

San Diego Newsline

Downtown San Diego news — the budget, public safety, business, and the civic life of America's Finest City

DOWNTOWN

Padres Season Ends with 3-1 Game 4 Loss to Brewers; Mitchell's Wall Catch Seals NLDS Exit

Fernando Tatis Jr. homered for the Padres' only run and Garrett Mitchell robbed Manny Machado of a game-tying blast in the eighth as Milwaukee eliminated San Diego before a sold-out Petco Park crowd.

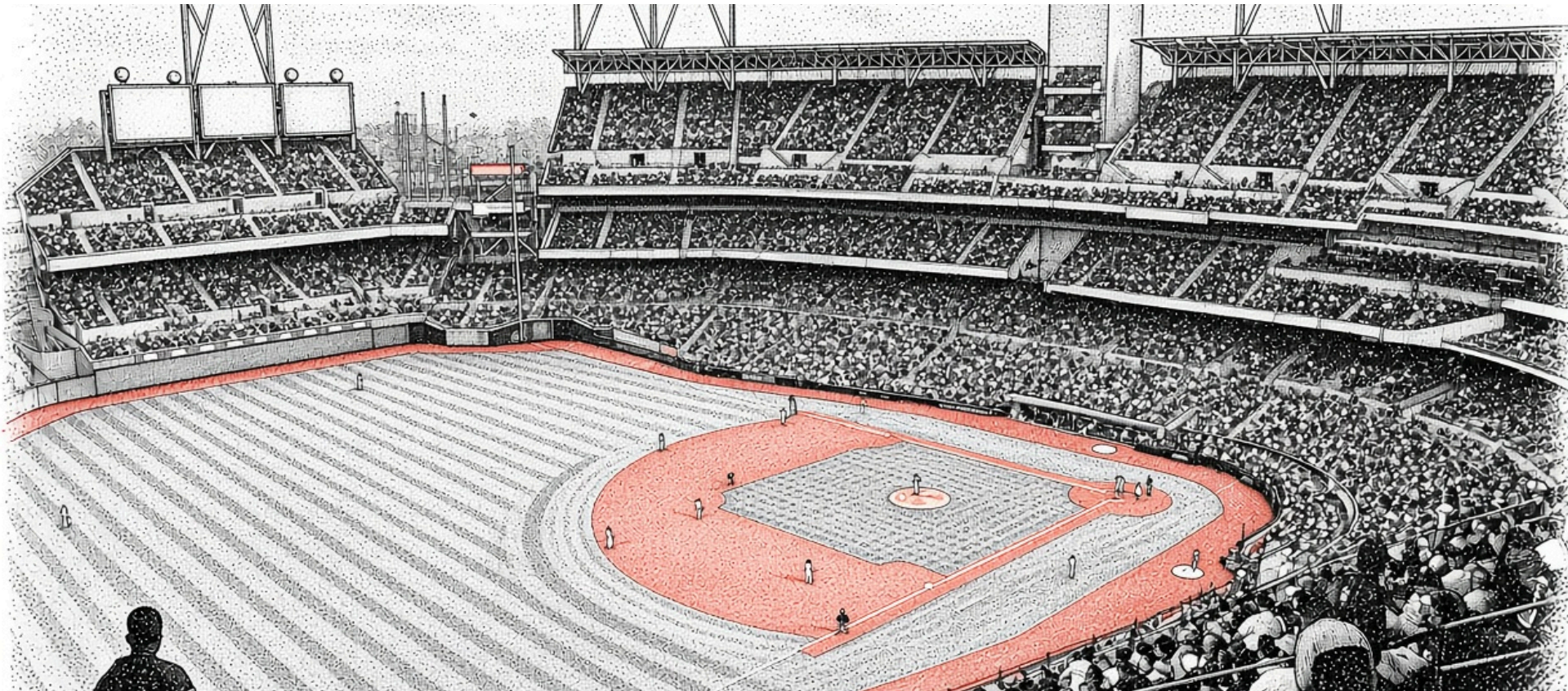


Illustration from a photo by unknown · Wikimedia Commons, Public domain

The San Diego Padres' 2026 season ended Wednesday night at Petco Park in a 3-1 Game 4 loss to the Milwaukee Brewers, who advanced to the National League Championship Series for the second consecutive year.

Brewers center fielder Garrett Mitchell delivered the series' defining moment in the bottom of the eighth inning, leaping at the wall to rob Manny Machado of what would have been a game-tying two-run home run, according to the MLB.com game recap. Machado's blast left the bat at 106.7 mph and drew a collective roar from the third-largest crowd in Petco Park history before Mitchell pulled it back.

