

# ANNUAL REPORT 2025



*fresnoland*

# LETTER FROM THE FOUNDER & BOARD CHAIR

Readers, supporters, and friends of Fresnoland – it has been a year. It's hard not to bump into someone I know around town who has felt the heaviness of 2025, from the dramatic shift in immigration enforcement by the Trump Administration, to the escalating cost of food, housing, energy, healthcare – well, it seems like everything, right now.

And while our role is to bear witness to difficult times, inside our newsroom, we also feel strongly: it's an important time to highlight stories of community resilience and solutions.

In 2025, we've doubled down on our approach to covering stories of residents leading the charge to improve their neighborhoods for the better. This year, we were especially interested in continuing to cover communities underrepresented in the news, particularly in the neighborhoods west of 99, that some people have referred to as 'Forgotten Fresno.' We launched a regular profile series called 'Around Fresnoland,' where we write about the extraordinary people who are doing interesting things around the city.

We're also incredibly proud of our investigative reporting on the proposed Southeast Development Area plan this past year, which has kept the public attention on the gaping costs from the sprawling mega-development impacting residents in Fresno's older neighborhoods.

Our event series, Fresnoland Futures, also featured two high-profile panels this year, bringing gubernatorial candidate Antonio Villaraigosa to talk about transit and light rail, and high-speed rail CEO Ian Choudri (along with our Mayor, Jerry Dyer and Assemblymember Joaquin Arambula) to talk about the future of the state's massive infrastructure project.

This past year, we grew to six full-time staff reporters, adding (Fowler High alum) Diego Vargas to our roster as our first-ever reporter covering education equity. We promoted Omar S. Rashad in October to serve as both an Assistant Editor and Investigative Reporter, where he's supporting Diego to grow our coverage of Fresno Unified to chip at a core question from our readers: how can we improve student outcomes in our state's third largest school district?

We've also expanded our beats to include immigration, with Gisselle Medina and Omar S. Rashad leading the charge.

And we've found ways to grow our audience this past year, even as ChatGPT has begun to step into people's news consumption habits, with well over a half-million visitors to our site. We just crossed 10,000 followers on Instagram the first week of 2026, nearly doubling our audience.

In 2026, we're bracing for another tumultuous year. We'll continue to cover the midterm elections with local voices and local impacts top of mind, getting candidates beyond sloganeering and into concrete policy statements. And our approach to reporting on elections will continue to evolve, as we dive deeper into creative ways to keep local democracy alive.

We couldn't do this without our generous community of funders and donors, who continue to show up and believe in Fresnoland in more and more numbers each year. Thank you for your continued partnership!



**DANIELLE BERGSTROM,  
FOUNDER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
& EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**



**KATHLEEN SCHOCK,  
BOARD PRESIDENT**

# OUR AUDIENCE

We continued to expand our audience across all platforms in 2025. Unique visitors to our website grew to over 540,000, about 13% more visitors than the year prior. We published 405 original stories.

We grew the size of our Instagram audience by over 90% over the course of the year and surpassed 10,000 followers in the first week of 2026. Our top 12 posts on the platform in 2025 collectively received over 28,000 likes and 1.6 million views. The most popular post of the year on Instagram—about ICE detaining immigrants at permanent resident appointments in Fresno – was viewed by nearly a million people.

Our audience remains hyperlocal to Fresno and young, with over half under the age of 55.



Credit: Gisselle Medina / Fresnoland

**540K**

**405**

**80%**

**90%**

Unique site visitors

Original stories published

Increase in newsletter subscribers to daily newsletter, Toplines

Growth in Instagram followers, which crossed 10,000 the first week of 2026



Credit: Omar S. Rashad / Fresnoland

## OUR IMPACT

Fresnoland was founded on the premise that journalism shouldn't be seen as neutral, but rather as a tool to bring about a more equitable and just future for all in Fresno and Madera Counties. News isn't just about informing residents, it's about equipping them with the information they need to become better advocates for their own communities and to hold their leaders accountable.



# HOUSING

- After four years of reporting on the efforts of the residents of La Hacienda Mobile Estates and their advocates to prevent mass evictions and secure community ownership, they've finally secured community ownership – via Self-Help Enterprises, a Visalia-based affordable housing developer – with the city's support and backing. Fresnoland was proud to attend a community celebration in November where residents and attorneys recounted the myriad of hoops they've jumped through to prevent mass evictions at the whim of the former owners and receivers of the property.
- Omar S. Rashad's reporting on the eviction protection program has kept the city's last-remaining pandemic-era policy protecting renters in the public eye this year, as Councilmember Tyler Maxwell swatted down some challenges to the program meant to restrict its use to just lower-income residents.

