  - 51 Not a one
  - 52 Singer Barry
  - 54 Similar
  - 55 Baseballer Hodges
  - 57 Guides, biblical-style
  - 59 "A little dab'll —"
  - 63 Mahmoud of Palestine
  - 64 "seaQuest —" (sci-fi series)
  - 65 Old Big Apple stadium
  - 68 — -Roman
  - 70 Decade
  - 71 Lay waste to divisions, in Rome
  - 73 "— Huckabees" (2004 film)
  - 74 Swedish, say
  - 75 Jerry of stage and screen
  - 77 "The Simpsons" character once voiced by Hank Azaria
  - 79 Ex-president Obama
  - 81 Old autocrat
  - 82 In a spiral-shaped way
  - 83 1960s World War II series, with "The"
  - 84 Ostrich kin
  - 85 Arena level
  - 88 John of plows
  - 90 Ottawa loc.
  - 91 Abbr. on a bad check
  - 93 Not looked for
  - 97 Cen. divisions
  - 101 Tiny drink
  - 102 Over the line
  - 103 Central New York lake
  - 104 Complain
  - 105 Turkey's tallest peak
  - 107 Breadth
  - 108 More bashful
  - 110 Ohio-to-Utah direction
  - 111 Suffix with fungi
  - 112 Large joint
  - 113 Berlin article
  - 114 General — chicken
  - 117 Witty sayings
  - 118 Steinbeck migrant
  - 119 Old Olds cars
  - 122 Large joint
  - 123 Call for help
  - 124 Uno tripled
- DOWN**
- 1 Peru's largest city
  - 2 Santa — (some winds)

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911 cont. from P. 4

the failed system to compete for a bid on the new statewide system, and Cal OES has already decided to extend an interim contract to one, Atos, through 2026 — shelling out additional cash to the provider who has already failed to deliver once.

Will this new statewide system work? California's nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office has strong doubts. In a report published earlier this year, the legislative analyst recommended that the state "pause" all implementation of the program until Cal OES can answer some basic questions, including "What Is the Nature and Scope of the Problem?" and "Will [the] New Plan Solve the Problem?" Nobody believes that the new system will be completed by 2030. "They said that ten years ago," one dispatcher told us.

*Meantime, California is stuck with a 1970s-era emergency call system that is falling apart.*

The legislative analyst has warned that the legacy system is "in very poor condition and is subject to failure." And Cal OES is woefully behind on updating other parts of the state's emergency services. As of this past February, 339 dispatch centers hadn't undergone maintenance on their call-handling equipment in seven to 10 years or more. Some equipment is built with parts not made anymore.

The result is waves of outages that have increased dramatically in recent years. According to the FCC, in 2017, California's legacy system averaged 17,000 minutes of outages per month. In 2022, that number increased to 59,000 minutes per month. And between October 2022 and June 2024, the legacy system suffered 22,001 hours of outages — about 62,000 minutes per month. Since then, Cal OES has stopped publicizing outage numbers.

These outages have caused serious problems for local communities. Earlier this year, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department 911 system had an overnight outage. Similarly, in 2025, a system crash forced dispatchers to write notes by hand and relay information via radio or phone, rather than with the computer-aided system.

In Oakland, the old system nearly left a police officer dead. In 2019, an off-duty Oakland cop named Danny Chor approached a woman who was vandalizing cars. During the confrontation, the woman stabbed him in the neck. Chor made multiple calls to 911 but could not connect. A nearby truck operator tried to help, but his call also failed. The bystander then called his employer, who was able to connect to the dispatchers directly. First responders brought Chor to the hospital in the back of a patrol car, fearing that he would not sur-

vive if they waited for the ambulance.

Since then, the system has teetered on the verge of collapse. A 2023 grand jury report on Oakland's 911 dispatch system found that, in 2022, nearly half of all callers waited 15 seconds or more for a response. The system managed records with legacy software no longer supported by the vendor; parts had to be purchased on eBay because they were no longer produced and the vendor had only one technician who could still decipher the software. Oakland, one of the most dangerous cities in the U.S., could experience a total blackout.

"If the proposed hardware and software is perpetually delayed to 'six months from now,'" the grand jury concluded, "the city risks a catastrophic failure of the system."