Fernando Tatis Jr. provided San Diego's only offense with a solo home run to center field in the bottom of the third inning, answering Milwaukee's first run and

briefly tying the game at 1-1. It was the Padres' final hit of the night.

The Brewers reclaimed the lead in the fifth when Mitchell tripled and scored on Jackson Chourio's RBI single, and added an insurance run on Sal Frelick's sacrifice fly in the sixth.

Walker Buehler, making his first postseason start since closing out the 2024 World Series for the Los Angeles Dodgers, pitched four innings and allowed two runs. The Padres' offense, which had been the best in baseball over the final two months of the regular season, managed just three hits and went 0-for-2 with runners in scoring position in the elimination game.

For the series, the Padres went 4-for-23 with runners in scoring position and lost three of four games. All but one game was decided by a

single run — the Padres won Game 3 by a 4-3 score on Tuesday to stave off elimination.

"The Padres, who featured the best offense in baseball down the stretch, saw it abandon them at the worst possible time for the third postseason in a row," Sports Illustrated reported. San Diego lost its 2025 wild-card round to the Chicago Cubs by the same 3-1 score.

The Brewers now advance to face the Dodgers in the NLCS beginning Sunday at American Family Field in Milwaukee. The Padres finish the season having reached the NLDS for the third time in five years but remain one of five MLB franchises never to win a World Series.

By San Diego Newsline Staff



Illustration from a photo by Los Angeles · Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0

DOWNTOWN

City Audit: Unsafe Camping Ordinance Reduced Downtown Encampments but Unsheltered Population Unchanged Citywide

The performance audit, presented to the Audit Committee on Tuesday, found a substantial drop in downtown encampments after the 2023 ordinance but concluded the overall unsheltered population did not decrease.

A City Auditor performance audit presented to the City Council's Audit Committee on Tuesday found that the Unsafe Camping Ordinance substantially reduced visible encampments downtown — but the overall unsheltered population across San Diego did not decrease.

The audit, published in April 2026 and reviewed by

the committee this week, examined the City's response to homeless encampments since the ordinance took effect in June 2023, according to the Office of the City Auditor.

The auditor found that monthly census counts showed a substantial decrease in the unsheltered population downtown after the ordinance. However, the unsheltered population as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development did not decline across the city as a whole.

Franklin Coopersmith, deputy director of the Environmental Services Department, told ABC 10News that the City's safe sleeping sites — while providing beds, shelter, and resources — are classified as unsheltered under HUD definitions, complicating the official count.

"Our safe sleeping is not considered an official shelter, so it is still considered unsheltered," Coopersmith said. "Though when the public looks, they don't see as many people on the street is because they're in these

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City Audit: Unsafe Camping Ordinance Reduced Downtown Encampments but Unsheltered Population Unchanged Citywide

places where we designate that they can go in."

Shelter demand outstrips supply

The audit also found that while shelter referrals increased after the ordinance, the City's shelter space — including safe sleeping sites — was limited, and most requests for shelter could not be met.

Reported encampment locations did not significantly change, but the City received an average of 13 percent more encampment reports in the two years after the ordinance compared to the two years before.

Storage and language concerns

The auditor found that the City's abatement storage procedures generally align with best practices, but language accessibility and procedures could be improved.

The Audit Committee was scheduled to hear the report as a discussion item at its 9 a.m. meeting Tuesday. The committee is chaired by Council President Joe LaCava.

By San Diego Newsline Staff

DOWNTOWN

Amy Reichert Says She Found Ripped-Open Ballots Dumped in Downtown San Diego Lot

In a video posted on X, Reichert says ballots and other stolen mail were discarded in an abandoned downtown lot — days after the county began mailing ballots for the Nov. 3 election.

Amy Reichert, who posts on X as @amyforsandiego, says she found ripped-open ballots in a pile of discarded mail in an abandoned lot in downtown San Diego.

"Found stolen ballots ripped open in a pile of discarded mail pile in an abandoned lot in downtown San Diego yesterday," Reichert wrote in a post on X on Oct. 6. "Stolen mail has become a common occurrence for downtown San Diego residents."

The video attached to her post shows a pile of torn-open mail, including what appear to be vote-by-mail envelopes, in an overgrown lot littered with trash. The post did not give the lot's address. By Wednesday it had been viewed more than 9,500 times and shared more than 400 times. Reichert's account describes itself as "Exposing fraud. Naming names."

San Diego Newsline has not independently confirmed how the ballots got to the lot or whose they were. As of publication, we found no public response to the post from the San Diego County Registrar of Voters, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, or the San Diego Police Department.

Ballots are in the mail now

The timing matters. The County of San Diego announced on Oct. 2 that every active registered voter would receive a ballot for the Nov. 3 General Election starting the week of Oct. 5, and that more than 150 official drop boxes would open Oct. 4. Mailed ballots must be postmarked by Nov. 3 and reach the Registrar within seven days after Election Day to count.

