

SANTA FE SPRINGS BUSINESS

Official publication of the Santa Fe Springs Chamber of Commerce / www.sfschamber.com / Vol. 39 No. 1 / January-February 2026



Welcoming a New Year of Growth, Connection, and Opportunity

As we step into 2026, the Santa Fe Springs Chamber of Commerce is energized and optimistic about the year ahead. A new year brings fresh opportunities to strengthen our business community, expand partnerships, and continue supporting the individuals and organizations that make Santa Fe Springs a vibrant place to live, work, and thrive.

While the end of 2025 presented some challenges in staff leadership, we want to assure our members that we are actively addressing these issues. We are taking thoughtful steps to strengthen our team, refine our processes, and ensure that the chamber operates smoothly and effectively. These efforts reflect our commit-

ment to continuous improvement and to providing the best possible support to our members.

In 2026, members can look forward to a full calendar of opportunities designed to help businesses grow and connect, including our signature Networking @ Noon events, Business Card Exchanges, educational seminars, and special celebrations. We will also continue our focus on workforce development, advocacy, and providing valuable resources to help local businesses navigate an ever-changing landscape.

We are also committed to deepening our partnerships with community organizations, local schools, and civic leaders, ensuring that Santa Fe Springs remains

a strong and thriving hub of economic activity. Together, we will foster an environment where innovation, collaboration, and community spirit flourish.

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to our dedicated members, sponsors, and volunteers. Your continued support and engagement are the backbone of our success. As we begin this new chapter, we are confident in our ability to move forward stronger than ever and create even more opportunities for connection, growth, and prosperity.

Here's to a productive, inspiring, and successful 2026. We are excited for what lies ahead—and grateful to have you with us on this journey.



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7:30AM - 9:30AM

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- Non-Member: \$110
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Registration includes breakfast with Q & A session

Dr. Chris Thornberg
Beacon Economics

Contact Us! (562) 944-1616 register at sfschamber.com

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Register Now: Insights for Economic Outlook 2026

As we approach the start of a new year, businesses and individuals alike are eager to understand the economic landscape for 2026. To shed light on these crucial developments, **Dr. Christopher Thornberg**, a renowned economist and founding partner of Beacon Economics, will be the keynote speaker at an exclusive event on **Thursday, January 22** at the **DoubleTree by Hilton** in Norwalk.

The event will be held at **13111 Sycamore Drive, Norwalk**, from **7:30 to 9:30 a.m.** and promises to provide attendees with an in-depth analysis of the economic outlook for 2026. Dr. Thornberg, known for his contrarian and data-driven ap-

proach, will discuss key trends that could shape the year ahead, including inflation, interest rates, employment, global trade, and consumer spending.

Why Attend?

In today's rapidly changing global economy, understanding where the markets are heading is crucial for making informed decisions, whether you're a business leader, investor, or concerned citizen.

About Dr. Christopher Thornberg

Dr. Thornberg is a recognized expert in economic forecasting, regional economics, labor markets, and real estate. As the founding partner of Beacon Economics and an expert witness, Dr. Thornberg

has advised numerous businesses, government entities, and nonprofits on economic issues. His expertise is frequently sought after by the media, making him a trusted voice in understanding economic shifts.

Whether you're looking to make strategic business decisions or want to gain a better understanding of the 2026 economic outlook, this event is a must-attend.

How to Register

Seats for this highly anticipated event are limited, so we encourage early registration. To secure your spot and be part of this insightful discussion with Dr. Thornberg, please visit sfschamber.com or call (562) 944-1616.

SANTA FE SPRINGS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Scott Summerfield, Cascade Pump Company

Cascade Pump Company has been in Santa Fe Springs for nearly 70 years. We have been members of the Santa Fe Springs Chamber of Commerce since 1965. From the beginning we have found the chamber of commerce to be a valuable resource. It has been a vehicle for continued learning, access to building meaningful relationships with city leaders, and a gateway to community involvement.

I have had a relationship with the chamber of commerce since I was a child. My father, Tom Summerfield, was the chamber's president in 1990 and is still active today through its Youth Enrichment Fund. I have personally witnessed the efforts of the chamber's members to make both the business and residential communities better and stronger together.

When I became a leader at my business, I felt the desire to serve the City of Santa Fe Springs community. The chamber of commerce board was the perfect fit for my efforts. I joined the chamber's board in 2021 and have been on the chamber's executive board as the vice president of public affairs three times, including this past year.

