January 2024 **Assembly Newsletter** Volume 8, Issue 1

# Kalra Capitol Report



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## Asm. Kalra Named Chair of Assembly Judiciary



Assemblymember Ash Kalra was appointed Chair of the Assembly Committee on Judiciary by Speaker Robert Rivas, becoming the first Asian American & Pacific Islander member of the California State Assembly to be appointed to this position. The Assemblymember has served on this committee for the past seven years.

"At a time when California must be vigilant in protecting civil rights, fostering a just legal system, and ensuring everyday consumers are protected, it is an honor to serve as Chair of Judiciary Committee," said Assemblymember Kalra.

Speaker Rivas said, "The justice system is foundational to keeping Californians safe and holding offenders accountable. I'm confident Assemblymember Kalra will fight for the rights of the people who matter most, while ensuring the system itself is just."

The Assembly Committee on Judiciary's primary jurisdictions include family law, product liability, tort liability, Civil Code, and Evidence Code (excluding criminal procedure).

Assemblymember Kalra has dedicated many years to public service, including his time serving on the San José City Council and working as a public defender in the Santa Clara County, with a focus on addressing racial disparities and advancing equity within the criminal justice system.

The Assemblymember most recently served as the Chair of the Labor and Employment Committee. He shared, "I'm so grateful for the opportunity to work with the mighty Assembly Labor & Employment Committee staff—Megan, Martin, and Lorie—for the past five years. I know our new Chair, Liz Ortega, will continue to ensure that California remains a great state for working families."

Kalra has also served as a member on the Committees on the Housing & Community Development, Transportation, and Water, Parks, & Wildlife.

## A Message From Assemblymember Ash Kalra

Hello Friends and Constituents.

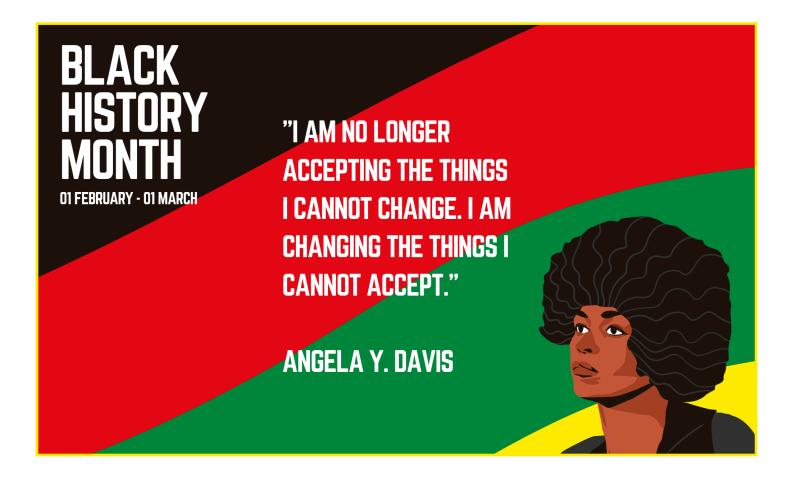
I hope this message finds you well, and I'd like to extend my wishes for a Happy New Year and Happy Lunar New Year! As we begin a new legislative year, I'm thrilled to be back in session and excited to collaborate on new legislation. We'll also be revisiting previous bills, so stay tuned. Additionally, the Governor has proposed his initial budget, and I look forward to a productive budget process in the legislature to mitigate impacts of the budget deficit.

As always, I'm grateful to represent such a diverse community in Assembly District 25. I encourage you to stay in touch with my office and share your priorities and concerns. Please do not hesitate to contact me or my staff with any questions or suggestions you may have at 408-286-2535.

Sincerely,

Assemblymember Ash Kalra

Hal Kale



## KALRA BUDGET WINS



Eviction Diversion Program (\$2M): Extends the City of San Jose's eviction diversion program, which has prevented over 100 households from forced eviction by providing targeted gap assistance to low-income households on the brink of eviction.



Lake Cunningham Water Quality and Shoreline Improvements (\$1.5M): Provides funding to the City of San Jose to begin wetland restoration and construct water quality improvement landscaping around Lake Cunningham.