What voters can do

Voters who have not received their ballot, or who think theirs was stolen, can check its status through the California Secretary of State's free tracking service, Where's My Ballot, and can request a replacement ballot from the Registrar of Voters. The Registrar says signing and dating the return envelope is required for a ballot to count, and voters can avoid leaving ballots in mailboxes by using an official red, white and blue Registrar drop box.

Mail theft is a federal crime. It can be reported to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

If you have information about stolen mail or ballots downtown, send San Diego Newsline a tip.

By San Diego Newsline Staff



Illustration from a photo by Bernard Gagnon · Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0

BUSINESS

Chamber Opposes City of SD 92% Increase in User Fee

The Chamber recently led a coalition of business organizations in opposing a proposed 92% increase in San Diego's Minimum Wage Ordinance User Fee, which would raise the annual charge from \$1.47 to \$2.82 per employee. The fee is included in the total amount businesses pay as part of their annual business license or business tax certificate.

Whenever a local government asks businesses to pay higher fees such as a user fee increase, our team closely analyzes the justification for that increase, how the additional revenue will be used, and whether there is a clear benefit to those being asked to pay. In this case, the fee increase funds enforcement of the City's wage ordinances. This is an important regulatory effort, as it helps maintain a level playing field for businesses that are playing by the rules and ensures violations can be appropriately addressed. However, officials did not make a clear case of why a 92% increase was necessary just one year after its initial adoption. Given the lack of justification and stakeholder engagement, as well as the cumulative impact of rising fees and regulatory costs on

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Chamber Opposes City of SD 92% Increase in User Fee

local employers, the Chamber and our coalition opposed the proposal.

The item passed the City's Budget Committee and will now head to the City Council for consideration. The Chamber will continue engaging with Councilmembers and the City Attorney's office to better understand the need for the proposed increase and reinforce that new or increased costs on businesses should be clearly justified, thoughtfully considered, and carefully monitored.

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Sep 29, 2026

BUSINESS

Member Spotlight – Episcopal Community Services

Kim had lost everything: her

home, her vehicle, her job. Due to her 20-year struggle with substance use disorder, her family disowned her, and she turned to crime. "I was clearly on my way to jail if I did not turn myself around," she said.

Tired of a life ruined by substance use, Kim found her way to ECS Central East Regional Recovery Center (CERRC). CERRC provided support she didn't even know she needed.

Now, over a year later, Kim's life has changed for the better. CERRC's specialized services connected her with the resources she needed to pull herself out of unemployment and homelessness. Kim secured her own apartment, restarted her accounting career, and purchased a car. Most importantly, she is on great terms with her family, including her granddaughter who encouraged her recovery.

"I've had family members say, 'Kim, you're a different person,' and I am."

She was so inspired by CERRC that she started an LLC—All of Me Recovery ("olive me,") support for sober living, in honor of her granddaughter Olive and late mother Meme.

Her journey is proof that compassion, accessible resources, and specialized services can change your path completely. Watch ECS' full interview with Kim.

ECS CERRC provides outpatient treatment services to adults with substance use disorders. To learn more, visit CERRC — Episcopal Community Services. Questions? Contact VP of Strategic Engagement, Adrienne Wilkerson, at awilkerson@ecscalifornia.org.

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Sep 17, 2026

READER POLL · RESULTS SO FAR

The City Council delayed its water rate vote to Oct. 27. Should San Diego raise water rates?

Yes, to pay for the system: 0%

No: 0%

Not until the city cuts its own costs: 0%

0 online votes · not a scientific survey · vote at sandiegonewsline.com/poll

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Where decisions get made

Mon, Oct 12 — San Diego City Council, City Administration Building, 202 C Street, 12th Floor

Tue, Oct 13 — San Diego City Council, City Administration Building, 202 C Street, 12th Floor

Agendas and public comment: sandiegonewsline.com/calendar

OPINION

The views of the writers named — not news reporting

COMMENTARY

Inside Todd Gloria's tent city: what the mayor doesn't want you to see

Amy Reichert walked into a city-funded homeless camp the press is kept out of. Her video, and the death toll at these sites, should end the mayor's claims that this is working.

Mayor Todd Gloria likes to call his tent camps "Safe Sleeping." A new video from inside one of them shows what that really means.

On Thursday, Amy Reichert posted what she called an exclusive inside

look at "@MayorToddGloria's taxpayer-funded homeless tent city." The video shows rows of red pop-up tents, many patched with blue and camouflage tarps, spread across a dirt lot under the eucalyptus trees.

