

THE COUNTY

BLADE



VOLUME 41, NO. 2

FEBRUARY 2026

YOU BELONG HERE GETTING INVOLVED WITH SLOCEA IS EASIER THAN YOU THINK

FIND FEATHERS!



SLOCEA's mascot, **FEATHERS**, is hidden somewhere in this month's edition of The County Blade!

The **FIRST FIVE** SLOCEA members to find Feathers win a **\$5 JAMBA JUICE GIFT CARD!**

Email INFO@SLOCEA.ORG with the page number where you found Feathers for a chance to win!



BEHIND THE SHELVES

WHAT TO DO IF YOU DISAGREE WITH YOUR PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

NEW LAWS FOR 2026

SLOCEA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

— SLOCEA MISSION STATEMENT —

The mission of the San Luis Obispo County Employees' Association is to advocate for fair compensation, safe working conditions, affordable healthcare, and a secure retirement for our members, who provide vital services to the public.

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

Nate Larsen

PRESIDENT

Dept. of Social Services, Seat 1

Norma Domingo

VICE PRESIDENT

Public Health, Seat 2

VACANT

SECRETARY/TREASURER

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Jeannette Rivera

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Dept. of Social Services, Seat 6

VACANT

Seat 7

Ryan Barney

Veteran's Services, Seat 8

Chelsea Hendron

Public Services, Seat 9

B.U. #2 TRADES, CRAFTS & SERVICES UNIT

VACANT

Seat 10

Ben Franco

Airports, Seat 11

B.U. #5 SUPERVISORY UNIT

Tim Faes

Parks, Seat 12

B.U. #13 CLERICAL UNIT

Crissie Danley

Sheriff-Coroner's Office, Seat 13

Arlene Hernandez-Tapia

Behavioral Health, Seat 14

COURT SUPERVISORY UNIT

VACANT

Seat 15

LOS OSOS CSD

Carol Gilmer

LOCSO, Seat 16

AT LARGE

VACANT

Seat 17

VACANT

Seat 18

VACANT

Seat 19

THE COUNTY BLADE

SLOCEA

San Luis Obispo County Employees' Association

605 Santa Rosa St.

San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

Phone 805-543-2021

E-mail: INFO@SLOCEA.ORG

WWW.SLOCEA.ORG

OFFICERS

Nate Larsen

President

Norma Domingo

Vice President

VACANT

Secretary/Treasurer

STAFF

Emily Landis

Executive Director

Brooke Daphne

Labor Representative II

Jennifer Tate

Labor Representative I

Carrie McGrath

Labor Representative I

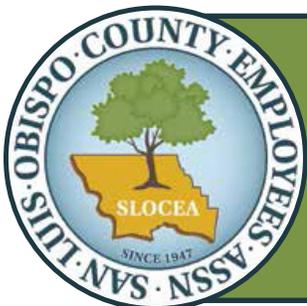
Briana Dickey

Office Administrator

The opinions expressed in **The County Blade** do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the **San Luis Obispo County Employees' Association** unless so specified.

For advertising information, please call Tana Pigeon at 951-686-7575.

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**HAVE A QUESTION?
CALL SLOCEA
805-543-2021**

Cover Image: Shell Beach at Pismo Beach.
Photo Credit: tupungato via iStock by Getty Images.

You Belong Here

Getting Involved With SLOCEA

Is Easier Than You Think

Emily Landis,
Executive Director



When people hear “union involvement,” it can sound intimidating—like you need to know all the rules, have endless free time, or already be deeply involved before you even raise your hand.

That’s not how it works at SLOCEA. Most members who get involved start in the same place: they care about their coworkers, they want things to be fair, and they’re curious about how they can help. From there, SLOCEA provides training, support, and community to help members step into roles that fit their interests, availability, and comfort level.

Former SLOCEA Secretary-Treasurer Kathleen Curits-Ames reflected on her many years volunteering with the Association and how that involvement shaped her experience as a County employee.

“Being involved in various

committees showed me how important it was to support our union. After serving on several committees as a steward and then taking a role as a director, my confidence grew.”

Kathleen shared that serving as a director, negotiating team member, and committee member gave her a deep sense of pride in the work SLOCEA does and the process members use to advocate for one another, work that continues to benefit employees long after her retirement.

VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP IS THE HEART OF A STRONG UNION

Volunteer involvement is a cornerstone of a strong association. While staff handle day-to-day operations and representation, it’s member leaders—stewards and board members—who help keep SLOCEA grounded in the real experiences of the workplace.

Still, many members hesitate before getting involved. We hear the same concerns often, so let’s talk honestly for a minute.

“I DON’T KNOW ENOUGH.”

That’s okay, you’re not expected to. No one joins as an expert. Learning happens along the way, and training, mentorship, and staff support are built into every role. Questions are welcomed, and curiosity is a strength.

“I DON’T HAVE THE TIME.”

Involvement isn’t one-size-fits-all. Some roles are light-touch, some are more structured, and many can

flex around work schedules, family responsibilities, and different seasons of life.

“I’M NOT SURE I’D FIT IN.”

There’s no single type of “union person.” SLOCEA leaders and volunteers come from many departments, classifications, and backgrounds. What they share is a belief that looking out for one another—and having a voice at the table—matters.

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED (BIG AND SMALL)

WORKSITE STEWARDS

Stewards are often the first friendly, familiar face coworkers turn to with questions or concerns.

Stewards help by:

- Sharing timely information and updates
- Connecting members with union support and resources
- Bringing workplace issues, trends, and ideas forward

Stewards attend a brief Zoom meeting every other month over the lunch hour to stay informed, ask questions, and build relationships with stewards from other worksites.

