



# Latino Times

A BILINGUAL PUBLICATION



## Cómo educar a sus hijos ahora sobre cómo crear hábitos de dinero saludables y duraderos

Patrocinado por JPMorganChase

A medida que consolida sus propósitos de Año Nuevo, es un excelente momento para comenzar a tener una conversación con sus hijos, ya sea en la escuela primaria, secundaria o universidad, sobre formas inteligentes de manejar las finanzas. Comenzar la conversación cuando son jóvenes ayudará a crear hábitos de dinero saludables a medida que crecen, lo que en última instancia beneficiará su futuro financiero.

Para ayudarlo a comenzar, a continuación encontrará sugerencias que facilitan que los niños de todas las edades aprendan a ahorrar, presupuestar y comenzar a administrar sus finanzas de manera más independiente:

1. Iniciar la conversación

Nunca es demasiado pronto para comenzar a hablar sobre dinero de manera

realista para que los niños puedan comprender cómo se usa para apoyar su estilo de vida y ayudarles a alcanzar sus metas y sueños. Comience la conversación de una manera apropiada para la edad que destaque ideas, como conocer la diferencia entre necesidades y deseos, ahorrar para algo especial y llevar un registro del dinero que gana, así como el dinero que gasta. Por ejemplo, los niños pequeños pueden entender la idea de ahorrar dinero de su asignación o puesto de limonada para comprar algo que desean en el futuro.

2. Tomar notas y utilizar herramientas

A medida que sus hijos envejecen, explique los conceptos básicos del presupuesto, incluso tan simples como enumerar lo que gana y lo que gasta, para que pueda asegurarse de no gastar más de lo que tiene. Cualquier dinero restante se pone primero en ahorros, luego pueden



considerar trabajar para comprar artículos o experiencias que podrían querer comprar. Existen muchos recursos de elaboración de presupuestos, por lo que puede encontrar el que mejor le convenga,

incluidas hojas de trabajo de presupuesto para llevar un registro de los gastos.

3. Organizarse y digitalizarse

La confianza financiera comienza con



# Chief Mayra Franco SUSD’s First Latina Police Chief

By Julia Barnes

The South Side of many towns is often viewed through a negative lens, defined by struggle, crime, or lack of resources, yet that perception overlooks the strength that lies within these communities. Despite the challenges, growing up in these environments often instills resilience, grit, and a strong sense of responsibility at an early age.

Many individuals overcome adversity through education, service, and leadership. Their achievements not only transform their own lives but also help uplift and empower the communities they call home.

“South Stockton kids have such a bad reputation because of past circumstances that have happened in our community, which is such a small faction. When we start to look at stories like yours and mine, there are really good people in South Stockton, and this totally gets overshadowed by the much of the negativity.”

These are the words of Chief Mayra Franco, the first Latina Police Chief of the Stockton Unified School District Police Department (SUSD), a shining example of someone who continues to inspire and uplift people in our community.

Chief Mayra Franco’s story begins with sacrifice, resilience, and the determination of immigrant parents who wanted more for their children. Born in the United States, her parents traveled back and forth to Mexico to work and do whatever they could to provide for their family. When Mayra was about five years old, her father lost his factory job in Mexico and made a life-changing decision to return to the United States in search of a better future for their five

children.

With little money and everything they owned packed into a station wagon, the family made the long drive to the border. They were exhausted, worried, and uncertain, especially because Mayra’s youngest sister had been born in Mexico and did not yet have documentation. After a tense crossing and help from an uncle waiting on the U.S. side, the family eventually made their way to Stockton, to rebuild their lives.

Settling in South Stockton, in the Conway Homes neighborhood on Glendale Street, Mayra’s mother stayed home to care for the children, while her father worked to support the family. Despite financial hardship, her parents created a strong and loving household, instilling in their children to never give up on their dreams.

Mayra attended Stockton Unified District schools throughout her childhood and credits her teachers with helping to shape her path, particularly her fifth-grade teacher, Rosalie Martinez, at Taylor Elementary.

Years later, as a police officer responding to shots fired at Harrison School, Mayra stood on the perimeter, when a teacher called out her name, as she recalled, “Oh my God, it was Ms. Martinez. It was totally crazy that she still remembered me.” The moment was both emotional and unforgettable, a reminder of how deeply educators can impact a child and vice versa.

Mayra’s family later moved to north Stockton, but she was determined to graduate from Edison High School, where generations of her family had attended as she recalls, “I didn’t want to attend any other school, but Edison. My brother would drive me to school



and then I’d ride the bus back home every day to make sure I could go to Edison High.”

Following high school, and encouraged by her mentors, she returned to school and ultimately became the first person in her family to earn both a bachelor’s and a master’s degree.

Encouraged by a friend, she entered the police academy, initially, seeing it as an opportunity to learn self-protection. However, during scenario-based training, she realized that impactful school-based policing could be a positive and meaningful way to give back to the community. She self-sponsored her way through the academy, working and taking out loans, committing fully, because failure was not an option.

After graduating, Mayra joined the Stockton Unified School District Police Department. Working with students reminded her of her own upbringing where initially, police were often thought of in a “negative way”, shaped by difficult circumstances and tense

interactions commonly encountered in the community.

Rather than turning her away, those early perceptions helped her better understand the concerns of the community and later fueled her commitment to building trust, empathy, and meaningful connections between police and the people they serve.

Mayra continued to advance her education and career simultaneously. She earned her law degree while working full-time, raising a family, and navigating promotions within the department. She studied for the California Bar while on maternity leave, balancing newborn care with exam preparation, a challenge she describes as one of her proudest accomplishments.

Despite opportunities to leave law enforcement for a legal practice, she believed deeply in the mission of the SUSD Police Department, and its focus on the youth, including, the annual “Trunk or Treat”, “Toy Drive”, and Holiday Express programs. Her leadership skills, lived experience, and dedication eventually led her to serve as Interim Chief, and later, Chief of Police.

