

Volunteers Discouraged After Trees Removed From Community Native Garden

Neighbors and volunteers were disheartened to find that a Fullerton City Landscape Crew had removed multiple trees at a beloved community garden on May 5. This was the first instance of any plant removal from the garden since its establishment in late 2017, nearly a decade ago. The removal occurred without any prior notice to neighbors or volunteers.

Affectionately known as “the butterfly garden,” the space is located along the Fullerton Loop Trail between Euclid Street and Richman Knoll and has become a popular rest stop for families and visitors of all ages. What was once an open field dominated by invasive seasonal weeds has, through years of volunteer effort, been transformed into a thriving habitat of California native trees, shrubs, and wildflowers.

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PHOTO BY LINDA FRY

Jensen Hallstrom with a family of visitors ready to learn about native gardening. The native specimens were all planted by local volunteers under Jensen’s supervision as he teaches how to care for each plant.

Fiscal Sustainability Ad Hoc Committee Divided on 2026 Sales Tax Initiative as Public Comment Focuses on Budget Gap, Cuts, and Alternatives

The City of Fullerton’s Fiscal Sustainability Ad Hoc Committee ended without a consensus on recommending a sales tax measure for the November 2026 ballot, deferring the decision to the City Council. Discussions included potential privatization or sale of the city’s water utility, with committee member Tony Bushala suggesting it could generate around \$200 million while offering discounted rates for low-income customers. However, caution was urged, with members preferring to wait for insights from the city’s fiscal consultant, Grant Thornton.

Investor-owned utilities in California, regulated by the California Public Utilities Commission, and examples like Golden State Water Company were discussed. Critics of privatization raised concerns about customer rates and accountability, while supporters cited the potential for better infrastructure investment.

No formal privatization proposal for Fullerton’s water utility exists, and any such initiative would require thorough financial analysis, regulatory review, and public hearings.

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How “Pay-to-Play” Politics Can Affect Cities Like Fullerton

In local government, “pay-to-play” refers to situations where corporations, developers, contractors, or vendors make political donations, sponsor events, or provide financial support to elected officials while simultaneously seeking city contracts, permits, or favorable policy decisions. While not every donation is illegal, critics argue that these arrangements can erode public trust, distort public policy, and increase costs for residents.

Public reaction is often mixed, but

skepticism tends to increase when residents see utilities, waste haulers, or government contractors sponsoring festivals, concerts, or civic events while rates are rising.

- At the same time, supporters argue:
- Sponsorships help fund community programs without using taxpayer dollars.
 - Companies routinely maintain marketing and community-relations budgets.
 - Local events might not happen at

the same scale without corporate support.

- Sponsorships can be part of corporate citizenship and philanthropy.
- Cities across the United States have faced major scandals tied to these relationships, often resulting in criminal investigations, taxpayer losses, lawsuits, and long-term damage to public confidence.

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VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Valerie Brickey

was born in Fullerton and after living away for a time returned to raise her family here. She has been contributing crossword puzzles since 2014.



Play the Crossword Puzzle on pg 7 and Answers on pg 19

CORRECTION

The Early May 2026 issue had the wrong crossword puzzle answers and question box. The correct one is on page 19.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Article in Early May 2026 - Local Business: Allison's Goods
Breanna,

I wanted to email you personally to thank you for the article you wrote. In person you were prepared, and I could tell you researched me, which shows you cared. The questions were thoughtful and in depth. The article that resulted was so well written that several people have commented to me this week that it was great, not just that they had seen it.

I really hope that you not only know how well you did, but that you have true talent and potential for any field you set your sights on. Be it journalism, creative writing, or other literary endeavors I encourage you to pursue it. I am proud to be in your portfolio!

Allison Fullerton

Article in Early May 2026 Fiscal Sustainability Ad Hoc Committee meeting

There were several really great comments from the public at this meeting that I hope the Observer will highlight in print.

Also some really bad ideas – one from committee member Wehn (seconded by Bushala) who suggested turning Fullerton water department over to private company. This has not worked for other cities. Results include sub-par water and soaring prices to residents.

Sharon Kennedy Fullerton

Article in Early May 2026 Suspect Arrested Following Kidnap and Assault Investigation

...and to think that in the last several years there have been citizens foolish enough to demand that the police departments be defunded. Laughable assertions yet so destructive to society.

Martin Eden Fullerton

Re: Article Fullerton Officials Warn Residents of Door-to-Door Impersonation Scam

There are also people pretending to be legitimate representatives of Southern California Edison or are supposedly "affiliated" third-party companies offering solar panel under the guise of SCE company programs. No one ever does anything about it.

Jan Marina Fullerton

Article in Early May 2026 Is Fullerton's Outsourcing Strategy Successful?

This outsourcing is not a good thing. Contractors rely on other subcontractors, who are often temporary workers themselves, with no benefits, sick pay, vacation, etc.

It's the old "Let the marketplace decide" Reagan mantra, and it only pushes good paying jobs out of local government, and makes a few richer, and many poorer.

I lived for a long time in a large city where the water, trash, sewer, parking, streets and power were totally city-owned, and the level of service was high, as was the accountability.

Paul Davidson Fullerton

Article in Early May 2026 Admiring Mural Art at Maple Elementary

Emerson,

I enjoyed Emerson Little's Video Observer story with Amy Aul's historical information!

Since I've been in Fullerton for 72 years, I have snippets of interesting stories from the past! This particular one involves the reopening of Maple School in 1996.

My father, William McGarvey Jr., owned a real estate company on Harbor for 40 years (1953-1993)! I remember a story that not many know about!

My Dad was a member of the original Fullerton Main Rotary Club that met at the old Elks Club.

In 1995 or 1996, Glenda Thompson, the new incoming Principal at the newly reopened Maple School, gave a talk to the Rotary Club at their luncheon meeting. After the meeting was adjourned, my Dad asked Glenda if anything was needed at this point.

She shyly said, "We don't have a library!" My father asked how much it would cost to get the teachers and kids a library... After thinking, she answered, "\$10,000."

My Dad made nine phone calls to Rotary friends for help with funding a library for Maple School. He collected \$1,000 from each friend and delivered a total of \$10,000 to Glenda the next day, showcasing how things used to get done in Fullerton.

A short story that should resonate today in town! People helping people!

Bill McGarvey III Fullerton

POLICE ACTIVITY

by David Spargur

Several Fullerton residents I've talked to have wondered what the Fullerton Police Department's (FPD) role is regarding immigration enforcement.

In this column's record of over 1,500 arrests going back to mid-February 2026, there have been zero arrests for immigration-related offenses by the FPD. (Examples of immigration-related criminal offenses include entering or reentering the U.S., illegally, marriage fraud, alien smuggling, etc.)

The California Values Act (SB54), enacted in 2018, prohibits Fullerton Police from doing immigration holds, making arrests on civil immigration warrants, asking about immigration status, using immigration agents as interpreters, sharing personal info with ICE (unless it's already publicly available), and notifying ICE of release dates. A Google check of the California Values Act will provide more complete details and exceptions.

Kristy Wells, Public Information Specialist for the FPD, stated, "The Fullerton Police Department does not enforce federal law – by statute, it's not

our job. Public Safety is the primary concern of the FPD, NOT immigration. The Fullerton Police Department is charged with keeping you and your family safe. We will continue to do so regardless of your immigration status."

Noteworthy recent arrests:

Officers responded to a May ninth 911 call near the cross streets of Lemon Street and Brea Boulevard. The call reported a male suspect who had attacked the male victim and the female victim.

The suspect hit the female victim with a vehicle, crashed it into a residence, attacked the 911 caller with a car and then assaulted him with an "edged weapon." Ultimately, the male and female victims were transported to a hospital. The suspect was arrested for assault with a deadly weapon, resisting arrest, and attempted murder.

On May 1, a suspect was arrested for kidnapping, sexual battery, and lewd and lascivious acts with a minor under 14. The suspect at that time was not a registered sex offender, but if convicted on these charges, he will be required to register as a sex offender.

Arrest Overview for April 25 through May 9

There were 235 arrests made.

Note: Arrestees are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

25.96% Drug-related arrests	12.34% DUI-related
23.40% Miscellaneous	6.38% Theft-related
12.34% Violence-related	0.85% Vandalism-related
17.87% Trespassing including unlawful camping	0.43% Firearm
	0.43% Sex offender-related



National Police Week

In observance of National Police Week, the Fullerton Police Department honors the courageous men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to their communities. This week serves as a reminder of the families, friends, and fellow officers who uphold the legacies of those lost in the line of duty.

It also highlights the dedication of current officers who serve with courage, professionalism, and compassion. The department expresses gratitude to past officers who paved the way and to the families supporting those who serve today.

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Fullerton Observer

The Fullerton Observer is a community newspaper founded in 1978 by Ralph and Natalie Kennedy, Roy and Irene Kobayashi, and a group of dedicated friends. Local volunteers are responsible for creating, publishing, and distributing the paper across the community. As a not-for-profit organization, all revenue is reinvested to enhance our independent and non-partisan publication.

Our mission is clear: to inform Fullerton residents about the institutions and societal forces that impact their daily lives. We empower citizens to engage actively, ensuring that private and public entities serve the community in lawful, transparent, and socially responsible ways.

We offer local news coverage and a community calendar to strengthen connections and celebrate the diversity that defines our nation. As an all-volunteer newspaper, we rely on the support of our subscribers and advertisers.

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From left to right: Fullerton School District Boardmembers Vanessa Estrella, and Ruthi Hanchet, Center for Healthy Neighborhoods community leaders Mary Ramirez, Ilianna Camacho, Sonia Garcia, Egleth Nuncci, and Lorena Camarillo standing behind the beautiful and tasty desserts served at the Mother's Day Celebration.

Mothers Honored at Special Celebration Hosted at CSUF Center for Healthy Neighborhoods

Nearly 158 mothers gathered on May 11 for a festive Mother's Day celebration at the CSUF Center for Healthy Neighborhoods during a community event organized by Egleth Nuncci.

The celebration brought together mothers from across the community, many of them single mothers, for an afternoon focused on appreciation, connection and support. Attendees arrived dressed for the occasion and enjoyed a catered meal in a warm and welcoming atmosphere.

The event highlighted the importance of recognizing mothers who often balance work, parenting, and family responsibilities with limited resources and support systems.

Guests shared meals, conversation and fellowship throughout the gathering, which Nuncci said was designed to honor the hard work and sacrifices mothers make for their families and communities.

Among those in attendance were Fullerton School District Board Members Ruthi Hanchett and Vanessa

Estrella, who joined community members in celebrating the occasion.

The event reflected the Center for Healthy Neighborhoods' ongoing role as a gathering place for community-based programs and outreach efforts serving local residents.

For many attendees, the celebration offered not only a Mother's Day outing but also an opportunity to feel recognized and appreciated alongside other women in the community.

Volunteers Upset After Trees Removed From Fullerton Native Garden *Continued from front page*

Cooper's hawks circle overhead while hummingbirds, butterflies, and native bees pollinate blooming sages. Western fence lizards sun on rocks and logs as scrub jays chirp among the oak trees. Carefully planted and maintained by community volunteers, the guerrilla garden has been thoughtfully curated to connect visitors with the rich diversity of California's native flora.

On the morning of May 5, a city landscape crew had removed two Sequoia trees from the space — one of which had been lovingly planted as a memorial for a volunteer's daughter. Both trees were in a small section of the garden representing the central coast.

During the removal, a concerned trail-side resident alerted garden volunteers to the crew's actions. Neighbors and several volunteers quickly arrived and voiced their concerns over the work before recovering the trees.

The incident upset community members, who say the city focused on removing healthy trees while leaving maintenance and safety problems along the trail unaddressed. Concerns about nearby hazards, including paths that have washed away or have deep crevices that make walking on them difficult, standing dead trees, were shrugged off by the crew lead, casting doubt on the city's prioritization of trail management. One such hazardous tree recently dropped a large, dead branch damaging a neighbor's chainlink fence.

For many involved, the removals struck at the heart of the grassroots effort, which transformed a neglected stretch of trail into a thriving educational and ecological space. Residents, businesses and organizations have

made generous contributions over the years, providing materials and resources for plantings and maintenance.

Some local businesses, including Organix Environmental Services, donated mulch, and Fullerton Ace Hardware donated supplies and materials. Native trees were purchased from Tree of Life Nursery with a \$500 donation from the Women's Club of Fullerton in 2022.

All plantings are well established and continue to thrive thanks to these community partnerships and the volunteers.

The garden has become widely known in the community through the work of environmental advocate Jensen Hallstrom. Most of the garden has been planted by local youth and families who have participated in volunteer events focused on habitat restoration and environmental education.

Hallstrom's mission has been to enhance the space through community stewardship and inspire engagement with local ecology.

Despite the setback, volunteers say they remain committed to maintaining the garden, strengthened by their determination to preserve the space and the volunteer spirit that built it.

Concerned community members may submit letters of support to City Manager Eddie Manfro at eddie.manfro@cityoffullerton.com.



Those interested in volunteering can contact fullertonurbanforest@gmail.com

"I saw you in the Fullerton Observer."
Say it when you visit restaurants, shop local, or attend community events.



Eliana Herdrich, Amilya Heffernan, Cordelia Wagner, Josephine Wagner, Olivia Miller, Maya Orton, Addison Seo, and Cambria Dominquez (Not pictured: Madeleine Lim, Joy Kennelly, and Bella Dinglasan)

Assisteens Recognized for Outstanding Volunteer Service by Gayle Berggren

Eleven Assisteens earned National Service Awards on May 4 for their outstanding volunteer service. Youth Gold Awards, the highest honors, were earned by Eliana Herdrich for 144 volunteer hours, Joy Kennelly for 241.75 volunteer hours, and Cordelia Wagner for 202.5 volunteer hours. (Youth Gold Awards are presented to volunteers aged 11 to 15 who complete at least 100 hours of service.)

Josephine Wagner received a Young Adults Silver Award for 225.75 earned volunteer hours (Young Adults Silver Awards are given to volunteers aged 16 to 25 who must earn 175-249 volunteer hours). The highest overall volunteer hours were earned by

Cambria Dominquez, with 316 hours, earning the Young Adult Gold Award (given for 250+ volunteer hours).

The National Service Honor is a verified, prestigious award program that recognizes students, families, and individuals for their community service hours completed over 12 months. Award levels are based on tiered age- and hours-served requirements. Award recipients receive a letter, certificate, lapel pin, and either a bronze, silver, or gold medal. Recognized volunteer hours can include multiple volunteering venues, such as a church or school.