California Racial Justice Act Implementation (\$8M): Provides funding for defense counsel to pursue retroactive claims under the California Racial Justice Act (RJA). Funds will be allocated to the Office of the State Public Defender and Judicial Council for appointed attorneys, experts, investigators, paralegals, and Habeas Corpus Resource Center, and California Appellate Project.



Economic Investment to End Detention (\$5M): Provides funding to the California Workforce Development Board (CWDB) to support cities and counties that end a conditional use permit for an immigration detention center. Cities and counties will gain access to the funding for high-road jobs, clean infrastructure, and other community needs.



California Workplace Outreach Program (\$25M): Restores funding for the second year of the California Workplace Outreach Program (CWOP), a collaboration between the Labor and Workforce Development Agency (LWDA) and 62 community groups to educate workers on paid leave, COVID mitigation health standards, and anti-retaliation.



Intertidal Biodiversity DNA Barcode Library (\$9.5M): Provides funding to the Ocean Protection Council to support the Intertidal Biodiversity DNA Barcode Library, which will genetically barcode specimens drawn from California's natural intertidal environment and numerous legacy collections.

### Assemblymember Kalra Celebrates San José's Joyful Holiday Concert

The Christmas in the Park Special Concert in downtown San José, hosted by the Asian American Center of Santa Clara County, was a remarkable event. The performances were lively, prompting everyone, including Assemblymember Ash Kalra, to join in dancing and singing on the brisk early December night. The crowd's cheers and singing often eclipsed the music from the stage, creating an electrifying atmosphere and adding to the festive energy.

Amidst this joyful holiday season, the Assemblymember praised the community spirit, stating, "It is pure joy to witness thousands of families gathering on a Saturday night in the heart of downtown, reveling in the special performances coordinated by the Asian American Center of Santa Clara County. I just love San José!"

The night was filled not only with music and dance but also with the warmth of community and the joy of the holiday season, forging unforgettable memories for all who attended.



### Native American Heritage Month Event Honors Culture & Community



Assemblymember Ash Kalra hosted a remarkable Native American Heritage Month Honoree Event that brought together community members, leaders, and advocates to celebrate the rich cultural tapestry of Native American communities. The event, held on November 30, 2023, featured heartfelt acknowledgments, powerful performances, and the recognition of exceptional individuals and organizations.

#### Land Acknowledgement by Muwékma Ohlone Tribe

The evening commenced with a Land Acknowledgment presented by members of

the Muwékma Ohlone Tribe, reminding attendees of the ancestral lands upon which the event unfolded. Assemblymember Ash Kalra set the tone, expressing gratitude for the diverse traditions that have shaped the nation and inviting everyone to join in the celebration of Native American Heritage Month.

#### Legacy Award: Valentin Lopez

The night concluded with the presentation of the Legacy Award to Valentin Lopez, Chairman of the Amah Mutsun Land Trust. Lopez's visionary leadership in land stewardship, cultural revitalization, and environmental conservation was celebrated. His decades of service and commitment to future generations earned him the title of a true guardian of heritage and a builder of a legacy that will resonate through generations.

In honoring these outstanding individuals and organizations, Assemblymember Ash Kalra and the attendees expressed gratitude for their unwavering dedication to Native American heritage, culture, and community well-being. The event served as a poignant reminder of the importance of acknowledging and celebrating the diverse traditions that have shaped the nation.

#### Leadership in Education: Gathering of Academic Indigenous & Native Americans (GAIN)



GAIN, represented by Dr. Soma de Bourbon, Dr. Veneice Lacy-Guillory, Dr. Jodie Warren, Mr. Ryan Ward, and Ms. Elisa Aquino, received the Leadership in Education Award. The organization's commitment to advancing Native American education at San José State University was commended, highlighting the dedication of its members to inclusivity, equity, and holistic student advancement.