Chief Franco’s journey, from a young girl traveling to the border in a packed station wagon, to leading the Stockton Unified School District Police Department, reflects the resilience of South Stockton and the power of determination. Her story stands as proof that background does not determine destiny, and that with support, and self-belief, anything is possible, as she relays, “When you talk about drive and resiliency, and you know about people having grit, it is people from South Stockton that have that.”

## Newsom K-12 school proposal would shift more power to governor

by Carolyn Jones

Gov. Gavin Newsom on Thursday proposed paring down the responsibilities of California’s elected State Superintendent of Public Instruction and shifting more power to the State Board of Education.

“California can no longer postpone reforms that have been recommended regularly for a century,” Newsom said, referring to numerous reports over the years that have suggested streamlining the state’s system of K-12 school governance.

“These critical reforms will bring greater accountability, clarity and coherence to how we serve our students and schools,” Newsom said.

The move is intended to simplify California’s convoluted education governance, which policy analysts have said can be inefficient, redundant and sometimes at cross purposes.

Under his proposal, the State Board of Education, an 11-member body appointed by the governor, would take over the California Department of Education. The State Superintendent of Public Instruction would have broader responsibility to “foster coordination and alignment of state education policies from early childhood through post secondary education.” The proposal didn’t offer further details.

For more than a century, the state’s public K-12 schools have been governed

by a web of authorities, both locally and at the state level. In Sacramento, the governor, state superintendent, State Board of Education and the Legislature all share policy-making duties, which may shift every few years depending on the political winds. The Department of Education, under the direction of the state superintendent, is supposed to carry out those policies.

Locally, school boards and county offices of education also hold power over schools, especially since the state switched to a funding system about a decade ago that gives more flexibility to school districts. County offices, among other duties, are charged with overseeing school district budgets.

California has a somewhat unique system of school governance. It’s one of only nine states that elects a schools chief. In other states, the top schools officer is appointed by the governor or the board of education, according to research by Education Commission of the States.

Newsom’s proposal echoes a December report by Policy Analysis for California Education which called for an overhaul of the state’s school governance structure.

“The need for stronger, more coherent governance has never been greater. Schools are grappling with fiscal challenges alongside deepening inequities, persistent opportunity gaps, and the last-

ing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on student learning and well-being,” the report’s authors wrote.

The issue is especially urgent, they said, as the federal government reels back its involvement in K-12 schools. President Donald Trump is in the process of shuttering the federal Department of Education, spinning off its duties to the states and other federal agencies. Federal education funding is also increasingly precarious, giving states more direct responsibility for educating children.

The PACE authors suggested several solutions, including the proposal that Newsom put forth. Under the PACE recommendation, the Department of Education would be run by an administrator appointed by the State Board of Education, and the superintendent would act as an independent advocate, with an eye on accountability. Most of the power and responsibility for schools would lie with the governor.

Previous proposals

This is not the first time the issue has arisen. Several ballot measures over the years — none successful — have sought to change the role of the state superintendent. In 2023, ACA 9, by former Assemblyman Kevin McCarty, a Democrat from Sacramento, would have made the position appointed by the governor. McCarty withdrew it amid opposition from the California Teachers Association, the

California School Boards Association and other groups.

In his proposal, Newsom cited other previous reports recommending changes to state schools governance, including one from 2002 and another from 1920.

The state’s current superintendent, Tony Thurmond, is winding down his second term. During his tenure, the department has expanded literacy efforts, community schools, student wellness programs and other initiatives. He’s also faced criticism for working side jobs and creating a “toxic workplace.”

Thurmond, who terms out in 2026, is running for governor.

Newsom’s proposal has backing from a wide array of education players, including the Association of California School Administrators, California Association of School Business Officials, Californians Together, which advocates for English learners, and EdTrust-West, a research and advocacy organization focused on equity.

”For far too long, California’s fractured education governance system has contributed to persistent inequities disproportionately impacting low-income students, students of color and multilingual learners,” said Christopher Nelum, executive director of EdTrust-West. “EdTrust-West commends Governor Newsom for championing these essential reforms.”



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## Dinero

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la organización. Puedes encontrar herramientas presupuestarias fáciles de usar que funcionan tanto para niños como para padres, con diferentes niveles de supervisión y gestión parental adecuados para diferentes grupos de edad. Ya sea que se trate de una primera cuenta bancaria o de una cuenta orientada a un estudiante universitario o de escuela secundaria, existen múltiples opciones que pueden ayudar a estudiantes de diversas edades con transacciones digitales de primera mano y saldos de cuentas, ayudando con la elaboración de presupuestos y el ahorro.

### 4. Planificar para el futuro

Según Bankrate, el 59% de los estadounidenses se sienten incómodos con la cantidad de ahorros de emergencia que tienen, y el 27% no tienen ningún fondo de emergencia. Es importante que los niños de todas las edades sepan que pueden ocurrir eventos inesperados en la vida, por lo que planificar con anticipación puede ayudar a reducir el estrés y a hacer frente mejor a lo que pueda ocurrir. Por este motivo, construir un fondo de emergencia o ahorrar para un día lluvioso es una habilidad crucial para aprender. Sus hijos pueden comenzar a aprender y practicar habilidades monetarias vitales ahora que permanecerán con ellos de por vida, así como también cómo usar herramientas financieras para poder mantenerse al tanto de sus finanzas y alcanzar sus metas.

Obtenga más información sobre to-

das las opciones disponibles para que sus hijos comiencen con la base financiera adecuada en [personal.chase.com/es/personal/checking](https://personal.chase.com/es/personal/checking).

