

MARTINEZ NEWS-GAZETTE

New regulations in effect for 2020

Employment/Workplace

AB 9: Employment discrimination

Employees are now granted up to three years to file any discrimination, harassment or retaliation complaints with the Department of Fair Employment and Housing.

SB 83: Extending paid leave

Going into effect July 1, 2020, the law increases paid leave from 6 to 8 weeks for those taking care of a seriously ill family member, or to bond with a new child.

AB 5: Gig worker law

This new labor law aims to provide new protections for gig economy workers, such as minimum wage, health insurance, and paid sick days.

It reclassifies some independent contractors as employees.

SB 188: Embracing natural hair

California is now the first in the United States to ban employers and school officials from discriminating against people based on their natural hair.

The Crown Act now makes it illegal to enforce dress code or grooming policies against hairstyles such as braids, afros, twists and locks.

Criminal Justice

AB 12: Gun violence restraining orders

Going into effect Sept. 1, 2020, the law expands who can petition a judge to confiscate someone's weapons if they believe that person may be violent.

The updated law allows employers, co-workers, and teachers to have that ability.

Data privacy

The California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) – the nation's toughest privacy law – is now in effect.



It allows California residents to demand that companies disclose data they have collected on them.

If users want that data to be deleted, companies must comply.

Non-California residents can't request their data be deleted, but rather can read through new terms of service to see what type of information data companies are collecting.

AB 218: Statute of limitations for childhood sex assaults

California has suspended the statute of limitations for three years starting Jan. 1, which will give victims of all ages the chance to pursue prosecution.

California is also expanding the statute of limitations for childhood victims of sexual abuse. Victims now have until age 40 (or 5 years from the time the abuse was discovered) to file civil lawsuits.

SB 273: Statute of limitations for domestic violence

The law extends the statute of limitations to report domestic violence to law enforcement from one year to 5 years.

It applies to domestic violence that happens on or after Jan. 1, 2020 and also applies to crimes for which the statute of limitations was in effect before Jan. 1, 2020 and had not run out.

Education

SB 328: Later school start times

High schools can start no earlier than 8:30 a.m. and no sooner than 8 a.m. for middle schoolers.

School districts in California will have a three-year window – until the start of the 2022-23 school year – to implement these schedules for high schools and middle schools.

The new law does not mandate that middle and high schools adhere to a specific bell schedule and does not change the instructional minutes required of schools.

The law does not apply to “zero” periods, which could still be held before the new mandated start-times.

AB 272: Limiting/banning smartphone use in schools

School boards will have the power to ban devices with the exception of emergencies or other special situations, such as medical reasons.

Housing

AB 1482: Rent increase cap

The new law aimed at combating the housing crisis in California limits rent increases to 5% each year, plus inflation until Jan. 1, 2030.

The law bans landlords from evicting people for no reason, making it illegal to force people out so they can raise the rent for a new tenant.

The law also applies to rent increases on or after Mar. 15, 2019.

The new law does not apply to housing built within the last 15 years, does not apply to single-family homes except those owned by corporations or real estate investment trusts, and does not cover duplexes where the owner lives in one of the units.

New Health Laws for 2020 started on Jan. 1

Californians are encouraged to enroll by Jan. 31 or face a penalty if they choose to go without health care coverage in 2020.

The penalty, which can be \$2,000 or more for a family of four, will be applied starting Jan. 1.

The penalty — enacted in state law and administered by the California Franchise Tax Board — remains in place despite the recent U.S. Circuit Court ruling in the federal Affordable Care Act case.

There is new financial help available to eligible consumers, including middle-income consumers who previously did not receive any assistance.

More than 540,000 people have already been found eligible for the new financial help.

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — While a federal court ruling last week leaves the federal individual mandate in legal limbo, Californians are reminded that a state law will take effect on Jan. 1 requiring all Californians to have health insurance.

“Open enrollment is underway right now. That means now is the time to sign up for a quality health plan through Covered California so you are protected in case you get sick or injured, and so you do not have to worry about a possible penalty,” said Covered California Executive Director Peter V. Lee. “Writing a check to the Franchise Tax Board when you file your 2020 taxes isn’t the real penalty — it’s getting hurt or ill and ending up with \$50,000 hospital bill.”

California created a new state individual mandate penalty that is similar to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act’s penalty. It will be administered by the Franchise Tax Board (FTB) and collected when people file their 2020 taxes starting in 2021.

“It’s important that everyone acts now to get health insurance starting in January 2020 to avoid the penalty when filing state tax returns in 2021,” said FTB Executive Officer Selvi Stanislaus.

For those facing a penalty, a family of four would pay at least \$2,000, and

potentially more, for not having health insurance throughout 2020.