For Steward Crystal Cullen, the biggest hesitation was time—until she experienced the role firsthand.

“My only hesitation with volunteering with SLOCEA was if I would have enough time. I did not know exactly what it entailed at first, but the meetings are quick and I have come to really enjoy learning about the inner workings of SLOCEA.”



Serving as a Director and being part of the executive team was the highlight of my 20 years of employment with the County.



Kathleen Curtis-Ames

“

Being able to have a ‘behind the scenes’ look really solidified how much stronger we are when working together.

”

Crystal Cullen

Crystal also emphasized the support she’s received from staff and how welcoming the experience has been—both for her and for the coworkers she represents in a remote office.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS: HELPING SHAPE THE FUTURE OF SLOCEA

SLOCEA’s Board of Directors plays a pivotal role in guiding the Association’s work and ensuring member voices are reflected in key decisions.

Board members help:

- Set the Association’s overall direction and priorities
- Review and approve budgets, contracts, and major initiatives
- Provide oversight and guidance to staff
- Represent members across bargaining units and worksites

The Board meets monthly, alternating between in-person and virtual meetings. Materials are provided in advance, dinner is provided at in-person meetings, staff walk through agenda items, and no one is expected to come in already knowing everything.

Currently, SLOCEA has several open Board seats, including:

- Public Services Unit
- Trades, Crafts & Services Unit
- Superior Court Supervisors Unit
- Three At-Large seats (open to any represented unit)

These vacancies represent an opportunity for members to bring fresh

perspectives, ask thoughtful questions, and help shape the Association’s priorities moving forward.

For Steward and Director Chelsea Hendron, stepping into leadership was driven by concern for coworkers navigating increasing pressures at work and at home.

“I became interested in volunteering because of the current state of the world and the increasing pressures many workers are facing financially, emotionally, and professionally. I saw coworkers who were stressed, struggling, or unsure where to turn when things felt unfair or overwhelming.”

Like many members, Chelsea shared that she hesitated at first—wondering whether she was qualified enough or worried about making mistakes. But once she got involved, those concerns quickly faded.

“What I found instead was a supportive community where learning, listening, and caring about others mattered more than being perfect.”

“

Unions aren’t just about policies or contracts—they’re about people looking out for one another.

”

Chelsea Hendron

Through her involvement as both a steward and a director, Chelsea said she’s grown more confident advocating for others, communicating clearly, and navigating difficult conversations with empathy. More than anything, her experience reinforced the power of solidarity—and how even small actions can make a

meaningful difference when people stand together.

Vice President Norma Domingo shared what motivated her to step into leadership—and how that decision evolved over time.

“I was initially interested in volunteering because I felt the County was taking advantage of employees. I felt anger and knew I had to do something.”

“

The Union has become something of a foster family to me.

”

Norma Domingo

Norma reflected on how board service helped her realize that everyone brings something valuable to the table, and how being part of the SLOCEA community gave her a sense of belonging and purpose, a place to build friendships and a network of support.



WHY MEMBERS CHOOSE TO STEP UP

Members who get involved often say they:

- Feel more connected to their coworkers
- Better understand how decisions are made
- Gain confidence and leadership skills
- Appreciate being part of something meaningful

Kevin Sulitz, who has been a Steward since 2013 and has served on the Trades Negotiating team since 2017, described his volunteer service as one of the most rewarding parts of his County career.



It was always fascinating being involved with the negotiating teams. I grew up some through SLOCEA. It was, as growth often is, overdue and eminently necessary.



Kevin Sulitz

“Over the length of my county service, my most exciting career contributions have been through service with SLOCEA... witnessing the slow, incremental and ultimately steady gains in overall terms and conditions of employment – for folks in Parks, in the Trades unit and for SLOCEA-represented employees as a whole.”

Kevin shared that witnessing steady improvements in wages, benefits, and working conditions—and contributing in even a small way—made his service worthwhile, and he hopes others will step forward after he retires.

YOU BELONG HERE - LET'S START A CONVERSATION

If you've ever thought, "Maybe I could help someday," this could be that moment. Reaching out doesn't commit you to anything, it simply opens the door.

Whether you're interested in becoming a steward, serving on the Board, or learning more about committee opportunities, your perspective matters, and there's a place for you at SLOCEA.

Contact SLOCEA staff or visit our website to learn more about steward roles and board vacancies. We'd love to hear from you.



YOU BELONG HERE

There's a place for you at SLOCEA

You don't need to be an expert.
You don't need endless free time.
You just need to care.



At SLOCEA, involvement looks different for everyone, and every contribution matters!

START WHERE YOU ARE

- No experience required
- Training & support included
- Flexible ways to get involved
- Real people. Real impact.



WHY GET INVOLVED?

- To support coworkers
- To learn new skills
- To help shape decisions
- To be part of something bigger



CURIOS? LET'S TALK

Reaching out doesn't commit you to anything. It just opens the door.



Your voice matters - and there's a place for you here.

What to Do If You Disagree With Your Performance Evaluation

Brooke Daphne,
Labor Representative II



Receiving a performance evaluation can be stressful, especially when the ratings or comments do not reflect your understanding of your work. It is important for employees to know that they have options if they disagree with an evaluation, and that those options depend largely on the overall rating assigned. Understanding the process and acting quickly can make a significant difference.