*Page 6 photo: Wickey Two Hands, 77, was the first person prosecuted under the city's new anti-encampment ordinance. He is pictured following his case's dismissal in April 2025.*

*Page 7 photo: A resident of the 4080 N Blackstone facility watches over a news conference between city and county officials, in which they touted a new partnership to tackle homelessness.*

*Credit: Pablo Orihuela / Fresnoland*

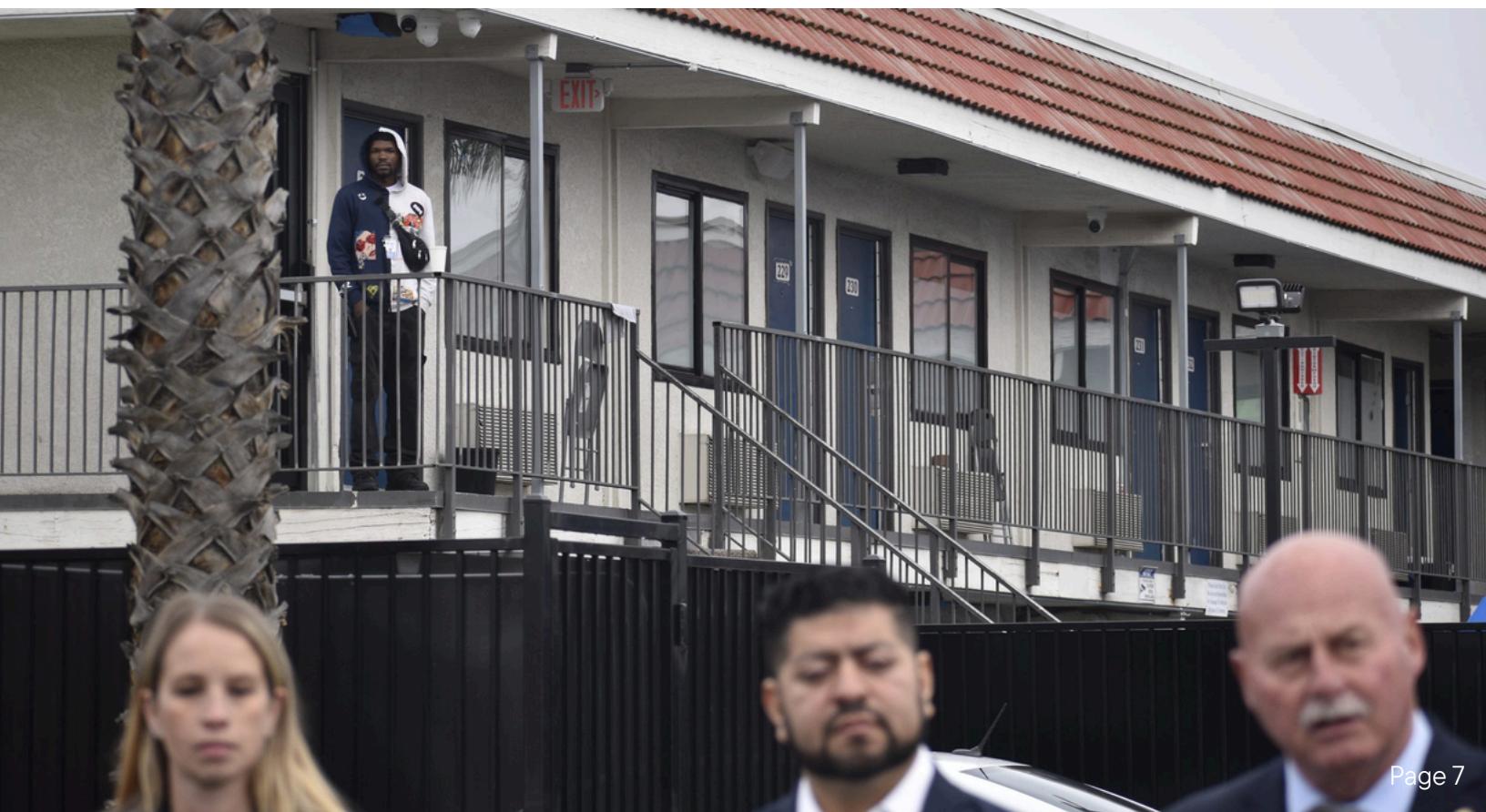
*Page 6*

■ Pablo Orihuela broke the news back in July that two of the city's homeless shelters were scheduled to close by the end of 2025, with no plan of return – sparking public dialogue about how the city avoids a situation where hundreds of homeless people return to the streets. City and county officials continue to meet behind closed doors to develop a shared homelessness strategy, but no details have been shared yet. Fresnoland continues to push public officials for a clearer response.

■ Pablo also was the first to report about Wickey Two Hands, the homeless man who was the city's first (and failed) prosecution under their anti-camping ban, sparking dialogue about the best – and most humane – ways to reduce homelessness.

Our team also prevailed in fighting back against the City Attorney's office, which attempted to serve Pablo Orihuela with a subpoena during his coverage of the case; a clear violation of our rights as reporters in California.