Serving as the Santa Fe Springs Chamber of Commerce president is a position I do not take lightly. I understand the responsibility to the business community and the attention necessary to continue the healthy partnership with our city stakeholders.

My goal is that the chamber finds a way to be a catalyst with you the growing your business. We will continue to offer services that add value to the business community. We will try to represent your interests as a collective voice in public matters.

I appreciate your participation in any meaningful way you can. The chamber of commerce is what we make it. The executive board and the greater chamber board are here to listen to and take action on the needs of our members. Please reach out to us and offer your opinions, suggestions and criticism. Together we can build on the foundation that came before for the benefit of all.



Santa Fe Springs Ambassador Chair Jerry Pinkston (right), Heartland Payment Systems, presents a thank-you gift to the YMCA of Greater Whittier for hosting the November 5 Business Card Exchange. Joining Jerry are YMCA President and CEO Curt Skotnicki (center) and Juan Aceves, Fund Development. The YMCA is a longtime supporter of the Santa Fe Springs Chamber of Commerce.

YMCA of Greater Whittier Hosts November BCX for Santa Fe Springs Chamber

The Santa Fe Springs Chamber of Commerce kicked off November with a successful Business Connections Exchange (BCX) hosted by the YMCA of Greater Whittier. Members gathered to network, share updates, and learn more about the programs and services the YMCA provides to the community.

Attendees enjoyed a warm welcome from the YMCA team, along with the opportunity to make new business connections and strengthen existing partnerships. The event highlighted the Chamber's ongoing commitment to fostering collaboration and supporting local organizations.

Thank you to the YMCA of Greater Whittier for hosting a fantastic BCX and for their continued dedication to serving our community.

Did you know the Santa Fe Springs Chamber of Commerce offers CERTIFICATES OF ORIGIN for products manufactured in the United States as a FREE member benefit? Contact the chamber at (562) 944-1616 or email mail@sfschamber.com

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<http://www.patchmade.net>
Kyle Bruce, President
contact@patchmade.net

Patchmade was born out of a shared vision among a diverse group of friends, each with their own professional experiences in industries as varied as Ergonomic Manufacturing, Trucking, Moving, Construction, Film and Music Production, Fitness, and more. We were spread across California and the West Coast, but our common bond brought us together time and time again, strengthening our connection through networking events and casual meetups.

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Holiday Spirit Shines at Chamber's December Business Card Exchange



Laughter, conversation, and connections filled the room as members took part in our interactive networking game.

The Santa Fe Springs Chamber of Commerce kicked off the holiday season with a cheerful Business Card Exchange on December 3, hosted by Embassy Suites in Downey. Members arrived ready to network—and ready to show off their most festive fashion—at this year's Ugly Sweater-themed event.

The room was filled with bright colors, bold patterns, flashing lights, and plenty of good-natured fun. Attendees enjoyed making new connections, catching up with familiar faces, and embracing the lighthearted holiday spirit. The highlight of the morning was the Ugly Sweater Contest, which added extra laughs and friendly competition.

A big thank you to Embassy Suites, Downey for their warm hospitality and for helping us end the year with joy, energy, and a whole lot of holiday cheer.



Holiday cheer was on full display during our ugly sweater contest! Ambassador Chair Jerry Pinkston (right), Heartland Payment Systems awarded first place to Gloria Estrada (left), Embassy Suites Downey, and second place to Julio Rivas, FirstLight Home Care.

Only One in the Nation: Cerritos College Earns Double Bellwether Finalist Honors

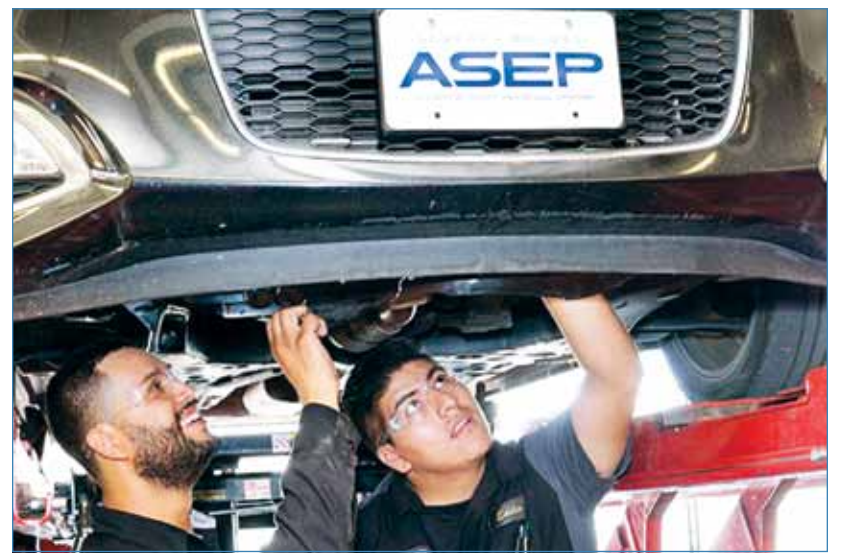
Cerritos College is the only institution in the United States recognized as a double national finalist for the 2026 Bellwether Awards. This honor places the school among the most innovative colleges in the country, those that turn bold ideas into results.