The return of the penalty was an important element in Covered California’s record-low rate change of 0.8 percent in 2020, meaning consumers have already benefited from the new policy.

New Financial Help

In addition to the penalty, California is making new financial help available to eligible consumers to help further lower the cost of their coverage. On average, consumers between 200 and 400 percent of the federal poverty level will receive \$21 per household, per month on top of their federal tax credits. Meanwhile, for the first time in the nation, people who earn between 400 and 600 percent of the federal poverty level will be receiving an average of \$460 per household, per month.

“More than half a million Californians have already found out they will benefit from this new money,” Lee said. “Consumers have through the end of January to see what plans are available to them and whether they qualify for financial help from the federal government, the state, or both.”

Gov. Gavin Newsom also reiterated his support of the Affordable Care Act when he joined Covered California during a teleconference last week.

“The Affordable Care Act is alive and well here in the state of California,” Newsom said. “We are saving lives, we’re expanding coverage, we’re deepening subsidies, and we’re doubling down on our commitment to fulfill the law’s promise and its potential.”

Californians already set to benefit from the state subsidy program include:

Yuriana and Hector, who say their daughter is a Covered California miracle because without their health insurance they would not have been able to afford getting pregnant.

Watch and download Yuriana and Hector’s story in Spanish or in English.

Shannon and John, who were surprised when they received the news in

the mail that they would be saving more than \$1,200 a month because of the new state subsidies. Now they are able to focus on completing a longtime dream.

Watch and download Shannon and John’s story.

“We do not want people to miss out on this opportunity. We don’t want them to leave money on the table, and we don’t want them to get stuck with a big bill when they pay their taxes in 2021,” Lee said.

Recent Court Ruling

California’s individual mandate and penalty remain in place as state leaders prepare to respond to the recent ruling by a three-judge panel of the U.S. 5th Circuit Court of Appeals. On Wednesday, the panel ruled that the individual mandate was unconstitutional, but remanded the case to a lower court.

“The court ruling will not impact California and should not deter anyone from signing up during the current open-enrollment period,” Lee said. “The legal battle will continue for the foreseeable future, and Covered California will be working to educate people about the penalty and enroll as many as possible.”

Getting Help Enrolling

Consumers can easily find out if they are eligible for financial help and see which plans are available in their area by entering their ZIP code, household income and the ages of those who need coverage into Covered California’s Shop and Compare Tool.

Those interested in learning more about their coverage options can:

Visit www.CoveredCA.com.

Get free and confidential in-person assistance, in a variety of languages, from a certified enroller.

Have a certified enroller call them and help them for free.

Call Covered California at (800) 300-1506.

California’s open-enrollment period continues through Jan. 31, 2020.

Solo Opera's annual fund-raising affair

Style-conscious fashionistas gathered in the Sun Valley Macy's Women's Formal Evening Wear Department this recent past Saturday, December 14th. They were there to enjoy Macy's fashion show and the lovely voice of soprano, Diana Squires, as part of Solo Opera's annual fund-raising affair, known as "The 12 days of Christmas". This delightfully orchestrated fund-raising fashion show included tasty snacks, liquid refreshments, and prizes that were periodically awarded based on tickets purchased by attendees. Fashion show attendees were shown attractive garments displayed provocatively by upbeat fashion models parading the latest fashionable formal dining gowns and trend-setting street-ware that is now available at Macy's! Eight lovely models representing our society's seniors, middle-aged adults, and young adults, graced Macy's brightly decorated fashion runway in a series of four festive garment presentations. In very quick repetitive changes of garments, the models repeated their fashion sojourn, occasionally pausing gracefully for the members of the audience to briefly inspect the garments as they passed by.

Macy's has always been a staunch supporter of their nearby community's citizens and business enterprises, constantly participating in local Chamber of



Commerce activities, and even aiding fundraising activities that are supportive to the needs of the local neighboring communities. Macy's has joined forces with the Solo Opera's annual fundraising efforts this year and has welcomed and engaged the talents of the Opera company's fundraising team, including its prima soprano, Diana Squires. Further, in creating a live fashion show to display their exqui-

site gowns and upscale garments in their store, this project has sought out local residents and students of the Martinez & Pleasant Hill high schools to perform as models. While there are those among the adult models with prior professional modeling experience, the more youthful models are thoroughly enjoying their very first experience walking a fashion runway!

Solo Opera president and Artistic Director Sylvia Amorino (a private vocal instructor for over 35 years) founded the Solo Opera company 20 years ago bent on offering high quality, professional opera, locally. Initially the company performed in the beautiful Leshner Center for the Arts in Walnut Creek. In subsequent years they added to their itinerary other venues and parks in which to perform around the Bay Area. This nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation was conceived to provide a broader out-reach to everyone in the East Bay, hoping to share with them a wonderful world of operatic enrichment. The early operas typically included those with familiar titles such as Amahl and the Night Visitors, Riders to the Sea and Minotti's "The Telephone". As recently as 2013 the company began work on a STORYBOOK OPERA series for family and children. As recently as 2016 they have been invited by the Orinda Rotary club to present their Operas in the Park in Orinda.