■ His reporting earlier in the year also highlighted how small businesses feel like the controversial anti-camping law has helped curb vandalism and nuisances that have affected their operations, provoking debate about how complicated the issue is for local residents.





## ENVIRONMENT & LAND

After Gregory Weaver reported on the myriad of infrastructure costs in the city's proposed Southeast Development Area for well over two years, city leaders made a major pivot in late December, deciding to punt a decision on the project until a fiscal impact analysis was completed for the first phase, known as 'South SEDA.'

His final story on SEDA, published just days before the city council's decision, used demographic forecasts to show how the plan's buildout could result in school closures, leading senior officials and trustees to come out in opposition to the plan.

Over 200 residents showed up at City Hall that December evening in opposition to SEDA; the largest turnout of residents on any policy issue in Fresno in more than a decade, since the general plan and bus rapid transit debates of 2014.

*Page 8 photo: More than 150 Fresno residents packed council chambers inside Fresno City Hall during the Nov. 19, 2025 planning commission meeting to oppose the Southeast Development Area plan.*

*Credit: Omar S. Rashad / Fresnoland*

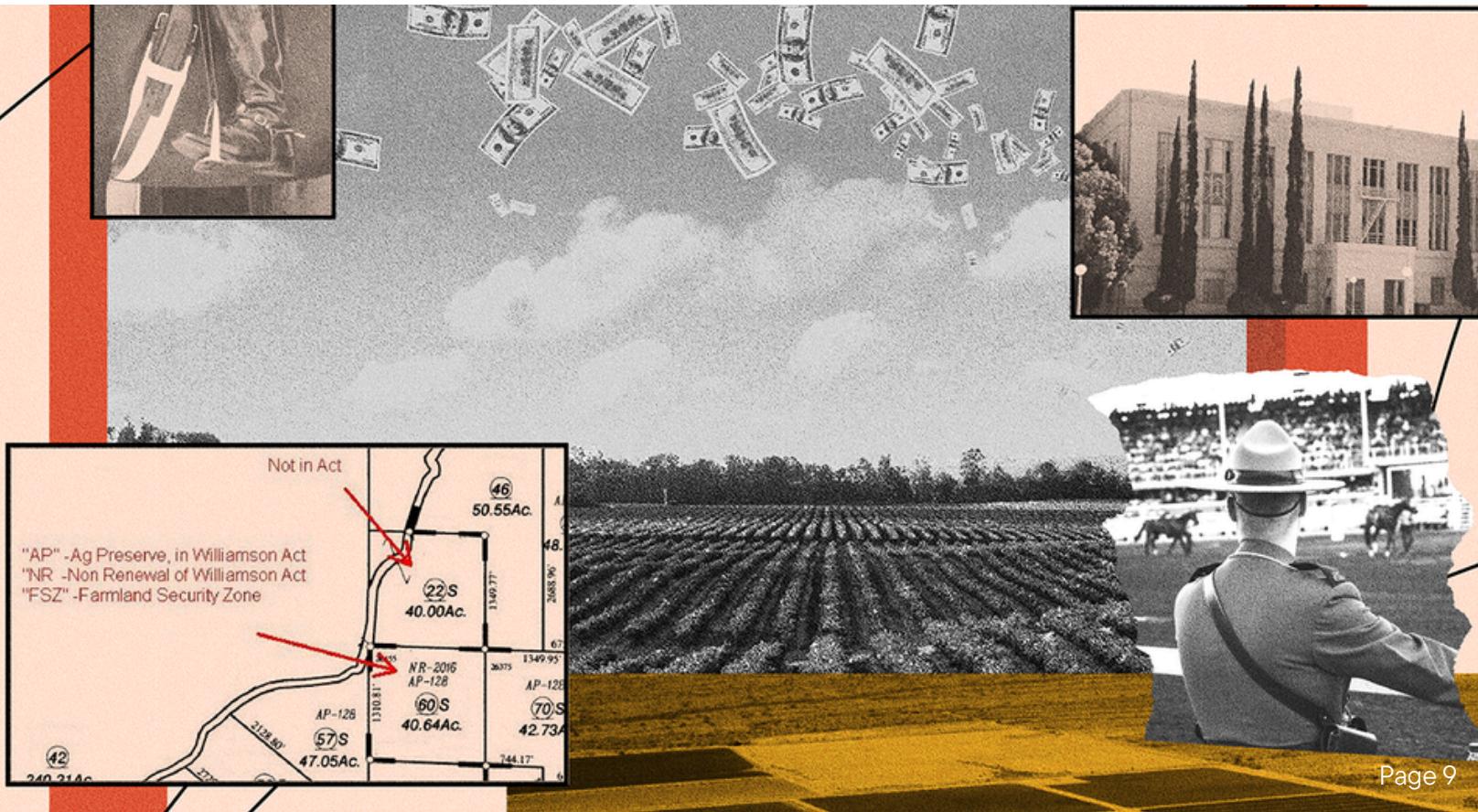
*Page 9 graphic: Created by Von Balanon for Gregory Weaver's Williamson Act investigation.*