WHEN THE OVERALL RATING IS “NEEDS IMPROVEMENT”

If you receive a performance evaluation with an overall rating of “Needs Improvement,” you have the right to appeal the evaluation in an effort to have the rating changed to “Successful.” Because a “Needs Improvement” rating can have serious implications for future employment opportunities, merit increases, and potential future disciplinary action, it is critical to address it promptly.

The first and most important step is to contact the SLOCEA office immediately to speak with a Labor Representative. **Timing is crucial.** Under the Civil Service Commission (CSC) Rules, an employee has only ten business days from receipt of the evaluation to initiate the appeal process. Without action to preserve the timeline – which is something your Labor Representative handles with the Director of Human Resources – you may lose your right to appeal altogether.

Your SLOCEA Labor



Under the Civil Service Commission (CSC) Rules, an employee has only ten business days from receipt of the evaluation to initiate the appeal process.



Representative plays a key role throughout this process. The Labor Representative will work with you to review the evaluation, gather relevant documentation, and prepare an appeal memorandum on your behalf. They will attend meetings with your supervisor and department head, advocate for you during discussions, and formally submit the appeal to the Human Resources Director. If Human Resources denies the appeal, your Labor Representative can assist in advancing the appeal to the Civil Service Commission for review.

Because of the strict timelines and procedural requirements, employees who receive a “Needs Improvement” evaluation are strongly encouraged to reach out to SLOCEA **as soon as possible** so assistance can begin right away.

WHEN THE OVERALL RATING IS “SUCCESSFUL”

If your evaluation’s overall rating is “Successful,” it is important to know that the evaluation is not appealable,

even if you disagree with certain comments or individual ratings within it. However, **that does not mean you are without options.**

Employees always have the right to request a meeting with their supervisor to discuss the evaluation and ask that specific language or ratings be reconsidered or revised if they believe the information is inaccurate, misleading, or unsupported. In some cases, supervisors may agree to make changes or clarifications.

Additionally, employees may submit a written rebuttal to be placed in their personnel file. A rebuttal allows you to formally document your disagreement with the evaluation’s contents and provide your perspective for the record. While this does not change the rating itself, it ensures that future reviewers see both sides.

SLOCEA strongly recommends that employees seek assistance before submitting a rebuttal. A Labor Representative can help you craft a professional and effective response that clearly communicates your concerns while remaining constructive and appropriate for inclusion in your official file.

WE’RE HERE TO HELP

Whether your evaluation is “Needs Improvement” or “Successful,” you do not have to navigate the process alone. If you have questions, concerns, or need guidance, contact the SLOCEA office. Early outreach allows us to provide the best possible support and ensure your rights are protected.

COLLABORATING TO FORM A UNIFIED, WELL-INFORMED, AND ACTIVELY ENGAGED MEMBERSHIP!

Listed by Department

AIRPORT

Ben Franco

BU 02 - San Luis
Obispo Airport
Airports Maintenance
Worker

ANIMAL SERVICES

Crystal Cullen

BU 01 - San Luis Obispo
Animal Control Officer

ASSESSOR

Miranda Donaldson

BU 01 - San Luis Obispo
Appraiser II

Chelsea Hendron

BU 01 - San Luis Obispo
Geographic Information
Systems Analyst II

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Sam Cvetovac

BU 01 - Arroyo Grande
Adult Services
Behavioral Health
Clinician II

Savannah Donovan

BU 01 - Paso Robles
- Drug & Alcohol
Behavioral Health
Specialist II

Janet Soto

BU 01 - Arroyo Grande
Youth Services
Behavioral Health
Clinician II

Emma Sturm

BU 01 - Atascadero
Adult Services
Behavioral Health
Clinician II

CLERK-RECORDER

Lucia Maceri

BU 01 - San Luis Obispo
Clerk-Recorder Assistant II

COUNTY COUNSEL

Renee Cooper

BU 13 - San Luis Obispo
Administrative Assistant III

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Beth Raub

BU 05 - San Luis Obispo
Victim Witness Supervisor

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Allen Dailey

BU 01 - San Luis Obispo
Geographic Information
Systems Analyst III

LIBRARY

Chelsea Cutler

BU 01 - San Luis Obispo
Library Associate III

Kate Mitchell

BU 01 - Arroyo Grande
Librarian

PARKS

Kevin Sulitz

BU 02 - Salinas District
Park Ranger I

PLANNING AND BUILDING

Angela Garcia

BU 01 - San Luis Obispo
Building Plans Examiner I

PROBATION

Esther Santiago

BU 13 - San Luis Obispo
Departmental Personnel
Technician

PUBLIC HEALTH

Norma Domingo

BU 13 - San Luis Obispo
Accounting Technician

Elizabeth Farrington

BU 01 - San Luis Obispo
Public Health
Microbiologist I

PUBLIC WORKS

Mitch Wallravin

BU 05 - San Luis Obispo
Supervising Custodian

SHERIFF-CORONER

Crissie Danley

BU 13 - Records
& Warrants
Legal Clerk II

SOCIAL SERVICES

Heather Griffin

BU 01- Arroyo Grande
Employment Resource
Specialist III

Freddy Hernandez

BU 01- San Luis Obispo
Program Review Specialist

Nate Larsen

BU 05 - Paso Robles
Employment Services
Supervisor

Mark McCullough

BU 01 - Nipomo
Employment Resource
Specialist III

Thomas McGarvey

BU 05 - Arroyo Grande
Employment Services
Supervisor

Rita Villaseñor

BU 01 - Paso Robles
Employment Resource
Specialist III

IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR A WAY TO GET INVOLVED WITH SLOCEA, CONSIDER BECOMING A STEWARD

ELIGIBILITY: You must be a SLOCEA member for at least one year.