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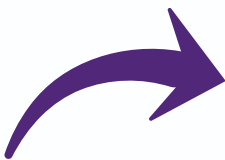
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# A Rollback at Birth: New Hepatitis B Guidance Could Deepen Health Disparities

By Sunita Sohrabji

For decades, U.S. public health policy has treated hepatitis B vaccination at birth as non-negotiable: every newborn, regardless of maternal risk factors, receives a first dose within 24 hours of life.

The approach mirrors global guidance from the World Health Organization and has been credited with sharply reducing pediatric hepatitis B infections and future liver cancer risk.

But new recommendations from the CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) have reopened the debate. On Dec. 5, ACIP issued revised guidelines, recommending that only infants born to Hep-B positive mothers should be immunized at birth. Hep-B negative mothers can now choose to vaccinate or not, according to new ACIP recommendations, which also cancelled out the mandatory three dose series. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention approved the updated guidances Dec. 15.

Pushback

In a Dec. 5 memo, the American Association of Immunologists said it was disappointed by ACIP’s recommendations. AAI noted that since implementation of vaccination at birth, chronic hepatitis B cases in children and adolescents have fallen by 99%.

The West Coast Health Alliance — comprised of the states of California,

Hawaii, Oregon, and Washington also released a statement Dec. 5, recommending that the hepatitis B vaccine series should be given to all newborns.

ACIP Recommendations Not Evidence-Based

Dr. Samuel So — founder and executive director of the Asian Liver Center at Stanford University — called the new ACIP recommendations “short-sighted and not evidence-based.” In an interview with American Community Media, So stated that birth dose is not simply an infection-prevention tool, but a cancer-prevention strategy for infants.

“If an adult contracts hepatitis B, only about 5% will go on to develop a chronic infection that could result in liver cancer or cirrhosis. However, if a newborn or young child becomes infected, the risk significantly increases. Between 50% to 90% of these infants will develop a chronic infection that can lead to serious liver disease and cancer.”

”This heightened risk is why organizations like the World Health Organization and the CDC have referred to the hepatitis B vaccine as the first anti-cancer vaccine,” said So. “Rolling back immunizations at birth puts us on a path toward more liver cancer, more cirrhosis, and more preventable deaths.”

The stakes are highest for East



Asian, South Asian, and African immigrant communities, where chronic hepatitis B remains endemic and is often acquired at birth or in early childhood.

Below are excerpts of the interview with Dr. So.

Dr. So, why are certain communities disproportionately impacted by hepatitis B?

People born in East Asia, South Asia, and Africa have much higher rates of chronic hepatitis B because many were infected at birth or in early childhood — before vaccines were widely available. In those regions, between 4% and 12% of adults may be chronically infected. When those individuals immigrate to the U.S., they carry a much higher risk of liver cancer and cirrhosis.

In the U.S., Asians are about nine times more likely to die from hepatitis B-related liver disease. African Americans — many of whom trace ancestry to African countries with high prevalence — are two to three times more likely to die from hepatitis B complications.

ACIP emphasizes maternal testing. Why isn’t testing alone sufficient?

Testing pregnant women has been recommended for over 20 years — this is not new. But it’s not foolproof. Even among women with private insurance, about 15% are not tested during pregnancy. The numbers are likely much worse for women without stable prenatal care.

More importantly, hepatitis B is extraordinarily infectious — 50 to 100 times more infectious than HIV. A drop of blood can remain infectious on a surface for up to five days. Babies can be exposed through household contact, caregivers, or daycare environments. Testing alone does not address those risks.

Can you explain environmental or “horizontal” transmission?

Babies and young children can be infected through minor skin breaks — scratches, abrasions — from contact with infected household members or other children. This used to be a major problem before universal vaccination.

With universal birth-dose vaccination, children can safely interact without fear. Without it, we return to an era of testing, exclusion, and stigma — something many Asian

countries experienced before vaccination programs were in place.

Some policymakers argue hepatitis B is mainly spread through sex or drug use. How do you respond?

That completely misses the point. The primary goal of hepatitis B vaccination is not to prevent adult behavior — it’s to prevent lifelong infection acquired in infancy that leads to cancer decades later.

Saying we should vaccinate teenagers once they’re sexually active is nonsensical. By then, the cancer risk is far lower. We learned this lesson with HPV: framing vaccines around behavior reduces uptake. Framing them around cancer prevention saves lives.

What impact could ACIP’s recommendation have long-term?

It will lead to more babies becoming infected — especially those born to mothers who weren’t tested, tested late, or lacked prenatal care. Those infections won’t show symptoms in childhood, but decades later we’ll see more liver cancer and cirrhosis.

This decision does nothing to improve public health. It dismantles one of the most successful childhood vaccination strategies we’ve ever had. What do global examples tell us?

China is the best example. Before universal newborn vaccination, 10% of children developed chronic hepatitis B by age one. Today, that number is under 0.3%. That success is recognized worldwide as a major public-health achievement.

I’ve spent 20 years helping low-income countries improve birth-dose coverage. Now the U.S. risks sending the message that universal vaccination is optional — which could undermine global progress, especially in Africa, where most countries still struggle to implement birth-dose programs.

Q: What is your advice to pregnant parents right now?

Follow the gold-standard recommendation: every newborn should receive the hepatitis B vaccine within 24 hours of birth and complete the full series. Three shots within six months protect for life — against infection, liver cancer, and stigma.

This is one of the safest, most effective vaccines we have. As a surgeon who treats liver cancer, I can tell you: prevention is everything.

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# New California laws Latinos should know about

By Andrea Valadez

The New Year has brought with it dozens of new laws, some that won't change day-to-day life too much and some that likely will. Ranging from education to immigration, many of the laws are set to have a big impact on the state's Latino population.

**Education**

The California State University (CSU) system will be required by a new law to establish a direct admissions process that involves notifying eligible high school seniors of their automatic admission to the 16 CSU campuses participating in the initiative. California community colleges will also be required to develop programs that facilitate a more seamless transition for community college students moving to a four-year university.