One might be tempted to view Newsom's Next Gen 911 rollout as a complete failure — after all, the old system is falling apart and the new system has been "paused." But as with so many of California's infrastructure projects, including the "butterfly bridge" and "high-speed rail," the endless delays and cost overruns produce some hidden winners: the state officials who manage the system and the private companies that secure never-ending contracts.

In the case of Next Gen 911, Newsom employed an army of unionized officials to oversee the work and approved enormous contracts to the four main vendors. \$198 million to Atos Public Safety; \$108 million to NGA 911; \$56 million to Synergem Technologies; and \$56 million to CenturyLink (now Lumen Technologies). The state is sure to spend millions more.

Meantime, the losers are always the same: the taxpayers and residents who, in this case, have to keep paying a fee on their monthly phone bill for technology that doesn't work and keep their fingers crossed that the current system won't fall apart and send their local dispatchers into a total blackout.

In Los Angeles, where the county sheriff's department has experienced repeated problems with the system, the stakes are even higher. The Olympics are coming to L.A. in 2028 and city hardware is falling apart. As a systems expert formerly with LAPD told us, it will take a "come-to-Jesus" system failure for the California state government to get serious about its transition to Next Gen 911.

When — not if — that disaster happens, Cal OES will realize "we're screwed."

*Christopher F. Rufo is a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute, a contributing editor of City Journal, and the author of America's Cultural Revolution. Haley Strack is an investigative reporter at City Journal. This article originally appeared at [www.city-journal.org](http://www.city-journal.org).*

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5/26

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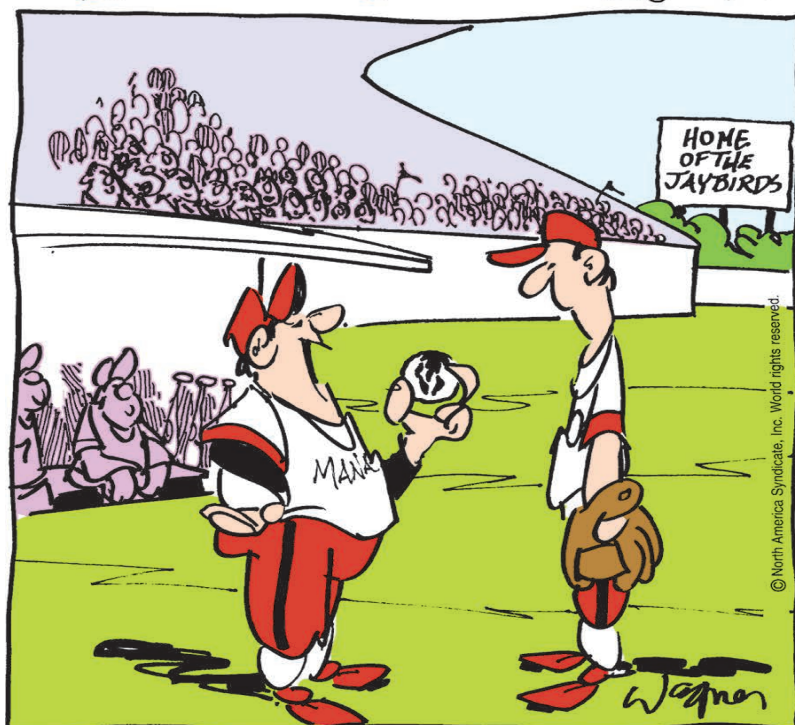
by Dave T. Phipps



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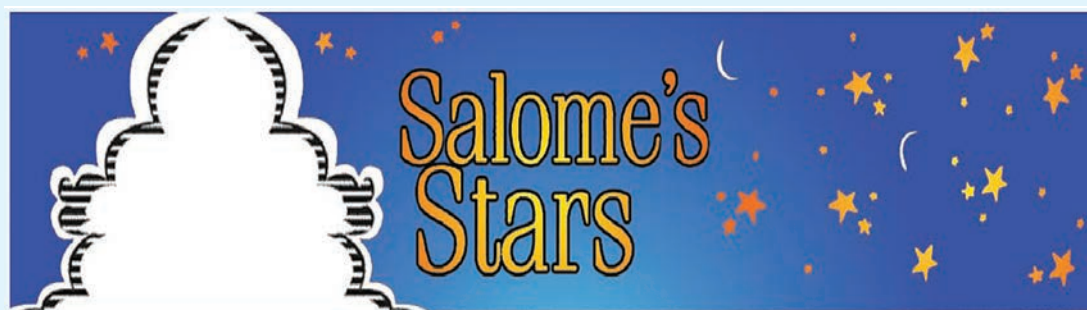
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**GRIN and BEAR IT** *by Wagner*