As a Steward you will:

- Gain a deeper understanding of your rights as a public employee.
- Learn how to be an advocate and source of information in your workplace.

*To learn more, please contact Brooke Daphne or Carrie
McGrath at info@slocea.org or 805-543-2021.*

Behind The Shelves

More Than Just Books

Carrie McGrath & Jennifer Tate,
Labor Representatives I



This month's interview was fun in a way we didn't quite expect. What Carrie and I anticipated would be a straightforward conversation with Chelsea Cutler, a

Library Associate at the SLO branch of the San Luis Obispo County Library, quickly turned into a guided tour that reshaped how we see the library. From the moment we walked in, it was clear this was not just a place to borrow books, but a hub of services, resources, and community support quietly working behind the scenes.

Our tour began on the first floor, where we watched the Automated Materials Handling machine sorting books destined for branches across the county. As the central hub of the county library system, materials requested from other branches pass through the SLO library, and this machine now manages sorting that staff once handled by hand. Watching it work through a large viewing window is oddly mesmerizing, but more importantly, it clearly saves staff time, allowing them to focus on working directly with patrons.

Once we managed to pull ourselves away, Chelsea showed us the rest of the first floor and pointed out just how many services are packed into the space. Public computers and printing services are available to all, along with reservable rooms for quiet



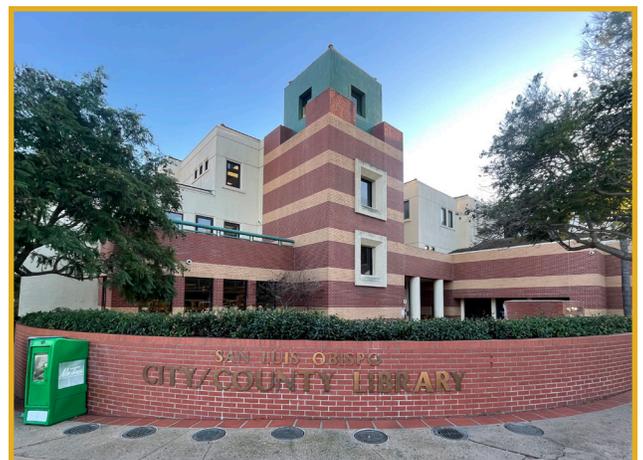
Chelsea Cutler and the Seed Library.

study or meetings. One of the most surprising offerings is the Library of Things, where patrons can borrow items like sewing machines, induction cooktops, knitting tools, phone repair kits, board games, and more. Chelsea also shared that the Shandon branch offers a tool library, perfect for borrowing that one gardening tool you only need once a year.

Moving up to the second floor, the library takes on that familiar feel, with rows of bookshelves and reading chairs inviting visitors to settle in. This floor houses the adult fiction collection, but just off to the side is an expansive children's section with its own distinct space. It is designed for children to explore, imagine, and grow through books and learning. Story times are held twice a week, including a bilingual session on Tuesdays, and Chelsea explained that the library runs bingo-

style reading programs each summer and winter for kids, teens, and adults. Participants can earn prizes for completing reading challenges, and one recent summer program logged over one million minutes of reading, a testament to how engaging these programs can be.

Near the children's area is another unexpected feature, a 3D printer. Library card holders can sign up for a time slot, bring their own file, and print at no cost, with the library providing the materials. Nearby is the teen section, a space designed just





Tyler Lopez and the AMH machine.

for them. Teens even have their own advisory board, which meets to share ideas and help shape programming that keeps teens engaged and excited about reading.

None of this happens without library staff who move fluidly between roles throughout the day. Library Associates rotate through different sections and assist with behind-the-scenes work like processing and preparing materials, while librarians focus on programming, collections, and specialized services. This team-based approach helps the library remain responsive, welcoming, and adaptable to community needs.

The third floor offers a noticeable shift in atmosphere. This quiet zone is home to the nonfiction and reference collections, along with computers and worktables for studying and focused work. Tucked into this space is one of the library's most charming features, the seed library. Chelsea proudly described it as her "baby." Seeds are packaged into small envelopes and filed into a mini card catalog, and patrons can

take up to ten packets per season, choosing from vegetables, herbs, or flowers. Last year alone, more than two thousand seed packets were shared. The seed library is just one example of how deeply the library is connected to the community.

Through partnerships with local seed groups and organizations like Sustainable SLO, along with an internal green team focused on sustainability, the library continues to find thoughtful ways to support both environmental stewardship and community connection.

Beyond these offerings, the library truly embodies public service. Several branches are staffed with certified passport agents who can process new applications, certain renewals, and passport photos, often making it a faster and more pleasant experience than the post office. Library staff also provide everyday technology assistance, helping people log into email, print documents, or learn how to use new devices. At the SLO branch, patrons can connect with an on-site social

worker for help navigating housing, food, phones, and other essential services. The library also partners with community organizations in practical ways, including hosting Shower to the People on Sundays and allowing mobile shower services to use library property so individuals can access basic hygiene with dignity. The Tutor Learning Center pairs volunteers with individuals seeking help with English, education, or skill building, and has supported community members as they work toward goals like employment, school, or stable housing.

The library also works hard to reach people who cannot easily make it through the doors. With three bookmobiles serving different regions of the county, library staff bring books, library cards, and services directly to communities, schools, and facilities throughout the area. The library also partners with county agencies to provide outreach to individuals at the jail and juvenile detention facilities.