Senate Bill 640, introduced by Sen. Christopher Cabaldon, builds on the existing direct admissions pilot program CSU launched in 2024 in partnership with the Riverside County Office of Education.

Latino students are the CSU's largest ethnic group, making up nearly 49% of the 23-campus system's student population as of fall 2024.

Students who meet the grade and coursework requirements for CSU admission will automatically receive a letter of acceptance from the CSU chancellor, without needing to apply to any of the participating campuses.

Due to enrollment capacities, San

Jose State, San Diego State, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Cal Poly Pomona, Cal State Fullerton and Cal State Long Beach are the campuses not participating in the initiative.

"We should make it as seamless for our students to go from 12th grade to the next stage of their education as it was for them to go sixth grade to seventh grade," Cabaldon said when the bill advanced to the Governor's desk in September. "Direct admission removes the application hurdle that stops some students from going to college, and relieves the fear that they won't get in anywhere."

**Health**

Even tortillas will change in 2026 due to AB 1830, a bill introduced by Assemblymember Joaquin Arambula that now requires manufacturers to add folic acid to tortillas and masa products in the state. The reason? Folic acid is a vital vitamin that supports infant health, but data shows Latinas consume less of the vitamin during early pregnancy than women in other demographics, leading to consistently higher birth defects rates among babies born to Latinas.

Folic acid has been shown to reduce the risk of neural tube defects, like spina bifida and anencephaly, by up to 70%. The new law requires manufacturers to add 0.7 milligrams of folic acid to every pound of masa and reflect the change on the nutrition label.

In the latest state data, from 2017 to 2019, around 28% of Latinas reported



they consumed folic acid a month before they were pregnant. Since folic acid is not present in many foods, the idea is that by putting it in tortillas, a traditional food many Latinas are already used to eating, the rates of folic acid consumed will increase and the rate of birth defects will decrease.

Insulin was also a big topic of conversation during the legislative session. As required by Senator Scott Wiener's SB 40, health insurers will now cap insulin co-pays at \$35 for a 20-day supply, significantly bringing the cost down for the consumer. The bill will prove significant for Latinos, whose diabetes rates trend higher than other ethnic groups. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, Hispanic/Latino adults were diagnosed with diabetes in 2024 at a rate 13% higher than the overall adult population. Data from the American Diabetes Association indicates that about 11.7% of Hispanic adults

have been diagnosed with diabetes, but the actual percentage of Hispanics/Latinos living with undiagnosed diabetes is likely significantly higher.

**Immigration**

Assemblymember Celeste Rodriguez' AB 495 was championed by dozens of immigrant rights groups. The law will strengthen family's rights, allowing parents to designate a temporary guardian for their children in case of detention or deportation. Previously, the list of who could be deemed a temporary guardian was very narrow, but now includes a wider range of family members and loved ones.

AB 495 also extends to daycares and child care facilities, barring them from collecting and sharing immigration-related information of students and their families. Schools under the new law are also required to distribute guidance to help families prepare for times of crises like family separations.

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# Los indocumentados que son padres deben actuar ahora por el futuro de sus hijos

Por Sharon Balmer Cartagena

Si usted es padre o madre de una de las millones de familias de estatus migratorio mixto en California, planifique con anticipación. Por doloroso que sea, existe la posibilidad de ser deportado, y es fundamental que tome medidas para sus hijos y así evitar que terminen separados más tiempo del absolutamente necesario. Durante casi 20 años, he trabajado en la intersección del derecho de familia, el derecho de tutela y el bienestar infantil, y veo demasiadas familias que no están tomando las mejores medidas posibles para planificar una posible separación. Algunas son víctimas de abuso, y otras reciben consejos erróneos.

Hace varios años, trabajé con una madre que fue separada de su hijo menor en la frontera al ser deportada durante la primera administración de Trump. Cuando el presidente Biden permitió el regreso de algunos padres que habían sido separados de sus hijos, ella aprovechó del programa. Sin embargo, debido a que los abogados que asistían a su hija no comprendían plenamente las consecuencias a largo plazo de su trabajo legal, le tomó años y miles de dólares para reunirse con su hija, a pesar de que los padres de acogida y los abogados estaban de acuerdo de que era una madre apta para recuperar a su hija.

Si toma medidas de protección importantes ahora, puede ayudar a evitar que su familia se encuentre en una situ-

ación similar.

Lo primero y más importante es asegurarse de trabajar con un abogado colegiado e informado con experiencia en derecho de familia de California.

Algunos estafadores que son o dicen ser notarios públicos intentan convencer a los inmigrantes vulnerables de que son abogados. En muchos países, un notario público puede ejercer como abogado, pero aquí no.

También debe asegurarse de que su abogado comprenda esta área del la ley. Algunos padres recurren a abogados y obtienen un poder notarial pero en California, un poder notarial no puede utilizarse para transferir la patria potestad ni la custodia. En muchos casos, los abogados no engañan intencionalmente a sus clientes; desafortunadamente, simplemente desconocen o no comprenden la ley.

En este caso, solo hay dos opciones viables: transferir la custodia a otra persona o completar una Declaración Jurada del Cuidador.

En la mayoría de los casos, recomendando comenzar con una Declaración Jurada del Cuidador. Este formulario permite a un familiar tomar las medidas necesarias para el cuidado diario de su hijo. Pueden inscribir a su hijo en la escuela, firmar formularios escolares y llevarlo al médico para recibir atención médica de rutina. Lo principal que no pueden hacer es sacar a sus hijos del país, obtener un pasaporte para ellos y dar



su consentimiento para recibir atención médica importante.