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**"Nice try, Lank, but painting flames on the ball doesn't make it go faster."**



**ARIES** (March 21 to April 19) An unexpected development could change the Arian's perspective on a potential investment. Keep an open mind. Ignore the double talk and act only on the facts.

**TAURUS** (April 20 to May 20) A surge of support helps you keep your long-standing commitment to colleagues who rely on you for guidance. Ignore any attempts to get you to ease up on your efforts.

**GEMINI** (May 21 to June 20) Family continues to be a dominant factor, but career matters also take on new importance. You might even be able to combine elements of the two in some surprising, productive way!

**CANCER** (June 21 to July 22) A realistic view of a workplace or personal situation helps you deal with it more constructively once you know where the truth lies. Meanwhile, reserve the weekend for someone special.

**LEO** (July 23 to August 22) As much as you LEONs or LEONas might be intrigued by the "sunny" prospects being touted for a potential investment, be careful that you don't allow the glare to blind you to its essential details.

**VIRGO** (August 23 to September 22) A friend's problem brings out the VIRGO's nurturing nature in full force. However, don't go it alone. Allow others to pitch in and help share the responsibilities you've assumed.

**LIBRA** (September 23 to October 22) A business decision might need to be put off until a colleague's personal matter is resolved. Use this time to work on another business matter that you've been anxious to get to.

**SCORPIO** (October 23 to November 21) Relationships (personal or professional) might appear to be stalled because of details that keep cropping up and need tending to. Be patient. A path begins to clear by midweek.

**SAGITTARIUS** (November 22 to December 21) A promotion could cause resentment among envious colleagues. But others recognize how hard you worked to earn it and will be there to support you if you need them.

**CAPRICORN** (December 22 to January 19) A delicate personal matter needs both your wisdom and your warmth. Expect some setbacks, but stay with it. The outcome will more than justify your efforts.

**AQUARIUS** (January 20 to February 18) Resist the temptation to cut corners just because time is short. It's best to move ahead step by step so you don't overlook anything that might later create time-wasting complications.

**PISCES** (February 19 to March 20) Use the good will that you recently earned with a well-received project to pitch your ideas for a new project. Expect some tough competition, though, from an unlikely source.

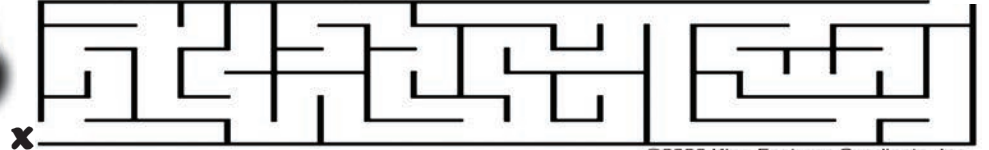
**Born this Week**

*Your love of family extends beyond your personal life to include others, to whom you generously extend your care and affection.*