In many ways, the library has become a true third space, not home, not work or school, but a place where people can simply be. Throughout the year, library spaces come alive with community events that bring people together in unexpected ways. There are after-hours escape rooms for teens, author talks that spark conversation, film festivals, and craft nights. The library also hosts a Comic-Con-style event attended by costumed characters and local comic shops, and Friends of the Library book sales that fund future library programs. One especially fun tradition is the Quail Trail, a countywide challenge that invites patrons to visit all fourteen library branches, turning the library system itself into an adventure. These moments transform the library into more than a building filled with materials. They make it a shared community space where curiosity, creativity, and connection are always welcome.

“

In many ways, the library has become a true third space, not home, not work or school, but a place where people can simply be.

”

New Laws For 2026

Dennis Hayes,
*Hayes, Ortega &
Sánchez, LLP*



**WORKPLACE
KNOW YOUR
RIGHTS
ACT (SB 294)**

The newly-passed Workplace Know Your Rights Act (SB 294) will require employers to provide employees with annual written notices describing various workers' rights, including rights against unfair immigration-related practices, constitutional rights against unreasonable workplace searches and seizures by law enforcement, right to workers' compensation benefits, and the right to organize.

Employers will need to provide the new notices to employees and their authorized representatives on or before February 1, 2026, and also to any new employees hired going forward. The law directs the Department of Labor Standards Enforcement Board to develop and post a template notice on its website by January 1, 2026. Violations may subject the employer to penalties of up to \$500 per employee for each day the violation occurs, up to a maximum of \$10,000 per employee.

PERB EXPANSION (AB 288)

California's Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) is the agency that has historically been tasked with enforcing labor law for public sector employees in the state. ABB 288, most notably, expands PERB's jurisdiction to cases in which a "worker is employed in a position subject to the NLRA [National Labor Relations Act] but the NLRB [National Labor Relations Board] has expressly

or impliedly ceded jurisdiction," which includes when the NLRB lacks quorum, the Board "has lost its independence" due to Supreme Court rulings or constitutional challenges, or delays have left the worker's case pending. (Lab. Code § 923.1(b).)

AB 288 follows similar efforts in New York and Massachusetts to empower state labor boards in cases where the NLRB fails to act. A partial catalyst for these legislative efforts was the NLRB's loss of its quorum following President Trump's dismissal of Board Member Gwynne Wilcox on January 27, 2025. Because the Board requires a three-member quorum to issue decisions, the Board was left unable to issue decisions for some time following Wilcox's removal (per order of the U.S. Supreme Court, Wilcox remains dismissed while her legal challenge to her removal is ongoing). Though, the NLRB restored its quorum on December 18, 2025, with the U.S. Senate's confirmations of Scott Mayer and James Murphy to the Board, as well as Crystal Carey to general counsel.

In addition, the NLRB has filed suit to challenge AB 288 based on the doctrine of



California's minimum wage will increase to \$16.90/hour effective January 1, 2026, per the annual inflation adjustment.



preemption, which generally bars state regulation of conduct already covered by federal regulation. On November 26, 2025, the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York found that a similar preemption challenge to New York's law was likely to succeed and granted a preliminary injunction barring its enforcement.

MINIMUM WAGE HIKE

California's minimum wage will increase to \$16.90/hour effective January 1, 2026, per the annual inflation adjustment. Many cities and counties maintain a higher minimum wage than the state: the minimum wage in Los Angeles and Los Angeles County is currently set at \$17.87, and will increase in the City of San Diego to \$17.75 as of January 1, 2026. Additionally, earlier this year, the City of Los Angeles passed a bill that will progressively increase the minimum wage for hotel employees and LAX workers to \$30/hour by July 2028, in time for the 2028 Olympics.





JANUARY'S FIND FEATHERS WINNERS!



1. Melissa Rodriguez - Probation
2. Cindy Todd - Dept Social Services
3. Rebecca Drake - District Attorney
4. Sonja Delcid - County Counsel
5. Daniel Grimes - Central Services



The SLOCEA Office
will be closed
Thursday, February 12th
&
Monday, February 16th

A New Year Resolution: Finding Common Ground

Vita Miller,
SLOCREA Vice-
President



Greetings and Happy New Year 2026. Peace and Prosperity are wished to all.

My resolution in the coming year is to find common ground among the turmoil and discord that currently looms over this great experiment we call a Republic with Liberty and Justice for All; keeping the faith that anything can be done when we resolve to do it.

We must, in my opinion, because it remains the best system of government ever perceived.

I will confess I am a political animal. My parents were Roosevelt Democrats. Yes, I am that old. They were both immigrants and my dad actually entered the country illegally in 1922 at the age of 19.

It was a different world then. I believe he benefited from the **Registry Act of 1929** and later became a naturalized citizen and was one of thousands of immigrants that helped to ignite the Industrial Revolution and prosperity of the country for several decades.

So here is my New Year's Resolution, I will resolve to temper my opinions and work with those of all political viewpoints, perspectives and visions for the betterment of my fellow man. I have been around long enough to remember when we could sit down and acknowledge these differences in a civil manner.

Being a member of SLOCREA allows for this type of fellowship



and comradery. I applaud the current board for working together to schedule interesting speakers and entertainment at the luncheon meetings and holiday party in December. We shall endeavor to do the same in 2026.

I encourage all current employees to become members when you attain the much sought after retirement status. There will be an invitation in your retirement package with a free one year membership. You can't pass that up.