Reichert says she went in last year looking for a homeless woman whose family had not heard from her. "The nonprofit running the site would not help her family locate her," she wrote. "The media are barred, and even elected officials have reportedly been denied access. I walked right in and spent two hours inside before I was recognized and

asked to leave. I complied."

The deaths

According to Reichert, more than 40 people have died at the tent city. She has been inside the camp herself and has followed these deaths closely, and her count is the one to watch.

Even the lowest count is damning. A 10News investigation in July could document only 19 deaths at the city's two Safe Sleeping sites since 2023, 15 of them at the O Lot site by the Naval Medical Center, and could not get a cause of death for most of them. When the press is barred and the city

won't say who died or how, counts built from what reporters can document will always fall short of the real toll.

The city's answer was a statement that participants' "health, safety, and well-being" remain its "highest priority."

More than 40 people dead in a city program that promised safety is not a priority being met. It is a program failing in plain sight, behind a fence the public isn't allowed past.

The joke is on the taxpayers

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Inside Todd Gloria's tent city: what the mayor doesn't want you to see

Gloria opened O Lot in 2023 with room for up to 400 tents and sold it as a clean, safe step toward housing. San Diegans have paid for the land, the tents, the security, the meals and the nonprofit contracts ever since. In July the city extended its deal to keep feeding the people living there.

What have taxpayers gotten for it? Camps they can't see inside. A death count they have to learn from TV reporters. And a mayor who keeps telling them the system is working.

A federal lawsuit now in court says the camps are "anything but safe." Reichert pointed readers to @eyeoftheSTORMsd, who has been covering that case.

Open the gates

There is a simple test for any program run with public money: can the public see it? If the Safe Sleeping sites are what the mayor says they are, he should welcome reporters, council members and families looking for their loved ones. Instead, a citizen with a phone had to walk in on her own to show San Diego what it's paying for.

San Diego deserves to know how many people have died in these camps, how they died, and what the city is spending to keep them running. Until the mayor answers those questions, it's hard to see him as anything but a joker running a very expensive, very deadly act.

Christopher South is the publisher of San Diego Newsline. Video stills

courtesy of Amy Reichert (@amyforsandiego) on X.

By Christopher South

COMMENTARY

Microsoft and Adobe got caught chasing cheap labor. Good.

The visa system was built to fill jobs Americans can't do. Too often it has been used to replace Americans who can. Washington is finally saying so.

On Thursday the Trump administration did something I have wanted to see for a long time. It told some of the biggest names in technology that they can no longer use the green-card labor certification program to bring in foreign workers.

Effective immediately, the Department of Labor will not accept new or pending permanent labor certification applications from Microsoft, Adobe, Cognizant, Tata, Infosys, Wipro, HCL and Capgemini. Without that certification, a company can't sponsor a foreign worker for a green card. The door to keeping those workers here permanently is shut, at least for now.

The numbers explain why. "Since 2009, just these companies alone have requested almost 3 million foreign workers," Labor Secretary Keith Sonderling said. "They've received over 230,000 H-1B visa approvals and over 100,000 permanent labor certifications."

Vice President JD Vance singled out Microsoft, saying the company laid off about 6,000 American workers in the past year while benefiting from about 6,300 H-1B visas and nearly 3,000

green cards. "There has been no company in the United States, unfortunately, that has abused the system more than Microsoft," he said. Microsoft and Adobe did not immediately respond to reporters' requests for comment.

What these visas were supposed to do

I spent years working in technology. I worked alongside a lot of bright, talented people from India and from all over the world, and many of them became friends. This isn't about them.

The H-1B program and the labor certification behind green cards were sold to Americans with a simple promise: when a company truly cannot find a qualified American for a job, it can bring in someone from abroad. That is a reasonable deal. If a company needs a rare specialist, it should be able to hire one.

But that is not how the system has been used. Many of the engineers brought in under these programs were not rare specialists. In my experience, plenty of them were entry level: beginners, still learning the job. Those are positions that could have been filled by Americans, including the young graduates coming out of San Diego State, UC San Diego and colleges across this country every spring.

Why companies did it

The reason isn't complicated. Companies were chasing savings for their shareholders.

I'm a capitalist, and I won't apologize for it. A company's job is to make as much money as it can for the

people who own it. That is how our economy grows.

But a company also does business in a country, and that country has citizens. When a corporation uses a visa program meant for genuine shortages to replace qualified Americans with cheaper labor, it isn't just cutting costs. It is breaking the bargain that let it use the program in the first place. Well-paying jobs in this country should go first to the people who already live here and are ready to do them.

We can't take everyone

America is still the shining city on a hill. Hundreds of millions of people around the world would come here to live and work if they could. That says something wonderful about this country.