They advanced in two categories that strengthen economic mobility for their region. Early College is rewriting access for local high school students by offering up to two years of college credit without tuition or textbook costs. Families save

thousands, and students graduate sooner.

General Motors Automotive Service Education Program transforms technical education into high-wage careers through paid, hands-on internships at General Motors dealerships and direct pathways to industry credentials.

These programs create clear routes from learning to earning. In February, Cerritos College will represent the community on the national stage in San Antonio, Texas, and show how innovation fuels workforce strength across Southern California.



PIH Health Now Offering Innovative Zephyr Endobronchial Valve Procedure for Patients with Severe COPD and Emphysema

PIH Health Whittier Hospital is now offering the Zephyr® Endobronchial Valve procedure, a breakthrough minimally invasive treatment option for patients suffering from end-stage chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or severe emphysema.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), approximately 3.8% of U.S. adults aged 18 and older live with COPD,

and 1.6% live with emphysema. COPD is currently the sixth leading cause of death in the United States, underscoring the urgent need for innovative treatment options that improve both lung function and quality of life.

The Zephyr Valve provides new hope for patients who struggle with daily activities—such as walking or even getting dressed—due to severely compromised lung function. The

procedure allows air to flow only into the healthier parts of the lungs, giving patients the ability to breathe more easily and experience a significant improvement in quality of life.

“This procedure represents a major step forward in the treatment of advanced COPD and emphysema,” said Alfredo Castellanos MD, PIH Health Pulmonologist. “By placing small one-way valves into the most dam-

aged areas of the lung, we can redirect airflow to the healthier lobes, helping patients breathe more comfortably without the need for major surgery or a lung transplant.”

Previously, patients with these advanced lung conditions often had limited treatment options—typically a lobectomy (removal of diseased lung tissue) or a lung transplant.

The Zephyr Valve offers a minimally invasive alternative, similar to a bronchoscopy, with benefits including:

- Improved breathing and exercise capacity
- Less blood loss compared to traditional surgery
- Shorter recovery times and hospital stays
- Faster return to work or normal daily activities
- Overall better quality of life

By offering this state-of-the-art procedure, PIH Health joins the ranks of major academic medical centers currently performing the Zephyr Valve treatment, bringing this advanced technology closer to home for patients in the Whittier community and surrounding areas.

“This innovation aligns with our mission to provide high-quality, patient-centered care using the latest advancements in medical technology,” added Dr. Castellanos. “It’s exciting to see how this procedure can truly transform lives.”

For more information or to schedule a consultation, please contact the PIH Health Pulmonology Department at 562.789.5470. To learn more about PIH Health Respiratory and Pulmonary Care services and offerings, visit PIHHealth.org/Respiratory.

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Making New Connections



Jan 15th 2026
04:30PM to
6:30PM



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A Festive Finish to 2025: Tamales and Margaritas Networking

The Santa Fe Springs Chamber of Commerce wrapped up its final Networking at Noon event of 2025 with a festive celebration—Tamales & Margaritas—bringing members together for an afternoon filled with great food, meaningful connections, and holiday cheer.

The SFS Chamber office was packed from wall to wall as members and guests enjoyed an assortment of delicious tamales paired with expertly crafted classic margaritas featuring a refreshing twist of lime. Music set the tone as laughter and conversation filled the room, creating an atmosphere of warmth, camaraderie, and celebration.

As the year came to a close, the event served as a reminder of the strong relationships and memories built throughout 2025. Chamber members—both longtime and new—continue to feel like family, and the chamber looks forward to creating even more opportunities to connect in 2026.

There's no better way to kick off the new year than by joining a Santa Fe Springs Chamber networking event and jump-starting your business connections. For more information, visit sfschamber.com or call (562) 944-1616.



Smiles, networking, and a little holiday flavor at our Tamales & Margaritas 2025 gathering at the chamber office!