Finally, my usual pitch is to remind people that endless studies have shown staying active, socially, physically and mentally has been proven to prolong your life span and

even more importantly, allow you to enjoy more health and well-being in those golden years

I do this by paddling with the Central Coast Dragon Boat Association, Surviveoars on Morro Bay twice weekly, taking walks along the bay and working in our yard, a never ending project. With week-end and evening paddles, you can enjoy a guest paddle now. Go to CCDBA.org "How to Get Started" for more information.

In closing and in honor of the recent national Martin Luther King Jr. holiday:

"Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor. It must be demanded by the oppressed."
— **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.**

ABOUT SLOCREA

Everyone who receives a pension from Pension Trust is eligible to join. First year is free, then dues are \$15.00 per year or \$40.00 for 3 years. Such a deal!

We are an all volunteer organization. Each year we have 3 lunch meetings with a speaker, one holiday luncheon with entertainment, and one BBQ/potluck picnic (outdoors).

www.slocrea.org

February 18th is National Battery Day

In commemoration of the birth of the Italian physicist Alessandro Volta, who invented the battery that provided the first source of continuous current in 1800.

We hope you **Get A Charge** out of your day!

YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS ARE WELCOME!

Would you like to submit a feature article, commemoration, or member recognition article for publication in the County Blade? The County Blade welcomes contributions from members!

Guidelines

- Articles must be in MS Word format.
- 600 words or less.
- Content must comply with SLOCEA's editorial policy as determined by the Communications Committee. Submission of an article is no guarantee of publication.

Email to: info@slocea.org
Mail or hand deliver to:
 The County Blade,
 605 Santa Rosa St., San
 Luis Obispo, CA 93401



Print deadline is the second Friday of every month for the following month edition.



HAVE A QUESTION? CALL SLOCEA

805-543-2021



HUMAN RESOURCES

Learning & Development Center Newsletter
February Blade 2026

CONVERSATIONS WITH LEADERSHIP

LDC hosted the first Conversations with Leadership in January! We are happy to share it was a great success. This was a unique opportunity to hear from two County Department Heads as they share their paths to executive leadership, lessons learned, and key successes along the way. Keep your eyes out for the next opportunity!

AVAILABLE CLASSES

CLICK THE LINKS BELOW TO ENROLL IN UPCOMING CLASSES

- Red Cross Adult and Pediatric First Aid/CPR/AED - February 4th - 9:30am-12:00pm
- Red Cross Adult and Pediatric First Aid/CPR/AED - February 4th - 1:00pm-3:30pm
- Onboarding for Supervisors - February 5th - 1:00pm-3:30pm
- New Employee Orientation - February 11th - 9:00am-4:30pm
- Learning Roundtable - Building Strong, Cohesive Teams -February 12th - 1:00pm-3:00pm
- Discover your Strengths - February 18th - 1:00pm-4:00pm

Webinars

[EAP Webinar - Communication Skills - February 18th - 10:00am](#)

LDC IS OFFERING STRENGTHS COACHING

CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO SIGN UP!



IMPORTANT INFORMATION & LINKS TO KNOW



Survivor's Endowment Grant

Attorney Referral List SLOCEA Legal Services Program

Wild At Work

SLOCEA members have access to discounts at major amusement parks in California, attractions in San Diego and the San Francisco Bay Area, car rentals, hotels, motels, campgrounds and more through Wild at Work.

**San Luis Obispo County Employees' Association
Survivor's Endowment Grant Program
Enrollment and Recipient Designation Form**

As a benefit of Association membership, every SLOCEA member in good standing may enroll in the Association's **Survivor's Endowment Grant Program**. The program currently pays a \$2,000 cash grant upon the death of the member, to the member's designated recipient ("Grant Designee"). Although this is an insurance program, the "Grant Designee" is neither a beneficiary nor a life insurance policy. **Enrollment in the Survivor's Endowment Grant Program is not free** to SLOCEA members. To enroll, please complete and return this form to the Association office via any of the following methods:

- Submit digitally via DocuSign
- Fax to 805-543-2021
- Mail to 1055 Walnut Street, San Luis Obispo 93401
- Email to info@slocea.org

IMPORTANT:
This section **MUST** be completed and returned

To enroll in the Association's **Survivor's Endowment Grant Program**, this form must be completed by the member and returned to the Association. Please fill in all the information requested and sign the form as indicated below.

Member's Name	Member's Sex
Member's Address	Member's Phone
Member's City/Zip	Member's Date of Birth
Member's Email Address	
Grant Designee's Name	Relationship to Member
Grant Designee's Phone	Grant Designee's Mailing Address
Grant Designee's City/Zip	Date of Signature

Click here to download the form

**Attorney Referral List
SLOCEA LEGAL SERVICES PROGRAM**

This program is available exclusively to SLOCEA members and their families, and provides low-cost legal services for assistance on non-work-related legal issues.

This program has no annual fee or membership costs. When you call the attorney of your choice to make an appointment, identify yourself as a member of the San Luis Obispo County Employees' Association in order to receive your exclusive special offers. If you have any questions or need the additional information, call us at 805-543-2021.