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Gregory's reporting on how the Williamson Act – an obscure tax policy meant to protect small farmers from converting their land to suburban development – showed how hedge funds and mega-corporations are benefitting to the tune of tens of millions of dollars, with land dozens of miles from the largest suburb. As a result, one county supervisor called for a closer look at the county's program, and a state working group recommended the governor call for a task force to evaluate whether the Williamson Act serves its purpose.

And, his reporting on the proposed blast mine on the San Joaquin River from multinational corporation CEMEX – and the details about how the proposal could affect flooding and water quality nearby, contradicting the company's claims – was cited by local officials, with Assemblymember Joaquin Arambula proposing legislation (which ultimately failed) to stop the mine proposal, and Mayor Jerry Dyer coming out in opposition to it.

Finally, his examination of how regulators slowed down a prescribed burn in the Teakettle Experimental Forest – which was ultimately scarred during September's Garnet Fire – has spurred dialogue amongst forestry policy wonks about the role the Forest Service has and should play in hyperlocal decision-making.





# LABOR, BUSINESS & HEALTH CARE

- After two years of reporting on IHSS' workers attempts in Fresno County to secure a raise for their workforce of about 25,000 domestic caretakers, Julianna Morano was able to report in April that their union had successfully snagged a \$1.25 per hour raise, along with greater healthcare benefits for some members. Fresnoland was the only local outlet consistently reporting on the issue.
- Julianna's nuanced reporting on why local hire provisions for large public contracts haven't been as successful as envisioned, has contributed to an ongoing public dialogue about how project labor agreements from local governments can be better designed to support Fresno residents' economic mobility.
- Omar S. Rashad's reporting also illuminated the acute challenges that the over half of Fresno County residents that rely on MediCal face as federal cuts loom.

■ Fresnoland's reporting on the challenges faced by street vendors this year culminated in a story in November from Pablo Orihuela that shed light on the confusion in that community after a ban was proposed on vendors in the Tower District. Councilmembers quickly pulled back from a full ban, and instead proposed to increase fines on vendors who operate without permits.



Page 10 photo: Statewide nonprofit Disability Voices United organized a rally outside U.S. Rep. Vince Fong's Clovis field office. The protesters called on the Republican Congressman to save Medicaid amid threatened cuts.

Credit: Julianna Morano / Fresnoland

Page 11 photo: Food truck, Tacos Ah Carbon, pictured on a Saturday night in the Tower District.