La otra opción legal es transferir la custodia a otra persona mediante una tutela. Esto le otorga a la persona todos los derechos de un padre, pero también suspende sus derechos parentales. Puede ser muy difícil recuperar la custodia de su hijo más adelante. Hacerlo requiere la terminación de la tutela en una audiencia judicial, incluso con el consentimiento del tutor e incluso cuando todos estén de acuerdo en que la transferencia original debía ser por un corto período. Incluso en los casos de abuelos, tías y tíos de cuales confea uno, como cuidadores, he visto padres que no han podido recuperar la custodia. Así que por favor, ejerza esta opción con cautela.

Lo peor que puede hacer es no hacer nada. Si no hace nada y es deportado sin un plan, es posible que los servicios de protección infantil intervengan y coloquen a su hijo en un hogar de acogida, lo que eventualmente podría resultar en la terminación permanente de sus derechos parentales. Aunque, el objetivo del hogar de acogida es la reunificación familiar, los casos judiciales de acogida avanzan con mayor rapidez y requieren que los padres asuman un papel activo, lo cual puede ser difícil para los padres que podrían ser detenidos indefinidamente o expulsados de EE. UU.

Si usted es un padre o madre que podría estar en riesgo de deportación, no permita que esto le suceda a su familia. Planifique con anticipación. Hable con su comunidad sobre quién podría hacerse cargo del cuidado de sus hijos si usted no puede. Prepare una Declaración Jurada del Cuidador o, si es más apropiado, hable con él sobre un cambio de custodia. Sé que es un momento aterrador, pero haga todo lo posible por proteger a su familia.

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# Where Does Venezuela Go From Here?

By Roxsy Lin

According to Andrew Latham, what transpired in Venezuela on Jan. 3 when U.S. forces entered the country, capturing its leader, Nicolas Maduro, along with his wife Cilia Flores, cannot be described as regime change but rather a “decapitation.”

Latham, a Senior Washington Fellow at the Institute for Peace and Diplomacy, says what follows may not look too dissimilar from what existed in the country under Maduro.

“Obviously, the very, very top layer of a multi-tiered regime has been removed, but the regime itself remains in place,” said Latham, pointing to the swearing in of Venezuelan Vice President Delcy Rodriguez as interim president on January 5.

Rodriguez, a lawyer and the daughter of a Marxist guerilla fighter involved in the high profile 1976 kidnapping of an American businessman, rose through the ranks under Maduro, including serving as finance and oil minister while helping to steer the Venezuelan economy through layers of U.S. sanctions.

Latham, who teaches international relations and political theory at Macalester College in Saint Paul, Minnesota, sees four possible scenarios playing out in Venezuela, the first being a “business as usual” outcome.

Under this scenario, the current regime survives intact, bound together by Chavista ideology—so named for the former Venezuelan leader Hugo Chavez—and existing power structures. Latham regards this as the least likely path.

The more plausible outcome, in his assessment, entails the same political actors and institutions remaining in control but quietly shedding much of the regime’s Chavista ideological baggage. In this version, power does not change hands, but priorities do: the government becomes more receptive to pressure from Washington, particularly

on two fronts: opening the country’s vast oil reserves, as well as its critical minerals sector to U.S. interests, while scaling back strategic ties with China, Russia, and Iran.

Under a third scenario, Venezuelan opposition leader and Nobel laureate María Corina Machado assumes the presidency, marking a full rupture with the existing regime, replacing it with a government promising stronger democratic accountability. According to Latham, this is among the least likely outcomes, at least in the short term.

A fourth and final scenario would see a near total systemic collapse of governing institutions, with the potential for civil war and the prospect of “American boots on the ground,” a move Trump has said he is not afraid to make.

Reporting suggests events remain unstable in the South American nation following Operation Absolute Resolve, the name given to the nighttime raid on Venezuelan territory by U.S. forces, with thousands rallying in the streets of Caracas on Jan. 5 calling for Maduro’s release.

U.S. officials say the operation resulted in 75 deaths, including several civilians. Venezuelan and Cuban officials put the death toll at more than 80.

The White House, meanwhile, continues to describe the operation as part of a law enforcement effort targeting Maduro, who was indicted by the U.S. in 2020 on drug trafficking charges. Democrats and international leaders say the operation violated U.S. and international law.

According to Latham, signals from the interim leadership suggest a Venezuela that remains under familiar control but is already positioning itself as more cooperative and strategically aligned with the United States.

A recent message posted to Rodriguez’s Telegram account invited the U.S. to collaborate in “an agenda of



cooperation.”

Pedro Urruchurtu is the International Affairs Coordinator at “Vente Venezuela,” Machado’s political party. In an interview with Venezuelan journalist Gladys Rodríguez, he said any post-Maduro transition would only be “possible and sustainable if it is led by leadership that people trust,” by which he means Machado.

Maduro declared himself the winner in presidential elections in 2024, despite Edmundo González—who ran as a sort of proxy for Macahdo after her candidacy was disqualified by the regime—claiming a lead of more than 40 percentage points based on total vote counts.

Urruchurtu insists the election demonstrates the desire among Venezuelans for a Machado government. He is also critical of those who attack U.S. intervention, noting powers including China, Russia and Cuba have long meddled in Venezuelan affairs.

Jorge Marquez is a Venezuelan petroleum engineer and public policy specialist now living in Texas. He says the post-Maduro transition should be led by González, though he acknowledges the country currently “does not have the conditions to undertake that transition.”

Both González and Machado are now outside Venezuela, having been clandestinely ferried out after remaining in hiding for months following the election, making an immediate handover unrealistic, says Marquez.

Even if that opposition were to return, he stresses, basic guarantees would still be required, given the power imbalance on the ground between opposition leaders and members of the Maduro government, which maintain control of the military, the police, and other paramilitary forces.

Rebuilding political structures would require international support to weaken the Maduro coalition, reduce its coercive capacity, and provide minimum security guarantees. Without protections for political leaders, meaningful political engagement is impossible, Marquez stressed.

As for more immediate political objectives, the first is to seek the release of the more than 700 political prisoners now behind bars in Venezuela.