## Leadership in Community Service: Indian Health Center

The Indian Health Center of Santa Clara Valley was recognized for its enduring commitment to community well-being. From its roots in the Urban Indian Relocation Center in the 1960s to its current status as a Federally Qualified Health Center, the organization has exemplified resilience, compassion, and dedication to healthcare equity. (continued)



#### Seven Generations Award: Teresa Yolotl Gomez

The Seven Generations Award was presented to Teresa Yolotl Gomez, a living embodiment of the Seventh Generation Principle. Gomez's commitment to justice, transformative experiences, and advocacy for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) earned her this prestigious recognition. Her deep love for humanity was emphasized as a driving force behind her impactful work, including a groundbreaking resolution offering an overdue apology to a local tribe for genocidal policies during the Gold Rush.

#### Leadership in the Arts: Alfonso E. Salazar

The first honoree of the night was Alfonso E. Salazar, recognized for his exceptional contributions to the cultural landscape of San Jose. Born in 1962, Salazar's journey from humble beginnings picking prunes to becoming a renowned artist highlighted the intersection of heritage and art. His recent mural along the Guadalupe River, paying homage to the Muwékma Ohlone Tribe, showcased not only artistic prowess but also a deep commitment to honoring local history.

### Historic Launch of California Fruit & Vegetable EBT Program

Assemblymember Ash Kalra played a pivotal role in the official launch of the California Fruit and Vegetable EBT Pilot at Santa Fe Foods on October 3. The initiative, funded by the 2023 California budget bill, allocates \$10 million to expand the supplemental benefit program, aiding low-income families in affording fresh produce.

The pilot program, integrated into the CalFresh system, provides CalFresh participants with up to \$60 per month in rebates for purchasing eligible fruits and vegetables. Following a successful two-week "soft opening," the program is set to expand to additional grocery stores and farmers' markets across California.

**Key Points:** 

- 1) Eligibility: Open to all CalFresh recipients purchasing eligible items at participating locations.
- 2) Earning Incentives: Participants earn incentive dollars based on their spending on eligible items.
- 3) Eligible Items: Fruits and vegetables meeting specific criteria are deemed eligible.
- **4) Monthly Maximum Benefits:** Each CalFresh household can earn up to \$60 per month in incentive benefits.
- **5) Redemption Process:** Incentive benefits can be redeemed at any EBT-accepting retail location, offering flexibility in purchasing any CalFresh eligible item.

Assemblymember Ash Kalra's involvement emphasizes the commitment to addressing food insecurity, supporting local growers, and promoting healthier eating habits across California. The program's expansion holds the potential to positively impact the lives of countless individuals and families in need. "I believe that access to healthy, fresh food is a fundamental right. The California Fruit and Vegetable EBT Pilot is not just a program; it's a commitment to ensuring that every Californian, regardless of their economic circumstances, can enjoy the nourishment they need for a better quality of life."



#### Asm. Kalra Receives Dual Legislator of the Year Awards for Community



In a historic acknowledgment of his tireless advocacy and commitment to community welfare, Assemblymember Ash Kalra was awarded the prestigious Legislator of the Year honor from two distinguished organizations in San Jose—the African American Community Service Agency (AACSA) and the San Andreas Regional Center (SARC). The awards were presented at separate ceremonies, with AACSA's event on September 30, 2023, and SARC's recognition on October 28, 2023.

The AACSA celebrated its 45th-anniversary event at the Signia by Hilton under the theme "Our Past, Present, and Future, 1978-2023: The Black Resiliency and Excellence for Us." Kalra, deeply humbled by the Excellence in Advocacy Award, took the opportunity to express gratitude to the Black and African American leaders who have played pivotal roles in shaping the history of

San Jose. He emphasized the significance of historical landmarks like Barack Obama Boulevard and statues of Tommy Smith and John Carlos, pointing to the ongoing efforts to establish the Silicon Valley African American Cultural Center.

On October 28th, at the San Andreas Regional Center event, Kalra was recognized for his exemplary legislative efforts in securing funding and support for individuals with developmental disabilities. The private nonprofit organization, serving Monterey, San Benito, Santa Clara, and Santa Cruz Counties, commended Kalra for his dedication to the community and unwavering commitment to legislation that ensures the rights and well-being of those with developmental disabilities.