It also means we can't take them all, and we shouldn't pretend we can. Opening the doors wider every time a corporation wants to lower its payroll is not compassion. It's a subsidy for the bottom line, paid for by American workers.

The long-term answer for the rest of the world is not to move here. It is for people to demand better from their own governments: governments that are socialist, corrupt, or so overregulated that talented people can't build a future at home. America became a beacon because Americans built something worth wanting. Others can do the same.

Hire American

Thursday's suspensions are not the end of the story. Federal investigators say they have more cases

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Microsoft and Adobe got caught chasing cheap labor. Good.

underway, and companies that clean up their hiring may eventually win back access. That is how it should work.

The message to corporate America is simple: if you want to do business in the United States, hire Americans first. If you truly can't find one, the program is there for you. If you can, you have no business using it.

Christopher South is the publisher of San Diego Newsline and has worked in the technology industry.

By Christopher South

COMMENTARY

The problem with Full Self-Driving: one Tesla is never enough

We bought one car with FSD. Within three weeks we bought a second, then our daughter purchased a third. Try it once and you'll understand why.

Here is the problem with Tesla's Full Self-Driving: once one person in the family has it, everybody else wants it too.

I know, because it happened in my garage.

The white Tesla came first. Within two or three weeks of riding along with Full Self-Driving, I knew I wanted one of my own. That's the black one parked next to it now. It wasn't an impulse buy. It was the most obvious decision I've made in years.

It changes how you drive, and how you feel

People ask what's so special about it. The honest answer is that it changes your life.

San Diego traffic stops being something you dread. The car handles the stop-and-go on the 5 and the 805, the merges and the lane changes, while you sit back and watch the road. You arrive at your meeting, or back home at the end of the day, with a clear head instead of a knot in your stomach. Your mind isn't worn out from an hour of fighting other drivers.

That clear head is the part nobody tells you about. You don't realize how much driving was taking out of you until something else is doing most of the work.

Then came Quicksilver

The FSD addiction took over the family. After the white car and the black car, a third Tesla joined us: the silver one, in the color Tesla calls Quicksilver, purchased by our grown daughter.

That one wasn't about convenience. It was about safety.

Our daughter is a grown woman with children of her own, and a capable driver. But no parent ever really stops worrying when their kids are on the road, especially with the grandkids in the back seat. With Full Self-Driving, she has a system watching the road in every direction at once, one that doesn't get tired, doesn't check a phone and doesn't get distracted. If you can afford it, I'd go further: ask yourself whether you can afford not to. For our family, that peace of mind is priceless.

Try it yourself

Tesla's system is called Full Self-Driving (Supervised) for a reason. The driver still has to stay alert, keep watching

the road and be ready to take over, and the law still holds the driver responsible. It doesn't replace good judgment. What it does is take the strain out of driving, and that turns out to be a very big deal.

So here is my challenge to every San Diego driver who has doubts: go to a Tesla store and ask for a test drive with Full Self-Driving. Let it take you through real traffic.

I guarantee that within a few hours you'll be seriously thinking about buying one. Just don't blame me when the rest of your family wants one too.

Christopher South is the publisher of San Diego Newsline. His family owns three Teslas, and he owns Tesla stock. Tesla did not pay for or review this column.

By Christopher South

COMMENTARY

What Trump actually said about Los Angeles and San Diego: the full, uncut remarks

Newsom, Becerra and other California Democrats called the president's Nebraska rally comments a threat to two cities. The unedited transcript shows he was arguing that higher gas prices from the Iran war are a small price to pay for stopping a nuclear Iran.

Gov. Gavin Newsom says President Donald Trump wants America's enemies to "take out" Los Angeles and San Diego. Xavier Becerra says the president called 13 million Californians "a small price to pay." Their posts spread fast this week.

The full, unedited recording of the speech tells a different story than the

10-second clip.

Where it happened

Trump spoke Monday, Oct. 5, at a midterm rally at the Pinnacle Bank Expo Center in Grand Island, Nebraska. The full speech is on video from Rural Radio Network and in a time-stamped transcript from Roll Call Factba.se. The passage in question runs from about 11:55 to 12:40 into the speech.

What came first

About eight minutes earlier, Trump set up the topic he kept coming back to: the war with Iran and what it is costing at the pump.

"We're saving the world from what could be one of the worst tragedies ever," he said. "We're not gonna let them have it and they won't have. That's, that's decided. They will not have a nuclear weapon."

A minute later: "We have to stop them from having a nuclear weapon." He then talked about gas prices he had seen in Iowa, \$1.95 and \$1.85 a gallon, and promised prices would fall further once the war ends.

The full passage, word for word

Here is the complete passage from the transcript, including the sentences the viral clips leave out. ("Word" in the transcript is how the transcriber heard "war.")