Attendees connected and enjoyed conversation during the networking event at World Burgers.



Networking @ Noon at World Burgers Brings Members Together

On November 20, the Santa Fe Springs Chamber of Commerce hosted a lively Networking @ Noon event at World Burgers in Whittier, where members enjoyed great conversation, new connections, and a taste of one of Southern California's most unique culinary spots.

World Burgers offers a creative fusion of the classic American hamburger with au-

thentic, globally inspired flavors. With more than 19 handcrafted burgers, fresh-cut fries, and old-fashioned ice cream floats, attendees had plenty of delicious options to enjoy while networking.

Thank you to World Burgers for welcoming our chamber and providing a fantastic setting for business connections and community engagement.

Networking @ Noon
11:30am-1:00pm

SFS Chamber members and non-members getting together for a business-to-business networking lunch.

15
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Are You 'Gold Setting' or Truly 'Goal Getting'? Stacey O'Byrne Breaks Down the Difference



In a powerful presentation on November 18, Stacey O'Byrne tackled one of the most frustrating yet essential topics for business owners, entrepreneurs, and sales professionals: goal setting. But she did not stop at the basics. O'Byrne challenged attendees



Presenter Stacey O'Byrne, president/CEO of Pivot Point Advantage

with a thought-provoking question: "Are you gold setting or goal getting?"

The distinction, she explains, is critical to long-term success. Many professionals fall into the trap of gold setting—wishing, dreaming, and hoping success will appear. It is the mindset of wanting "gold" without putting in the consistent, intentional work required to achieve it. Goal getting, on the other hand, is active. It is about clarity, commitment, focus, and daily steps that turn plans into measurable outcomes.

Throughout the presentation, O'Byrne dove deep into the mindset and behaviors that separate dreamers from achievers. She encourages attendees to ask themselves whether what they want aligns with what they truly feel they deserve—an internal conflict that often keeps people stuck.

She also reframes common frustrations. Instead of asking why something is not working, she urges everyone to ask what the purpose is. That shift, she says, can unlock motivation and direction.

One of her strongest reminders is to abandon the illusion of productivity that comes from "busy

work." Real progress requires meaningful action tied to specific, measurable, achievable, and time-bound goals.

Her presentation was filled with memorable insights:

- "You're never going to find the time to accomplish something you don't feel you deserve."
- "The brain is incapable of achieving goals that aren't specific, measured, achievable, and time-bound."
- "Do your rituals and routines move you towards achieving your goals?"

For those ready to shift from wishing to achieving, O'Byrne offers additional resources—from free strategy sessions to coaching programs and an interactive community of success-driven entrepreneurs and sales professionals.

Whether you are a seasoned business owner or just beginning your professional journey, O'Byrne's message is clear: success comes not from dreaming about the "gold," but from committing to the daily actions that make you a true goal getter.

Significant New California Laws Affecting Businesses, Focusing on Key Areas Such as Employment, Data Privacy, and General Business Operations

Minimum Wage Hikes and Pay Equity Rules Top New CA Business Laws for 2026

California businesses face a wave of new regulations starting January 1, 2026, with major implications for payroll, hiring, and compliance. The statewide minimum wage will increase to \$16.90 per hour for all employers, leading to a corresponding

rise in the minimum salary for exempt employees to \$70,304 annually.

In a push for greater transparency, Senate Bill 642 expands equal pay protections by requiring employers to provide a "good faith estimate" of the wage range in all job postings and broadening the definition of "wages" to include all forms of

compensation, such as bonuses and stock options.

"Stay-or-Pay" Contracts Outlawed: California Bolsters Employee Mobility with AB 692

In a major shift, California has banned most "stay-or-pay" or Training Repayment Agreement Provisions (TRAPs) in employment contracts, effective January 1, 2026. Assembly Bill 692 makes it unlawful to require employees to repay training costs, relocation expenses, or other fees if they leave a job before a specified time, with limited exceptions for certain tuition and upfront bonus repayments that meet strict criteria.

This legislation aims to prevent employers from trapping workers in jobs with financial penalties, providing more freedom for employees to seek new opportunities. Violations can result in penalties of \$5,000 per worker, plus damages and attorney's fees.

New Workplace "Know Your Rights" Act Mandates Notices and Emergency Contacts

Employers must comply with new extensive notice requirements under the Workplace Know Your Rights Act (SB 294), with initial distribution deadlines looming in early 2026. Starting February 1, 2026, employers must provide a standalone written notice to all employees outlining key rights related to workers' compensation, immigration inspections, union organizing, and constitutional protections during law enforcement interactions.