Credit: Pablo Orihuela / Fresnoland

Page 12 photo: Protesters outside the downtown Fresno ISAP office voiced their opposition to President Donald Trump's deportation plans and supported undocumented immigrants who showed up for their ISAP check-ins.

Credit: Omar S. Rashad / Fresnoland



# IMMIGRATION

- Gisselle's story in November reporting that ICE is now detaining people attending appointments in Fresno to obtain permanent residency had a large impact on our audience. It went viral on Instagram, with over 985,000 views. It has been a part of a larger conversation nationally about who ICE is actually targeting – and not necessarily going after people with serious criminal records, but instead those that are following the rules to legally integrate into society.
- Our reporting this year also covered a second failed attempt by advocates and residents in the local Punjabi community to secure state legislation that would train law enforcement on acts of transnational repression. Gisselle's reporting illuminated how a meeting between Indian state sympathizers and Fresno law enforcement preceded some attempted intimidation of Fresno-based activists in the Punjabi Sikh community.
- Fresnoland was also the first – and only – news organization to report on ICE's first arrests in Fresno in June, with a story by Omar S. Rashad. The story also detailed how the arrests were made by masked agents who did not identify themselves, sparking local discussion and reaction from law enforcement officials about the harm that practice can cause.



# RELIGION, CULTURE & NEIGHBORHOODS

■ This year, Gisselle's reporting explored the under-discussed topic of mandatory reporting, or how churches handle sexual abuse claims, sparking conversations about how churches and local faith leaders can do a better job of not sweeping these issues under the rug.

Their reporting on how some Fresno congregations are exploring becoming 'Sanctuary Churches' for immigrants seeking refuge from ICE raids prompted more discussion locally amongst the faith community about their role in immigration enforcement and supporting immigrants and refugees.

*Page 13 photo: Children playing on claw machines during Yosemite Middle School's Hmong New Year celebration.*

*Credit: Gisselle Medina / Fresnoland*

*Page 14 photo: Dozens of children enjoyed the new playground at Broadway Parque, which celebrated its opening in Fresno's South Tower neighborhood last summer.*

*Credit: Julianna Morano / Fresnoland*

This past year, Julianna has led the charge to dive deeper into stories of residents and communities taking control of their neighborhoods. From artists and activists building new parks and murals in the South Tower, to how artists are helping resurrect memory-building in a public art project in West Fresno, she's been on a mission to surface underreported stories that make us proud to be Fresnans.

Those stories have been a favorite amongst readers, flooding our inboxes with comments of appreciation for seeing their hard work, creativity, and resilience represented in local media.



DATE RECEIVED

FULL NAME, MAILING ADDRESS  
AND ZIP CODE OF CONTRIBUTOR  
(IF COMMITTEE, ALSO ENTER I.D. NUMBER)CUMULATIVE TO DATE  
CALENDAR YEAR  
(JAN. 1 - DEC. 31)

5/31/2024

FrontPoint Partners LLC - Cynthia Mitchell  
Newport Beach, CA 92660

\$10,000.00



City of

**FRESNO****2023 Lobbyist Registration Report**

Lobbyist	Company
Alex Tavlian	Frontpoint Partners, LLC

**Schedule A (Continuation Sheet)  
Monetary Contributions Received**

NAME OF FILER

Elizabeth Jonasson for Fresno City Council District 5, 2025

DATE RECEIVED

FULL NAME, STREET ADDRESS AND ZIP CODE OF CONTRIBUTOR  
(IF COMMITTEE, ALSO ENTER I.D. NUMBER)CUMULATIVE TO DATE  
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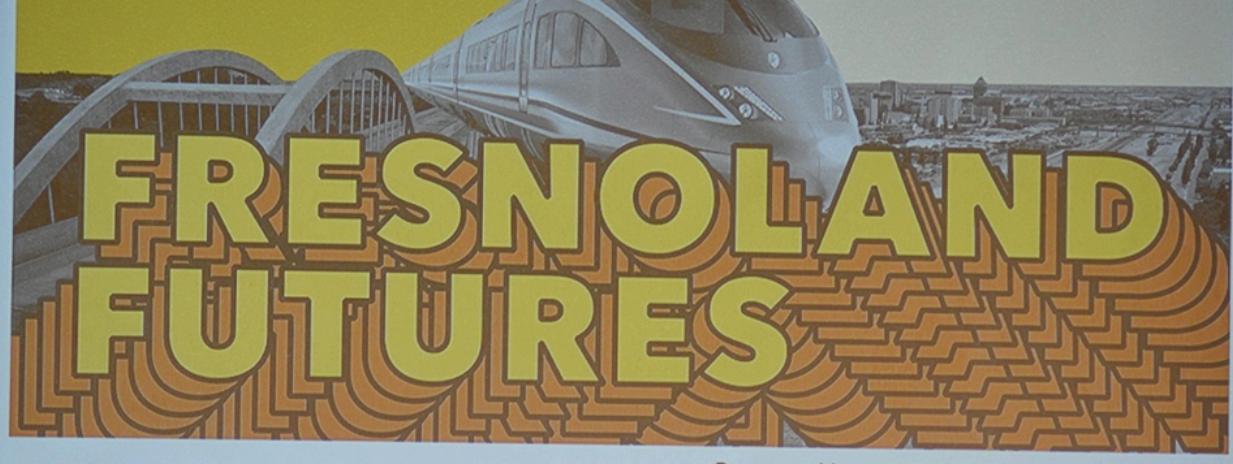
# GOVERNMENT