Assisteens is an auxiliary volunteer group of the

Assistance League of Fullerton. Assisteens must apply for membership, and they commit to at least 40 hours of annual volunteer and community philanthropy projects. They support humanitarian projects of the Assistance League of Fullerton, including fundraising activities like Taste of the Town (coming up October 3) and the nonprofit thrift shop on Amerige Ave. The Assistance League credits thrift shop sales to the Assisteens' budget for the hours they volunteer as sales clerks and donation sorters, which funds the Assisteens' own community service projects. For more information: www.assistance-league.org/fullerton/

Climate Forum Highlighting Clean Energy, Pollution Concerns, and Utility Affordability

by Helen Higgins

The Climate Action Campaign put together a panel of clean energy advocates on May 11 at the California State University, Fullerton Center for Healthy Neighborhoods to discuss pollution, renewable energy programs and ways to make electricity more affordable for local households, with over 30 Fullerton residents in attendance.

The forum opened with remarks from Dr. Iris Aguilar, the Center's director, who emphasized the health impacts of exposure to pollution, particularly for residents living near freeways. Aguilar said stronger public policies are needed to protect communities from air pollution and related environmental hazards.

Jacque Henderson, representing the Orange County Power Authority, outlined programs to expand access to cleaner energy sources while reducing dependence on fossil fuels. Henderson explained that OCPA delivers electricity using existing Southern California Edison infrastructure, including poles and transmission lines, while sourcing energy from alternative generation sources.

Henderson highlighted assistance programs that include portable battery units capable of powering room air conditioning systems during outages or periods of high demand. She also noted that electricity rates are generally highest between 4 pm and 9 pm and discussed programs designed to assist lower-income households with energy costs.

The forum also featured Matthew Langer, chief operating officer of the



Panelists Dr. Iris Aguilar, Director Genaro Bugarin Jr. with The Energy Coalition, Jacque Henderson, representing the OCPA, Matthew Langer, COO of CPA, and Dr. Vivianna "ViVi" Goh with UCI. Standing are forum coordinator Egleth Nuncci and Climate Action Campaign affiliate Tomas Castro.

Clean Power Alliance, California's fourth-largest electricity provider serving 35 communities and approximately one million customers. Langer explained that residents can select clean energy providers independently of their city's default utility provider.

He discussed several renewable energy initiatives, including a new 1.32-megawatt rooftop community solar project in Carson that officially launched April 30. Developed through a partnership between Clean Power Alliance and Prologis, the rooftop installation is housed at a Prologis warehouse facility and is expected to provide 100% renewable energy to 500 local households and the Carson City Hall.

According to panelists, the project offers eligible residents a 20% discount on electricity bills through the Power Share program, which focuses on income-qualified households and disadvantaged communities. Officials said the City of Carson is expected to save approximately \$75,000 annually on City Hall energy costs.

The Carson installation is part of a broader 10-project partnership between Clean Power Alliance and Prologis that aims to generate more

than 9 megawatts of solar capacity throughout Southern California. The project also supports the California Public Utilities Commission Disadvantaged Communities Green Tariff program, which is intended to expand access to localized clean energy in underserved areas.

Genaro Bugarin Jr., director of energy innovation for The Energy Coalition, said the organization's mission is to ensure equitable access to clean energy resources. He noted that the coalition partnered with Clean Power Alliance on the Carson solar project and supports local solar generation as a way to reduce long-term energy costs.

Panelist Dr. Vivianna "ViVi" Goh, a researcher and educator affiliated with UC Irvine, specializes in urban planning, public policy, and community gardens, said local clean energy projects can help reduce the need for costly power grid upgrades.

She also discussed policies focused on improving energy affordability, including federal and state initiatives tied to the Inflation Reduction Act, which includes more than \$142 billion for climate mitigation and adaptation efforts. Dr. Goh stressed the impor-

tance of consistent government policy to help utilities, businesses and residents make long-term clean energy investments.

The panelists also cautioned residents about unreliable solar contractors, noting that consumer watchdog organizations and local agencies can provide assistance to homeowners experiencing problems with solar installations. Henderson, the OCPA representative, said the agency maintains a preferred list of vetted solar installers.

During a question-and-answer session, an audience member asked what single action could have the greatest impact on climate change.

Panelists responded that reducing household energy consumption in any form can help and emphasized that collective community action remains one of the most effective responses to climate challenges. Speakers encouraged residents to attend climate information meetings and review local climate action plans and energy policies as a starting point for community involvement.

The forum was organized by Egleth Nuncci, and Tomas Castro introduced the panel discussion.

City Council Cancels May 19 Meeting, Delaying Discussion on Housing Issues

The Fullerton City Council has officially canceled its meeting originally set for May 19, postponing critical discussions regarding several pressing public issues facing the city.

Among the agenda items that will now be delayed are key updates on the city's Fiscal Audit findings related to accounting errors, proposed amendments to tobacco-related regulations, and potential litigation concerning a controversial housing development proposal.

The cancellation comes as financial oversight and accounting issues have been central topics in broader conversations about Fullerton's budget challenges, particularly amid a significant \$13.7 million deficit. Council members and residents were expected to review these pressing concerns during the meeting.

Additionally, a public hearing on proposed changes to municipal regulations affecting businesses that sell tobacco products was scheduled. The ordinance changes were anticipated to attract considerable attention from both the council and the community.

Further complicating the council's agenda, the meeting was slated to address issues tied to the contentious

housing development proposal at 111 West Hermosa Drive. The discussion included the potential for litigation stemming from prior city actions regarding the project, amid growing pressure from state housing mandates and requirements.

The cancellation of the May 19 meeting adds to a trend of postponed meetings for various city commissions and committees in recent months. City officials cited scheduling conflicts as the primary reason for the cancellation, stating that Mayor Jung, Mayor Pro Tem Dunlap, and Councilmember Valencia were unavailable—two of them being out of state, and one allegedly facing medical issues.

In accordance with California law, public meetings may be canceled for various reasons, including a lack of agenda items or a lack of quorum.

Residents looking for updates on future meetings and agendas can visit the city's public meetings portal at [Fullerton Public Meetings] (<https://fullerton.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>). The next scheduled city council meeting is set for June 2 at 5:30 pm in the council chambers at City Hall, located at 303 W Commonwealth Avenue.

The Growing Risk of Homelessness for Older Women

COMMUNITY CHAT

TUESDAY, MAY 26 | 12:00 – 12:30 PM



Understanding Why More Older Women Are Experiencing Homelessness for the First Time

A growing number of older women are experiencing homelessness for the first time later in life, often following unexpected changes in health, finances or personal support systems.

Brateil Aghasi, chief executive officer of WISEPlace, is expected to help lead a discussion on the issue by sharing insight into why the trend is increasing in Orange County and why homelessness can be especially difficult to recover from later in life.

According to event information, the discussion will focus on “why this trend is growing in Orange County, why homelessness can be especially difficult to recover from later in life,

and what effective local support and successful outcomes can look like for women working to regain stability.” The conversation will also examine how health challenges, financial instability and the loss of support systems can contribute to housing insecurity among older women.

WISEPlace is a nonprofit organization that provides housing and support services for women experiencing homelessness in Orange County.

The conversation will be moderated by Carrie Buck, Senior Director of Community Strategies for United to End Homelessness at Orange County United Way.

RSVP to www.eventbrite.com/e/the-growing-risk-of-homelessness-for-older-women-community-chat-tickets1987865166224?utm_source=United+to+End+Homelessness&utm_campaign=a2ac81661e-mc-community-chat-invite-051126&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_4bbf3eb9b3-a2ac81661e-375911840

How “Pay-to-Play” Politics Can Affect Cities Like Fullerton *continued from front page*

What Happens When

Pay-to-Play Culture Develops

One of the first casualties in a pay-to-play environment is public confidence in government. Residents begin to question whether decisions are being made in the public interest or for politically connected donors.

In many cities, this leads to:

- Lower civic participation
- Increased political polarization
- Distrust of city staff and elected officials
- Constant allegations of favoritism

For cities like Fullerton, where major contracts involve waste hauling, development, public infrastructure, or energy projects worth millions of dollars, even the appearance of favoritism can become politically toxic.

Two Most Recent Examples are: Anaheim FBI Corruption Investigation Raises Alarm Over Political Integrity

Anaheim found itself at the center of a significant FBI corruption investigation that highlights the troubling intersections of political influence, lobbying, and development interests in local governance.

In 2022, federal affidavits revealed a purported network of influential political operatives and business interests that allegedly wielded disproportionate power over Anaheim City Hall. The investigation has had far-reaching implications, including the resignation

of then-Mayor Harry Sidhu, which underscored the severity of the situation.

Federal authorities delved into allegations surrounding campaign donations, insider access, and negotiations concerning critical city assets, shedding light on potential mismanagement and illicit dealings within the local government.

While not all accusations resulted in criminal convictions, the political consequences were significant. In the wake of the scandal, several major development projects were either canceled or delayed, leading to a palpable loss of confidence among residents in their city leadership. Furthermore, proposals for ethics reforms and lobbying restrictions emerged, indicating a community grappling with the fallout of perceived corruption.

The Anaheim case serves as a cautionary tale, illustrating how the mere perception of donor influence can destabilize local government and erode public trust.

The implications of pay-to-play politics extend beyond individual scandals, often leading to detrimental patterns for cities embroiled in such controversies.

For taxpayers, contracts awarded through political connections instead of competitive bidding can result in inflated costs, long-term unfavorable agreements, and diminished competition. This is particularly concerning in

areas such as waste-hauling contracts, energy projects, public-private partnerships, and development agreements, where quality of services may be compromised.

Moreover, cities entangled in corruption allegations frequently face a surge in legal troubles, including grand jury investigations, FBI subpoenas, civil lawsuits, and public records litigation. Even when municipalities eventually clear their names, the financial burden of legal defenses can be staggering to a city budget.

As Anaheim navigated the aftermath of this significant investigation, the community was left to reconsider the integrity of its political landscape and the broader impact of corruption on governance and public trust.

Former Orange County Official Andrew Do Pleads Guilty in Bribery Scandal

Andrew Do, once a prominent figure in Orange County (OC) politics, has pled guilty to a federal bribery conspiracy charge, marking a significant turn in a scandal that has cast a shadow over the county's government.

Allegations emerged of a “pay-to-play” culture, suggesting that political connections, donations, and personal relationships heavily influenced county contracting and financial decisions.

Federal prosecutors accused Do of accepting over \$550,000 in bribes

linked to the diversion of COVID-relief contracts to a nonprofit associated with his daughter. Following these allegations, Do resigned from his position, bringing to light deeper issues regarding procurement practices and favoritism within local government.

A forensic audit commissioned by OC in 2026 revealed a troubling landscape of “pay-to-play schemes,” implicating contracts connected to donors, political allies, and associates of Do's office. In a formal censure in 2024, the OC Board of Supervisors criticized Do for “reckless judgment and favoritism,” asserting that he had exploited his position for the benefit of family members and associates through various community programs.

The term “pay-to-play” has drawn significant attention in this context, denoting situations in which government contracts and favorable treatment are awarded based on personal connections rather than merit.

Community reaction has been fierce, with residents expressing their outrage on platforms like Reddit, calling for ethics reforms, pension forfeiture, and more stringent oversight.

KEY DOLLAR FIGURES

Over \$10 million in COVID relief contracts.

Over \$550,000 in bribes.

\$8.8 million allegedly diverted from intended services, according to court filings and county claims.

About \$3.7 million recovered so far.

The popular Certified Farmers Market in Fullerton is located at 801 W. Valencia Drive
Every Wednesday from 8:30 am to 12:30 pm.
Fruit, vegetables, eggs, honey, party dips, bread, baked goods, and more.
Eat Well and Support Local Farmers.

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FEATURING: WOMEN OWNED BUSINESSES IN FULLERTON

Owner-Operator Marie in her shop, Zombee Donuts & Bakeshop, 802 E Chapman Ave, Fullerton, Open Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday from 6 am to 6 pm, Sunday 7 am, to 12:30 pm, Closed Tuesday



Zombee Donuts: Dedicated to Delicious Donuts

by Breanna Pineda

On the busy street of Chapman Avenue as 10 pm rolls around, bakers head to Zombee Donuts to start preparing the freshly made desserts for the next day. By 6 am, horror-themed donuts sit on the display.

Since the very beginning, Zombee Donuts has been focused on maintaining quality. Marie Elizabeth Theodore started this business in 2015 with her daughter, Vanessa Guillen, after turning their love of baking into the desire for a bake shop.

However, their efforts were not just in creating unique recipes; Marie also spent time visiting other successful donut shops, both locally and outside of Fullerton.

One of the places Marie said influenced Zombee Donuts was Voodoo

Doughnut, the well-known donut chain that originated in Portland, Oregon. While she enjoyed the shop's theme, she noticed the donuts lacked quality. This led Marie to realize she wanted Zombee Donuts to strike a balance between unique donuts, high-quality ingredients, and friendly customer service.

After this decision, Marie created a business and marketing plan to ensure Zombee Donuts' success. This is also why she decided to open her shop in Fullerton, a short distance from both Fullerton College and Cal State Fullerton, where there would be a constant flow of students looking for a new food spot to try.

When the shop first opened, a variety of sweets was offered, including cook-

ies and cupcakes. But it became clear that their main attraction was the donuts.

"We added donuts for traffic, but then every day we were throwing away cupcakes and cookies," Marie said.

Another thing Marie learned from visiting other donut shops was the importance of a theme to spark people's interest. At the time, Marie and her daughter enjoyed watching 'The Walking Dead' and decided to center their donut shop around zombie and horror elements.

"We knew plain donuts do not draw people, so with the [theme] we had to give fun names," Marie explained.

This is where Zombee Donuts gets all of its unique donut names, such as "Rabie Baby" and "Cookies and Scream." This attention to detail is also evident in the shop's current design.

"We thought out everything in the shop," Marie said.

The place is filled with horror-themed Easter eggs, a cobweb chandelier and a mural with zombie-like figures painted by students from Fullerton College.

The shop has also seen a growth in popularity because of social media. The donut's specialty designs and themed names lend themselves to internet virality. Although Marie admits that the algorithm for viral videos can feel random at times, she has seen it lead to success.

"We had one guest that came in about 5 years ago [and] she blew us up for a whole month," Marie said.

Although Zombee Donuts has grown in success over the years, Marie and Vanessa still take a hands-on approach to running their business. Marie still works behind the counter, talking directly to customers, and Vanessa monitors the bakers she hires to ensure the donuts are made fresh and up to

their standards.

Aside from donuts, the shop also includes other items people can order with donuts. This includes coffee, croissants, and unique blended drinks with flavors that correlate with the donut theme.

The mother-daughter business also has support from the rest of their family, with Marie sharing that her granddaughter has begun learning to work behind the counter.

As a result of Marie's direct contact with customers, she can better understand what customers want and how to improve.

"Nobody is going to care [about your business] like you. You can get the best employee, but they are not going to care like you and pay attention to what customers are saying," Marie said.

Not all the employees are family-related, though. The shop's connection to college campuses has enabled Marie to find employees who are students seeking their first job. Zombee Donuts also hires from the adult transition program in Fullerton, helping people with disabilities find work.

In the future, Marie shares that she would like to see Zombee Donuts expand. Currently, an old school bus sits in the donut shop's parking lot, and Marie says the plan is to turn that bus into a food truck. After the food truck, she aims to open more Zombee Donut shops and grow the business.