Additionally, by March 30, 2026, businesses must allow employees to designate an emergency contact to be notified in the event of an arrest or detention at the workplace or during work hours.

New Regulations for Retail, Dining, and Tech Sectors

Several other laws target specific industries:

Retail and Environment: An updated ban on single-use plastic carryout bags goes into effect, permitting stores to only distribute recycled paper bags (for a minimum 10-cent fee).

Dining: New rules allow open-kitchen restaurants more flexibility with outdoor dining setups (AB 592) and prohibit food delivery platforms from using customer tips to offset driver pay (AB 578).

Technology: The Transparency in Frontier Artificial Intelligence Act (SB 53) will impose safety, transparency, and reporting requirements on large AI developers. A separate law (SB 446) requires businesses to notify consumers of a data breach within 30 days of discovery.

Housing: A new law requires landlords to provide working refrigerators and stoves in rental apartments starting January 1, a change expected to have a significant impact in certain regional rental markets.

For comprehensive information on all new California laws, businesses can consult resources from the California Department of Industrial Relations and various legal compliance guides.

**Santa fe Springs Chamber of Commerce
presents**

2026 Labor Law Update

**Wednesday, January 14, 2026
9:00 - 11:00 AM**

Featured Speaker:
Paul Fleck, partner at Atkinson, Andelson, Loya, Ruud & Romo

Important changes are coming for employers in 2026.
Staying ahead is key to ensuring compliance.
This session will discuss up-to-the-minute regulatory,
legislative, and legal issues facing HR Professionals today and
provide a preview of what to expect in 2026.
Bring your questions and get the answers you need!

Location:
SFS Chamber Office
12016 Telegraph Rd. #100
Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670

Cost:

Members	\$40
Non-Members	\$60

Register online at www.sfschamber.com or contact the Chamber Office at (562) 944-1616

Member Anniversaries!

Congratulations to our renewing members (November-December 2025)! We greatly appreciate your continued support and involvement.

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Ivy Park at Cerritos

17 Years

Colliers International - Chris Sheehan

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Oscar's Electric, Inc.

15 Years

Pacific Palms Resort

12 Years

Plastic Connections, Inc.

9 Years

Whittier Police Officers Association

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Mindset Meets Market: What Santa Fe Springs Buyers and Sellers Should Know

Real estate conversations in Santa Fe Springs feel different this year—and for good reason. Homes are still selling and buyers are still purchasing, but today's market is less about rushing and more about strategy. Understanding what's happening locally requires more than national headlines; it requires education and the right mindset.

With over 25 years serving this community as both a real estate broker and mortgage broker, I've seen how informed decisions lead to better outcomes—especially in changing markets.

A Local Market Snapshot

Santa Fe Springs remains a strong, active market, but conditions have shifted. Inventory is limited, buyers are more thoughtful, and sellers are adjusting expectations. Well-priced, well-prepared homes continue to attract interest, while negotiations have become more balanced.

Today's buyers are asking smarter questions, and sellers are more open to creative solutions that help deals move forward.

Negotiations Have Evolved

One of the biggest changes I'm seeing is in how contracts are negotiated. Buyers now have more opportunities to ask for seller credits, repairs, or interest-rate buydowns—tools that can significantly impact affordability and long-term comfort.

Understanding how real estate terms and mortgage strategy work together is critical. The right structure can make a meaningful difference for local families planning their next move.

Homeownership Is a Mindset

This is where *Mindset Meets Market* comes into play. Success today isn't about waiting for the "perfect" moment—it's about preparation, education, and confidence. Homeownership is more than a transaction; it's about stability, community roots, and long-term opportunity.

Through my weekly series *Mindset Meets Market* and *Coffee & Contracts*, my focus is on education—helping our community make informed, empowered decisions.

If you're wondering how today's market applies to your goals, start with understanding the mindset behind the market.

Lina S. Ariza is the broker-owner of CBM Real Estate & Home Loans, a women-owned brokerage proudly serving Santa Fe Springs for over 25 years. She can be reached at (562) 777-6116.

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Giving to the Community at the YEF Mentor Holiday Lunch

Few things capture the holiday spirit quite like giving back to the community. Mentors and mentees came together for the YEF Mentor Holiday Luncheon, where the focus was on service, connection, and kindness. During the event, participants assembled community care kits for The Arc Los Angeles/Orange County, thoughtfully filling each backpack with essentials such as hand sanitizer, wipes, bandages, and other helpful items for community outings and field trips.