"And again, remember, with the word, it's just artificial, it's a little bit high. It's a small price to pay for keeping the world safe, keeping our country safe. They can take out a city. Let them take, let it, let them take out Los Angeles. Let them take out San Diego.

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What Trump actually said about Los Angeles and San Diego: the full, uncut remarks

That's, this is a very small price to pay, and it's gonna be over very soon. It's essentially almost over with. And they might keep going a little long, you know? They always say they have a big threshold for pain. They need it, let me tell you. They need it. But it's gonna end very soon, and it'll end one way or the other, and your gas and your gasoline and all of the things."

What the context shows

The "small price to pay" in that passage is the temporary rise in fuel prices from the war, which Trump calls "artificial" and "a little bit high." He comes back to it at the end of the same passage: "your gas and your gasoline and all of the things." It is the same thing he was talking about minutes earlier, when he said prices "are gonna come tumbling" once the war is over.

"They can take out a city" follows directly from his earlier point: Iran must never get a nuclear weapon, because a nuclear Iran could destroy an American city. Read that way, Los Angeles and San Diego are the cities a nuclear Iran could hit, and a few months of higher gas prices are the cost of making sure it never happens.

The White House gave the same explanation. "He was clearly stating U.S. cities would have been threatened if a nuclear Iran hadn't been stopped," Communications Director Steven Cheung said. The administration's Rapid Response account on X put it more bluntly: Trump "was

saying the U.S. is fighting to STOP Iran from having the ability to take out LA and San Diego with a nuclear weapon."

Nothing in the speech says Trump wants either city harmed. Anyone can check by watching the full recording.

What California Democrats said

Newsom, who has spent the year fighting the president over the National Guard deployment to Los Angeles, posted: "After sending the National Guard and Marines to occupy California, Donald Trump is now saying our foreign enemies should 'take out' Los Angeles and San Diego. He is deranged and dangerous."

Becerra, the former California attorney general and U.S. health secretary, posted: "Thirteen million Californians call LA and San Diego counties home. Their lives are not a 'small price to pay' or a punchline for Donald Trump."

San Diego Mayor Todd Gloria said, "San Diego is not collateral damage. We are not expendable." Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass said the president "suggested that a foreign government attack Los Angeles."

None of those statements quoted the sentence about gas prices that comes just before the line they objected to, or the president's earlier remarks about keeping a nuclear weapon out of Iran's hands.

Not everyone read it the White House's way

Trump's phrasing was clumsy, and the words "let them take out Los Angeles" are hard to hear for anyone

who lives here. Some Republicans said so. County Supervisor Jim Desmond, a Republican, said he "vehemently" disagreed with the comments.

Still, there is a difference between saying a president chose his words badly and telling millions of Californians that he wants their cities destroyed. Newsom and Becerra said the second thing. The full recording does not back them up.

San Diego Newsline reviewed the complete transcript and the full video of the speech. Readers can do the same using the links below.

By Christopher South

COMMENTARY

Veto AB 2218: Equal Protection, Not Racial Preferences

The governor stopped a bill that carves out special state support and consultation rights based solely on Native American ancestry.

Gov. Newsom has vetoed AB 2218, a bill that would have required the state government to support California Native Americans to maintain cultural and linguistic traditions, practice ecosystem stewardship, and engage in good faith government-to-government consultations with all California Native American tribes regarding policies that may affect tribal communities. The legislation, authored by Asm. Kalra and Asm. Rogers, passed the Assembly 57-0, the Senate 28-0, and the Assembly again 56-0 before reaching the governor's desk. It is now enrolled but vetoed on Sept. 30, 2026.

The bill's digest makes its intent unmistakable. It would have amended the Government Code and Water Code to declare it the established policy of the state to recognize and address inequities inflicted upon all California Native American tribes through financial assistance, protection of tribal beneficial uses, consultation on water projects, plans, and policies, and incorporation of indigenous knowledge to restore and protect ecosystems. State agencies including the State Water Resources Control Board, regional water quality control boards, and the Natural Resources Agency would have been required to incorporate this race-based policy when revising, adopting, or establishing policies, regulations, permits, or grant criteria.

The legislation would have mandated that these entities identify and offer financial assistance to the tribes consistent with existing legal and policy requirements. In cases of dispute between a tribe and a state agency over implementation, the matter would go to the Governor's Office of Tribal Affairs for mediation before any court challenge, complete with specified procedures and timelines. The State Water Resources Control Board would also have been required, during investigations of water rights, to consult with a tribe whose ancestral territory includes the water body at issue upon request.

Our objection is not to culture, language, or environmental care. It is to the bill's explicit use of race,

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Veto AB 2218: Equal Protection, Not Racial Preferences

ethnicity, and tribal status as the basis for special state support, financial assistance, consultation rights, and policy influence that other Californians do not receive. The law must treat every Californian the same. Creating a privileged class defined by ancestry violates the principle of colorblind equality that demands government remain neutral on race.