"We want to franchise; that is the ultimate dream," she said enthusiastically.

Despite the goal of expansion, Zombee Donuts also wants to maintain its reputation for top-notch, made-from-scratch, creative donuts that satisfy the community.

"We focus on quality, customer service, and making our customers happy," Marie stated.

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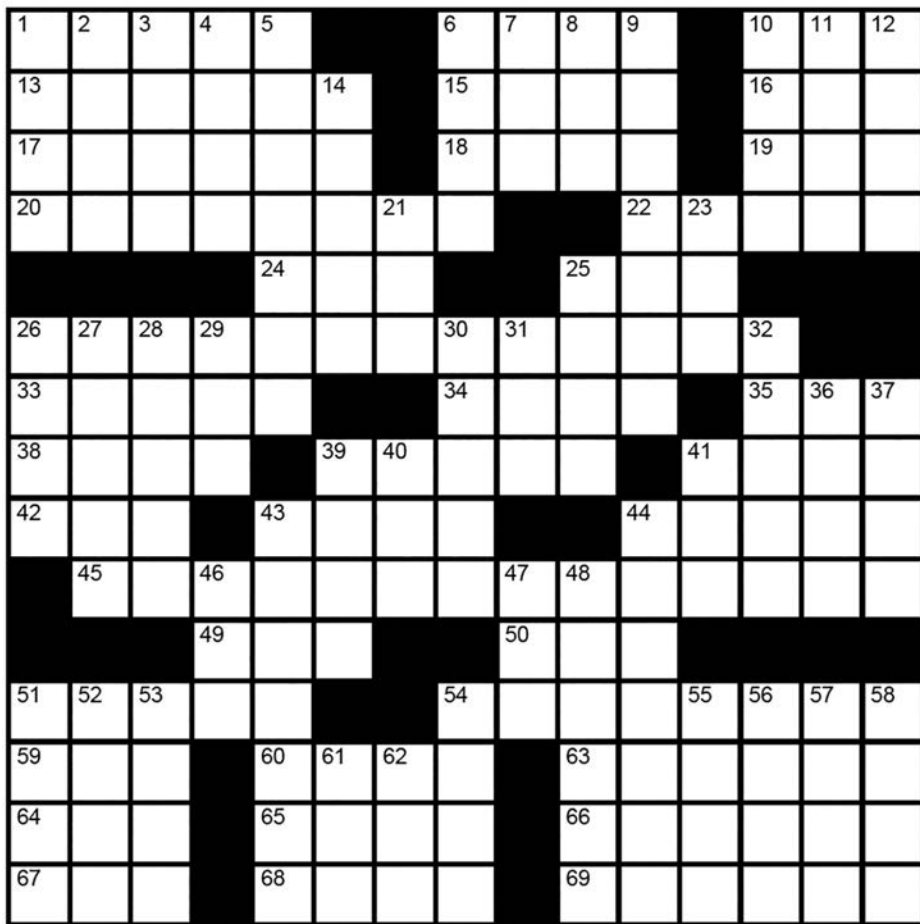
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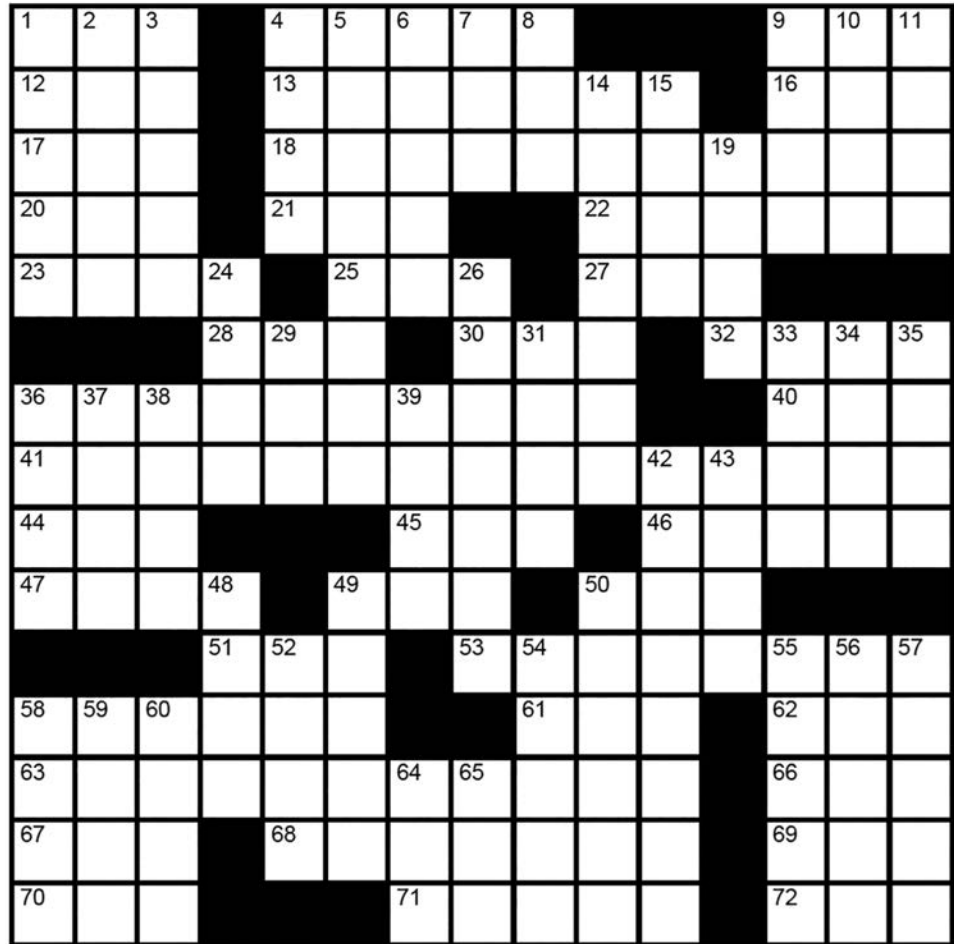
Correct Question Box from Early May 2026

YOU CAN SEE THE QUESTIONS TO "MAY CELEBRANTS" UNDER E-EDITION AT WWW.FULLERTONOBSERVER.COM



OUR TOWN CROSSWORD © 2026

"SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL" by Valerie Brickey (answer key on page 19)



Fullerton Firefighters Answer the Call

Crews from the Fullerton Fire Department recently responded to a garage fire on Malden Avenue between Malvern and Brookdale Place on May 13, showing just how critical fast action can be in an emergency. Firefighters arrived quickly to battle the blaze and help protect nearby homes as the situation unfolded.

During the incident, a neighbor was forced to escape through a window while carrying her cat to safety. Thanks to the rapid response and professionalism of the firefighters on the scene, the situation was brought under control before it became even more dangerous. Amazing work! See more photos on the Fullerton Observer website at www.fullertonobserver.com.

ACROSS

DOWN

- 1. Stir-fry pan
- 4. One of two U.S. Presidents who died on July 4, 1826
- 9. When repeated, cheer accessory
- 12. Earth Day mo.
- 13. Portmanteau meals eaten in the late afternoon
- 16. Tuna type
- 17. Fullerton Union High School graduate Fender
- 18. Oldest signer of the Declaration of Independence
- 20. East end?
- 21. Chowd down
- 22. "On the Road Again" singer Willie
- 23. Swedish auto
- 25. "Only You Can Prevent Forest Fires" ad, briefly
- 27. Univ. in Pullman, WA
- 28. Not ltr.
- 30. TV franchise for CBS
- 32. Le ____, France (racing town)
- 36. It might go from green to yellow to black
- 40. Decay
- 41. Semiquincentennial is the ____ year anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence (or the number of crosswords I've done for The Observer!)
- 44. Moray, e.g.
- 45. Stomach muscles, briefly
- 46. "Do the Right Thing" actor Davis
- 47. Neighbor of 11-Down
- 49. Faulkner's "____ Lay Dying"
- 50. Kabuki kin
- 51. MMA org.
- 53. U.S. President born on July 4, 1872
- 58. U.S. President who died on July 4, 1831
- 61. Garden tool
- 62. Branch
- 63. Last colony to ratify the Declaration of Independence
- 66. "Rocky ____" (Mr. T's in this one)
- 67. Pantry pest
- 68. Gloria who co-founded Ms. magazine
- 69. Sch. project, often
- 70. "New Girl" actress ____
- 71. Rib
- 72. Positive response
- 1. Dylan Thomas's home
- 2. "Die Fledermaus," e.g.
- 3. Swedish capital?
- 4. "Fantastic Four" actress Jessica
- 5. Nutritionist's recommendation
- 6. Queen ____ lace
- 7. It premiered on Sept. 21, 1970 on ABC
- 8. Homily: Abbr.
- 9. Buddies
- 10. Birthplace of seven U.S. Presidents
- 11. Tim Walz st.
- 14. Went berserk
- 15. 1990s game console, initially
- 19. Model Heidi
- 24. Ho-hum
- 26. Biting
- 29. Bearded antelope
- 31. Candy shop on Orangethorpe and Lemon
- 33. Lab greetings?
- 34. Reply to the Little Red Hen
- 35. Eye sore
- 36. Bingo call
- 37. Wowed
- 38. Another nickname for the "Big Easy"
- 39. Smartphone precursors, for short
- 42. "I had no idea"
- 43. Last known member of the California Native American Yahi people
- 48. Member of an indigenous Iranian ethnic group
- 49. Crush the final
- 50. "____ here": "The place is empty"
- 52. Not friends
- 54. Hawaiian for "family"
- 55. Milk and cheese products, collectively
- 56. Kvetch
- 57. Radiates
- 58. "I'm Yours" singer Jason
- 59. "It can't be!"
- 60. Do, for example
- 64. "Quiet on the ____!"
- 65. Trumped-up story

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*Remember to say,
I read it in the
Fullerton Observer!*

Fullerton Joint Union High School District Announces New Principal and Celebrates Employee Achievements at the May 12 Meeting

by Vivien Moreno

Transitions and Celebrations

Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources Mark Miller announced that the new Sonora High School Principal would be Administrator and Art Program Specialist Maggie Crail.

The May 12 FJUHS board meeting celebrated the districtwide employees of the year. Learn more about each individual at the FJUHS website, www.fjuhsd.org, scroll to newsletter, click on May 12, 2026 board meeting recording 1:14:30 start.

Buena Park High School

Certificated: Alberto Gutierrez
Classified: Michael Chesmore

Fullerton Union High School

Certificated: Kimberly Harris
Classified: Janet Enriquez

La Habra High School

Certificated: Julie Hail
Classified: Javier Francisco Molina

La Sierra High School

Certificated: Amanda Gieser
Classified: Jeff Smith

La Vista High School

Certificated: Sara Gabby Meza
Classified: Dennia Reyes

Sonora High School

Certificated: Kelly Viridin
Districtwide Classified:
David Carrizosa

Sunny Hills High School

Certificated: Hera Kwon
Classified: Michelle Rizzi

Troy High School

District Employee of the Year
Certificated: Rich Liem
Classified: Louie Rodriguez

District Office: Robert Rodriguez
Maintenance: Matthew Carrillo
Transportation: Melanie Garcia
Administrator of the Year:
Vince Madsen

Trustee Vacancy

The trustees engaged in a lively discussion concerning their options to fill the board member vacancy left by Dr. Chester Jeng, beginning May 4. The board has until July 3 to determine a course of action.

Superintendent Dr. Steve McLaughlin presented Board Policy and Education Code options for filling the vacancy, including legal and deadline considerations.

Since 2026 is a midterm election year, regular succession elections for FJUHS board districts 1, 4, and 5 will occur this November.

Trustees Joann Fawley and Lauren Klatzker pointed out that, due to “the awkward timing” of Dr. Jeng’s resignation, the earliest possible special election date coincides with the regular midterm November 3 election, eliminating the need for any additional expenditure to hold a special election.

Trustees Dr. Vicki Calhoun and Board President Marilyn Buchi expressed a preference for District 1 constituents from La Habra and parts of East La Mirada to choose their next board representative. Since FJUHS trustees respect one another, work well together, and agree on district direction and business, this should not be a difficult seven months with four board members.

Traditionally, FJUHS trustees understand that each member represents all FJUHS students, not just those in their elected areas.

President Buchi stated, “The only day a district area matters is on election day; after that, all the school district is your area.”

The trustees voted 4-0 to hold a “special”/regular election for District 1 on November 3.

School Plans

for Student Achievement

Director of Education and Student Assessment Steven Cazares explained how individual school plans align with the district’s “moonshot” goal of having 80% of FJUHS’s class of 2027 achieve a-g completion while serving the unique needs of each school site.

A-g completion refers to coursework in English, mathematics, science, world languages, arts, and social sciences that all students must pass with a “C” grade or better before attending a California State University or a University of California. This requirement, along with Career Technical Education pathway completion, is currently the main way the state determines if a high school graduate is college and career ready.

Every school provides academic tutoring, broad course access, and social and emotional support. School site principals highlighted specific areas they will allocate funds for student programs and staff support.

Buena Park High School Principal Dr. Sonji Berg highlighted programs aimed to raise English learner literacy levels. Buena Park employs an English literacy TOSA (teacher on special assignment) working with teachers and

students to improve writing skills, reading comprehension, and intervention tutoring.

Fullerton Union High School supports expanded student college and career readiness through intervention classes. Intervention classes have a smaller class size with individualized tutoring and support for students to rise to grade-level mastery. Math Mentors is a new peer tutoring program that teams up advanced math students with challenged students to build their math skills.

La Habra High School supports their professional learning communities (PLC) targeting student achievement by asking four main questions: what do we expect students to learn and know, how do we test this knowledge, how do we address challenges to this learning, and if mastered, what do we do to extend their learning process. They plan to add AVID to their campus next year, a program that teaches students study skills and resiliency.

Troy continues to improve support for English learners and students with special accommodations, access to academic courses and social and emotional support systems.

The next FJUHS regular board meeting is on June 2 at 6pm.

In Fullerton School District News

Parks Junior High School held its 5th Annual Korean Culture Night to celebrate culture, community and showcase student talent

FSD Opens New Arts and Recreation Center at Parks Junior High

FSD Awarded \$525,000 Grant to Expand Student-Built Tiny Home Project at Nicolas Junior High School

Teacher Mike Shaffer Surprised with \$5,000 Award at Richman Elementary School During Teacher Appreciation Week

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Tap & Go: Korea's New Contactless Transit

by Olive, 10th Grade



As of April 2026, travelers who are visiting Korea can use Apple Pay with a Mastercard to pay for public transport. This contactless payment allows for faster, easier travel on subways, buses and taxis.

Before the change, Korea's public transport infrastructure system prioritized domestic bank-issued cards. This practice caused difficulties for tourists visiting Korea.

Foreigners would have to buy physical cards, as foreign credit cards and non-Korean Apple Pay wallets were not accepted. This method was time-consuming and unsafe, as travelers had to carry cash and risk having their cards lost or stolen.

