



The Price of The American Dream

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Our youth reporters focused on the economy for this iteration of The kNOW's annual publication, from the daily struggles of affording necessities such as groceries to the looming threat of the valley's robust ag workforce. As the years go by and those in power do close to nothing, it's apparent that this country is in need of a revamp. Every election cycle, we see our politicians being bought out by the ultra elite on both sides of the aisle. Groveling at their every need which benefits the 1% while the rest of us ration for survival. We see billionaires being praised for donating chump change to charitable causes, a drop in the bucket for them with an added bonus of a tax write-off. We get fed the lie of the American dream - working hard will get us to "success" as we perceive it to be.

As a younger millennial, that dream has been dying. But today's young people notice that it *has* been dead. We're at a point where retirement is but a fantasy. Social security benefits will be dried up. We are living paycheck to paycheck and expected to foresee how to self-sustain in the golden years of our lives. Put the country in rice. Unplug it and plug it back in after fifteen seconds. Factory reset her. There's no way for us to remedy this while continuing the way we're going. Lucky us, we have just the right people to make that change. Today's young people will make that change. They will fight this system, and they will beat it. We will rebuild to a more sustainable, equitable, and livable future. We will recreate the American dream. But for now, she's dead. - Daniel Gonzalez, Senior Program Coordinator

What Would the Economy Look Like Without Immigrants?

by Angel Alonso Arreola

America has a problem and that problem is how the government does not prioritize the economy over the discrimination against immigrants.

As a young adult who came to this country as a child, I understand why people try to escape their country to seek better opportunities and a brighter future. The economy affects people in many ways, both physically and mentally.

Immigrants come to America to follow their dreams and live a better life. Many immigrants come here without a plan, only hopes and dreams. However, when immigrants stop working, people will realize how essential they are. They will see how hatred, violence and the extermination of immigrants will affect the U.S. economy. Immigrants contribute to the work force in agriculture, education, and government. The U.S. would experience a great deal of economic downturn if immigrants and people of color were not allowed to enter this country to look for better opportunities.

Contrary to some claims, immigrants do not "take jobs" from American citizens.

Some economists say that immigration is good and helpful for the U.S. economy because it helps increase the size of the labor force, boost tax revenue, and increase consumer demand. Immigrants contribute to economic development by filling labor shortages, creating businesses, and paying taxes. They often take jobs in sectors that face shortages, such as agriculture, healthcare, and technology.

According to a special report by the American Immigration Council, "In 2022 alone, undocumented immigrant households paid \$46.8 billion in federal taxes and \$29.8 billion in state and local taxes. After taxes, they were left with \$256.8 billion in spending power, money that could be spent in local communities."

Farmworkers play a critical role in feeding America and sustaining the nation's economy. Without them, a lot of jobs and duties would be unfilled.

Since the beginning of the United States, immigrants have been forced to do the dirty and difficult work that nobody else wants to do and without the recognition that they deserve. Not only do immigrants increase the workforce, they also increase the demand for goods and services. If immigrants were to leave their jobs for even a few days, the cost of fruits and vegetables would go up in price, making it more difficult for people to afford to feed their families.

Some immigrants also help with the education system by going to college, working as teachers and adult allies to help youth get educated and be prepared for the future as the next generation.

The children of immigrants not only advocate for their parents but also will support other families to overcome potential issues due to being immigrants. As a community, we should help and support any and all immigrants, no matter their race or the country they come from. I hope in the future, immigrants will have a better life and more opportunities for them and future generations.



Undermining Opportunity : How Funding Cuts Deepen the Education Divide

by Domaris Cid

A person's socioeconomic status significantly influences the quality of education they receive. This is largely because socioeconomic status affects the overall quality of life, including access to opportunities and privileges.

In the United States, children living in poverty face substantial disadvantages, particularly due to limited opportunities to break the cycle of poverty.

Education is a foundational resource for uplifting students from all backgrounds.