- Fresnoland was the first local outlet to report on the existence of dark money in local elections, with Omar S. Rashad's reporting on how an Orange County-based company connected to a Fresno political consultant was funneling money into city council and county supervisor campaigns. Our reporting has provided an unparalleled level of transparency and scrutiny to local campaign finance decisions. The political consultant in question is currently under investigation by the Fair Political Practices Commission.
- Omar also reported new information this past year that shed some light on attempts by the Fresno City Council to avoid disclosure of their secret budget committee that may be in violation of the state's transparency law, the Brown Act. The litigation against the city – as a result of Fresnoland's initial investigation – is ongoing.



# EDUCATION

- Gregory Weaver's bombshell story in late December on how the city's proposed Southeast Development Area plan could result in as many as 11 school closures in Fresno Unified spurred a public debate over the value of SEDA and also highlighted the district's growing enrollment challenges.
- In Diego Vargas' first few months as our new education reporter, his reporting has helped uncover how immigration enforcement fears have impacted attendance levels in Fresno Unified – and explored how administrators and teachers have found success at Hoover and McLane high schools to improve English literacy after a few years in a slump.
- On our podcast, we dove in deep with Fresno Unified Superintendent Misty Her on her plans to dramatically improve student achievement in the state's third largest school district, and talked with the district's head of social services to better understand the creative ways the district of nearly 70,000 students is trying to keep students at school.



## EVENTS & PODCAST

- This year, Fresnoland brought several prominent leaders from across California to speak at our two Fresnoland Futures events. In April, we hosted a conversation about the future of California's high-speed rail project with rail authority CEO Ian Choudri, Mayor Jerry Dyer, Assemblymember Joaquin Arambula, and CalMatters Editor Yousef Baig, drawing nearly 200 people to Fresno City College.
- In October, Fresnoland hosted former Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa to talk about the future of light rail in Fresno, along with Fresno City Councilmember Miguel Arias, drawing a standing-room only crowd of 90 people at Tioga-Sequoia.
- In 2025, the Fresnolandia podcast continued to grow, to about 400 downloads average per episode. The show regularly features experts and local leaders who are driving the news, and we're now being requested to feature local and state leaders who want to reach Fresno audiences with their message.



# RECOGNITION OF OUR WORK

- Omar's 2024 investigation into Valley Childrens' Hospital was awarded the first place prize for best news story in the [George F. Gruner Awards](#) at Fresno State. His reporting found that the nonprofit hospitals' community investments stagnated even as their profits and excess revenues reached record levels after the pandemic.
- Gregory Weaver won an honorable mention at the Gruner Awards in the writing category for a story about a record-breaking legal settlement regarding TCP contamination in Fresno drinking water. And Pablo Orihuela and Omar S. Rashad also won an honorable mention in the best feature category for their complex examination of a homeless encampment being torn down.
- Fresnoland took home ten awards from the [2025 California Journalism Awards](#), a contest put on by the California News Publishers' Association, including five first place finishes.