PARTICIPATING ATTORNEYS:

Law Office of Doreen B. Curtis, PC 10775 Grand Avenue, Santa Barbara, CA 93108 Phone: 805-468-3844 Email: dcurtis@dbcurtis.com Areas of Practice: Estate Planning, Trusts, Guardianship, Consumer Protection, Business Formation & Contracts	Stalberg & Tatum 710 Santa Rosa St., Santa Rosa, CA 95405 Phone: 805-444-9416 Email: info@stalbergtatum.com Areas of Practice: Contract Law, Product Liability, Medical & Dental Malpractice, Copyright Infringement
Law Office of Stephen M. Stone, PC 1117 Grand Avenue, Santa Barbara, CA 93108 Phone: 805-444-4207 Email: stephen@stephenstone.com Areas of Practice: Estate Planning, Real Estate, Debt Collection	Spaulding & Grant 710 Santa Rosa St., Santa Rosa, CA 95405 Phone: 805-518-6100 Email: info@spauldinggrant.com Areas of Practice: Workers Compensation, Personal Injury, Estate Planning

Click here to download the list

Click here to register and get discounts

YOUR RIGHT TO REPRESENTATION

- If you are called in to a meeting with management, you have the **RIGHT** to know the subject of the meeting.
- If you **reasonably believe** the meeting could lead to discipline, you have the **RIGHT** to representation by SLOCEA. **You must ask for that right.** Management **DOES** not have to offer it to you.
- You have the **RIGHT** to consultation with your SLOCEA representative before the meeting.

When in doubt, call your SLOCEA representative at 805-543-2021.



SLOCEA

805-543-2021 • www.slocea.org
605 Santa Rosa St., San Luis Obispo, 93401



DO WE HAVE YOUR SURVIVOR'S ENDOWMENT GRANT FORM ON FILE?



Every SLOCEA member may enroll in the **Survivor's Endowment Grant Program**

PROGRAM PAYS A
\$3,000 GRANT

To your chosen beneficiary in the event of your death



**FILL OUT A
FORM HERE**

VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR MORE INFO



SLOCEA.ORG/MEMBER-PROGRAMS



OR GIVE US A CALL AT
805-543-2021





San Luis Obispo County Employees' Association

Survivor's Endowment Grant Program

Enrollment and Recipient Designation Form

As a benefit of Association membership, every SLOCEA member in good standing may enroll in the Association's **Survivor's Endowment Grant Program**. The program currently pays a **\$3,000** cash grant, upon the death of the member, to the member's designated recipient ("Grant Designee"). Although this is not an insurance program, the "Grant Designee" is similar to a beneficiary for a life insurance policy. **Enrollment in the Survivor's Endowment Grant Program is cost free** to SLOCEA members. To enroll, please complete and return this form to the Association office via any of the following methods:

- Submit digitally via DocHub
- Mail to 605 Santa Rosa Street, San Luis Obispo 93401
- Email to info@slocea.org

IMPORTANT:

This section MUST be completed and returned

To enroll in the Association's **Survivor's Endowment Grant Program**, this form must be completed by the member and returned to the Association. Please fill in all the information requested and sign the form as indicated below.

Member's Name:	Member's SS#:
Member's Address:	Member's Phone #:
Member's City / Zip:	Member's Date of Birth:
Member's Personal Email:	

Grant Designee (designated to receive payment in the event of the member's death):	Relationship to Member:
Grant Designee Phone:	Grant Designee Email Address:
Member's Signature:	Date of Signature:

Note: The San Luis Obispo County Employees' Association's **Survivor's Endowment Grant Program** is not an insurance program. This program is self-funded by the Association and is intended as a benefit of Association membership. The **Survivor's Endowment Grant Program** was adopted by the Association Board of Directors and is administered through the Association's Member Benefit Committee. The Association Board of Directors retains the right to amend, modify, abolish, or replace the Survivor's Endowment Grant Program at any time and without prior notice. **For more information, please contact SLOCEA Staff at (805) 543-2021.**

Service Anniversaries & New Members

The following County, Courts and LOCSD employees will reach a significant service anniversary during the month of FEBRUARY. We list those employees who have reached their 5th, 10th, 15th and higher years of employment. These anniversaries represent the hire date of our members, not time in service accumulation.

Congratulations to these employees for their years of service!

FEBRUARY SERVICE ANNIVERSARIES

First Name	Last Name	Department	Years Of Service	First Name	Last Name	Department	Years Of Service
Mark	Tabares	Public Works	34	Maxine	Barrios	Superior Court	15
Charles	Riha	Planning & Building	29	Kathleen	Welles	Public Health	15
Sheila	Hall	Assessor	27	Ian	Landreth	Agricultural Commissioner	10
Cara	Taylor	Agricultural Commissioner	26	Michael	Walton	Department Social Services	10
Kerry	Brown	Planning & Building	26	Nathaniel	Larsen	Department Social Services	10
Kymberly	Kusko	Department Social Services	26	Ashley	Arzola	Department Social Services	10
Betty	Bautista	Department Social Services	25	Katie	Nyback	Assessor	10
Deborah	Loomis	Department Social Services	24	Eric	Zatt	Public Works	10
Jennifer	Love	District Attorney	23	Vianna	Mongeur	Department Social Services	10
Dorothy	Irwin	Department Social Services	22	Atoosa	Boyd	Department Social Services	10
Margaret	Kensinger-Klopf	Library	21	Erin	Kelly	Department Social Services	10
Sahara	Zubia	Department Social Services	21	Jesse	Poe	Public Works	10
Erica	Mora	Department Social Services	21	Ariel	Farrior	Probation	5
Eric	Guy	Central Services	17	Maria Cristina	Arevalo	Parks	5
Vanessa	Larson	Public Health	17	Ismael	Hernandez	Department Social Services	5
Diana	Galloway	Behavioral Health	16	Maria	Masullo	Behavioral Health	5
Cody	Brindley	Parks	15				