Receiving Legislator of the Year awards from both AACSA and SARC in the span of one month highlights the

broad impact of Kalra's advocacy, which spans diverse communities in San Jose. The dual recognition underscores the collaborative efforts between Kalra and these influential pillars of the local community. It is a testament to his ability to bridge gaps and champion causes that resonate across various sectors, bringing communities together for positive change.

Assemblymember Ash Kalra expressed gratitude for the dual honors, acknowledging the collective efforts of the communities he serves. The recognition not only applauds his individual contributions but also underscores the united spirit of San Jose in working towards a brighter and more inclusive future for all.





## Latino Leaders Dialogue: Fostering Unity and Empowerment



Assemblymember Kalra is proud to have concluded his latest quarterly Latino Leaders Dialogue. This gathering has become a cornerstone for fostering a collaborative atmosphere where Latino community leaders can connect, learn, and support each other in their shared mission of uplifting their communities.

The dialogue sessions allow Assembly-member Kalra to provide important legislative updates and receive feedback directly from the community. Equally important, it allows community leaders to showcase their initiatives and achievements, reinforcing the strength of their collective efforts.

In 2023, esteemed presenters brought a wealth of knowledge and inspiration to the

Latino Leaders Dialogue. Patricia Diaz, representing Community Health Partnerships, shared invaluable insights drawn from their experiences during the global COVID-19 crisis. Her presentation illuminated the critical work undertaken by Community Health Partnerships to prepare for future emergencies, emphasizing a just and equitable response that resonated with all attendees.

Participants also had the privilege of hearing from Jesus Flores, a passionate advocate from the Latino Business Foundation. Jesus showcased the remarkable resources his organization provides to bolster the resilience of our local economy and protect our most vulnerable small businesses. His presentation left a lasting impression on all, highlighting the importance of supporting the backbone of our community.

Additionally, Dora Beyer, a representative from Excite Credit Union, detailed the cooperative efforts between Excite Credit Union, the Latino Business Foundation, and SOMOS Mayfair to support our small businesses. Her presentation spotlighted the challenges faced by businesses affected by factors such as the lack of a social security number or poor credit history. It was a testament to the power of collaboration and innovation in addressing these critical issues.

In a special celebration for the last quarterly convening, Assemblymember Kalra cohosted a holiday party alongside La Raza Round Table and ConXion to Community. This festive occasion was graced with the honor of presenting the Assembly District 25 Legacy Award to Mr. Victor R. Garza. Mr. Garza, a true trailblazer, has



dedicated countless years to breaking barriers and serving the Latino community. His achievements symbolize the spirit of unity and resilience that defines the Latino Leaders Dialogue.

As we look forward to more engaging sessions in the coming year, we celebrate the power of collaboration, empowerment, and recognition within our vibrant Latino community. The Latino Leaders Dialogue continues to be a beacon of hope and a catalyst for positive change in Assembly District 25.

#### Green Eats & Vibrant Beats: VeggieFest 2023 Ignites Downtown San Jose



Plaza de Cesar Chavez, located in the heart of Downtown San Jose, was a hub of energy and purpose as it hosted the vibrant VeggieFest 2023. An annual tradition in Assembly District 25 co-hosted by Assemblymember Kalra and Veggielution.

The event has grown significantly since the

tradition started back in 2016 attracting a diverse mix of attendees. Many drawn by their interest in health, sustainability, and plant-based lifestyles, while others were captivated by the lively multicultural performances, the variety of vendors, and the strong sense of community spirit. The event was curated in a way where even those not initially attracted by the health and sustainability aspects would leave with a newfound appreciation for these important themes.



Assemblymember Kalra, the only vegan in the California State Legislature, shared his personal commitment and vision for VeggieFest, "As a vegan, motivated by animal welfare, environmental conservation, and personal health, I believe VeggieFest is a unique platform to promote these values. We aim to create a fun, entertaining, and delicious environment that naturally inspires attendees to explore and adopt a healthier, more sustainable way of living."

