

Kellie Todd Griffin ...

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though we are aware that there are other populations that are in great need, the quality-of-life indices for Black Californians continue to decrease. Our life expectancies are decreasing. Our unhoused population is increasing. Our health outcomes continue to be the worst.

We're not asking anyone to choose one group to prioritize. We are saying, though, in addition to your investments into our immigrant brothers and sisters – or our religious brothers and sisters – we are also asking you to uplift the needs of Black Californians. That way, all of us can move forward together.

What inspired you the most over the last year?

I've always been amazed by the joy of Black women in the midst of crisis.

That is really our secret sauce. We don't let the current state of any issue take our joy from us. It may

Black Repertory Theater ...

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has also received praise from LGBTQ readers for its courage and emotional honesty.

Another honoree was William G. Wong, author of "Sons of Chinatown," published by Temple Press. I've known Bill for decades. We both spent years in mainstream media before finding our voices in ethnic media, as columnists at AsianWeek in the 1990s. We were two outspoken Asian Americans at a time when Asians were expected to stay silent.

Also honored was Mona Vaughn Scott, who, for the past 36 years has been the guiding force behind the Black Repertory Group. She took over leadership after the death of her mother, Nora Vaughn. Un-

der Scott's direction, the Black Rep has nurtured actors, audiences, and community members. It comes as close as theater can to being a true community center.

Despite setbacks—including a recent act of vandalism—the theater has endured. Under Scott's leadership, it continues to demonstrate that Black theater, like the Black church, remains vital to preserving community.

That's award worthy.

About the Author

Emil Guillermo is a Bay Area journalist, writer, and stage monologist. See him tell Christmas stories on Monday Dec. 15, at 7 p.m. at the SF Marsh at 1062 Valencia St., San Francisco. See his micro-talk show on YouTube.com/@emilamok1

NOTICE AND DIGEST

ORDINANCE AMENDING OAKLAND MUNICIPAL CODE TITLE 4, CHAPTER 4.56, VACANT PROPERTY TAX TO 1) ADD AN EXEMPTION FOR PARCELS THAT CHANGE OWNERSHIP AFTER ASSESSMENT, 2) REQUIRE THE HEARING OFFICER TO INCLUDE FINDINGS OF FACT IN THEIR DECISIONS, AND 3) ESTABLISH A TWELVE MONTH TIME PERIOD WITHIN WHICH OWNERS OF PARCELS DEEMED VACANT AND ASSESSED THE VACANT PROPERTY TAX MUST FILE A PETITION TO REVERSE THE ASSESSMENT, CLAIM AN EXEMPTION, OR TO SEEK REFUND OF TAXES PAID

This ordinance amends portions of the City of Oakland's Vacant Property Tax, Oakland Municipal Code, Chapter 4.56. The Vacant Property Tax ordinance, originally approved by Oakland voters as Measure W in November 2018, imposes a special parcel tax on parcels deemed "vacant" in a calendar year, each year for twenty (20) years following the initial imposition of the tax. Parcels are deemed vacant if they, or in some situations permanent improvements built upon them, are not "in use" for at least fifty (50) days during the calendar year, and are not subject to any often (10) listed exemptions. This ordinance further adds an exemption for change of ownership on parcel if an "Arm's Length Transaction" takes place after a decision made on vacancy status; requires a hearing officer to include the findings of fact in their decisions; and establishes a statute of limitations for filing a petition to reverse the assessment or entitlement to exemption or seek refund of taxes paid to within 12 months from the due date of the second installment of the secured property tax bill.

Notice of Publication

This Ordinance was introduced at the City Council meeting, Tuesday evening, **December 2, 2025**, and passed to print **8 Ayes**; Final adoption has been scheduled for the Special City Council meeting Tuesday afternoon **December 16, 2025, 1:00 P.M.**, at One Frank H. Ogawa Plaza, Council Chamber, 3rd floor, Oakland, California, and via Teleconference.