“Two: ensure the return to the country of the main political leaders, including María Corina Machado and Edmundo González.” Finally, he said “Once this happens, regroup our entire team and rebuild our political strength to be able to manage the transition.”

## City of Stockton Announces Three Key Leadership Appointments

STOCKTON, Calif. – Three seasoned public administrators have been selected to fill critical leadership roles within the City of Stockton, bringing decades of combined municipal experience to the organization.

**Audree V. Jones-Taylor** was appointed as Interim Director of the Community Services Department beginning December 15, 2025. Her four-decade career includes serving as Director of Oakland Parks and Recreation and Chief of Staff for Baltimore’s Department of Public Works. Jones-Taylor has also held senior positions in San Bernardino, Long Beach, San Francisco, and Marin City, where she championed youth development programs, environmental justice initiatives, and expanded public access to parks and recreation facilities. She earned her Master’s Degree in Organizational Leadership from St. Mary’s College of California and her Bachelor’s Degree in Business Administration from the University of Redlands. Beyond her public service work, Jones-Taylor has authored children’s books and serves as a mentor.

**Peni Basalusalu** assumes the role of Public Works Director on December 22, 2025. Basalusalu previously worked for Stockton’s Parks and Recreation Department for 3.5 years, with nearly ten years of experience in the Parks and Recreation field. He has been a city resident since 2003. His two-decade career in municipal government includes positions as analyst, manager, deputy director, and director across multiple California jurisdictions, including Richmond, Vallejo, Galt, Patterson, Waterford, and Manteca. Most recently, he served as Deputy Director of Public Works in Berkeley. Basalusalu holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Brigham Young University-Hawaii and a Master of Public Administration from Brigham Young University. He and his wife Amy have four children, three born at St. Joseph’s Hospital in Stockton.

**Gilbert Garcia** assumes the Chief Financial Officer position on December 22, 2025, marking his return to the city where he launched his public sector career in 1997. The Stockton native



Audree V. Jones-Taylor

has more than two decades of municipal finance leadership, including roles as Finance Director and CFO in Lincoln, Ventura, and Huntington Beach, as well as Assistant Budget Director in Oakland. His background encompasses operational and capital budgeting, strategic financial planning, treasury operations, grants management, and financial reporting. During his earlier years with Stockton, Garcia gained experience across multiple departments, including Police, Public Works, Budget, and Accounting.



Peni Basalusalu



Gilbert Garcia



# 72 congresistas piden a Trump dejar a un lado amenazas a México

Un grupo de 72 congresistas demócratas piden a Trump frenar amenazas militares contra México; advierten riesgos en cooperación y el comercio bilateral

Por Elia Lopez

Un grupo de 72 congresistas demócratas instó al presidente Donald Trump dejar de lado las amenazas de una posible acción militar en México, advirtiendo que cualquier operación unilateral sin el consentimiento del gobierno mexicano y sin autorización del Congreso tendría consecuencias “desastrosas” para la seguridad, la economía y la cooperación bilateral.

La advertencia de Trump contra los cárteles

La petición fue enviada un día después de que Trump declaró en una entrevista con Sean Hannity en Fox News que su gobierno comenzará a “atacar a los cárteles” por tierra, en medio de reiteradas declaraciones en las que ha sugerido que Estados Unidos podría emprender acciones militares dentro de México.

“Cualquier acción militar unilateral de Estados Unidos dentro de México sin el consentimiento de México destruiría la confianza, desmantelaría la cooperación con las autoridades mexicanas y dificultaría mantener las drogas fuera de las comunidades que representamos”, escribieron

los legisladores en la carta dirigida al jefe de la diplomacia estadounidense.

Los congresistas también expresan su oposición al “uso no autorizado de la fuerza militar” en Venezuela y rechazan lo que califican como afirmaciones falsas de Trump sobre su supuesta capacidad legal para ordenar ataques militares sin la aprobación del Congreso.

México, el principal socio comercial de México

Los firmantes recordaron que México es el principal socio comercial de Estados Unidos y un aliado clave en materia de seguridad. Subrayaron que bajo la presidencia de Claudia Sheinbaum, el gobierno mexicano ha intensificado la cooperación bilateral, lo que consideran incompatible con cualquier acción que viole su soberanía.

Las repercusiones económicas de un conflicto serían significativas, advirtieron.

Adema, destacaron que la inversión extranjera directa estadounidense en México superó los \$14,500 millones de dólares el año pasado, más de un millón de empleos en Estados Unidos dependen del comercio transfronterizo y más de cinco millones



están vinculados al intercambio comercial con México.

Legisladores destacan extradiciones de narcos mexicanos

En materia de seguridad, los legisladores destacaron avances recientes, incluyendo extradiciones masivas de presuntos líderes criminales, grandes incautaciones de fentanilo y reformas legales para prohibir la producción y distribución de esa droga y de sus precursores químicos.

Aunque reconocen que México aún enfrenta desafíos en materia de Estado de Derecho y crimen organizado, los congresistas señalaron que

la cooperación bilateral ha producido resultados concretos y que una acción militar unilateral pondría en riesgo décadas de trabajo conjunto contra las organizaciones criminales transnacionales.

“En un momento en que necesitamos generar confianza y colaborar con nuestros aliados frente a la competencia global, instamos a la Administración a no emprender acciones unilaterales y drásticas que puedan violar la soberanía de México, perturbar el comercio o socavar el progreso en seguridad que hemos logrado juntos”, precisó la carta.



## Free Tax Filing Assistance Available to San Joaquin County Residents Earning Less Than \$70K

“Our team spent time with a family from Peru, guiding them through the ITIN application process.” Maira recalls. Through the VITA program, the family gained the knowledge to do it on their own in the future. “They told us we didn’t just help them with their taxes- we gave them confidence.”