Adding a personal touch, students decorated cards and wrote heartfelt messages that were attached to each backpack, hoping to bring a smile to the face of every recipient. The Arc Los Angeles/Orange County advocates for and provides vital services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, making the effort especially meaningful.

Program Directors Margoritt Aquije and Emily McCreary addressed the group, sharing insights into their roles and highlighting the impact of The Arc's work on the lives of its clients. The afternoon was filled with warmth, laughter, and a shared sense of purpose. Thank you to everyone who participated in making this holiday celebration both joyful and impactful.



Youth Enrichment Fund Mentors and students in Santa Fe High School Business Tech Academy pose with the kits they made for The Arc Los Angeles/Orange County.

Students Reach New Heights in Engineering Challenge

November's mentoring participants were filled with excitement and ingenuity as students took part in an Engineering Challenge, a mentoring project designed to introduce high

schoolers to the fundamentals of engineering, teamwork, and problem-solving.

The challenge was simple in theory but complex in practice: build the

tallest free-standing tower using only straws and tape. Working with their mentors, students brainstormed designs, tested ideas, and refined their structures as they learned how

engineers turn concepts into reality.

Mentors guided students through the engineering design process, encouraging them to plan carefully, communicate effectively, and learn from failure. As towers rose higher, so did the students' confidence. Some teams focused on wide, stable bases, while others experimented with triangular supports and creative reinforcement techniques.

The project culminated in a friendly competition, with students proudly measuring their towers and cheering for one another's successes. Several structures reached impressive heights, standing tall with only lightweight materials and smart design holding them together.

Judging by the excitement in the room—the future of engineering is off to a strong start.



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CalChamber's CEQA Reform: Boosting California's Economy and State Budget

New analyses of the California Chamber of Commerce ballot measure to streamline and modernize the construction of essential projects find it could result in a multibillion-dollar boost to the state's economy and, in turn, add new jobs and revenues to help pay for vital government programs.

Separate reviews by the nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) and the Blue Sky Consulting Group, a research firm comprised of veteran state policy experts, found ample evidence of the economic benefits contained in the Building an Affordable California Act (BACA).

"The results of these in-depth studies are not only a reflection of why we want voters to take action in 2026, but also why we are so sure the proposal is key to California's long-term prosperity," said CalChamber President and CEO Jennifer Barera. "Our state has so much potential that's being locked up by well-intended but outmoded processes, and the Building an Affordable California Act will be a catalyst toward making the state a more affordable place to live and work."

'Likely to Result in Savings'

The LAO review, issued on December 10, 2025, found that the net effect of BACA provisions — especially those related to shortened time limits for agencies and the courts — would "likely result in savings in the longer term."

Analysts also concluded that inflationary costs of public works projects could decrease under new timelines for review. Completion of more private sector projects, the LAO report points out, "could lead to an increase in tax revenues, such as property tax revenue."

The Impacts of Even Modest Changes

The Blue Sky Consulting Group report found that even a 5% increase in annual statewide spending on essential projects — as defined in the Building an Affordable California Act — could generate \$12 billion a year in additional economic output and more than 38,000 new jobs in construction and other sectors.

The resulting wages, profits, and taxable sales would, in turn, add some \$220 million a year to California's general fund and \$89 million in annual revenue for local governments. The Blue Sky report notes that increased productivity in the construction sector will "allow firms to produce more output given the same inputs" — in essence, more bang for the buck.

Costs will also go down, the report's authors conclude, when a project's backers are no longer saddled with indefinite delays and bureaucracy.

"These delays impose costs in the form of uncertainty," they write, "given that investors may require a higher rate of return to compensate for the uncertainty and development costs may increase by more than the rate of inflation during the delay period."

Government costs are also likely to go down.

The current open-ended reviews "impose significant time burdens on government staff, who must prepare updated technical analyses, draft revised impact studies, and coordinate the review process across several public departments," the report notes. It also points out that local and state governments would see cost pressures go down when building their own public works projects.

The Building an Affordable California Act, a comprehensive plan to modernize the permitting process while keeping all the state's environmental protections in place, will soon receive title and summary from the Office of the Attorney General and is on track to appear on the ballot for voters to consider in November 2026.


—CalChamber, December 17, 2025

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- WHAT INTERESTS YOU ABOUT THAT CAREER?
- WHAT EDUCATION IS REQUIRED FOR THAT CAREER?



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Turn in poster to school office.