Even though this fashion show is now referred to in past tense, it probably will be back next year, but you can always find the latest in beautiful fashions and more, at any time in Macy's Sun Valley store.

Story and photos by Charlie Jarrett



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Park It by Ned MacKay: Trails Challenge 2020

The New Year brings new adventures in the East Bay Regional Parks, with the 2020 edition of the popular, free and family-friendly Trails Challenge.

A partnership of the Regional Parks Foundation and Kaiser Permanente HMO, Trails Challenge encourages visitors to explore the regional parks by completing any five of 20 trails listed in the 2020 guidebook.

There are trails for all levels of fitness and expertise, from easy to challenging. Hike, bike or ride whichever you choose, turn in your trail log by Dec. 1, and receive a commemorative pin while supplies last.

The 2020 Trails Challenge guidebook is available as of Jan. 2 at park district visitor centers or online at the district website, www.ebparcs.org/TC. And you can download the free AllTrails app. Besides trail maps, the guidebook has useful information about equipment, safety, and the regional parks in general.

Participating visitor centers also have free Trails Challenge T-shirts, again while supplies last.

So make a New Year's resolution to pick up a guidebook and venture out into the parks.

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Speaking of trails, naturalist "Trail Gail" Broesder will be leading a series of hikes at various regional parks from 9 a.m. to noon on three Sundays in January on the theme of "New Year, Nature You." All are part of the Healthy Parks Healthy People program promoting safe, low-impact activities in the outdoors through regular enjoyment of the regional parks.

Gail's first hike will be on Jan. 5, starting at the Alhambra Creek Staging Area of Briones Regional Park. The entrance is on Reliez Valley Road about a mile south of the intersection with Alhambra Valley Road in Martinez. For information, call 510-544-2233.

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There are natural and cultural history programs every Saturday or Sunday in January and February at Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve in Antioch.

"Nature Discoveries" is from 10 to 11 a.m. every Saturday. Learn what is flying, crawling or blooming in the park. "Historic Somersville" is from 1 to 2 p.m. on Sundays. Learn about the lives of 19th Century miners, see some miners' tools, or go on a short walk.

Or you can meet a live gopher snake, king snake or rattlesnake from 1:30 to 2 p.m. every Saturday.

Black Diamond Mines is at the end of Somersville Road, 3½ miles south of Highway 4. The snake program is at the Sidney Flat Visitor Center just past the park entrance kiosk. The other two programs meet in the parking lot at the end of the road.

Black Diamond Mines has a parking fee of \$5 per vehicle. The programs are free of charge. For information, call 888-327-2757, ext. 2750.

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The naturalists at Big Break Regional Shoreline in Oakley host occasional coffee talk sessions to discuss current news relating to the Delta. There's one from 8:30 to 9 a.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 8, another at the same time on Feb. 5.

Big Break is at 69 Big Break Road off Oakley's Main Street. For information, call 888-327-2757, ext. 3050.

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You can hear natural history stories by the fireside from 11 to 11:30 a.m. every Sunday in January and February at the Environmental Education Center in

Tilden Nature Area near Berkeley.

And there's a nature stroll starting at the center from 1 to 2:30 p.m. on Saturdays, Jan. 4, 11 and 18, led by naturalist Anthony Fisher. These are easy walks to observe the variety of life in the nature area. Bring a camera.

The center is at the north end of Tilden's Central Park Drive, accessible via Canon Drive from Grizzly Peak Boulevard in Berkeley. Call 510-544-2233.

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Crab Cove Visitor Center in Alameda features Family Nature Fun from 2 to 3 p.m. every Saturday and Sunday, with a different topic each week. Mammals (including us) are the subject on Jan. 4 and 5.

Crab Cove is at 1252 McKay Ave. off Alameda's Central Avenue. Call 510-544-3187.

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Coyote Hills Regional Park in Fremont offers a full schedule of programs celebrating the cultural heritage of the Ohlone people who inhabited what is now the park for thousands of years.

There are regular tours of a reconstructed Ohlone village site within the park, a half-mile walk from the visitor center. The next is from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. on Saturday, Jan. 4.

Coyote Hills is at the end of Patterson Ranch Road off Paseo Padre Parkway. There's a \$5 parking fee; the programs are free. Call 510-544-3220.

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This isn't even half of what's going on in the regional parks. For full information, visit the district website at www.ebparcs.org.

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