However, children from lower-income households face significant barriers to success compared to their wealthier peers.

Childhood poverty can negatively impact cognitive development, making it harder for students to concentrate and learn in the classroom. Additionally, many lower-income students attend underfunded and under resourced public schools, which further hinders their academic progress.

Funding for K-12 schools varies significantly between public and private institutions. Unlike public schools, private schools do not receive government funding and must generate their own revenue through tuition, fundraising, and endowments, which are donations often contributed by individuals and corporations. As a result, private school students typically come from higher socioeconomic backgrounds and communities with greater financial resources.

Public school funding varies by state and is funded through a combination of local, state, and federal dollars. According to Peter G. Peterson Foundation, approximately 86% coming from local and state governments. School districts distribute these funds to individual schools in their district ; however, significant disparities still exist, as not all states allocate resources equitably across student populations. Funding can often vary widely between districts based on the wealth of the communities they serve.

Local school funding is largely driven by property taxes, which often results in students from high-income families to receive greater education support at the local level.

To address the imbalances, states use their own funding formulas to fill in the gaps when allocating additional funds for schools serving low-income students. According to a study, while federal funding accounts for less than 10% of total funding, it plays a critical role in maintaining equity across the system.

Federal funding is distributed through specific grant programs that are designed to support schools serving at-risk youth, like students with disabilities and those from low-income households.



These grants are administered by the federal government and distributed to the states, which then allocate the funds to school districts. The Department of Education plays a central role in directing this funding.

Although disparities in school funding for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds persist, federal programs such as Title I - which provides additional resources to schools with high concentrations of low-income students - and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) - which funds support services for students with disabilities - are essential tools in promoting educational equity.

Dismantling the Department of Education would harm students who are already at a disadvantage - including those from low-income households, students with disabilities, and those attending rural schools.

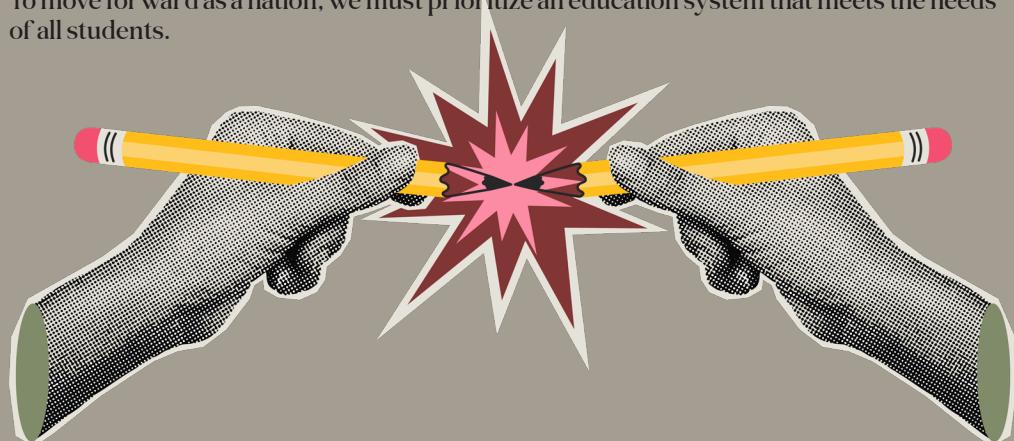
President Trump's executive order to shut down the Department of Education implies heavy uncertainty for flagship programs like Title I. Students who rely on these programs will not be provided the support they need to succeed academically. Although the administration promised that school funding formulas would be preserved through other departments, dramatic layoffs of experts particularly in special education and civil rights enforcements, makes it unclear how they will be able to maintain these critical services and protections.

For example, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) previously employed over 100 staff members, but following recent layoffs, only three remain. This drastic reduction severely impacts the ability to collect and analyze data critical for determining grant eligibility.