Download a tax preparation checklist and learn more: [www.hpsj.com/taxhelp](http://www.hpsj.com/taxhelp)

\*Volunteers are certified through IRS



▲ Maira Chaves  
Volunteer Tax Preparer assists community resident with tax filing.

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Health Plan of San Joaquin



# Elderly Bakersfield Couple Self Deports After 35 Years in the US

By Alfonso Sierra

BAKERSFIELD, Calif. – A couple who has lived in the city of Bakersfield for 35 years has decided to self deport for fear of being detained and separated from loved ones by force.

Daniel and Alberta Herrera, both originally from Mexico, entered the United States in 1990 seeking a new life for themselves and their family. Daniel, 73, worked in agriculture, picking oranges, lemons, and other crops in the Central Valley, while his wife, 70, stayed home and raised their nine children and subsequently helped with their grandchildren. Both are undocumented.

Due to the Trump Administration’s extreme immigration policies, the couple has chosen to self deport for fear of being arrested by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and sent to a processing center where they would be separated, detained, and eventually deported.

“We’re not good here! We are not happy being in the situation that we are in. Fear and insecurity are all we have,” Alberta told El Popular during an interview in the modest home they share with a son in east Bakersfield.

Daniel was injured while working the citrus crops and is unable to work. “I haven’t worked since April, we have children that help, but they already have families and their own lives to live. We do not want to be a burden on them,” stated Daniel.

Depression, anxiety in wake of ICE raids

In early January, border patrol

agents conducted a massive immigration enforcement operation in Kern and neighboring counting, targeting farm-workers, day laborers and anyone else they suspected of being undocumented. Operation “Return to Sender” provided a glimpse of what was to come under the Trump administration.

Daniel’s children convinced him not to continue to go to work since ICE agents had detained several farmworkers. Since then, Daniel says that he has experienced depression and anxiety, feelings that are exacerbated by the constant stream of images of ICE agents in masks dragging people from their homes and vehicles.

“I tried to obtain legal status during the amnesty in the 1990’s, but since I didn’t have my birth certificate, it couldn’t be done,” said Daniel.

The couple tried again some years later to legalize their status with the help of an immigration attorney who told them at the time that there were no waivers currently available and that it would be better if they stayed to see if the laws changed. The lawyer also suggested that because of their age they would likely not be targeted by immigration authorities.

Circumstances have since changed dramatically.

The Dignity Act of 2025

In July of last year, Rep. Maria Elvira Salazar (R-Florida) introduced the Dignity Act of 2025 (H.R. 4393) in the U.S. House of Representatives, a bipartisan effort to strengthen border security while providing undocumented individuals

with an opportunity to obtain legal status if they meet certain requirements. The legislation is pending, though it remains unclear whether it has any hope of advancing under this administration.

In a December press release, Salazar stated the bill has gained momentum in the House, with more than 25 cosponsors and 50 endorsements.

“Momentum is growing. With six new sponsors joining the Dignity Act this week, we are proving once again that immigration reform is possible if Congress has the courage to act,” said Salazar. “Every day we wait, the situation gets worse, our workforce remains under pressure, employers struggle to hire, and millions of long-term immigrants who power our economy remain unable to fully contribute. We cannot afford more delay. The time for excuses is over. The time for the Dignity Act is now.”

Still, both Daniel and his wife say that once they leave, they no longer want to return to live in the United States. Their only wish, says Daniel, is to obtain a visa to be able to visit their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

For those who do self deport, that may prove more complicated. Voluntary departure vs. self deportation

According to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), some 1.6 million people opted to self deport since late 2024/2025. Some have called those numbers into question, arguing many immigrants are instead moving deeper into the shadows to avoid detention and deportation.

Self deportation is distinct from voluntary departure. The former entails leaving the U.S. without formal approval by an immigration judge and can affect future re-entry. Voluntary departure, conversely, is a judge-approved process by which an individual agrees to leave the country on their own, within a certain period (up to 120 days) without a formal deportation order being issued.

Individuals who choose voluntary departure forfeit any right to appeal a judge’s decision, and while they may be eligible to apply for a visa to eventually return to the U.S. timelines range from 5 to 20 years.

DHS had offered a \$3,000 incentive and a free flight home for individuals to leave the country voluntarily through the end of 2025 via the CBP app, warning that those who fail to take advantage of the incentive “have only one alternative: They will be arrested, deported, and they will never be able to return to the United States.”

Experts say for those considering leaving the country, it is critical to consult an immigration attorney to understand the consequences and whether a “voluntary departure” program is the optimal choice, as it may limit future options.

Daniel and Alberta say the constant fear combined with the inability to work and provide for themselves convinced them to leave. They plan to return to Mexico for the first time in more than three decades in early January. One of their children will take them to Tijuana, from where they plan to return to Oaxaca, in the far south of the country.

## ANUNCIO DE AUDIENCIA PÚBLICA

El Consejo de Gobiernos de San Joaquín (SJCOG, por sus siglas en inglés) está buscando su opinión para determinar si hay alguna Necesidad de Tránsito Insatisfecha razonable de satisfacer en cada ciudad o en el condado no incorporado.

Las Necesidades de Tránsito Insatisfechas que se identifican como “razonable de satisfacer” deben ser financiadas antes de que los Fondos de Transporte Local puedan ser utilizados para propósitos no relacionados con el tránsito en la jurisdicción respectiva. Se invita al público a comentar sobre cualquier Necesidad de Tránsito Insatisfecha en una audiencia pública durante la reunión de la Junta Directiva de SJCOG programada regularmente el jueves 22 de enero de 2026, a las 4:00 PM, 555 E. Weber Avenue, Stockton CA 95202.

Para más información sobre la Evaluación de Necesidades de Tránsito Insatisfechas, visite nuestra página [www.sjcog.org/UTN](http://www.sjcog.org/UTN). También se le pide al público a participar en la encuesta sobre las Necesidades de Tránsito Insatisfechas escaneando el código QR o haciendo clic en el siguiente enlace.