The culinary experience at VeggieFest was a major highlight, showcasing the versatility and richness of vegan cuisine. Attendees indulged in an array of global flavors, from refreshing açaí bowls adorned with fresh fruits and granola to savory plant-based dishes representing various cultures. Mexican cuisine was a stand-



out, with vegan birria, chicken, and asada tacos offering a taste of authentic flavors. Indian cuisine added its spicy and aromatic



Other delicious products to take home included delicious vegan bakery items, deli cold cuts, vegan cheese bread dry mix, cheese, energy bites, and of course, funnel cakes adding a nostalgic charm to the festival experience. (continued)

At VeggieFest 2023, the retail selection offered a delightful array of sustainable products. Shoppers found unique vegan bath essentials, cruelty-free beauty items like reusable press-on nails, and a variety of natural skincare options. The craft scene was vibrant with handcrafted crochet accessories, crystal jewelry, and artisanal soap creations. For home and garden enthusiasts, there were custom succulent arrangements, plants, and eco-friendly home goods. Fashion-conscious attendees delighted in ethically produced, vintage-inspired apparel, along with cacti-leather wallets and backpacks providing a conscious way to stay stylish. For more insights into these incredible vendors and the creative minds behind them, visit our Instagram @SJVeggieFest, where we spotlight the array of vendors featured at VeggieFest.





The stage at VeggieFest was graced by a variety of talented artists throughout the day, each contributing their unique artistic expression. Performers included Tabia African-American theatre featuring poetry, song, and dance to convey the contributions and culture of African-Americans. Tshaka Campbell, known for his thoughtprovoking poetry and spoken word, and Victoria Thuy Vi, whose multilingual singing talent earned her the title of the "Voice of San Jose." The festival also featured the vibrant energy of Bay Breeze, offering a unique musical experience with their Japanese cover songs. Mighty Mike McGee, a renowned poet and humorist, delighted the audience with his witty and insightful spoken word performances. Each artist brought their distinctive style to the festival, creating a rich and dynamic tapestry of cultural and artistic expression. The diversity of performances, from folkloric dances to contemporary music, ensured that VeggieFest was not just a celebration of plant-based living but also a showcase of the community's diverse and vibrant cultural heritage.

The array of performances was as diverse and vibrant as the festival itself, culminating in the spectacular closing performance by Las Cafeteras. This renowned band, celebrated for their unique blend of traditional Mexican music with modern rhythms, provided a fitting finale to the event. Their performance, brimming with energy and passion, not only entertained but also echoed the festival's themes of cultural identity and sustainability. As advocates of veganism, some members of Las Cafeteras added a deeper connection to the festival's ethos, making their performance a powerful blend of music, message, and shared values.

Adding to the festival's charm was the Kids Zone, a dynamic and magical area crafted especially for young visitors. This section of the festival buzzed with excitement, featuring a range of activities including a face painting station, a photo booth, and a jump house guaranteeing smiles and memorable moments.

Reflecting on VeggieFest 2023, it's evident that this event transcended the ordinary, marking a celebration of health, sustainability, and community that left an indelible mark on Plaza de Cesar Chavez. While the festival may have concluded, its spirit lives on, inspiring a commitment to a greener, more vibrant future. Be sure to follow VeggieFest's Instagram @SJVeggieFest.



## Addressing Challenges in California's Community Clinics

On January 13th, Assemblymember Ash Kalra joined local elected officials and participated in a crucial roundtable discussion with Bay Area Community Health (BACH) workers who are seeking to unionize. The discussion brought attention to the challenges faced by California's community clinics, which grapple with persistent difficulties in recruiting, training, and retaining staff, as well as the challenge of low wages all of which jeopardize healthcare quality for underserved communities.

Healthcare workers within these clinics report severe understaffing, extended wait times, inadequate resources, and burnout. The predominantly low-income communities served by these clinics deserve timely and quality care. Unfortunately, workers who speak out about hazardous conditions often face retaliation instead of support from clinic leadership.

The roundtable served as a platform to spotlight the challenges healthcare workers encounter daily and to garner support for their unionization efforts. By participating in the discussion, Assemblymember Kalra demonstrated his ongoing commitment to advocating for fair working conditions in the healthcare sector, even as



he moved on from his role as Chair of the Assembly Committee on Labor and Employment.

Addressing the systemic issues and crises faced by the community clinics that serve 7.7 million Californians annually requires increased collaboration and partnership between clinic administrators, workers, patients, and elected leaders.