# AWARDS

## GEORGE F. GRUNER AWARDS

- First Place, Best News Story: 'Very, very unusual.' Is Valley Children's taking more than it's giving back? | Omar S. Rashad
- Honorable Mention, Best Feature: 'Where the hell can we go?' Fresno's unhoused residents brace for arrests ahead of new laws | Omar S. Rashad & Pablo Orihuela
- Honorable Mention, Best Writing: 'It's horrible.' Fresno's record-breaking settlement highlights region's larger drinking water problem | Gregory Weaver

## CALIFORNIA JOURNALISM AWARDS

- First Place, Investigative News Story: 'Very, very unusual.' Is Valley Children's taking more than it's giving back? | Omar S. Rashad
- First Place, Housing & Homelessness: 'Where the hell can we go?' Fresno's unhoused residents brace for arrests ahead of new laws | Omar S. Rashad & Pablo Orihuela
- First Place, Community Focus: 'We need more places like this in Fresno.' LGBTQ+ groups fight discrimination as second Trump term looms | Gisselle Medina
- First Place, Newsletter: This Week in Fresnoland, 'The outrage over Valley Childrens' exec salaries, explained'
- First Place, Podcast: Fresnolandia, 'Homelessness is a housing problem'
- Second Place, Public Service & Second Place, Education: Ventana Hills series | Julianna Morano
- Second Place, Writing & Third Place, Enterprise News: 'It's horrible.' Fresno's record-breaking settlement highlights region's larger drinking water problem | Gregory Weaver
- Third Place, Religion: How the 2x2 sect silenced Central Valley sexual abuse survivors and their fight for justice across the globe | Gisselle Medina

# OUR TEAM

## **DANIELLE BERGSTROM**

Founder, Executive Director & Editor-in-Chief

## **ROB PARSONS**

Senior Editor

## **ISABEL SANTOS-GONZALEZ**

Director of Operations

## **OMAR S. RASHAD**

Investigative Reporter & Assistant Editor

## **GREGORY WEAVER**

Environment Reporter

## **GISSELLE MEDINA**

Religion, Culture & Immigration Reporter

## **JULIANNA MORANO**

Labor & Economy Reporter

## **PABLO ORIHUELA**

Housing Reporter

## **DIEGO VARGAS**

Education Reporter

# OUR BOARD

## **KATHLEEN SCHOCK**

Board President, Fresno City College

## **AMBER CROWELL**

Secretary, Fresno State

## **MICHAEL MANJARREZ**

Treasurer, Whelan Financial

## **CHRISTINE BARKER**

Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries (FIRM)

## **KIMBERLY GIBSON**

UC Merced

## **MIKE OSEGUEDA**

Fresno Street Eats

# OUR FINANCES

## ■ INCOME

We closed the 24/25 fiscal year with a \$821,000 budget – up almost \$100,000 from the last fiscal year.

FY24/25

**\$821K**

FY23/24

**\$730K**

## ■ MEMBERSHIP

We've seen a significant expansion of reader revenue this past year. We increased the number of individual donors by 63% from 2024, with 476 donors in 2025. Our board of directors hosted our first in-person fundraiser in years, which raised nearly \$9,000 for our work. And we surpassed our initial goal of raising \$15,000 during our end-of-year Newsmatch campaign, raising over \$28,000 in the final months of the year.

Finally, monthly memberships – an important source of revenue for our sustainability – grew by 24%.

## ■ EXPENSES

Fresnoland is a lean operation, with the vast majority of our budget going directly towards paying salaries, benefits, and indirect costs associated with our staff – media liability insurance, website hosting, tech subscriptions for our operations, and office space.

Members

**235**

% budget for editorial

**73%**

Individual donors, 2025

**476**

% budget for fundraising/ops

**11.5%**

2025 reader revenue

**\$88,000**

% indirect

**15.5%**

2025 sponsorship revenue

**\$18,500**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We'd like to extend a special thank you to the foundations, organizations, donors, and members who support our work, and without whom all of this would not be possible.

The James B. McClatchy Foundation

The Kresge Foundation

The California Endowment

Rose Foundation for Communities and the Environment

The California Wellness Foundation

The Miami Foundation / NewsMatch

The Central Valley Community Foundation

The Campbell Foundation

Report for America / The GroundTruth Project

The Central Valley Journalism Collaborative

All In for Democracy Fund at The James McClatchy Foundation

The James Irvine Foundation

LION Publishers

Paul Gibson and Joan Eaton

Allyson Darakjian

La Siembra Fund at the Central Valley Community Foundation

Marianne Kast

Kimberly Gibson

Carey and Kathleen Schock

And our community of local donors and members