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ASHA REED, City Clerk

NOTICE AND DIGEST

AN ORDINANCE, AS RECOMMENDED BY THE CITY PLANNING COMMISSION:

1) AMENDING TITLE 17 OF THE OAKLAND MUNICIPAL CODE (THE PLANNING CODE), TO (A) ADJUST REGULATIONS FOR PERMITTED AND CONDITIONALLY PERMITTED ACTIVITIES AND FACILITIES FOR PURPOSES OF PROVIDING GREATER OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROUND FLOOR ACTIVITIES AND EASE THE PERMITTING BURDEN FOR COMMERCIAL, CIVIC, AND LOW IMPACT INDUSTRIAL ACTIVITIES; AND (B) MAKE RELATED MISCELLANEOUS AND ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES; AND

2) MAKING APPROPRIATE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT FINDINGS.

The ordinance proposes revisions to 28 chapters of the Oakland Planning Code. The amendments would reduce regulatory barriers to permitting certain types of small- and neighborhood-serving businesses, as well as the implementation of parks improvements and maintenance by the City.

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Ann Lowe: The Quiet Genius ...

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1930s, she designed gowns for high-society women in Florida and New York, operating boutiques and working for prestigious department stores. Her reputation for craftsmanship, originality, and elegance grew increasingly. She was known for creating gowns that moved beautifully, featured delicate hand-made flowers, and looked sculpted rather than sewn. Many wealthy clients specifically requested "an Ann Lowe gown" for weddings, balls, and galas.

Her most famous creation came in 1953: the wedding gown worn by Jacqueline Bouvier when she married Massachusetts Sen. John F. Kennedy. The dress – crafted from ivory silk taffeta with dozens of tiny, pleated rosettes – became one of the most photographed bridal gowns in American history. Despite this achievement, Lowe received no public credit at the time. When a flood destroyed her completed gowns 10 days before the wedding, she

Black Women's Equity Champion LaNiece Jones ...

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Advocacy Masterclass Series, which now includes focus areas such as economic empowerment, maternal health, mental wellness, educational equity, and legislative strategy. In addition, we continue to grow the DWJ Public Policy Fellowship Program, which proudly celebrated its 10th anniversary this year.

What frustrated you the most over the last year?

The ongoing political gaslighting of Black communities – especially Black women – has been deeply frustrating.

What inspired you the most over the last year?

The unstoppable power of Black women at the grassroots

and her seamstresses worked day and night to remake everything – at her own expense. Her dedication and perfectionism never wavered.

She eventually opened "Ann Lowe Originals," her own salon on New York's Madison Avenue. She served clients such as the Rockefellers, DuPonts, Vanderbilts, and actresses like Olivia de Havilland. Yet even with her wealthy clientele, she struggled financially, often undercharging because she wanted every dress to be perfect, even if it meant losing money.

Lowe's contributions were finally recognized later in life. Today, her exquisite gowns are preserved in museums, including the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

In the last five years of her life, Lowe lived with her daughter Ruth in Queens, N.Y. She died at her daughter's home on Feb. 25, 1981, at the age of 82, after an extended illness.

level continues to inspire me. From mothers advocating for educational equity at school board meetings to young leaders pushing for housing and climate justice.

What is one lesson you learned

in 2025 that will inform your decision-making next year?

"Capacity before campaign."

You can't sustain bold ideas without building internal infrastructure.

In one word, what is the biggest challenge Black Californians faced in 2025?

Displacement.

Whether it's housing, jobs, education, or political representation – Black

Californians are being pushed out, priced out, and too often left out. Reversing this trend requires unapologetic advocacy, bold policy shifts, and the political will to center those most impacted.

What is the goal you want to achieve most in 2026?

To secure a full slate of Black women candidates in key state and local elections – and win. That includes building out a robust

BWOPA political leadership institute, developing a campaign war chest, and forging statewide coalitions to shift power from protest to policy.

Support Your Child's Mental Health

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healing through sports, art, music, and therapeutic camps.

- Initial joint behavioral health visits, where a mental health provider and child welfare worker meet with the family early in a case.

- Child welfare liaisons in Medi-Cal health plans who help caregivers and social workers get services for children faster

Keeping Kids Safe from Opioids and Harmful Drugs

DHCS is also working to keep young people safe as California faces rising risks from opioids and counterfeit pills. Programs like Elevate Youth California and Friday Night Live give teens mentorship, leadership opportunities, and positive outlets that strengthen mental well-being.

Through the California Youth Opioid Response, families can learn how to avoid dangerous substances and get treatment when needed. Song for Charlie provides parents and teens with facts and tools to talk honestly about mental health and counterfeit pills.