Over the past few decades, Korea has become an increasingly popular travel

destination with an estimated 18.7 million international visitors in 2025.

With the influence of K-pop, Korean movies, and well-known skincare and beauty products, Korea has become a very admired and desirable travel spot.

Tourists can experience Korean culture by visiting Korea's many sites, which are known for their safety and convenience, thanks to the country's now more efficient public transport. Korea has consistently been adapting to serve its travelers' needs better.

I highly recommend that you visit Korea for its culture, its delicious cuisine, its beautiful sites, and now, the ease and convenience of tap-and-go transportation.

Troy Preparedness Club

by Alicia, contributing writer



Natural disasters cause widespread damage to the environment, homes, and physical health of those living within them, but the effects on the mental and emotional health of individuals can linger long after the physical effects of an event have healed. While houses can be rebuilt, wounds to one's mental and emotional well-being may last months or even years. It is essential for individuals to recognize the mental effects of a disaster and learn ways to support recovery.

One of the primary psychological consequences of disasters is anxiety and stress. The feelings of fear, worry, and vulnerability an individual experiences during the process, before, and after a disaster may lead to significant, prolonged consequences. A family might spend days in fear about their home, loved ones, and their own lives. A child has a heightened level of anxiety and fear, lacking the maturity or knowledge to comprehend what is happening in their lives. A family will suffer sleeping problems, bad dreams, and panic attacks, and maintain feelings of nervousness and anxious feelings for an extended duration, possibly experiencing jumpiness any time they hear a sudden noise or anything that reminds them of a natural disaster.

A common consequence of natural disasters is grief and depression. When families and loved ones are lost, possessions are destroyed, or pets succumb to the elements, individuals often find themselves immersed in sadness and hopelessness. The guilt of being one of the few survivors and the realization that loved ones are lost can lead to guilt about one's own survival. A heightened level of depression and grief can culminate in post-traumatic stress disorder, where the individual experiences repeated flashbacks to the event, which can relive one's emotions and sense of being in the original instance.

Natural disasters will cause additional impacts on individual lives through harm to relationships and community well-being. Overwhelmed individuals are likely to experience irritability, frustration, loneliness, and bouts of anger as the stress of the disaster consumes them. It is natural for increased arguments and friction to emerge within families due to stress and the challenge of dealing with financial and logistical problems; however, recovery

will require addressing all of the mental impacts associated with the event, not just those that impact relationships and community interactions.

Fortunately, there are a multitude of ways to manage stress and find help after a natural disaster occurs. For one, talking to one's friends, loved ones, or other adults one is comfortable with about one's fears, worries, and anxieties will help alleviate the burden of loneliness; communicating openly about the emotional repercussions of a disaster can help to heal any emotional wounds left from the event. Support groups or community programs will facilitate the meeting of like-minded individuals who can assist each other with what they are experiencing.

An individual can also seek the aid of mental health professionals who will assist them in coping with their trauma and managing emotions and can offer vital support if individuals struggle with their emotional well-being. Therapists, counselors, and psychologists offer skills and techniques that will aid in processing traumatic experiences; teenagers, adolescents, and children may often be provided with support at school or at community centers.

Apart from these methods, individuals have control over certain behaviors they will engage in to manage trauma. Staying active by exercising or working out, ensuring that they have nutritious meals at appropriate times each day, getting an adequate amount of sleep each night, and practicing coping strategies such as yoga or meditation, or controlled breathing will help reduce levels of stress. Avoiding behaviors that bring about unnecessary fear, such as constant exposure to news coverage, can also reduce anxiety.

As one continues to recover from trauma by dealing with anxieties, grief, and depression as a consequence of a natural disaster, it is very apparent that the process will take an extended amount of time; nevertheless, recovery from a natural disaster is attainable with a great amount of help, support from those you trust, and a good mental health facility. By working on both the physical as well as mental impacts of a natural disaster, survivors can ultimately persevere through difficult circumstances and once again feel hope for the future.

The Power of a Small Circle of Friends

by Taliha, 11th Grade



In elementary school, friendship was simple, as it was often defined by nothing more than being in the same class. However, as we grew into our teens, the basis of friendship shifted toward trust and mutual growth. In a world heavily influenced by social media, prioritizing quality over quantity is important. It is crucial to create a few meaningful friends who bring out your best than a thousand friendly acquaintances whom you do not really know.

According to the Pew Research Center, "friendships [for today's teenager] can start digitally: 57% of teens have met a new friend online." While these digital platforms provide individuals to talk to, they often lack the experience and substance of a real-world connection. Moreover, social media often lacks authenticity. Pew Research notes that "many teens feel obligated to project an attractive and popular image through their social media postings." When teenagers are afraid to be their true selves, honest friendship becomes impossible. To have a real bond, both parties must be willing to be vulnerable and make sacrifices. Without that effort, the relationship eventually fizzles out.

The teen years are difficult, as they are a time of sensitivity to social standing. We often care more about "fitting in" than almost anything else. However, getting introduced to the wrong crowd can be damaging.

Newport Academy points out that "when teens get involved in toxic friendships, it can be bad for their mental health and challenging for the whole family."

Because the physical, mental and social parts of the "health triangle" are interconnected, your social circle dictates your well-being. The National Institutes of Health explains: "People do tend to choose friends who are similar to them. You also become more like your friends over time. And that can influence your health." By choosing even one trustworthy friend who makes you feel good about yourself, you can significantly improve your overall health.

Friendship is an investment. While making friends may come easily to some, many need to put the time and effort to maintain them. This effort pays off long-term; the Mayo Clinic also notes that older adults with strong social support systems tend to live longer. We must be intentional. We should seek friends who offer support but we must also ensure we are not using people purely for our own benefit. True friendship should be a mutual exchange of joy and support. So make a promise to embrace the true meaning of friendship. Your future self will thank you for the boundaries you set today.

Starting a Summer of Service

by Tegan, 8th Grade



As summer break approaches, families and students often plan and prioritize vacation trips and summer enrichment courses.

Another invaluable activity that students can consider is volunteering with philanthropic organizations. While some mistakenly believe that volunteers must be 16 or 18, there are many ways to get involved as early as junior high.

The benefits to volunteering, for the individual and the community, are multifold. Young volunteers gain a sense of community ownership and connections, learning about the services that are offered to the young, old and underserved.

For example, Pathways of Hope is a nonprofit that serves families facing food insecurity.

Among other projects, they operate a food pantry, which receives fresh groceries daily and requires volunteers to sort and stock their shelves. While students typically cannot serve during the school hours, the flexibility of summer allows them to lend their muscles and time.

Beyond contributing directly to an organization, volunteers receive a mental and physical boost by contributing positively to the lives of their fellow residents. Serving just a couple of hours results in a perspective of appreciation.

Students who are interested in combining service with leadership opportunities can join organizations designed for youth.

SOME LOCAL OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

Assistees of Fullerton:

Open to 7th-12th grade students, this group supports Assistance League projects with Operation School Bell, their Thrift Shop, and Day of the Author (www.assistanceleague.org/fullerton/volunteer-2/assistees/).

The Teen Advisory Board at the Fullerton Library:

This group meets monthly to coordinate activities and meetups for teens geared to their interests (www.fullertonlibrary.org/teen-volunteer-opportunities/).

Fullerton Service League of Boys (SLOBs):

This is a parent-son organization open to students who live or attend school in the FJUHSD district (www.fullertonslobs.com/).

National Charity of League (Fullerton chapter):

This is a mother-daughter service group that structured by graduating class and is open to 7th-12th grade females (Class of 2031 and 2032 are open until May 31st, (www.nationalcharityleague.org/chapter/fullerton/)).

Service allows students to expand their experiences and gain firsthand knowledge of how non-profits function. It also cultivates a sense of civic mindfulness and care for others.

As the iconic actress Audrey Hepburn once noted, "As you grow older, you will discover that you have two hands — one for helping yourself, the other for helping others." Let us make a commitment to using both this sunny season.

May

19 Tuesday

MEETINGS

Canceled: City Council Meeting:
City Hall
303 W Commonwealth Ave, Fullerton
(714)-738-6350

20 Wednesday



MARKET

8:30 am to 12:30 pm: Certified Farmers Market: Fresh local produce. Support farmers live close by. Independence Park
801 W Valencia Dr, Fullerton
(714) 738-6575

MOVIE

4:00pm - FREE: Meet Me in St. Louis: Young love and childish fears highlight a year in the life of a turn-of-the-century family.
Fullerton Public Library
Conference Center
353 W Commonwealth Ave, Fullerton
(714) 738-6333

21 Thursday

NIGHT MARKET

4:30 to 8:30pm: Fullerton Night Market: Every Thursday local farmers, artisans, merchants, and non-profit organizations to offer their unique products and services in a fun and festive atmosphere. The market includes a variety of features including fresh produce, prepared food, arts and crafts, jewelry, novelty and gift items, live entertainment, as well as family and children's activities.

BAND LINE UP

May 21: Sonic Gold
May 28: The Alter Billies
June 4: Soundbytes
Museum Plaza
125 E Wilshire Ave, Fullerton
(657) 683-4661

22 Friday

THEATER

7:30 to 9:30pm: Comedy of Errors: After being separated from their twins in a shipwreck, Antipholus and his slave Dromio go to Ephesus to find them. The other set of twins lives in Ephesus, and the new arrivals cause a series of incidents of mistaken identity.
Fullerton College
Bronwyn Dodson Theatre
321 E. Chapman Ave., Fullerton
(714) 992-7149

ART

10:00am-5:00pm-\$10: More Than Love: The Life & Art of Natalie Wood: An exhibition that celebrates Ms. Wood's unrelenting curiosity and passion for art, design, literature, music, family & friends; with rarely seen artwork by Don Bachardy, Henry Jaglom, Margaret Keane, and Natalie Wood herself. Including many of her personal possessions.
The Muckenthaler Cultural Center |
714-738-6595 | themuck.org
1201 W Malvern Ave, Fullerton

23 Saturday

MARKET

12:00 pm: Toontown Market
This is a must-do market for you! Great vendor booths unique Disney inspired items not to mention food and drink vendors too!
Downtown Plaza
125 E. Wilshire Avenue, Fullerton

LIVE MUSIC

7:00pm - FREE: Indie surf-rock band The High Curbs with God Awful: This is an all-ages show at the combined skate shop/venue, often featuring local underground talent. RSVP: www.thehighcurbs.com
Programme Skate & Sound
2495 E. Chapman Ave., Fullerton
(714) 798-7565

24 Sunday

MARKET

12:00 pm:Soul Real Market: Featuring vendors, food, music, and community activities. Families with younger kids can walk around the plaza, grab snacks, and enjoy a relaxed outdoor atmosphere.
Downtown Plaza
125 E. Wilshire Avenue, Fullerton

25 Monday

HOLIDAY

10:00am: 88th Annual Memorial Day Commemoration: In honor of the United States' 250th birthday, the city of Fullerton is set to commemorate Memorial Day with a special ceremony. Attendees can expect a moving program featuring patriotic music, speeches from esteemed military speakers, and moments of solemn remembrance for those who have served. Organizers expect over 1,000 citizens to attend the ceremony, which is sponsored by the nonprofit American Veterans Memorial Association, the City of Fullerton, and Loma Vista Memorial Park.
Loma Vista Memorial Park
701 E Bastanchury Rd, Fullerton
(714) 525-1575

26 Tuesday

A DAY

IN THE PARK

- Acacia Park:**
1910 Fullerton Creek Drive
- Adlena Park:**
300 N Adlena Drive
- Amerige Park:**
300 W Commonwealth Avenue
- Bastanchury Park:**
1717 W Bastanchury Road
- Brea Dam Park:**
1700 N Harbor Boulevard
- Byerrum Park:**
501 N Raymond Avenue
- Hilcrest Park:**
1200 N Harbor Boulevard
- Craig Regional Park:**
3300 State College Boulevard
- Edward H White II Park:**
1550 Parks Road
- Emery Park:**
1201 Sunny Ridge Drive
- Fullerton Arboretum:**
1900 Associated Road
- Fullerton Creek Greenbelt:**
1910 Fullerton Creek Drive
- Gilman Park:**
2590 Hartford Avenue
- Laguna Lake Park:**
3120 Lakeview Drive

27 Wednesday



MARKET

8:30 am to 12:30 pm: Certified Farmers Market. Fresh local produce. Support farmers live close by.
Independence Park
801 W Valencia Dr, Fullerton
(714) 738-6575

28 Thursday

NIGHT MARKET

4:30 to 8:30pm: Fullerton Night Market: Every Thursday this market includes a variety of features including fresh produce, prepared food, arts and crafts, jewelry, novelty and gift items, live entertainment, as well as family and children's activities including a water fountain for children to play in.

BAND LINE UP

May 28: The Alter Billies
Museum Plaza
125 E Wilshire Ave, Fullerton
(657) 683-4661

CLUB MEETING

11:00am - \$35: Lunch with the League with Guest Speaker Professor Jodi Balma:
The League of Women Voters invites the public to lunch and listen to guest speaker Jodi Balma, Professor of Political Science at Fullerton College will speak about ranked choice voting and other electoral changes needed to improve California elections.
Coyote Hills Golf Club
1440 E Bastanchury Rd, Fullerton
RSVP Required by May 23
lunchwithleague@lwvnoc.org

29 Friday

FESTIVAL

11:00am to 10:00pm: 30th Anniversary Newport Beach Jazz Festival from May 29 to 31:
The Newport Beach Jazz Festival will feature an incredible lineup of performers, including:

- The Isley Brothers
- Ledisi
- Marcus Miller
- Damien Escobar
- Avery*Sunshine
- Rick Braun
- Rahsaan Patterson
- Poncho Sanchez
- Kim & Kayla Waters
- Sy Smith
- Nicholas Cole & Julian Vaughn
- Jeff Ryan
- Durti-Ryce featuring Deron
- Biscuits & Gravy Live
- DJ Shell

Hosted by Pat Prescott. Grab your tickets now and get ready for an unforgettable experience! Tickets: HyattConcerts.com
Hyatt Regency Newport Beach
1107 Jamboree Rd, Newport Beach

30 Saturday

FESTIVAL

10:00am to 2:00pm: \$40: Fullerton Coffee Fest: This community-focused festival features a mix of coffee experiences, creative expression, and live performances. Guests can explore local coffee offerings while enjoying art displays, entertainment, and live poetry in a relaxed, family-friendly setting.
Hunt Branch Library
201 South Basque Avenue Fullerton
(714) 738-6587

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JUNE 6TH

2PM - 7PM

DOWNTOWN FULLERTON PLAZA

FREE EVENT!

Live Music

Vendors

Bike Parade

Beer Garden

Food Trucks

31 Sunday

—TAKE A HIKE—

All Day -FREE: If you are looking to get outdoors, Fullerton has a fantastic network of trails.