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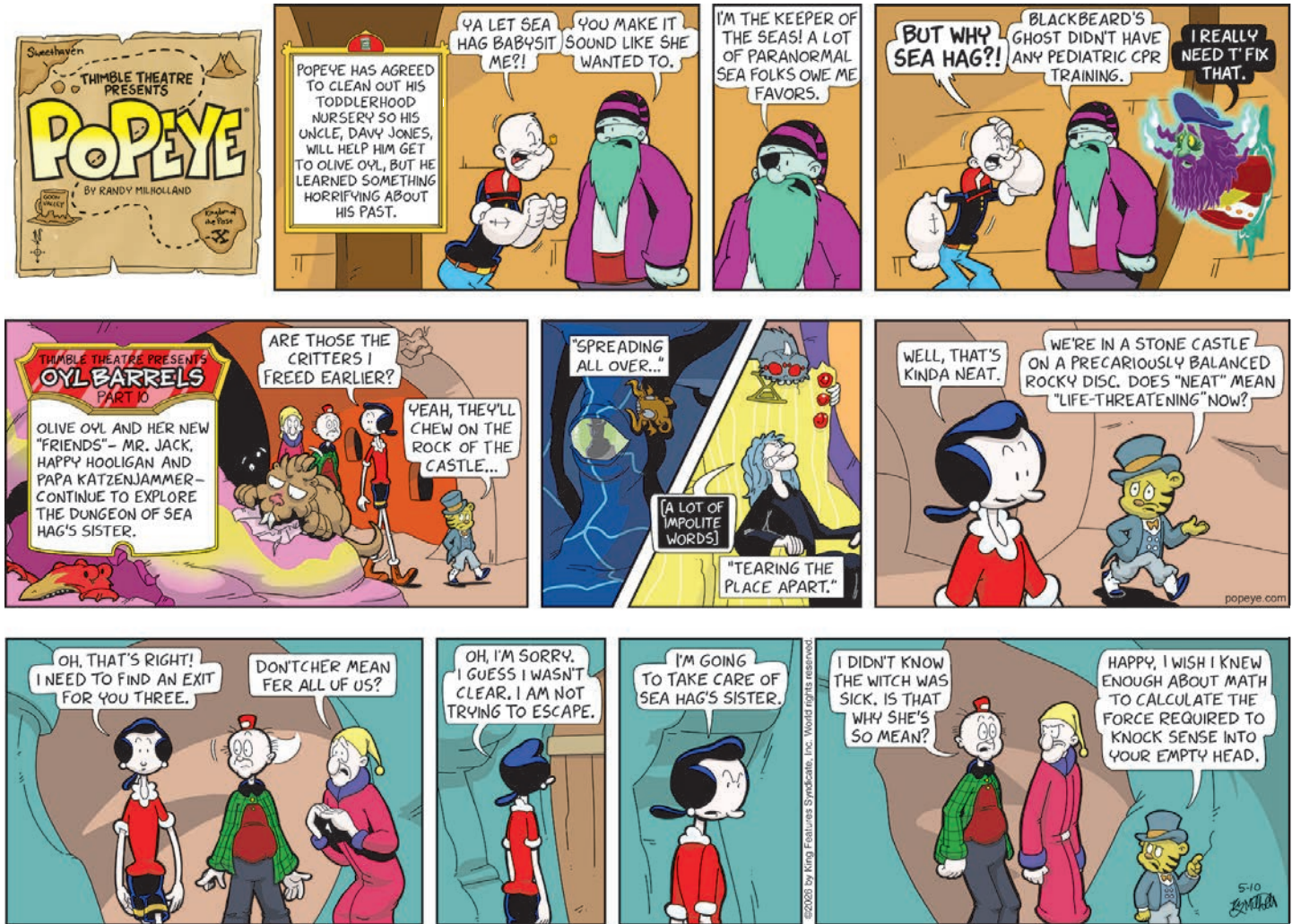
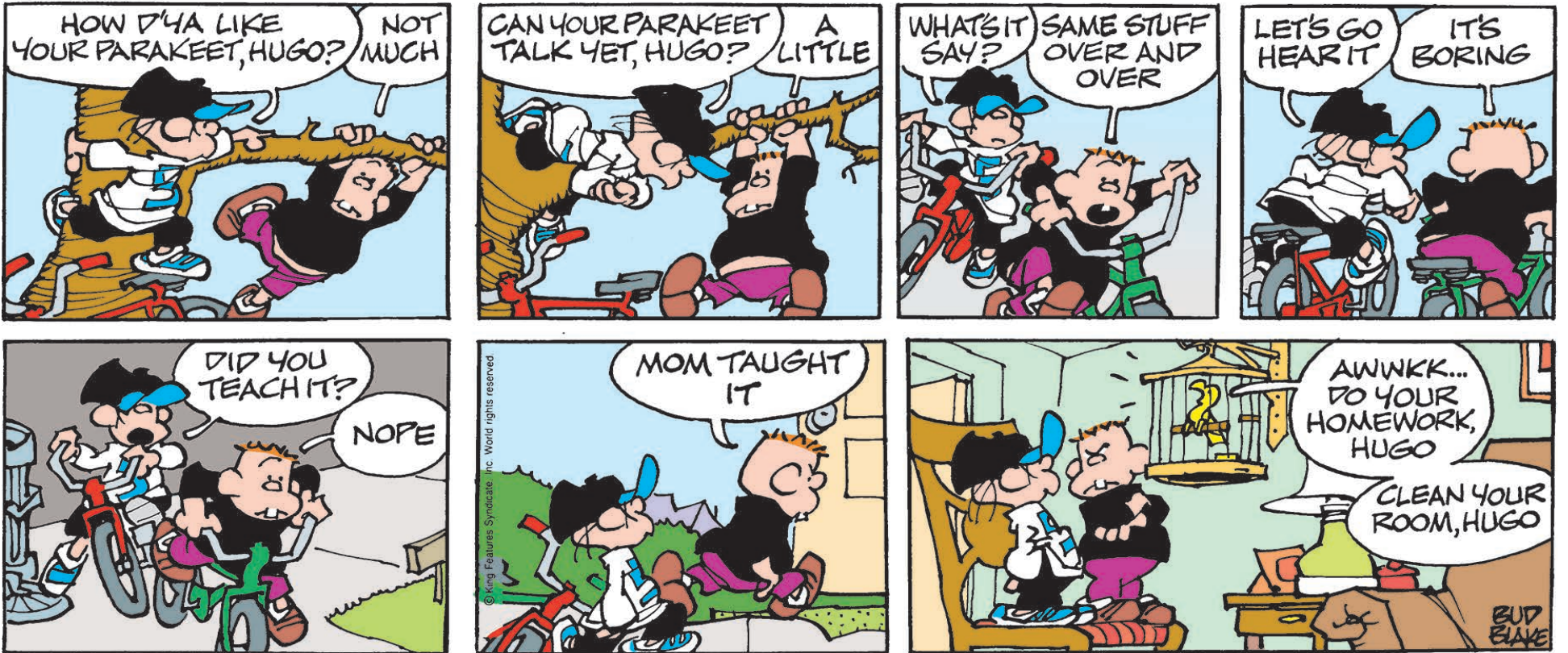
# FUN PAGES