DHCS also supports groups like Young People in Recovery, which helps youth build skills for long-term healing, and the Youth Peer Mentor Program, which trains teens with lived experience to support others. These efforts are part of California's strategy to protect young people, prevent overdoses, and help them make healthier choices.

Support for Parents and Caregivers

Children thrive when their caregivers are supported. Through CalAIM's vision of whole-person care, Medi-Cal now covers dyadic services, visits where a child and caregiver meet together with a provider to strengthen bonding, manage stress, and address behavior challenges.

These visits may include screening the caregiver for depression or anxiety and connecting them to food, housing, or other health-related social needs, aligning with CalAIM's Community Supports framework. Notably, only the child must be enrolled in Medi-Cal to receive dyadic care.

Family therapy is also covered and can take place in clinics, schools, homes, or via telehealth, reflecting CalAIM's commitment to flexible, community-based care delivery.

Additionally, BrightLife Kids offers free tools, resources, and virtual coaching for caregivers and children ages 0–12. Families can sign up online or through the BrightLife Kids app. No

insurance, diagnosis, or referral is required.

For teens and young adults ages 13–25, California offers Soluna, a free mental health app where young people can chat with coaches, learn coping skills, journal, or join supportive community circles. Soluna is free, confidential, available in app stores, and does not require insurance.

CalHOPE also provides free emotional support to all Californians through a 24/7 support line at (833) 317-HOPE (4673), online chat, and culturally responsive resources.

Support at School – Where Kids Already Are

Schools are often the first place where emotional stress is noticed. Through the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI), public schools, community colleges, and universities can offer therapy, counseling, crisis support, and referrals at no cost to families.

Services are available during school breaks and delivered on campus, by phone or video, or at community sites. There are no copayments, deductibles, or bills.

Medi-Cal Still Covers Everyday Care

Medi-Cal continues to cover everyday mental health care, including therapy for stress, anxiety, depression, or trauma; medication support; crisis stabilization; hospital care when needed; and referrals to community programs through county mental health plans and Medi-Cal health plans.

How to Get Help

- Talk to your child's teacher, school counselor, or doctor.
- In Alameda County call 510-272-3663 or the toll-free number 1-800-698-1118 and in San Francisco call 855-355-5757 to contact your county mental health plan to request an assessment or services.
- If your child is not enrolled in Medi-Cal, you can apply at BenefitsCal.com or my.medicare.ca.gov.
- In a mental health emergency, call or text 988, the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

Every child deserves to grow up healthy and supported. Medi-Cal is working to transform care so it's accessible, equitable, and responsive to the needs of every family.

NOTICE AND DIGEST

ORDINANCE (1) ADDING CHAPTER 9.54 OF TITLE 9 OF THE OAKLAND MUNICIPAL CODE TO ESTABLISH AND REGULATE ENTERTAINMENT ZONES PURSUANT TO SB 969 (2024) TO PROMOTE ECONOMIC ACTIVATION; (2) MAKING OTHER CONFORMING CHANGES TO SECTIONS 9.08.180 AND 9.08.190 OF THE OAKLAND MUNICIPAL CODE; (3) CLASSIFYING AN ENTERTAINMENT ZONE EVENT AS A TIER TWO OR TIER THREE SPECIAL EVENT PURSUANT TO CHAPTER 9.52 OF THE OAKLAND MUNICIPAL CODE; AND (4) ADOPTING APPROPRIATE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT FINDINGS

This Ordinance adds Chapter 9.54 of Title 9 of the Oakland Municipal Code to establish and regulate Entertainment Zones pursuant to a Management Plan to allow for the purchase of open container alcoholic beverages from local bars, restaurants, wineries, breweries and on-sale licensees for consumption outside in common spaces, such as plazas, public streets, sidewalks, or public rights-of-way during certain hours, subject to a special event permit issued pursuant to Chapter 9.52, pursuant to SB 969 (2024) to promote economic activation. This legislation makes other conforming changes to Sections 9.08.180 and 9.08.190 of the Oakland Municipal Code to further consistency with this policy. The proposed ordinance establishes Entertainment Zones in the Jack London District, Broadway Valdez/Northlake District, Temescal District, and Uptown Downtown and further classifies an Entertainment Zone Event as a Tier Two or Tier Three Special Event pursuant to Chapter 9.52 of the Oakland Municipal Code and adopts appropriate California Environmental Quality Act Findings.

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