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Write an essay, in which you organize your thoughts about the path for your current career choice. Be sure to explore the reasons for your interest and how these interests have led you to this specific career path. The essay should include any research you have completed to explore your career choice and the education required to obtain this career. Educate the reader about the motivation for and knowledge about the career path you have chosen.



1st Place: \$100 Amazon Gift Card

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3rd Place: \$50 Amazon Gift Card

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Deadline for submission: Friday, January 23, 2026.

Turn in essay to school representative or call (562) 944-1616.

California Expands Leave Protections

This past year, Governor Newsom signed new bills impacting leave rights and protections for California employees. The following summarizes the new leave-related employment laws that California employers should be aware of.

AB 406 (Workplace Protections for Victims of Violence)

AB 406 expands upon AB 2499 (Schiavo, Chapter 967, Statutes of 2024), which provides leave for victims of qualifying acts of violence for specified reasons and requires employers to provide accommodations to victims of qualifying actions of violence (as reported in our previous Alert).

Specifically, effective January 1, 2026, AB 406 adds Government Code section 12945.8(a)(4), which prohibits employers from discriminating or retaliating against an employee who is a victim or is a family member of a victim for taking time off work to attend any judicial proceedings related to that crime, including, any delinquency proceedings, a post-arrest release decision, plea, sentencing, postconviction release decision, or any proceeding where a right of that victim is an issue.

For this section only, AB 406 creates a new definition of "victim" which includes being subjected to one of 14 different crimes enumerated by Government Code section 12945.8(j)(8)(c), including violent felonies and serious felonies as defined in the California Penal Code.

AB 406 also expands Labor Code section 246.5, part of the Healthy Workplaces, Healthy Families Act ("Act"). The Act grants paid sick leave to California employees who are not covered by a valid collective bargaining agreement which expressly provides for the wages, hours, and working conditions of employees, and expressly provides for paid sick days or a paid leave of paid time off policy that permits the use of sick days for those employees. Effective October 1, 2025, the Act allows employees to use paid sick leave to attend judicial proceedings delineated in Government Code section 12945.8(a)(4) related to a qualifying act of violence.

Additionally, effective October 1, 2025, AB 406 restores specified Labor Code sections that were deleted by AB 2499 regarding leave rights and protections for employees who are victims of a qualifying act of violence,

or who have a family member who is a victim of a qualifying act of violence, including Labor Code sections 230 and 231.1. These reinstated Labor Code sections only apply to alleged actions or inactions occurring on or before December 31, 2024, and do not apply to public school district employers. The bill clarifies that pending cases arising from employer violations of the above rights occurring on or before December 31, 2024, are still valid and within the jurisdiction of the Division of Labor Standards Enforcement ("DLSE"), the department responsible for enforcing the California Labor Code. AB 406 transfers jurisdiction to the California Civil Rights Department ("CRD"), the department enforcing the California Fair Employment and Housing Act ("FEHA"), for such cases arising from employer violations on or after January 1, 2025. The bill would keep the Labor Code sections in effect until January 1, 2035.

Employers will need to update their leave policies to allow qualifying victims and family members to take time off to attend judicial proceedings related to the crime. Additionally, the CRD will likely need to update its AB 2499 Notice provided in July 2025,

which provided the reasons for which an employee could take leave related to a qualifying act of violence (as reported in our previous Alert).

AB 642 (Expansion of School Employee Catastrophic Leave to Charter Schools)

AB 642 was passed by the Governor on July 30, 2025, and took effect immediately. AB 642 amends section 44043.5 of the Education Code, governing catastrophic illness leave, and adds section 44043.6 to the Education Code.

Current law authorizes the governing board of a school district or county office of education ("COE") to establish a catastrophic leave program to permit employees of that school district or COE, if specified conditions are met, to donate eligible leave credits to an employee when that employee or a member of their family suffers from a catastrophic illness or injury. This bill extends the above-described authorization to the governing body of a charter school.

Additionally, AB 642 authorizes the governing board or body of a school district, COE, or charter school to permit employees to donate eligible leave credits to an employee impacted by a state of emergency that has been proclaimed by the Governor. Passed as an urgency measure, AB 642 was implemented immediately to address the recent California fires.

SB 590 (Paid Family Leave Expansion for Designated Persons)

Effective July 1, 2028, SB 590 expands employees' eligibility to receive state Paid Family Leave ("PFL") benefits to those who are taking time off work to care for a seriously ill "designated person." SB 590 only applies to employers who pay into state disability insurance benefits for PFL. The law defines a "designated person" as "any care recipient related by blood or whose association with the individual is the equivalent of a family relationship."

