

MID-YEAR IMPACT REPORT 2023

Making an Impact on California

Impact. It's what we hope to achieve with our journalism, improving California's democracy and making the Golden State a better place to live.

It's also tricky to measure and track. When a legislator cites our work as the impetus behind a new bill or a regulation changes because of a CalMatters story, that's clear, direct impact we see. When a librarian or high school civics teacher uses our stories to spark in-depth discussions that prompt people to take action on crucial issues, that's impact we can't track. But we love knowing that it's happening.

In this report, we feature examples we've collected of the impact we do see: Reporting that made a difference as well as unique programs that support journalism and information access for more Californians.

This work is all made possible by our members, grantmakers, and sponsors, and we're tremendously grateful for that support. Thank you.



Neil Chase, CEO



John Boland, Board Chair

FIRST RESPONDER LEGISLATION INTRODUCED

Following Julie Cart's [landmark series](#) on the mental health crisis facing California's firefighters, Senator John Laird, a Democrat from Santa Cruz, [introduced a bill](#) that would expand workers' compensation coverage for first responders experiencing post-traumatic stress. Laird said the CalMatters series "set the context" for his bill.



Cal Fire firefighter. Photo by Josh Edelson, AP Photo

CLEAN ENERGY PRODUCTION QUESTIONED

Nadia Lopez produced an [in-depth report](#) on whether state agencies can amp up the state's electric grid quickly enough to support 12.5 million more electric vehicles by 2035 or move us to solar and wind energy in the following decade. During a legislative hearing, Assembly member Vince Fong cited Nadia's report and challenged the California Air Resources Board's contention that it can meet the state's deadlines.

FLOODPLAIN FUNDING RESTORED

Governor Newsom restored floodplain funding in his budget proposal after CalMatters water reporter Alastair Bland [revealed widespread criticism](#) from an unlikely alliance of bipartisan legislators, local leaders, and conservationists in the San Joaquin Valley. They all said the cuts jeopardized the region’s low-income, disadvantaged farm towns and the city of Stockton.



Rains from January storms swell the San Joaquin River on Jan. 24, 2023. Photo courtesy of River Partners

CAMPAIGN FINANCE PROBE INITIATED

A [CalMatters investigation](#) by Ben Christopher, Alexei Koseff, and Jeremia Kimelman sparked a probe by the Fair Political Practices Commission into whether the political donor network Govern for California violated campaign contribution rules.

POLICE SHOOTING INVESTIGATIONS EXPANDED

After reporter Nigel Duara revealed that the state’s [Department of Justice failed to investigate](#) or log all reported incidents of fatal police shootings of unarmed civilians as required, the agency said it would stop focusing only on what it called “qualifying events” and instead review all cases referred by local police agencies.

“I found that CalMatters materials can help librarians looking to connect Spanish speakers with fact-based news, engage Californians with policy issues that affect their lives and increase civic engagement.”

— Ana Villalpando, Long Beach Public Library

MENTALLY ILL PRISONER TRANSFERS TRACKED

A member of the California Rehabilitation Oversight Board cited reporting by Byrhonda Lyons and Jocelyn Wiener when urging the corrections department to track and share data on how frequent transfers affect prisoners with mental illness. Byrhonda and Jocelyn’s data analysis showed that [inmates needing the highest level of mental health treatment](#) were three times more likely to be moved than other prisoners.



Outlines of the Madera Community Hospital sign. Photo by Larry Valenzuela, CalMatters/CatchLight Local

HOSPITAL MERGER LEGISLATION INTRODUCED

Ana Ibarra and Nicole Foy’s reporting on the [closure of Madera County’s only general services hospital](#) was cited in the introduction of a state Senate bill that would make it easier for non-profit hospitals and for-profit business entities to merge.

IMPACTING THE NEXT GENERATION

Earth Day op-ed contest. In April, our Earth Day op-ed contest attracted commentaries from middle and high school students statewide. One school, Thomas S. Hart Middle School in Pleasanton, submitted 37 student entries. To prepare students, we hosted two free webinars on opinion writing and gave participants live feedback on their pitches. [Read excerpts from some of the outstanding submissions.](#)

CalMatters for Learning. As part of our ongoing effort to reach more Californians – especially youth – we launched a [free learning hub](#) for library staff, educators, and community organizers. It provides teaching resources and unique tools to guide conversations about quality-of-life issues.

High School Journalism Program. To increase engagement in democracy and improve readiness for college and careers, we created a unique program to support high school journalism in underserved communities. We're developing the next generation of journalists while filling a need for local reporting in those areas.

AWARDS

FIRST PLACE GENERAL EXCELLENCE & 7 OTHER AWARDS

California Journalism Awards

FIRST PLACE CONSUMER FEATURE REPORTING, KRISTEN HWANG

Association Of Health Care Journalists

FOUR FIRST PLACE AWARDS INCLUDING DAILY CAPITOL COVERAGE, ALEXEI KOSEFF

Sacramento Press Club

TWO FIRST PLACE AWARDS

2023 Best of the West



PUBLISHER'S CIRCLE DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Leif Wellington Haase

What motivates your support for nonprofit journalism?

Good state and local journalism is the lifeblood of democracy. It holds elected officials accountable, explains complex policy issues in meaningful ways, and shines a light on the things government does well-- a rarity in this day and age. With older revenue models crumbling, non-profit journalism is the only realistic model for achieving these goals.

What do you appreciate the most about CalMatters?

CalMatters exemplifies non-profit journalism at its best. Its writers and staff are first-rate, it chooses stories wisely and sticks with them, and its website is easy to navigate. Knowing what is going on in Sacramento and around the state is vital not only for Californians but for readers around the world. That's why I support CalMatters.



Leif Wellington Haase
Author, Political Consultant,
Health Care Expert

Live Journalism Returns

We're returning to public, live-journalism events in 2023 with two series designed to engage, inform, and expand our audience.

Sacramento Sessions: These one-hour events feature a Sacramento newsmaker in conversation with one of our journalists on a hot topic in the capital city. They're hybrid so that movers and shakers can be in our CalMatters Studio to experience the event live or tune in from around the state to stay in the know on what's being done in Sacramento.

CalMatters Live: These larger events around the state focus on an issue that matters to the local community – from housing and homelessness to electric vehicle charging infrastructure to public and mental health investments. They feature a panel of speakers moderated by a CalMatters leader and are available both in person and online.

Watch for details in our newsletters or on our [Events page](#).

NEW EDITOR

Kristen Go

Kristen Go is CalMatters' new editor-in-chief, bringing extensive experience in high-quality local and national journalism to our eight-year-old nonprofit newsroom. Born and raised in California's Central Valley, Go joins CalMatters from USA TODAY, where she was vice president and executive editor for news and initiatives.

Go succeeds founding editor Dave Leshner, who is staying at CalMatters and will lead The Accountability Desk, our artificial intelligence driven effort to transform government accountability reporting.



Kristen Go
Editor-in-chief

CalMatters depends on the generous support of people just like you. For information on how you can improve California's democracy, go to calmatters.org/gifts or contact Kate Looby, Chief Development Officer, at kate@calmatters.org.