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# Health Plan of San Joaquin Launches Advantage D-SNP Product

As of January 1, 2026, residents who qualify in San Joaquin, Stanislaus, El Dorado and Alpine Counties have access to Health Plan’s new Advantage D-SNP (HMO) Dual Eligible Special Needs Plan—an integrated benefit package designed to better serve individuals who qualify for both Medicare and Medi-Cal.

The new plan offering provides a single, coordinated health plan that makes it easier for members to access the care and benefits they need. The primary goal is to streamline and enhance care for individuals by eliminating the fragmentation that often results from navigating two separate programs. Advantage D-SNP brings together the best of Medicare, Medi-Cal/Medicaid

in one seamless plan designed to simplify care and improve the member experience. With one plan and one card, eligible members can now enjoy integrated coverage that makes managing their health easier than ever. Advantage D-SNP also connects members to coordinated care—providing smooth access to trusted providers, specialists, and case managers who work together to support their health journey.

Members can now benefit from expanded services that include vision, dental, hearing, transportation, and over-the-counter allowances, ensuring more complete and convenient care. Health Plan is rooted in the community, providing members with access

to dedicated local support including a team of care managers and advocates who understand their unique needs and are committed to helping them live healthier, fuller lives.

“This is a milestone for our organization and our community,” said Health Plan’s Chief Executive Officer, Lizeth Granados. “Our Advantage D-SNP (HMO) plan streamlines services, making it easier for individuals and families to access coordinated, high-quality care. By expanding local support and resources and offering dedicated care coordination close to home, we’re helping members receive guidance to get the care they need—right here in our communities.”

“This new plan offering strengthens what we can offer our members and gives them access to a broader range of benefits and health services,” said Dr. Lakshmi Dhanvanthari, Health Plan’s Chief Medical Officer. “We are simplifying care and expanding the supports available to help our members stay healthy and independent.”

Eligible Medicare members — including those turning 65 and those under 65 with qualifying disabilities who also have Medi-Cal — now have the option to choose their local health plan of nearly 30 years as their Dual Special Needs Plan. Community members, providers, and partners can learn more by visiting [www.hpsj-mvhp.org](http://www.hpsj-mvhp.org).

# Chicken Ranch Casino Announces Remodel of Original Casino Property

OG Casino to temporarily close January 5 for a full-property refresh and update

Jamestown, CA — Thursday, December 11, 2025 – Chicken Ranch Casino Resort today announced a full remodel of the original Chicken Ranch Casino (“the OG”), marking the next phase in the property’s evolution.

On January 5 at 2:00 AM, the OG will temporarily close its doors to begin a refresh and update of the entire building, with a reopening planned for spring 2026.

When the OG reopened in August 2024, one month after the debut of the new Chicken Ranch Casino Resort, gaming occupancy was intentionally reduced to roughly half of its pre-

vious capacity. Following this refresh, the OG will reopen with both sides of the building activated, featuring: Additional gaming machines, including fan-favorite titles such as Wheel of Fortune Cash of Reels, Lucky Lemmings Stampede, and 5x3x2x Red Hot Tamales.

16 Electronic Table Games. An enhanced overall gaming floor layout and Guest flow to grow. The OG will remain an 18+ fully smoking property upon reopening, continuing to offer a dedicated option for Guests who prefer a smoking environment. In keeping with current

policy, the OG will not serve alcohol. Throughout the remodel, the Bingo Hall will remain open and continue to run its regular bingo sessions, ensuring bingo enthusiasts can still enjoy their favorite games while construction is underway.

“Refresh and update of the OG allows us to honor the roots of Chicken Ranch while giving our Guests more of what they love—more games, more space, and more choices,” said Joseph Mathiesen-Powell, Tribal Chairman. “With the new resort and the refreshed OG, we’re creating complementary experiences for every type of

player.” About Chicken Ranch Casino Resort - The Chicken Ranch Rancheria Me-Wuk Indians of California: Nestled in the heart of Jamestown, California, near Yosemite National Park, Chicken Ranch Casino Resort is a unique destination in Tuolumne County that boasts a nine-story resort with an expanded gaming floor that offers expansive views of the Sierra Nevada foothills. Opened in July 2024, the destination features 197 hotel rooms and suites, a collection of restaurants and bars and 12,000 square feet of event space.

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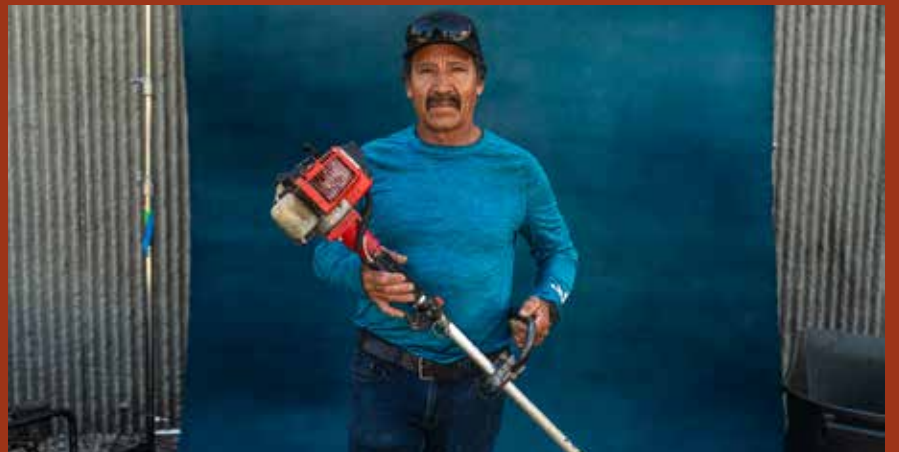
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