An employee who wishes to receive PFL benefits from the Employment Development Department to care for a designated person will be required to identify the designated person, and under penalty of perjury attest to how they are either related by blood to the designated person or how their association with the designated person is the equivalent of a family relationship. This law follows in the footsteps of AB 1041 (2022), which added "designated person" to the list of individuals for whom an employee could take paid sick leave and leave under the California Family Rights Act.

If you have any questions concerning this alert or how to implement the requirements, please contact the authors of this alert or your usual counsel.

Thank you to law clerk Heily Acicon for her extensive work in preparation of this Alert.

This AALRR publication is intended for informational purposes only and should not be relied upon in reaching a conclusion in a particular area of law. Applicability of the legal principles discussed may differ substantially in individual situations. Receipt of this or any other AALRR publication does not create an attorney-client relationship. The Firm is not responsible for inadvertent errors that may occur in the publishing process.

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Help Shape the Future of the Santa Fe Springs Chamber!

Now Accepting Nominations for the Board of Directors

The Santa Fe Springs Chamber of Commerce & Industrial League invites motivated, community-minded leaders to be considered for its **Board of Directors**.

Serving on the Board is a rewarding opportunity to **influence local business advocacy, support economic development, and help guide the Chamber's programs and priorities** that strengthen Santa Fe Springs.

Board members serve a **three-year term** and play an active role in shaping the future of our business community.

Who Should Apply or Be Nominated?

Ideal candidates:

- Are Chamber members in good standing
- Can attend monthly board meetings and occasional special meetings
- Are willing to participate in Chamber activities and events

Are able to commit time, leadership, and enthusiasm for the full term

Additional qualities we value:

- Proven leadership or service within the community or Chamber
- Professional experience demonstrating sound judgment

A collaborative spirit and passion for local business success

Self-nominations are welcome, and members are encouraged to nominate fellow Chamber partners.

📌 IMPORTANT DEADLINE

Nominations & applications must be submitted by

Friday, March 6, 2026

What's Good About 2026 for Businesses

In 2026, the business environment is defined by a shift from experimenting with new technologies to fully integrating them into core operations. Despite ongoing economic and regulatory complexities, overall business confidence remains strong, particularly among small and mid-sized enterprises.

1. Strategic Technology Integration

- **AI Evolution:** Businesses are moving from "trying AI" to embedding it into daily workflows. In 2026, autonomous "AI agents" are beginning to manage end-to-end processes in HR and finance with minimal human oversight.
- **Hyper-Personalization:** AI-driven data analytics allow small businesses to offer the level of personalization once reserved for large enterprises, significantly boosting customer loyalty and conversion rates.
- **Lower Barriers to Entry:** Advanced no-code tools and AI-driven platforms enable entrepreneurs to launch and scale ventures with significantly reduced overhead and faster execution.

2. Booming Market Sectors

- **Health and Wellness:** Digital health is expanding rapidly through AI-powered diagnostics, telemedicine, and personalized wellness apps.
- **Green Economy:** Sustainability has become a "non-negotiable" mandate. Massive demand exists for green energy consulting, sustainable packaging, and circular economy business models (repair and upcycling).
- **Aging-in-Place Services:** With North America's aging population, businesses specializing in senior home maintenance, assistive technology, and mobile healthcare are seeing consistent, recession-resistant demand.
- **Professional Services:** There is a surge in demand for specialized consulting in AI adoption, ESG compliance, and cybersecurity as companies struggle to navigate new technical and regulatory landscapes.

3. Operational and Economic Tailwinds

- **Favorable Tax Provisions:** In the U.S., several tax benefits have been stabilized or enhanced for 2026, including the **permanent extension of the 20% pass-through deduction** and the return of **100% capital expensing** for new equipment and company vehicles.
- **Flexible Talent Models:** The normalization of remote and hybrid work continues to allow businesses to access a global talent pool and reduce facility costs.
- **Resilient Stock Market:** Major analysts (such as those at Goldman Sachs and UBS) project double-digit gains for the S&P 500 in 2026, supported by resilient corporate earnings and anticipated interest rate cuts by the Federal Reserve.

4. Modern Workforce Advantages

- **Skills-Based Hiring:** More businesses are prioritizing demonstrated skills over formal degrees, allowing them to tap into a more diverse and capable talent pool that was previously overlooked.
- **Financial Wellness Benefits:** Offering flexible pay (e.g., on-demand pay access) and emergency savings benefits has become a critical competitive advantage for retaining employees in a tight labor market.

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