AB 2218 does precisely what we oppose: it singles out one group for preferential treatment under the law. It requires the state to "support California Native Americans" in maintaining traditions and practicing stewardship, while offering no parallel mandate for any other ethnic, cultural, or ancestral group. The mandated government-to-government consultations and required incorporation of "indigenous knowledge" into water policy and ecosystem decisions further embed this ethnic classification into the machinery of state government. We fear the likely result would be unequal access to resources, permits, grants, and influence over public policy based solely on ancestry.

The bill's sponsors acted publicly to advance this race-conscious framework, passing it without a single dissenting vote in either chamber. That unanimity does not make the policy right. It reveals how far Sacramento has drifted from the foundational American commitment to individual rights and equal protection. Merit, not ancestry, should determine how state resources are allocated and how policies are shaped. Taxpayers of all backgrounds foot the bill for these preferences; they deserve government that treats them equally.

Financial assistance targeted by ancestry, protection of "tribal beneficial uses" not extended to others, and mandatory consultation rights unavailable to non-tribal citizens all flow from the same flawed premise: that government should sort citizens by bloodline and dispense rights accordingly. This is the opposite of colorblind equality. It replaces the ideal that every Californian stands equal before the law with a system of group preferences that inevitably breeds resentment and litigation.

The governor's veto correctly halted this expansion of race-based policymaking. Although the

veto message itself does not elaborate, the decision aligns with the imperative to reject legislation that institutionalizes unequal treatment. Californians of every background deserve the same rights under law. No group should be elevated above another by legislative decree.

AB 2218's defeat is a small but important victory for the principle that government must be blind to race. True equity comes not from carving out exceptions based on ethnicity but from applying the same rules to everyone. The state should protect the rights of all individuals equally, without regard to ancestral claims or tribal status. Anything less replaces equal justice with identity politics and taxpayer-funded division.

Lawmakers who supported this bill should reconsider their commitment to equal protection. The path forward is not more preferences but a renewed fidelity to the idea that every Californian, regardless of heritage, stands equal in the eyes of the state. Only then can we fulfill the promise of a government that serves all its people without favoritism or fear.

By The Newsline Editorial Board

ABOUT THIS PAPER

San Diego Newsline covers downtown San Diego first —

City Hall, the Gaslamp Quarter, East Village, Little Italy, Barrio Logan and the waterfront — and the county around it. Every item names its source; read the originals and our standards at sandiegonewsline.com.

San Diego Newsline

Published weekly every
Thursday by **San Diego
Newsline LLC**

524 W. Calle Primera, Ste 1004,
San Diego, CA 92173
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PUBLISHER

Christopher South

Subscriptions \$89.95 per year
by mail (San Diego County) ·

Single copy \$5.00

Subscribe at
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**Adjudicated a newspaper of
general circulation for the
County of San Diego by the
Superior Court of California,
County of San Diego, Case No.
410977 (adjudicated March 15,
1978; microfilm Book 1152,
Page 410). Legal notices
accepted.**

Commentary reflects the views of the
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Downtown, City & County

DOWNTOWN

Downtown Jack in the Box Drenches Passersby with Sprinklers in Anti-Loitering Campaign; Corporate Says Audio 'Not Approved'

Customers, homeless residents, and even a reporter were soaked without warning by water jets and a recorded message telling people to 'buy something or bounce' outside the C Street restaurant.

A downtown San Diego Jack in the Box has been dousing passersby with automated sprinklers and playing a recorded message telling loiterers to "buy something or bounce," drawing complaints from customers and homeless residents — and prompting corporate headquarters to disavow the audio recording.

ABC 10News reporter Michael Chen was standing outside the C Street restaurant on Friday when water began pouring down just feet from where he was standing, accompanied by a 25-second recorded announcement.

"Attention loiterers," the recording begins, according to Chen's report. "You are blocking the drive-thru ... Buy something or bounce. The clown is watching ... Move. Now. Jack says so."

The "clown" is an apparent reference to the chain's original mascot character.

Neighbors told the station that homeless people do gather near the restaurant.

The sprinkler system was reportedly installed last week, running at three locations around the building with intervals of several minutes between each spray cycle.

A homeless man identified as Estap told the station he was sitting down when the water came pouring down on him. "Sitting down closing my eye and got drenched," he said.

Brandi James said she was caught in the spray after leaving the restaurant with a breakfast sandwich. "I went in to get a breakfast sandwich. I came out and had my electric bike on the steps. There was water coming down, sprinkling all over me and my bike," James told ABC 10News, adding that the soaking damaged her bike.