Brea Dam Trail (1.59 mi)

Begin the trail at the Leonard Andrews Tennis Center, which is located to the rear of the St. Jude Medical Center. Follow the trail down into the canyon and then turn left, making your way north. Eventually you will run into two tunnels going under Bastanchury Road. At this point, you can either forego the tunnels and continue on to the Lost Trail, which will lead you to Trail Rest Park. Or if you decide to go through the tunnels, they will lead you to the Fullerton Municipal Golf Course.

Castlewood Trail (1.33 mi)

Take Coyote Hills Drive west to its end. Coyote Hills Drive is about block north of where Gilbert Street crosses Rosecrans Avenue. (That's a mile east of Beach Boulevard.) There are a few places to park near Castlewood Trail sign, but neighbors would prefer you to park on Somerset Lane.

Valencia Mesa Trail (1.16 mi)

This is a connector and street trail. It primarily functions as an access point to the city's larger equestrian and pedestrian networks, linking West Valley View Drive down to the iconic Juanita Cooke Greenbelt Trail off Valencia Mesa Drive. Key Connection Points are Juanita Cooke Trail and Horse Alley Trail. Street parking is generally available along Valencia Mesa Drive.

See map and more trails and locations at:

<https://www.cityoffullerton.com/government/departments/parks-recreation/parks-trails-and-fields/parks-and-trails/list-of-trails>

June

1 Monday

—ART CLASSES—

2:00pm to 5:00pm: Adult Ceramics with Young Hong: \$245 from June 1 - June 29: Handbuilding and wheel-throwing classes for beginner and experienced adult students, focusing on the techniques and artistic traditions of Korean Buncheong ceramics while introducing a variety of additional ceramic techniques.

6:30pm to 8:30pm: Mondays at the Wheel with Nick Lewis: \$170 from June 1 - June 29: Beginner and intermediate wheel throwing. Learn and build upon fundamental wheel throwing techniques in a fun and relaxing environment with friends.

The Muckenthaler Cultural Center
1201 W. Malvern Ave, Fullerton
(714) 738-6595

2 Tuesday

—VOTE—

All ballots must be returned: By drop box: Deliver your ballot to any polling or ballot drop-off location in California by 8:00 pm on Election Day. **In person:** Polling locations are established by county elections officials and are open from 7:00 am to 8:00 pm on Election Day.

If you miss the deadline to register to vote, you can go to your county elections office, vote center, or polling place on or before Election Day to complete conditional voter registration.

To find a location to vote early before Election Day, visit caearlyvoting.sos.ca.gov.

HITS & MISSES

by Pamela Mason Wagner © 2026



THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA 2: A HIT AND A MISS

The most delicious aspect of “The Devil Wears Prada 2” is the reunion of all four principal players from the original—each recognizably themselves, but older, wiser, and in some cases, softer. That softness, however, may disappoint viewers who relished the acidic wit and gloves-off nastiness of the first film. Back then, “Runway” editor-in-chief Miranda Priestly (Meryl Streep) wore her dragon-lady boss stripes with pride. Here, she feels subdued, her wings clipped by HR policies that keep her viciousness in check.

Ripped from the headlines, the stage is set for the devolution of traditional journalism into the lower rungs of “content creation,” with AI threatening to replace editors, photographers, writers, perhaps even models and designers. When “Runway”'s longtime parent company's CEO is succeeded by his son (who wears tracksuits to meetings where everyone else is in Prada or better), Miranda sees her empire slipping away. Budgets are slashed, staff are forbidden from ordering private cars, and are instead grudgingly forced to Uber home after late nights at the office. In one of Miranda's more nuanced moments—“to deceive and betray and let each other down: it's what we're built to do”—we glimpse a deeper, more layered character than in the original film.

Anne Hathaway returns as Andy Sachs, reunited with Miranda after losing her straight-journalism job to downsizing. Determined to bring good writing to “Runway,” Andy quickly comes to loggerheads with both Miranda and their corporate overlords, who care only about clicks. As Andy's nemesis-turned-co-conspirator, Emily (Emily Blunt), true to form, reveals her

wicked, double-crossing nature. A delightful Stanley Tucci reprises his role as Nigel, Miranda's unseen fixer and muse—chronically underappreciated, yet secretly satisfied in the knowledge that he truly wields the power behind the throne.

Cameos by celebrities and members of the fashion elite — Donatella Versace, Anna Wintour, Marc Jacobs, Tina Brown, and even Jenna Bush Hager—provide a fun “spot them if you can” diversion. One gets the sense that exclusion from the film signals total social irrelevance.

Another star of the movie is Milan, where the team attends a series of Fashion Week events. The hotel rooms! The restaurants! Leonardo da Vinci's “Last Supper!” One starts to wonder whether Milan Tourism helped finance the production. Still, the eye candy is a welcome distraction, reminding us that beauty has always been central to the human story. Artists, designers, seamstresses, fabricators—and the press that amplifies their work—have for centuries competed to signal opulence, relevance, and status.

Andy tells her new Australian boyfriend, Peter (Patrick Brammall), that she secretly believes the fashion industry is the worst industry in the world. Yet even Andy revels in wearing couture and in how it makes her look and feel fabulous. Stuart (Kenneth Branagh), Miranda's new husband, gently skewers the superficiality of the spectacle when he dryly observes, “These parties were so much better when I was still drinking.”

All told, the film is a welcome amuse-bouche: a half-hearted but enjoyable attempt to both skewer and celebrate an industry everyone loves to

- Two HITS: Don't Miss it!
- A HIT & A MISS: You Might Like it.
- Two MISSES: Don't Bother.

Year-round offerings
Youth and Adult Swim Lessons
Red Cross Lifeguarding Classes
Water Aerobics, and
indoor family fun swimming

for more info and updates visit fullertonaquatics.org or follow us on Instagram @fullertonswimshere

Sign up here!

ALL DAY DISCOUNTS

Taco Tuesday
10 tacos for \$20
Dine in or Take out

Wicked Wednesday
20% off Cocktails
50% off Appetisers

THIRSTY THURSDAY
Half off Wine Bottles
Only applies to wine bottles \$40 or less

Live Music Line-up Every Saturday
 May 9: The Ron Kobayashi Trio May 23: The Ron Kobayashi Trio
 May 16: The Dardens May 30: The Dixielic Jazz

Live Music Every Night in Chapter 4 Lounge

LIVE JAZZ MUSIC
 AN EVENING WITH AVERY

FOLLOW THE MONEY: BIG DONORS AND SELF-FUNDING SHAPE RACE FOR ORANGE COUNTY'S 4TH DISTRICT SUPERVISOR SEAT

Four candidates are competing to replace termed-out Orange County Supervisor Doug Chaffee in the June 2 primary election for the county's 4th District seat, with campaign finance filings showing stark differences in fundraising sources, spending, and political backing.

The top two finishers will advance to the November 3 general election unless a candidate captures more than 50 percent of the vote outright. Campaign disclosure filings submitted on April 23 provide the clearest picture yet of who is financing the race and where the candidates' political support is coming from. The filings cover activity from January 1 through April 18, 2026. The four candidates are shown below.



Connor Traut

Buena Park Mayor Connor Traut reported raising \$28,712 during the most recent filing period while spending \$136,606. He ended the period with \$117,134 cash on hand and no outstanding debt.

Traut's campaign has been heavily supported by labor organizations, attorneys, and Democratic-aligned

political groups. Recent donations of \$1,000 or more came from organizations including the Orange County Young Democrats, the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades, and the Southern California District Council of Laborers.

Other major donors included attorneys, mediators, consultants, and Planned Parenthood's political action committee.

Earlier filings showed Traut raised nearly \$225,000 during 2025, including a \$109,315 transfer from his Buena Park City Council campaign committee. His donor list included construction trade unions, firefighters, police associations, apartment industry groups, real estate interests, and numerous attorneys. Current Supervisor Doug Chaffee also contributed to Traut's campaign.



Rose Espinoza

La Habra Councilmember Rose Espinoza reported raising \$195,128 during the latest filing period while

spending \$59,675. She ended with \$148,064 cash on hand.

Unlike the other candidates, most of Espinoza's campaign funding came from herself. Filings show a \$150,000 loan to her campaign along with a \$43,891 non-monetary contribution.

Outside contributions above \$1,000 were limited, with the largest reported donor being the Los Angeles County Fire Fighters Local 1014 PAC at \$2,200.

Earlier filings also reflected significant self-financing, including the initial \$150,000 campaign loan made in October 2025.



Fred Jung

Fullerton Mayor Fred Jung reported the largest campaign war chest in the race, ending the latest reporting period with \$347,433 cash on hand.

Jung raised \$58,155 between January and April while spending \$128,568. He also reported \$62,938 in outstanding debt. His donor network reflects strong

support from business owners, developers, real estate figures, liquor store operators, public affairs firms, and Korean-American business interests. Contributions included donations from jewelry companies, real estate investors, engineering contractors, hospitality businesses, and public affairs consultants.

Previous filings showed Jung raised more than \$354,000 in 2025, including a \$197,253 transfer from his Fullerton City Council campaign committee.

Jung's donor list included contributions from the California Apartment Association, the Fullerton Police Officers Association, the Fullerton Firefighters Association, developers, oil companies, construction firms, restaurants, and multiple business executives.



Tim Shaw

Orange County Board of Education Trustee Tim Shaw reported raising \$16,398 during the latest filing period and spending \$14,126. He ended with

\$66,705 cash on hand.

Shaw, who has been endorsed by the Republican Party, reported a \$5,000 loan to his campaign from himself.

Major contributors included the WECA Good Government PAC and Inland Group Inc. President William Johns.

Earlier filings showed support from real estate interests, charter school advocates, Republican political consultants, and business groups. Donors included Assemblymember Phillip Chen, the California Real Estate Political Action Committee, and the Apartment Association of Orange County.

California 2026 Primary Voting Resource Information

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS GUIDE:

<https://cavotes.org/easy-voter-guide/>

CalMatters VOTER GUIDE:

<https://calmatters.org/california-voter-guide-2026/>

Independent Expenditures and Transfers

Campaign finance records are available through the Orange County Registrar of Voters Campaign Finance Disclosure Portal and the California Secretary of State Cal-Access database.

Fullerton Public Library Vote Center Dates and Times

Saturday 5/23 through Monday June 1 from 10AM - 6PM and Tuesday June 2 from 7AM - 8PM

Drive Thru voting available for ballot drop off in the City Hall parking lot. For more Orange County voting information, check out <https://ocvote.gov/>

In celebration of Dr. Winston Lee's 20th anniversary of practicing and to show appreciation to the community, he wants to give **FREE acupuncture treatment to ALL FIRST RESPONDERS**



Thank you

- Who is eligible?**
Full Time Active Duty
 Police Officers
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 Military Personnel
 EMTs, Paramedics
- No Insurance Required
 - A Patient A Day
 - By Appointment Only

Doctor Acupuncture in Korean Medicine
 2720 N. Harbor blvd suite 120
 Fullerton CA 92835
 T. 714-519-3775



Jodi Balma,
 Professor of Political Science at Fullerton College,
 will speak on



"Ranked Choice Voting and Other Electoral Changes Needed to Improve California Elections"

at May's Lunch with League

Thursday, May 28, 2026 at 11 AM

Coyote Hills Golf Club,

1440 E. Bastanchury, Fullerton

RSVP by 5/23 to LUNCHWITHLEAGUE@LWVNOC.ORG

What Happens When a City Like Fullerton Privatizes Everything? by Saskia Kennedy

As officials in Fullerton grapple with sales tax decisions, infrastructure funding, and the controversial prospect of privatizing parts of the city's water system, a pivotal question arises: What are the implications of transitioning public services to private entities?

The complexity of privatization presents both immediate benefits and long-term risks. On one hand, privatization can deliver quick cash to cities, alleviate short-term fiscal pressures, and transfer construction costs away from local taxpayers. Conversely, such measures can lead to soaring user fees, diminished public oversight, job losses, and a significant erosion of local control.

For cities facing budgetary strains like Fullerton, this debate transcends theory and becomes a pressing reality.

Privatization can manifest in various forms, including:

- Selling or leasing public assets such as parking and water utilities
- Contracting services to private firms
- Outsourcing maintenance
- Engaging private companies to finance infrastructure projects
- Replacing utilities with investor-owned that is regulated by state entities rather than local governments

In California, numerous municipalities already rely on private contractors for services such as trash collection, landscaping, towing, road repairs, and some public safety functions. However, broader privatization efforts—chiefly those tied to water and essential municipal services—tend to spark public controversy.

A notable case arises with California's investor-owned water companies, which are overseen by the California Public Utilities Commission instead of local city councils. Such companies profit from rates approved by regulators; among them is the Golden State Water Company, which serves parts of Placentia, Yorba Linda, Los Alamitos, and nearby unincorporated areas.

Proponents of privatized water systems argue that these utilities can swiftly access capital markets, finance significant infrastructure projects, spread costs across a larger customer base, and operate specialized systems more efficiently. Yet, critics highlight a troubling reality—water rates often rise more quickly under private oversight, local elected officials lose direct influence, residents find themselves appealing to distant state regulators

rather than their own city councils, and the push for profits can escalate long-term costs for customers.

The issue has re-emerged in Fullerton's Fiscal Sustainability Ad Hoc Committee discussions, with officials contemplating whether privatizing or selling parts of the city's water utility might serve as a viable alternative to raising taxes. As of now, no formal proposals have been approved.

California has a history of privatization debates tied to fiscal crises. During budgetary constraints, cities have explored outsourcing for various services, including street maintenance, public parking, wastewater management, emergency dispatch, libraries, and utility systems. The outcomes have been mixed: Some cities have found temporary budget relief through private contracts, while others have faced backlash over declining service quality, labor disputes, and rising long-term costs.

For many municipalities, reversing privatization can be fraught with complications and hefty costs. For Fullerton, the financial implications of "re-municipalizing" services depend on the type of privatization utilized, existing contract terms, infrastructure ownership, debt obligations, and state regulations. Historical data show that undoing privatization can involve sig-

nificant buyback costs, lawsuits, higher financing costs, and protracted negotiations.

In several California communities, opposition to privatization has emerged over concerns about accountability dilution. As public services shift to private hands, decisions regarding staffing, maintenance schedules, rates, and investment priorities often fall under the jurisdiction of contracts and regulatory agencies rather than local governing bodies.

These discussions come at a time when Fullerton is facing grim fiscal forecasts. City projections from May indicated that without new revenue sources or significant spending cuts, Fullerton could exhaust its reserves within five years, potentially leading to dire consequences such as fire station closures, police staffing cuts, deferred street repairs, slower emergency response times, and diminished neighborhood services.

Ultimately, this financial pressure often catalyzes discussions of privatization. Selling or leasing utility systems could yield a substantial one-time financial boost, while contracting out services might alleviate pension obligations, staffing expenses, and equipment costs. However, the long-term trade-offs necessitate careful consideration.