Kids' Maze



## TIGER

by **BUD BLAKE**



## TRIVIA TEST

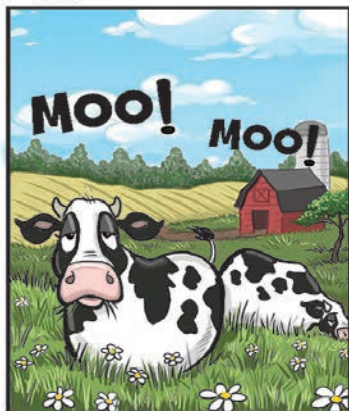
By Fifi Rodriguez

- FOOD & DRINK:** When fish eggs are served as food, what are they called?
- LITERATURE:** Which Dr. Seuss book about trying new foods has a character called Sam-I-Am?
- GEOGRAPHY:** What is the most populated country in Africa?
- U.S. STATES:** Which state's nickname is The Pine Tree State?
- ANIMAL KINGDOM:** What kind of animal produces mohair?
- GENERAL KNOWLEDGE:** How many tines does a standard dinner fork have?
- FOOD & DRINK:** In what year was Kool-Aid introduced?
- TELEVISION:** Which animated TV show features a baby named Stewie?
- MOVIES:** What is the name of the character played by John Travolta in "Saturday Night Fever"?
- SCIENCE:** What is a googol?

- Roe.
- "Green Eggs and Ham."
- Nigeria.
- Maine.
- Angora goats.
- Four.
- 1927.
- "Family Guy."
- Tony Manero.
- The digit "1" followed by 100 zeroes.