Donica McArthur, who is not homeless, said she was also drenched and felt the system activated without regard for who was nearby.

In a statement provided to ABC 10News, a Jack in the Box spokesperson said the audio recording "does not reflect Jack in the Box's brand standards or values and was not approved by Jack in the Box" and that it "has been immediately disabled."

The spokesperson characterized the water system as "a ground-surface cleaning mechanism that automatically cleans the ground area in between routine pressure washing" and said it "is not positioned

to interfere with guests or passers by."

"We recognize the importance of treating everyone in the communities we serve, including people experiencing homelessness, with dignity and respect," the statement continued. "Our goal is to support measures that keep the neighborhood peaceful, the restaurant clean and safe, and our guests and employees comfortable."

The C Street Jack in the Box sits in the heart of downtown's Core-Columbia district, an area that has seen ongoing tensions between businesses, residents, and the city's homeless population. City officials have not commented on the sprinkler system.

By San Diego Newsline Staff

DOWNTOWN

\$3 Million Security Fence Construction Begins at SDPD Downtown Headquarters

The project, planned since 2018, adds 8-to-10-foot fencing around the Broadway headquarters after years of vandalism, trespassing, and a recent employee assault in the parking lot.

Construction began this week on a \$3.01 million security fence encircling the San Diego Police Department's downtown headquarters at 1401 Broadway, a project that has been in planning since approximately 2018.

The fence will stand 8 to 10 feet high and is designed to align security at SDPD Headquarters with measures already in place at other police facilities, according to a Sept. 28 department news release.

SDPD said the headquarters building "experiences frequent vandalism, disturbances, trespassing, and, recently, had an employee assaulted in the parking lot."

The design incorporates public access accommodations: outer gates along Broadway will permit entry to the grass and public park spaces in front of the building and will remain open 24/7, though they can be closed when security needs require it. The main Broadway entrance will remain open to the public during business hours, Monday through Thursday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Employee-only zones, the E Street walkway, and the main parking lot will transition to secure key-card access.

The \$3.01 million total covers design, materials, permits, and construction. The design phase was completed in May 2022, with physical installation only beginning this week. Construction is expected to last several months with limited impact on public access, though minor parking disruptions around the building are anticipated.

By San Diego Newsline Staff

MORE NEWS

Downtown, City & County

DOWNTOWN

City Council Reviews Affordable Housing Fund Report; Downtown's Jacaranda on 9th Among FY2026 Completions

The annual report shows 31,815 homeless households assisted and 10,028 units created since the fund's inception, with five new developments finishing construction last fiscal year including 87 units in Cortez Hill.

The San Diego City Council is set to review the Affordable Housing Fund Fiscal Year 2026 Annual Report on Monday afternoon, an informational item that tallies revenue, expenditures, and outcomes from the city's two primary affordable housing funding streams — the Housing Trust Fund, established in 1990 and funded by commercial

development linkage fees, and the Inclusionary Housing Fund, created in 2003 and supported by fees from residential developers.

Since their inception, the funds have assisted approximately 31,815 households experiencing homelessness, created 10,028 affordable housing units, preserved 422 existing units, and helped 414 first-time homebuyers, according to the report prepared by the San Diego Housing Commission and presented to the SDHC Board of Commissioners on September 11.

Five rental developments funded in part by the Affordable Housing Fund completed construction during the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2026. Among them is Jacaranda on 9th, an 87-unit affordable apartment building at 901 Beech Street in the Cortez Hill

neighborhood of downtown San Diego.

Developed by Community HousingWorks at a cost of \$44.6 million, Jacaranda on 9th replaced a long-vacant hotel with 79 one-bedroom and 8 two-bedroom apartments reserved for households earning between 25 and 40 percent of the area median income — roughly \$28,950 to \$52,950 per year for a two-person household. The San Diego Housing Commission awarded 14 federal rental vouchers to the development for residents who experienced chronic homelessness and 73 vouchers for extremely low-income tenants. Units will remain affordable for 55 years.

The five-story building, which won the San Diego Housing Federation's 2026 Ruby Award for Project of the Year in the new construction category, is

located within walking distance of grocery stores, pharmacies, and Balboa Park.

The other four developments that completed construction are Iris at San Ysidro (101 units, District 8), Grant at Mission Trails (47 units, District 7), Navajo Family Apartments (44 units, District 7), and Serra Mesa (59 units, District 7).

The report, listed as Item 200 on Monday's council agenda, is informational only and does not require a council vote. The council's main business this week comes Tuesday, when a public hearing is scheduled on the proposed switch to a unitary water rate following the Patz v. City of San Diego court ruling that found the current tiered system violates Proposition 218.

By San Diego Newsline Staff

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