Fiscal Sustainability Ad Hoc Committee Divided on 2026 Sales Tax Initiative as Public Comment Focuses on Budget Gap, Cuts, and Alternatives *continued from front page*

The city faces a projected \$13.7 million structural deficit, and staff presented various fiscal scenarios, with a 5% expenditure reduction projected to save \$7.6 million annually, but this would significantly impact city operations and services. A more drastic 10% cut would generate \$15 million in savings, but is described as operationally devastating by City Manager Eddie Manfro. The city might face serious service reductions, including the potential closure of fire stations and police department cuts.

Three tax scenarios were proposed:

1. A half-cent dedicated infrastructure sales tax requiring two-thirds voter approval.
2. A one-cent general sales tax needs majority voter approval.
3. A one-cent dedicated infrastructure tax.

The one-cent general sales tax was described as the most financially stable option, expected to generate around \$31 million annually for the General Fund, allowing the city to maintain staffing and services after a period of

short-term reductions. Initially, the city would implement a 5% reduction in expenditures until sales tax revenues began to come in. Finance staff projected that the General Fund reserves could reach about \$30 million by fiscal year 2030-31 under this scenario.

Public criticism and alternative proposals arose as several residents criticized the city's process, financial assumptions, and pursuit of new taxes. One speaker accused staff of using "fake numbers" to pressure residents into supporting a sales tax, arguing that the committee should wait for the consultant, Grant Thornton, to provide operational and financial findings before recommending tax increases or major budget actions. He also criticized the city's document retention practices, claiming that short email retention policies could hamper efforts to fully investigate past financial decisions.

Former Fullerton Mayor Chris Norby opposed raising taxes and instead urged the city to pursue structural reforms and asset sales. Norby sug-

gested that the city consider contracting police services through the Orange County Sheriff's Department and outsourcing paramedic services similarly to neighboring Placentia. He argued those changes could save tens of millions of dollars annually and recommended selling several city-owned properties and exploring redevelopment of the Fullerton Municipal Airport.

"That 86 acres could be transformed into a planned walkable community of mixed housing types, parks, and neighborhood businesses," Norby said. Norby estimated that redevelopment of the airport property could generate between \$350 million and \$500 million for the city.

One resident argued that the city's departments were already operating efficiently and warned that large cuts would substantially reduce public services.

"If you want to not do sales tax revenue, then say where the \$13.7 million is going to come from," the resident told committee members.

Steven Sherry, urged committee members and the City Council to unify around any potential tax proposal.

"There needs to be unanimous recommendations out of this committee and unanimous votes from council to signal to the public that a sales tax is in the city's best interest," Sherry said.

Sherry also questioned whether contracting police services would produce the level of savings some proponents claimed without affecting response times or service quality.

Committee Members Discussion

Committee discussions highlighted significant disagreement over the city's fiscal direction. Chair Lisa Wozab described the overwhelming amount of information as "drinking from a fire hose."

Canceled meetings left little time for reflection or public input. Members expressed reluctance to support tax

recommendations until findings from Grant Thornton Advisors, hired for an independent review, were completed. However, urgency was raised due to impending budget deadlines and the July 17 Registrar of Voters' deadline for ballot measures.

Committee member Tony Bushala proposed privatizing city water to potentially generate \$200 million without layoffs, but others urged caution in implementing major changes before receiving the advisors' recommendations.

Infrastructure Funding Debate

The meeting primarily addressed concerns about infrastructure funding and compliance with Measure M2 requirements. Public Works Director David Grantham highlighted that the city needs to allocate approximately \$5.9 million annually for eligible street and infrastructure projects to secure regional transportation funding. There was concern that not meeting spending levels could risk millions in future Measure M2 funding.

Committee members discussed whether to implement a dedicated infrastructure sales tax to either supplement or replace the current funding ordinance, which directs a portion of General Fund revenue to road maintenance and improvements.

Committee member Tony Bushala expressed that he would only support a new sales tax if the existing ordinance was preserved.

Tax Measures Fail

At the meeting's conclusion, committee members voted on tax recommendations, both of which—a half-cent infrastructure sales tax and a one-cent general sales tax—failed to gain majority support.

They then debated the value of further meetings and ultimately passed a motion to recommend that the city consider selling the water utility, which passed 3-2 (Duong and Smith opposed)

88th Annual
Avenue of Flags

**MEMORIAL DAY
 COMMEMORATION**

MONDAY, MAY 25, 2026
★
10:00 A.M.

LOMA VISTA MEMORIAL PARK
 701 E. Bastanchury Road, Fullerton, CA 92835 ★ (714) 525-1575

City Council Notes by Saskia Kennedy

Meetings are on the first and third Tuesday of each month at 5:30 pm. Upcoming agenda information and streaming video of meetings are available at www.cityoffullerton.com click on meetings and agenda. City Hall is located at 303 W. Commonwealth, Fullerton. Contact Council at (714) 738-6311 or council@cityoffullerton.com

May 5 City Council meeting

City Council Heated Debate Over Housing Development

At the Fullerton City Council meeting on May 5, a contentious debate emerged over a proposed residential development at 111 W. Hermosa Dr. This discussion highlighted significant divisions among council members and showcased a chaotic decision-making process. The main issue was whether to uphold or overturn the Planning Commission's decision to deny the project, which was being reviewed under California's Builder's Remedy provisions.

The Fullerton Planning Commission voted 4-1 to deny a proposal for a 32-unit, three-story condominium project on the vacant lot. Commissioners Tutor, Dino, Valadez, and Wehn voted against the project, while Commissioner Fleenor was in favor of it.

The proposed development was submitted under California's Builder's Remedy housing law, which sets limits on when cities can refuse housing pro-

posals.

Assembly Bill (AB) 1893, which started on January 1, 2025, changed the Builder's Remedy rules in important ways. This new law made it necessary for new Builder's Remedy projects to follow certain site restrictions, density limits, and local standards that are clear and objective.

At the same time, it made some of the rules about affordable housing a bit easier. Supporters of the bill argued that these changes provide better protection for developers against typical objections they might face.

The discussions extended beyond typical zoning issues to encompass a range of concerns, including environmental impact, traffic safety, water infrastructure, and legal ramifications of potential lawsuits.

Mayor Fred Jung, Mayor Pro Tem Nick Dunlap, and Council member Jamie Valencia raised alarms about traffic hazards along Hermosa Drive,

referencing current congestion, accident rates, and the area's proximity to schools and equestrian facilities. Despite their concerns, city staff clarified that state law did not require a formal traffic study because the project did not generate enough traffic to trigger one.

Valencia, however, maintained that the lack of a comprehensive traffic study indicated an incomplete evaluation. She insisted that further studies on traffic, water capacity, and infrastructure should have been mandated before approval was granted.

City staff reassured the council that sewer and water systems had been previously assessed, with simulations indicating no downstream capacity issues. They explained that a water demand study would be conducted later in the development process as a condition of final approval.

A crucial point of discussion was the project's qualification for a CEQA Class 32 exemption under state law. Staff reiterated that environmental reviews had been conducted within the scope of this exemption, constraining the city's ability to impose further environmental analysis requirements.

Valencia expressed a desire to impose additional local conditions, such as mandatory undergrounding of utilities for the entire area. Despite the insistence of staff, colleagues, and the developer that many of these issues had been addressed or legally waived under state provisions, a contentious

debate ensued over the necessity of undergrounding existing overhead utilities. While city standards typically required undergrounding, the developer contended that such requirements could threaten project viability due to increased costs and complications in coordinating with neighboring properties and utility providers. They also assured the council that the project will underground all utilities on the property.

Throughout the meeting, Council members engaged in an exchange of motions, amendments, and second motions, creating uncertainty regarding the items being voted on. Proposals to overturn the Planning Commission's decision and approve the project were met with counter motions to deny it outright or to approve it with modified conditions. Votes were divided, with Valencia abstaining and opposing approval due to perceived inadequacies in the modifications.

The council repeatedly grappled with a central question: should the council prioritize objective findings rooted in state housing law, or were broader safety and infrastructure concerns justifiable grounds for imposing additional local restrictions?

As the meeting concluded, no consensus was reached. Instead, council members departed with competing interpretations of the balance of authority between state housing mandates and local governance, leaving the development's future uncertain.

Fullerton Updates Long-Term Water Management and Drought Planning Strategy

Fullerton updated its long-term water management strategy through the 2025 Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP), a state-required document outlining projected water demand, supply reliability, and drought preparedness through 2050. The city council received the presentation on May 5.

The plan was developed to comply with the California Urban Water Management Planning Act and state water code requirements. Fullerton completed the update as part of a shared services agreement coordinated by the Municipal Water District of Orange County (MWDOC), collaborating with 22 other agencies in the region.

City officials reported that the updated UWMP included projections for future water use, conservation targets, supply planning, and long-term reliability assessments under varying climate and drought conditions. It also incorporated the city's revised 2025 Water Shortage Contingency Plan (WSCP), which serves as the operational guide during water shortages and emergency supply interruptions.

The Fullerton water system, serving a 22.3-square-mile area, comprises seven active wells, 15 reservoirs with a combined storage capacity of 67.5 million gallons, 12 booster pump stations, and approximately 424 miles of

pipeline. Additionally, the city maintains seven connections to the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and six emergency interconnections with neighboring agencies.

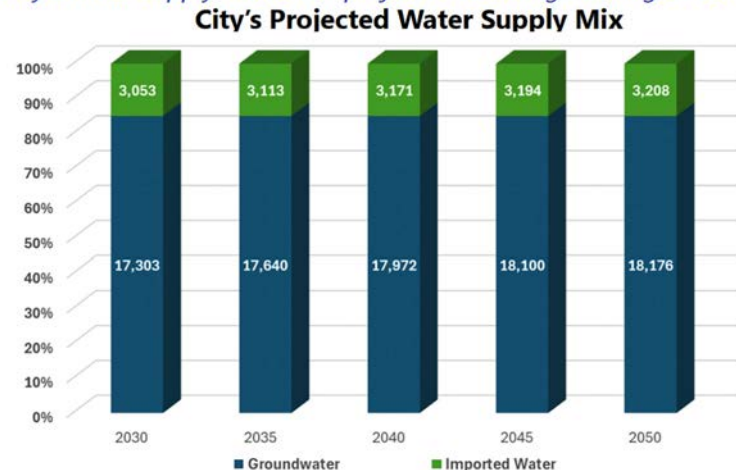
Officials projected the city's population would increase from 141,277 residents in 2025 to 158,923 by 2050, alongside additional housing growth, including 3,198 Regional Housing Needs Allocation units by 2029 and around 50 accessory dwelling units. Despite this population growth, water demand was expected to decline slightly. The report estimated annual water demand would decrease from 22,243 acre-feet in 2025 to 21,384 acre-feet by 2050, a reduction of about 3.9%.

City officials attributed this decline largely to conservation efforts and water efficiency programs. Current water usage in Fullerton was estimated at 64% residential, 23% commercial, industrial and institutional, 6% dedicated irrigation and 8% for other uses.

Fullerton reported compliance with California's 2009 Water Conservation Act (SB X7-7), which mandated a 20% reduction in urban per-capita water use by 2020, achieved through collective efforts with other Orange County retailers via MWDOC's regional water use efficiency programs.

The city's current water supply port-

The City's water supply mix is not projected to change through 2050.



The City's water supply mix is not projected to change through year 2050

folio consists of approximately 62.8% groundwater and 37.2% imported water. Officials noted that the use of imported water had temporarily increased while several groundwater wells were offline due to the construction of treatment facilities addressing per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) contamination.

According to the report, groundwater use was expected to rise to about 85% of the supply portfolio by 2050 as PFAS treatment facilities were completed and wells were restored to service.

The report outlined multiple reliability assessments for normal, dry, and extended drought conditions through 2050, concluding that Fullerton was projected to meet customer water demand during normal years and single dry years, as well as in droughts lasting up to five consecutive years, through local groundwater supplies, imported water reserves, and conservation measures.

The Water Shortage Contingency Plan established six levels of water shortage response actions based on the severity of supply reductions, detailing communication procedures, annual supply assessments, and enforcement measures.

Officials emphasized that the WSCP aimed to prevent major service disruptions through proactive management rather than relying solely on emergency responses.

The report also addressed infrastructure and environmental concerns impacting the city's water system. Fullerton began constructing additional PFAS treatment plants in partnership with the Orange County Water District and plans to drill a new groundwater well by 2028, expected to produce approximately 3,000 gallons per minute.

The city experiences about 100 water main breaks annually and planned to accelerate pipeline replacement efforts to mitigate future disruptions. Ongoing environmental monitoring takes place at the Orange County North Basin Superfund Site, where contamination from industrial solvents and volatile organic compounds, which had lingered since the 1950s and 1970s, continues to be investigated under the oversight of the United States Environmental Protection Agency. Officials said the completed 2025 UWMP and Water Shortage Contingency Plan will be submitted to the California Department of Water Resources by July 1, 2026.

How to contact your District Representative

• **District 1: Fred Jung**
Council Chair
(714) 738-6311
fred.jung@cityoffullerton.com

• **District 2: Nicholas Dunlap**
Council Vice Chair
(714) 738-6311
nicholas.dunlap@cityoffullerton.com

• **District 3: Dr. Shana Charles**
(714) 738-6311
shana.charles@cityoffullerton.com

• **District 4: Jamie Valencia**
(714) 738-6311
jamie.valencia@cityoffullerton.com

• **District 5: Dr. Ahmad Zahra**
(714) 738-6311
ahmadz@cityoffullerton.com

Sponsorship Ethics and Transparency Debates Dominate the May 5 Fullerton City Council Meeting by Jack Hutt

Consent Calendar Items Pulled

Councilmember Dr. Ahmad Zahra pulled Items 4, 6, and 7 from the consent calendar for discussion. The remaining consent calendar items were approved unanimously.

Public Comments

Resident Raise Concerns Over Waste Rates

During public comment, resident Jeffrey Otter urged the council to conduct a formal cost-of-service analysis before awarding a new waste services agreement. Otter argued that proposed commercial waste fee structures could disproportionately affect residents of apartments, condominiums, mobile home parks, and other multifamily housing.

Otter said comparisons of the short-listed waste-hauling proposals showed multifamily residents could pay between 250% and 1,400% more than single-family households for equivalent levels of service. He warned that without a Proposition 218-compliant analysis, the city could face future legal challenges.

He also offered to assist the city in evaluating revised proposals and urged the council to pursue a two-tier commercial rate structure to avoid shifting costs onto multifamily residents.

Public Speakers Criticize Mayor Jung

Several speakers criticized Mayor Fred Jung over recent actions and statements.

Karen Lloreda accused Jung of repeatedly acting beyond his authority, citing prior controversies involving a proposed Korean garden at the Korean War Memorial, the use of the city seal by non-committee appointees and non-city employees, and a proclamation recognizing April 27 as “Kim Boo Kan Philanthropy Day” that had not been formally approved by the council.