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Name	Department	Name	Department
Monica Flores	Department Social Services	Nicolette Littler	Public Works
Brett Dowgiewicz	Health Agency	Sarah Plumlee	Public Works
Cleida Corres	Health Agency	Matthew Hernandez	Public Works
Elisa Becerra	Health Agency	Benjamin Soto	Public Works
Zsofi Barthmaier	Health Agency	David Doust	Sheriff-Coroner
Melanie Echo	Probation	Dustin Albrecht	Sheriff-Coroner
Amanda Heisdorf	Probation	Owen Shapleigh	Weights & Measures

ASSOCIATION COMMITTEES

SLOCEA Board of Directors

- Executive Committee
- Personnel Committee
- Finance Committee
- Bylaws Committee
- Members Benefit Committee
- Academic Scholarship Committee
- Summer Childcare Committee
- SLOCEA Political Action Committee (SLO PAC)
- Steward Committee
- County Healthcare Committee: Four Bargaining Unit Delegates
- Strike Committee



HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS!

First Name Last Name	Birthday	First Name Last Name	Birthday	First Name Last Name	Birthday
Kermit Spears	02/01	Martha Nunez Salazar	02/10	Kimberly McCord	02/19
Jonathan Maule	02/01	Susana Alvarez	02/11	Monica Hollenbeck	02/19
Eric Tolle	02/01	Jennifer Dotzler	02/11	Tanya Sandroff	02/20
Norma Domingo	02/01	Dana Olivares	02/11	Jasmine Leon	02/20
John Stapleton	02/01	Barbara Hillier	02/11	Michelle Freeman	02/20
Daniel Flores Lopez	02/02	Kathleen Saffell	02/11	Amanda Servin	02/20
Caitlyn Vera	02/02	Ashley Totah	02/12	Ruben Nunez	02/20
Jessica Suchecki	02/02	Stephanie Garcia	02/12	Corryn Engdahl	02/21
Juan Gonzalez	02/02	Karen Walsh	02/12	Daniel Miranda	02/21
Madison Martinez	02/03	Evelyn Schnadarle Foster	02/12	Amanda Canter	02/22
Alexander Viles	02/03	Elizabeth Kavanaugh	02/13	Kristen Danley	02/22
Claire McNamara	02/03	Jennifer Woodward	02/13	Kellie Navarro	02/22
Angela Schroeder	02/03	Joshua Garza	02/13	Erika Torres-Contreras	02/22
Luis Alvarez	02/03	Jennifer Phinney	02/13	Eloiza Aramburo	02/22
Adriana Salazar	02/03	Nicole Ellis	02/13	Kellie Mercer	02/23
Alice Henderson de Rodriguez	02/03	Sarah Anderson	02/14	Jeannette Rivera	02/23
Daniel Ambriz	02/03	Rodrigo Rodriguez	02/14	Emanuel Ramos	02/24
Shane Ostafin	02/04	Savannah Perez	02/14	Heinrich di Santo	02/24
Dolores Rincon	02/04	Holly Reyes	02/14	Brianna Zuniga	02/24
Brent Kitagawa	02/04	Kyle Whelan	02/14	Ashley Hain	02/24
Kerri Pino	02/04	Ricardo Mendez	02/15	Felipe Gonzalez	02/24
Cecilia Hernandez Pimienta	02/04	Michelle Rodkey	02/15	Christina Wheeler	02/25
Kevin Farrell	02/04	Julianne Schmidt	02/15	Rebecca Adkisson	02/25
Lucia Maceri	02/04	Denise Casillas	02/15	Joshua Gonzales	02/25
Marie Bussacco	02/04	Thomas Arnold	02/15	Rachel McSpadden Tarver	02/25
Blanca Salguero Hernandez	02/05	Deborah Medrano	02/15	Joyce Bolivar	02/26
Melissa Ramos	02/05	Catalina Ambriz	02/15	Joe Moreno	02/27
Darla Budge	02/05	Michelle Lowe	02/16	Stephanie Preciado	02/28
Daisy Ramirez	02/07	Gurpreet Sahan	02/16	Charles Alexanian	02/28
Stephen Carroll	02/07	Heather Zickuhr	02/16	Jessica Yates	02/28
Danielle Raiss	02/08	Maxine Barrios	02/17	Ashley Lira	02/28
Abigail Rees	02/08	Tara Joaquin	02/17	Rhonda Lovelady	02/28
Edward Griley	02/08	Joshuah Salmeron	02/17		
Marisol Hinojosa	02/08	Aurora Arevalo	02/17		
Raylene Gardner	02/09	Gabrielle Selna	02/17		
Ana Rosa Gavilanes	02/10	Nathan Lafferty	02/17		
Gail Daniels	02/10	Jesse Ferris	02/18		
Miguel Cruz	02/10	Maria Paredes	02/18		
Mackenzie Ramsey	02/10	Cesar Avina	02/18		

If your birth date is not listed above it is because we do not have it in our database. Please help us keep our records up to date by contacting us at 805-543-2021.

DON'T MISS THESE MEETINGS!

SLOCEA Board of Directors Meeting
 Wednesday, February 18, 2026 @ 5:45pm.
 In-person @ the SLOCEA Office

SLO County Board of Supervisors Meetings
 All meetings are conducted in person at the BOS Chambers. Watch online by going to the County's home page and clicking "Watch Live Video".
 Tuesday, February 3, 2026 @ 9:00 AM
 Tuesday, February 10, 2026 @ 9:00 AM

SLOCREA Meetings
 February is a non-meeting month

SLO County Pension Trust Board Of Trustees Meeting
 Monday, February 23, 2026 @ 9:30 AM, BOS Chambers