#### AD25 Welcomes New Office of the United Vietnamese American Community of NorCal



In late October, Assemblymember Ash Kalra attended the grand opening ceremony of the new office of the United Vietnamese American Community of Northern California (UVACNC) and the inauguration of its newly elected Board of Directors. The advocacy organization's new office is located in Assembly District 25. The celebration kicked off with welcoming speeches from respected veterans, San Jose community leaders, elected officials, and advocates before a pleasant ribboncutting ceremony, greeted with loud cheers from all the attendees.

San José City is home to one of the largest Vietnamese overseas communities, and UVACNC has been a pivotal organization in the city, advocating for the rights of Vietnamese American community members in securing inalienable civil protection and meaningful social plat-

forms to contribute to the community's growth and well-being.

"Congratulations to the United Vietnamese American Community of Northern California on the opening of your new office and the election of your new Board of Directors!" said Assemblymember Kalra. "I look forward to continuing to partner with you to best represent the Vietnamese-American community."



CalKIDS is a new program from the State of California that provides up to \$1,500 in free money for college to eligible public school students.\* CalKIDS can help families boost their children's college savings and increase access to higher education.



To learn more and to find out if your child qualifies, visit CalKIDS.org today!





<sup>\*</sup>Student eligibility is defined by the Local Control Funding Formula.

The California Kids Investment and Development Savings Program (CalKIDS) is a children's savings account program, administered by the ScholarShare Investment Board, an agency of the State of California. CalKIDS will provide eligible participants with college savings accounts, including seed deposits and other potential incentives, to help pay for future qualified higher education expenses. To learn more about CalKIDS or opt out of the program entirely, please see the Program Information Guide at CalKIDS.org. CalKIDS participants may also establish individual accounts with ScholarShare 529, California's 529 College Savings Plan.

## Photos from Around the Capitol, the District & Beyond























### Make a Friend for Life at San José Animal Care Center!



Sassy Sally, a delightful black and white Domestic Longhair, has been patiently waiting for a home at the San José Animal Care Center since December 12, 2023. At approximately 9 years old, Sally loves playtime, lap cuddles, and relaxing by your side.

Ready to make her yours? Adoptions and fosters take place in person at the Animal Care Center, conveniently located at 2750 Monterey Road in San José. Adoption hours are from noon to 4:00 p.m. on Monday, 10:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, and 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. Please note that adoptions and fosters are processed on a first-come, first-served basis. Adoption fees cover spay/neuter, vaccinations, microchipping, and a one-year license.

Adding a pet to your family is a significant decision that requires careful consideration. While the joy of having a loyal friend is unparalleled, it's essential to recognize the commitment and responsibilities that come with pet ownership. Before deciding to adopt, think about the training and commitment required to provide a loving home for Sassy Sally or any other pet!





## Contact Us!

Want to sign up for the newsletter?

Please email Celeste Walker at <u>celeste.walker@asm.ca.gov.</u>







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We've moved!



#### **State Agencies Contact Information**

Aging Alcoholic Beverage Control Board of Equalization Bureau of Automotive Repair California Courts California Highway Patrol Caltrans Child Supportive Services Civil Rights Department Consumer Affairs Controller's Office Developmental Services Employment Development Fair Political Practices Commission Fish & Wildlife Food & Agriculture Health Care Services High Speed Rail Authority Insurance Motor Vehicles Parks & Recreation Public Health Rehabilitation Secretary of State Social Services Toxic Substances Control Veterans Affairs	(916) 419-2500 (800) 400-7115 (800) 952-5210 (415) 865-4200 (800) 835-5247 (916) 654-2852 (866) 901-3212 (800) 884-1684 (800) 952-5210 (916) 445-3028 (916) 654-1690 (800) 300-5616 (916) 322-5660 (916) 445-0411 (916) 654-0466 (916) 445-1248 (916) 324-1541 (800) 927-4357 (800) 777-0369 (916) 558-1784 (916) 324-1313 (916) 653-6814 (916) 651-8848 (800) 728-6942 (800) 952-5626
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