Another speaker challenged Jung’s recent claim that homelessness in Fullerton had been “drastically reduced,” calling the statement inaccurate and urging greater transparency regarding homelessness data and city policy. They criticized the city’s restrictions on newspaper distribution within city buildings, highlighting publications like the Fullerton Observer and Daily Titan.

Financial Audit Discussion

The council discussed an agreement with Grant Thornton Advisors LLC for financial audit, budget analysis, and related advisory services.

Questions centered on whether the council would retain authority over any future forensic investigation stemming from the audit findings.

City Manager Eddy Manfro said any significant expansion into forensic services would require council approval. However, staff could proceed with preliminary investigative work if the initial findings warranted further review.

Staff said the audit firm is expected to provide periodic updates and that any indications of fraud or serious irregularities would be communicated immediately to both the council and the public.

Councilmember Shana Charles questioned whether the Fiscal Sustainability Ad Hoc Committee would receive information before the full council. Staff responded that all councilmembers would receive the same information simultaneously.

The agreement was approved unanimously.

Tense Exchange Over Transparency and Street Projects

Council comments became contentious after Councilmember Charles raised concerns over street rehabilitation projects approved at a previous meeting.

Charles said media analysis showed several projects were located near the homes of councilmembers Dunlap, Jung, and Valencia and proposed agendizing a future discussion regarding disclosure requirements for projects located within a half-mile of elected officials’ residences.

Mayor Jung strongly opposed the proposal, arguing that existing conflict-of-interest laws already address disclosure requirements and that additional measures could create safety concerns for council members who have received threats. He said that he had received threats on his life and feared for his safety so much that he had police officers camped out in front of his home.

After debate, the council voted 3-2 against agendizing the discussion, with Charles and Zahra voting in favor of further review.

Energy Audit Proposal Approved

Zahra raised concerns about why the proposal had not undergone a formal request-for-proposals process. He also questioned why the city was exploring additional energy-saving opportunities while still paying off financing related to a previous energy project conducted by NORESCO, a national leader in energy efficiency, resiliency, and infrastructure solutions. This prior project involved an \$8.4 million investment that was guaranteed to save the city \$12.1 million.

City staff explained that the proposal is exploratory only and carries no financial obligation for the city. Staff said the audit would identify possible future energy efficiencies and determine whether additional projects would be financially viable. Representatives from Veregy said some federal incentives tied to solar infrastructure are time-sensitive and could expire later this year.

The agreement was approved 4 to 1 (Zahra opposed).

Treasurer’s Report Presented

The council also received a third-quarter Treasurer’s Report and approved an updated city investment policy.

Finance staff reported the city’s investment portfolio totaled approximately \$191.4 million at the close of the third quarter of Fiscal Year 2025-26. The portfolio included investments in state-managed short-term pools, U.S. Treasury notes, corporate accounts, and municipal securities.

The city reported a market yield of 4.19% for the quarter and approximately \$1.7 million in interest income.

Zahra said he pulled the item to ensure greater public transparency surrounding the city’s financial operations amid ongoing budget concerns.

The council approved a no-cost agreement with Veregy LLC to conduct an investment-grade audit evaluating potential energy conservation measures citywide.

Fullerton Council Divided Over State of the City Sponsorships and Transparency

The Fullerton City Council spent significant time Tuesday, May 5, debating the ethics, transparency and structure of the city’s upcoming 2026 State of the City event, with disagreements emerging over corporate sponsorships, public access, and whether the event should continue in its current format.

Councilmember Dr. Ahmad Zahra raised concerns about sponsorship donations from companies and organizations that either hold city contracts or may seek future business with Fullerton. Staff identified sponsors including Boeing (future contract with Fullerton Airport), Republic Services (current waste management for the city), Orange County Power Authority (public utility that pays thousands annually for city events whose board includes Mayor Jung as a member), Happy Jewelers (who received the keys to the city from Jung and then donated to his campaign), Fullerton College, Cal State Fullerton, West Coast Arborist (currently contracted with the city), Kimley-Horn (contracted with the city, specifically in planning and urban development). They were recently engaged to analyze survey results for the City of Fullerton’s Open Space Element update and the Environmental Justice Element, with reports presented to the Planning Commission) and Fullerton’s City Attorney Jones & Mayer.

Zahra questioned whether accepting sponsorship money from city vendors or affiliated entities created the appearance of ethical conflicts.

“My point of all of this is that while we are looking at the overall revenue, I think the source of revenue is as important because it tells a story about the ethics of this council,” Zahra said during the discussion.

Deputy City Manager Daisy Perez explained that sponsorship solicitations are widely distributed via mass emails to approximately 200 organizations.

Jung defended the sponsorship process and disputed suggestions of impropriety, while Councilmember Jamie Valencia and Mayor Pro Tem Nick Dunlap said they supported ven-

dors contributing to city events so long as conflict-of-interest guidelines are established.

The discussion expanded beyond sponsorships to broader questions about the event’s future format. Zahra and Councilmember Dr. Shana Charles advocated for holding future State of the City events at public city-owned venues such as the Community Center, Hunt Library or the Downtown Plaza rather than at the Summit House restaurant.

Charles also expressed frustration that councilmembers had little involvement in planning this year’s presentation and argued the council should have an opportunity to review the mayor’s speech beforehand if it is intended to represent the entire city.

“We are equals here,” Charles said. “I think that it matters that we actually represent what’s actually going on with the city.”

Mayor Pro Tem Nick Dunlap took a more moderate position, saying he supported creating clearer policies for future events while also defending the value of the State of the City program.

Dunlap noted that previous State of the City events were operated by the Fullerton Chamber of Commerce, which influenced venue selection and fundraising practices. He suggested the city could potentially use the Fullerton Community Foundation as a future fundraising vehicle.

The council also debated whether the event should comply with Brown Act public meeting requirements. City Attorney Dick Jones explained that an Attorney General opinion issued last year suggested that State of the City events involving multiple councilmembers may qualify as Brown Act meetings, though cities have handled the issue differently statewide, as it is an opinion rather than law.

Several motions seeking immediate changes failed on 3-2 votes.

The council ultimately approved moving forward with this year’s State of the City event as currently planned at the Summit House, with tickets at \$65 per person and sponsorship ranging from \$500 to \$5,000.

CITY MEETINGS 2026

May 20 at 5:30pm Active Transportation	June 10 at 6:30pm Planning Commission
May 27 at 6:30pm Planning Commission	June 15 at 5:00pm Infrastructure and Natural Resources
May 28 at 6:00pm Library Board of Trustees	June 25 at 6:00pm Library Board of Trustees
June 1 at 4:00pm Transportation & Circulation	July 6 at 4pm Transportation & Circulation
June 2 at 5:30pm City Council	July 7 at 5:30pm City Council
June 8 at 6:00pm Parks and Recreation Commission	July 8 at 6:30pm Planning Commission



OPINION: Out of My Mind

by Jon Dobrer © 2026 Jonathandobrer.substack.com

The War Powers Act: Trump Shamelessly Ignores

Rejected & Evaded by Every President

Every administration hates the War Powers Act. This is understandable since no Executive wants to be limited by another branch. Since the Executive is given the power to wage war, they reject Congress' attempted supervision. Congress, they assert, has the power to declare war but not to manage the conflict. Thus, the presidents question its constitutionality. However, they haven't tested their objections in the courts.

Even Hillary Clinton, when running for the presidency, admitted that she was probably bound by the act but didn't like it. President Trump and his administration's objections are therefore not at all surprising. Their current argument about why this is not the time for Congress to authorize further military action is, well, creative. They argue that there is no war and therefore no relevance to the Act. They assert that even when we started bombing Iran, it did not constitute war. This does have a certain logic to it. After all, technically we have not had a war since WWII. Not Korea with 35,500

American dead. Not Vietnam with 58,220 American dead. Not Iraq with 4,500 American dead. Not Afghanistan with 2,461 American dead. Approximately 100,681 Americans in service to our nation have lost their lives in some form of organized violence that lacks a Declaration of War. So, yeah, this lacks a congressional declaration. Why, the administration argues, should Congress step in now? Well, the 100,000 plus dead speak for themselves from their graves.

This week, the administration came up with a very creative and truly original rationale for not responding to the War Powers Act's requirement to come to Congress to authorize further military activity. They held, that not only was this not a war but even if it were,

The war does not stop simply because we don't bomb Iran or shoot Iranian soldiers. Every day that we blockade their ports, restrict their trade, and threaten to destroy their roads, bridges, power plants, oil fields, and refineries perpetuates this war.

the ceasefire stops the clock from tolling and today (May 1, 2026) is not actually day 60. You must stop counting from early April. And besides, they rationalize, we "terminated hostilities on April 30." The war, that they didn't recognize, is over. We won. Since we're not shooting or bombing Iran today, the War Powers Act is irrelevant.

This is truly brilliant sophistry and would score points in a formal academic debate. However, it does not stand up to either laws or reason. A state of war does not demand renewal on a daily basis. If you keep your troops in the barracks and the bombers on the decks of the carriers and don't engage militarily, does this "time out" mean the war is over? Clearly not. How many ceasefires have been declared in Ukraine? Does anyone believe that the soldiers in the trenches and the forests and occupying ruined towns were somehow out of the war?

Does anyone sincerely believe that our troops in the Middle East, in Syria, Iraq, and on aircraft carriers are out of harm's way and not on a wartime foot-

ing and vulnerable? Does the Trump administration really think that a war ends when you just declare that it's over but remain deployed?

Where their rationale truly collapses is with the inarguable fact that we are proclaiming and enforcing a blockade of the Strait of Hormuz. A blockade is in itself an "Act of War." When, during a conflict, you stop ships in international waters, you are committing an act of war. We are intercepting and turning ships around—under threat of firing on them or boarding them and confiscating their cargos. Anything ambiguous about this? The question answers itself when we may briefly wonder if we would consider the firing on, sinking of, boarding or confiscating of the cargo of an American ship (or ship with American owned cargo) as an act of war against us. You bet!

This war does not stop simply because we don't bomb Iran or shoot Iranian soldiers. Every day we blockade their ports, restrict their trade, and threaten to destroy their roads, bridges, power plants, oil fields and refineries perpetuates this war. And not only do these actions constitute war, but the explicit threats of such mass destruction are in themselves war crimes. I think that if you are committing war crimes, you must infer that there is a war, and hostilities have not ended.

The war goes on as do this administration's denials, deflections and deceptions.

OPINION: AT HOME WITH THE HOMELESS

by Andrew Williams © 2026 WWW.PATREON.COM/C/THEOPINIONATOR

"Rasta Nuh Work For CIA!"

Distinguishing the real Bob Marley from the manufactured version on the 45th anniversary of his death on May 11, 1981

The first song I ever heard by Bob Marley was "Buffalo Soldier," released posthumously on the "Confrontation" album in 1983. On the surface, it is a song about the real-life "Buffalo Soldiers" who served with distinction in the Union Army during the American Civil War. But when you dig deeper into the words, they have a more contemporary resonance: Marley is comparing contemporary (1970s-80s) Rastafarians to America's Buffalo Soldiers, "fighting for survival." Marley makes the comparison plain and inescapable in these lyrics:

*(When I analyze the stench
To me it makes a lot of sense
How the Dreadlock Rasta
was the Buffalo Soldier
(If) you would know
where you coming from
Then you wouldn't have to ask me
Who the 'eck do I think I am*

The original title of this essay was The Last Days of Bob Marley, OM. OM stands for the Order of Merit, which was awarded to Marley in February 1981, three months before his death from cancer, by then-Jamaican Prime Minister Edward Seaga. But after reading Timothy White's amazing, encyclopedic biography of Bob Marley, and learning the real reason for Seaga's action--simultaneously lionizing Bob Marley as a national hero

while defanging his pointed dissents against Seaga, the Jamaican Labour Party and Jamaican politics in general--you realize that by analyzing the stench from Seaga's deceptive actions, these powerful words from British journalist Dave Thompson ring with even louder truth:

"Bob Marley ranks among both the most popular and the most misunderstood figures in modern culture... That the machine has utterly emasculated Marley is beyond doubt. Gone from the public record is the ghetto kid who dreamed of Che Guevara and the Black Panthers, and pinned their posters up in the Wailers Soul Shack record store; who believed in freedom; and the fighting which it necessitated, and dressed the part on an early album sleeve; whose heroes were James Brown and Muhammad Ali; whose God was Ras Tafari and whose sacrament was marijuana. Instead, the Bob Marley who surveys his kingdom today is smiling benevolence, a shining sun, a waving palm tree, and a string of hits which tumble out of polite radio like candy from a gumball machine. Of course, it has assured his immortality. But it has also demeaned him beyond recognition. Bob Marley was worth far more."

In the 1970s and 1980s, Rastafarians in Jamaica were engaged in an uncivil

war with the Jamaican government. The stereotypical image of the dreadlocked Rasta, shirtless, a spliff hanging insolently from his lips and a machete strapped to his waist, conjured the same threatening image of the "black-heart mon" that terrified a young Robert Nesta Marley. PM Seaga skillfully insinuated the idea, via popular press such as the Daily Gleaner, that Rastafarians were in league with the Central Intelligence Agency in order to overthrow the Jamaican government.

In reality, it was Seaga who sought the involvement of the United States in Jamaica's financial and political affairs, delighting then-President Ronald Reagan, who saw an opportunity to expand the War on Drugs worldwide while helping Seaga crack down on Rastafarianism. It also must have delighted then-Vice President George H.W. Bush, former head of the CIA, for the same reasons. In the process, the lifting of tariffs on imports—a condition of America's involvement with Seaga's government—virtually destroyed small businesses in Jamaica. And the crackdown on ganja farmers resulted in the gargantuan growth of cocaine and heroin sales and use.

The most sickening irony of all is that Bob Marley arguably made it possible for Edward Seaga to be Prime Minister. In a hotly contested race between Seaga and his opponent, Michael Manley, who was seeking a

second term as PM, Marley arranged for both men to come on stage during the "One Love" Peace Concert in 1978 in Kingston. He then took both men's hands in his and raised them above his head—a gesture which everyone who's seen the Fritz Lang film "Metropolis" will recognize. And it is an equally great shame that not only were the concert's co-promoters, Claude Massop and Bucky Marshall, shot and killed two years later, but that this concert appearance by Seaga helped him win the election for Prime Minister in 1980, which put him in a position to manipulate Bob Marley's image and, in the process, neuter it to suit his political needs.

The takeaway here is that the Bob Marley who wrote "Don't worry about a thing/Cause every little thing is gonna be all right" is part and parcel with the man who wrote, "Get up, stand up/Stand up for your rights/Get up, stand up/Don't give up the fight." Chock-a-block with the happy-making songs are sober reminders about grievances to be redressed, injustices to be fought, and wrongs to be righted.

Bob Marley was a spiritual warrior. You cannot separate the two. He was a man who believed in peace, but not at the price of one's soul. As my father used to tell me, when dealing with bullies, "Don't ever start a fight. But if someone starts a fight with you, make damn sure you finish it."