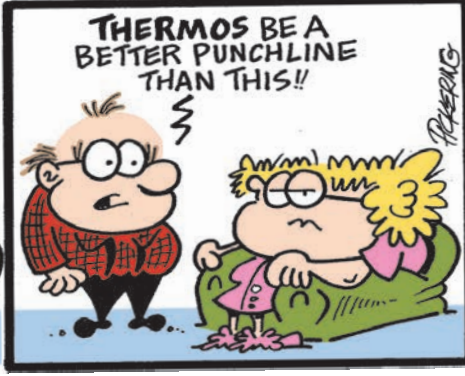
# Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



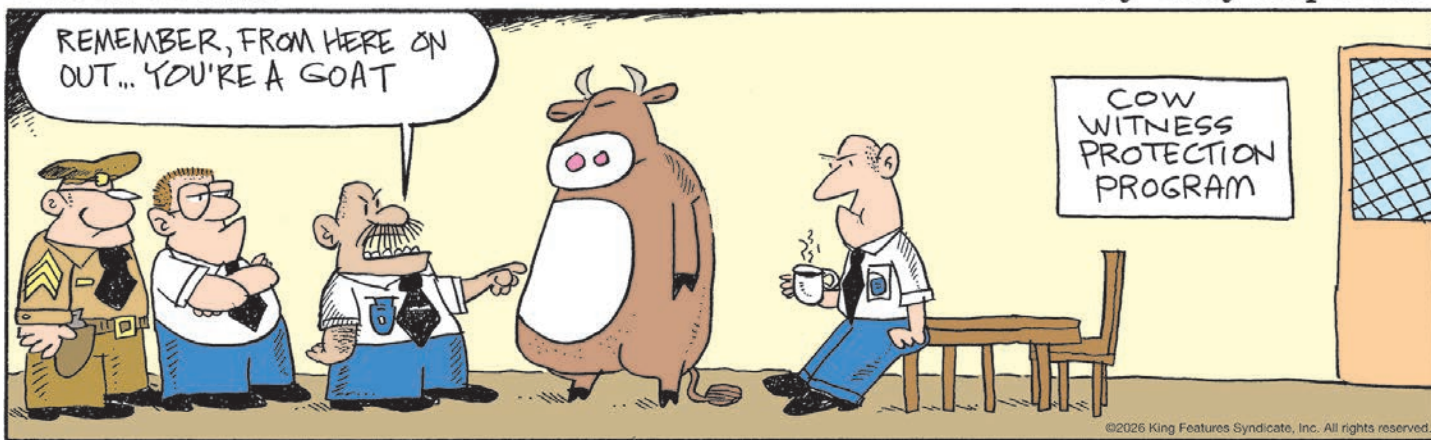
# The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



# Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



# HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels. Differences: 1. Tie is different. 2. Hat is smaller. 3. Handle is added to purse. 4. Window is not as wide. 5. Man has more hair. 6. Arm is longer.

# SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

1	7	8		4	2
			1		7
8	2		9		
	1	5		6	3
	3	5			
9	6	4		5	2
				4	3
	2	8			
				5	8
				2	9

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# MAGIC MAZE • MIDDLE —

R	Z	W	T	Q	N	K	H	D	A	X	U	R	P	M
J	G	D	D	A	X	A	V	S	Q	N	K	I	F	D
A	X	V	T	A	Q	M	O	M	J	H	Y	F	C	A
Y	W	U	R	P	O	E	E	W	N	L	A	J	H	L
F	L	D	R	B	Z	R	E	C	X	S	D	V	S	A
T	R	O	Q	E	O	I	E	M	N	K	E	I	E	I
D	N	U	O	R	G	C	H	H	F	A	H	M	G	T
D	B	Z	Y	H	A	A	W	T	T	L	T	V	A	I
T	R	Q	T	O	C	E	N	S	I	F	F	S	N	N
L	K	I	H	F	D	S	S	A	L	C	O	C	I	I
A	Z	X	W	V	U	S	R	E	M	O	C	N	I	D

Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions forward, backward, up, down and diagonally. Unlisted clue hint: First Letter of Your Middle Name

- Ages
- America
- Class
- Distance
- Ear
- East
- Ground
- Income
- Manager
- Names
- Of the day
- Of the road
- Rail
- School
- Weight

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# FUN PAGES

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