Rest In Power, Robert Nesta Marley.

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Balance & Change

by Michelle Gottlieb, Psy.D., MFT, LPCC © 2026

Finding Hope in Dark Times

One of the hardest things to hang on to at times is hope. But it is so very important that we do hang on to it! If we have hope, even the slightest bit, it can make all the difference!

People can make the choice not to commit suicide if there is hope. Hope is one of the most important things we need to live a healthy life.

In the world today, it is extremely easy to lose hope. All we have to do is listen to the news for five minutes, and we can all get extremely depressed.

(Quick aside, please be sure to get your news from a reputable, non-partisan source, or you may get an even deeper feeling of hopelessness.)

How do we hold on to hope?

By noticing when there is even the slightest movement towards the positive. Nature helps us with this.

As we watch plants bloom, it can help us to see that things change. If you are working out and can go even slightly faster, lift even slightly more, it can put a smile on your face.

Look at your personal relationships. Are there small changes that you can make that will engender a bit more hope? Maybe schedule a date night with your partner or a game night with the family?

It can be difficult to find hope, but it is crucial!

Here is a wish from me that you all find some hope today!

Healthy Awareness

by Jo Ann Brannock, Ph.D. © 2026



Higher Ground: Transforming Lives of the Most Vulnerable Communities

When successful businessman Joe Baldo looked around his community, he wanted to do more than succeed in business — he wanted to give back. Inspired by the idea behind the film “Pay It Forward,” Baldo believed a single act of kindness could change lives.

While volunteering at juvenile hall, he noticed a troubling pattern. Young men were released only to return again and again. Instead of asking why the recidivism rate was so high, Baldo asked a different question: What if someone reached these youth before they entered the system?

Driven by his faith and desire to help vulnerable young people find purpose, Baldo began visiting parks known for gang activity alongside the Gang Unit. Of four parks surveyed, he chose the most dangerous — Lincoln Park in Anaheim. There, he slowly earned the trust of two rival gangs by building relationships first.

Many of the young men spent their days drinking and smoking marijuana, so Baldo started bringing snacks, soccer balls, and permits to use the fields. Over time, soccer games replaced hostility. Young men from opposing gangs began playing together instead of fighting each other.

Although Anaheim’s mayor initially expressed concern about Baldo’s activities, city leaders later encouraged him to continue after seeing the positive impact. That small effort eventually grew into Higher Ground Youth & Family Services, a nonprofit dedicated to engaging, educating, equipping, and empowering youth and families in under-resourced communities. Baldo later sold his video production business to devote himself fully to the mission.

Many of the youth served by Higher Ground come from single-parent households and face significant socio-economic challenges. Some return home after school to empty apartments with little supervision and sometimes no dinner, leaving them vulnerable to gangs, drugs, and crime.

In 2012, tensions in Anaheim escalated after two gang members pointed guns at police officers and were shot, sparking riots and protests against law enforcement. At the same time, Higher Ground was opening its first facility at Lincoln Park. Community leaders hoped the organization could help rebuild trust and provide opportunities for local youth.

Today, Higher Ground offers programs including tutoring, literacy support, STEM education, art, music, counseling, sports, gardening, cooking, and video production. The organization also supports parents through counseling, workforce training, English classes, and practical skills programs such as sewing, baking, nail application, and event decorating.

Food assistance is another key service, with groceries and snacks provided to families in need. Summer programs introduce youth to experiences they might never otherwise have, including sailing lessons through the Los Angeles Maritime Institute and animal enrichment activities designed to build confidence and responsibility.

Last month, Higher Ground opened a new facility in Fullerton offering after-school programs, mentoring, sports, music, leadership development, counseling, and meals for teens. The center is coordinated by staff members Spencer Cecil, Jordan Barrera, and Maritza Prieto, who believe lasting community change begins by investing



The Science Behind It

by Yuvika Salman © 2026

Placebos

Most of us think of placebos as something close to deception. A sugar pill. A fake treatment. Something that only works because the patient doesn’t know any better. But modern neuroscience has revealed something far stranger: the brain can produce real, measurable biological changes simply from the expectation of healing.

In placebo studies, patients have reported lower pain levels, reduced anxiety, and improved sleep after receiving treatments with no active ingredients. These aren’t just feelings. Brain imaging studies show that placebo-induced pain relief can activate the same neural pathways as actual pain medication, triggering the release of endorphins, the body’s natural painkillers, and dopamine, which plays a central role in reward and motivation.

In some studies, administering a drug that blocks opioid receptors also blocked the placebo effect, suggesting the brain was genuinely producing opioid-like compounds on its own. Expectation, in other words, has a chemistry.

This does not mean illness is imaginary, or that people can simply “think away” serious disease. What it reveals is how profoundly connected the brain and body actually are. Expectations, stress, emotions, and prior experiences all shape how the nervous system interprets and amplifies, or dampens, physical symptoms.

Pain is one of the clearest illustrations of this. Pain is not a simple alarm signal traveling from injured tissue to the brain. It is an interpretation that the brain actively constructs, moment to moment, based on context, memory, and anticipation.

When the brain expects relief, research suggests it can modulate incoming pain signals before they fully register as suffering. Studies have implicated the prefrontal cortex, a region involved in reasoning, prediction, and emotional regulation, as a key player in this top-down pain control. The mind doesn’t just receive pain. It decides how much of it to let through.

Interestingly, the opposite can also happen. A phenomenon called the “nocebo effect” occurs when negative expectations worsen symptoms. Patients who are warned extensively about potential side effects are more likely to experience them, even when given an inert substance.

Anxiety about a treatment can alter the very physiology the treatment is trying to fix. The brain’s predictions shape biological reality in both directions.

All of this has quiet but significant implications for medicine. If trust, expectation, and the therapeutic relationship genuinely influence outcomes, then bedside manner is more than a nicety. It’s a clinical variable.

A rushed appointment, a dismissive tone, or a carelessly worded prognosis may not simply affect how a patient feels about their care but rather how their body responds to it. Warmth and clear communication can contribute to the treatment itself.

The placebo and nocebo effects extend beyond medicine itself. The way we speak to ourselves may shape our mental state more than we realize. Neuroscience increasingly suggests that repeated thought patterns influence emotional processing, stress hormone regulation, and even immune function over time. The brain doesn’t easily distinguish between something we sincerely believe and something we tell it over and over.

I’ve been thinking about this in the context of something my generation has made almost reflexive: self-deprecating humor. While jokes can seem harmless, repeatedly telling ourselves that we are failures, unattractive, unintelligent, or “burnt out” may gradually normalize those beliefs in the brain.

But if the brain is as responsive to expectation and repetition as placebo research suggests, habitually framing yourself as incompetent or unworthy may not stay safely contained to the joke. Repeated negative self-referencing can reinforce stress responses and entrench cognitive patterns that make those beliefs feel true, even when they aren’t. We may be training ourselves into a version of the nocebo effect, not about a drug, but about ourselves.

The brain is a prediction machine, and you are one of its primary sources of input. Positive self-talk isn’t just optimism. It may be one of the more direct levers we have over our own neurobiology.

The placebo effect teaches us that the brain is not a passive observer of what happens to the body. It is an active participant.

The same may be true of the stories we tell about ourselves. The brain is always listening. The question is what we’re asking it to believe.

The brain is always listening. The question is what are we asking it to believe.

**Remember to say,
“I read it in the Fullerton Observer!”**

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McAulay and Wallace Mortuary Hosts Celebration Honoring 100 Years of the Fox Theatre

McAulay and Wallace Mortuary welcomed guests on May 3 for a special community celebration honoring 100 years of the historic Fox Theatre Fullerton and the musical legacy that helped shape Fullerton’s cultural history.

Held at the mortuary’s Harbor Boulevard location, the event transformed the venue into a nostalgic tribute to the golden age of entertainment, celebrating sounds and memories connected to the Fox Theatre, from the jazz era to Fullerton’s ties to Fender Musical Instruments Corporation.

The afternoon began with a lively Dixieland jazz performance by the Dixielatics in a movie-theater-inspired lobby setting complete with popcorn, Fox Theatre memorabilia, a photo station and refreshments. Guests mingled and shared memories while enjoying music that reflected Fullerton’s long-standing connection to jazz and live performance.

The celebration continued with a concert featuring the California State

University, Fullerton Jazz Group, the Titan Six with Paul Kreibich, vocalist Tia Reeves, jazz and gospel pianist Isha Love of Temple Beth Tikvah, jazz vocalist Miranda Mower and award-winning tribute artist Martin Anthony.

Performers delivered jazz standards and film-inspired classics that honored the memories, milestones and music that became part of Fullerton’s cultural soundtrack over the past century.

Audience members responded enthusiastically throughout the afternoon as music filled the venue and celebrated the enduring legacy of the Fox Theatre and Fullerton’s arts community. The event served as both a tribute to one of Fullerton’s most recognizable historic landmarks and a celebration of the city’s rich musical heritage, bringing together residents, performers and community members for an afternoon centered on history, nostalgia and live entertainment. See photos at FullertonObserver.com.

Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise. (Psalms 51)



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 (At Will/Non-Benefited) Closing Date: Continuous

Community Services Specialist

Salary: \$17 to \$18 Hourly Job Number: 2026- CSSPEC
 Job Type: Non-Regular Department: Parks and Recreation
 (At Will/Non-Benefited) Closing Date: Continuous

Police Officer - Lateral/Academy Trained

Salary: \$89,234 - \$137,488 Annually Job Type: Regular Full-Time
 Location: City of Fullerton Job Number: 2026-PO-Lateral
 303 W Commonwealth Ave Department: Police

OUR TOWN CROSSWORD

© 2026 from page 9

ANSWER KEY TO "SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL"



PUZZLE MASTER Valerie Brickey
 was born in Fullerton and returned to raise her family here. She has contributed puzzles since 2014.

W	O	K		A	D	A	M	S			P	O	M		
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Correct answers from Early May 2026

ANSWER KEY TO "MAY CELEBRANTS"

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Curators Jasmine McNeal (right) and Georgette Collard (right) stand at the entrance to the Fullerton Museum Center's "Orange County Made" Exhibition



VIDEO OBSERVER

by Emerson Little © 2026

See videos on YouTube @emersonlittle1901

Curatorial Collaboration Makes FMC's OC Made Exhibit Come Alive

The task of selecting, installing and placing over 130 works from artists across Orange County in the Fullerton Museum Center's (FMC) latest exhibition, "OC Made," was one of many challenges that Museum Curator Georgette Collard and Fullerton College Art Gallery Curator Jasmine McNeal were able to quickly overcome through a collaborative curatorial process. I recently had a chance to interview both curators in the FMC's main gallery space about how the museum's new biennial juried show came together.

"In the past, we have had shows that just focused on Fullerton alone, like "Our Fullerton: Art Town" (an exhibition from 2023), and as we kept looking at that, we wanted to make sure we expanded that opportunity, and I saw that there was a lot of missed opportunity with highlighting Orange County artists," said Collard.

"There are great exhibits out there like "Made in L.A." and "Made in California," but they're so competitive, and they're so broad with the regions that they cover, and I didn't really see anything specifically targeting Orange County. I feel like that's kind of an ongoing story with the art world... So, I wanted to make sure we created something that really highlights all the wonderful artists and art from the OC."

She stressed the importance of having diverse guest jurors and a curatorial team to make sure that the exhibit was inclusive of everyone. "OC Made's" guest jurors, each representing parts of the OC's art community, included: Abel Alejandro, a multidisciplinary artist; John D. Spiak, Director and Chief Curator of CSUF's Grand Central Art Center; and Dave Tourje, a multidisciplinary artist and co-founder of the California Locos collective.

For both Collard and McNeal, it was hard to determine which artworks would be accepted for display in the museum and which would be rejected, since they initially received about 260 online submissions for the show.

"We got about 1,000 artworks by the end, so there were quite a few meetings between us where we went through rounds to see what artworks we were going to go with," said Collard.

"It was like, okay, this is the space that we have. Now, among these artworks, how are we going to start eliminating them so they all fit? We had art-

works from established artists as well as someone who just does it as a pastime, and that shouldn't matter if they're established or not.

"The quality of the artwork could be just as meaningful, whether they're doing it full-time or as a hobby. It was great working with Jasmine and her knowledge of contemporary art, as well as our curatorial team. They all have different areas that they specialize in...and could help make a sound judgment on whether this is something that should be included or not."

McNeal said, "Georgette did a great job of really setting the criteria of how we were going to look at these artworks, and having technique be at the forefront to make sure that everything was museum standard... So we could have a show that was very expansive about what Orange County means... That was a really great foundation and basis to go from when judging and looking at everything... Working with the curatorial team and staff here at FMC was the fun part, and just doing it in more of a community style was nice to see."

The show's open call for artwork started back in the fall of 2025. McNeal and Collard tried to give everyone about four or five months to submit their art work. After the deadline, they worked quickly to get everything done within one to two months. This involved meetings between the two curators to prepare the exhibition space, make final decisions, send out notifications, and finally accept the physical artworks so that everything was ready for opening day on March 21.

"We kind of work the same way... We always like to look at the artworks in person and see how they feel in the space or how they talk to one another. So once the artwork was in here, then that's when we started working on the layout (of the gallery), taking into consideration the lighting and everything. We did the layout quickly, like in a week or two," said Collard.

McNeal said, "I think we work really well together because of our methods... Going from looking at the images to seeing them in person is just a whole different experience... It's really beautiful to be like, 'Oh wow, this is what this looks like in person."

"Here are all the textures; this is what

it's saying with this work.' I love to move things around and am very hands-on, so it went very quickly because we just saw the themes emerge and also how it felt throughout the space."

From more traditional art forms such as painting, sculpture, stained glass, ceramics, and photography to under-represented mediums such as comics, mixed media, collage, and textiles, the FMC's "OC Made" exhibit encompasses a multitude of works, including a mixed media piece by my own grandmother of a forest on fire.

"For the first part of the show, I think something we saw immediately was just this dreamlike, surrealist theme, which you see when you first come into the gallery, and then as you move through, it becomes more about community, and really representing and seeing more people and landscapes of OC, and then you get to the photography portion as you move through the space," said McNeal.

"So there's a consistent sort of theme in each room, and of course, there are

different spaces on different walls that tell specific kinds of stories... There are a lot of portraits and works representing everyday lives."

Collard added, "I think something that stuck out to me as well is that while yes, we're in the OC, that doesn't make us in our own little bubble; we have people from all over the world who live here, and just seeing how other things happening around the world still affect us. That's digested and represented through an artist... You start to see pockets of communities indicative of people who live in the OC.

"You can kind of see that whole picture as you walk through the exhibit, like that's the goal of the story: a whole eagle eye view of what the OC is made out of and all the people that live in it."

The FMC's "OC Made" exhibition runs until August 1, 2026. Admission is \$10 for adults and \$5 for children (5-17). The Fullerton Museum is open Wednesdays through Sundays.

For more information, visit www.fullertonmuseum.com.

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