Programs like the Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP), which provides support to rural and low-income schools, are now at risk. According to NPR, with continued layoffs at both NCES and the Department of Education, it is increasingly unlikely that funds will reach schools in need by the 2026-27 school year.

K-12 public education is a critical foundation for students' academic and personal growth. Every student deserves an equitable education that provides the resources and support needed to succeed, regardless of their socioeconomic background. By dismantling the Department that provides crucial grant programs for public schools, the Trump administration continues to harm marginalized communities.

To move forward as a nation, we must prioritize an education system that meets the needs of all students.



Accessing Housing in the United States : The Immigrant Experience

by Moises Jauregui

In the United States, securing affordable housing is a challenge in today's economy. As the housing market fluctuates and the cost of living rises, many people struggle to get a living space. Unfortunately, many individuals don't understand the demand for housing and how important it is for residents, but also acquiring it may pose a more significant challenge to immigrants. So, what are the obstacles when it comes to buying a house?

In California, residents looking to purchase their first home must meet several key requirements. First, a person needs to be able to provide the correct documentation, specifically proof they have stable income, often showing at least two years of employment history.

Another thing they need to provide a realtor is a good credit score. A person's credit score is determined by income, credit card usage, loans and other financial activities. In California, the higher a credit score a person has, the easier it is to receive a lower interest rate and better loan terms. Sellers want to ensure that buyers can reliably make mortgage payments, and credit scores reflect a buyer's financial responsibility.

According to Synchrony, first-time buyers need to prepare for substantial costs as they need to provide at least a standard mortgage. They also need to consider costs like appraisal fees, inspection charges and more, depending on the situation.

A lot of people struggle to understand the concept of how important immigrants are when it comes to housing in the United States. In the workforce, immigrants make over 19% of the workforce in the United States since August 2024.

Just in the construction industry, in states like California and Texas, 40%



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Immigrants play a huge role in the supply and demand, but getting housing is much harder. The requirements are the same ; the only difference is how immigrants make those requirements.

For example, having a stable income is essential. Many immigrants struggle to get a stable job to make a good income, which in turn makes it difficult for immigrants to build a credit score. To build credit, they need to get a job to get a chance to get a credit card, which is the fastest way to build credit. However, all credit cards and loans often come with strict requirements and immigrants have it more difficult due to the lack of documentation. It becomes a domino effect : without one key element, it's nearly impossible to access the next, creating a cycle that's difficult to break.

Ultimately, even though the requirements to buy a house are the same, immigrants have a much more difficult time to purchase housing. Not everyone starts from the same place, and no two individuals share the exact same experiences or legal status. Recognizing these disparities is essential if we want to build a more equitable path to homeownership for all.

The Impact of Trump's Tariffs and Inflation on American Households

by Aileth Aguilar

As of 2025, President Donald Trump has imposed a 25% import tariff on imports from Canada and Mexico and an additional 10% tariff on imports from China. Tariffs are a tax on imported goods from foreign countries. On February 1, the White House fact sheet stated that he threatened imports from Canada, one of the United States' closest allies, which did not look good.

Why did he do this? He said the move is meant to "hold Canada, Mexico and China accountable for halting immigrants and stopping poisonous fentanyl."

Trump claimed that foreign countries pay tariffs on all foreign goods, but in reality, American companies that import goods pay tariffs to the U.S. Treasury. To offset those costs, companies typically raise prices, meaning American consumers ultimately pay the bill. As a result, the prices of foreign goods are more expensive and encourage Americans to spend their money on domestic products.

After the 2024 presidential election, Trump was re-elected as president. His main priorities were the economy and lowering prices. Inflation had been a concern under President Joe Biden, and Trump promised American voters that there would be a change, which resulted in many voting for him. Ironically, after he got elected, he said he couldn't lower prices. According to NBC News, he said, "Look, they got them up. I'd like to bring them down. It's hard to bring things down once they're up. You know, it's very hard." In the end, many voters saw this as a broken promise.

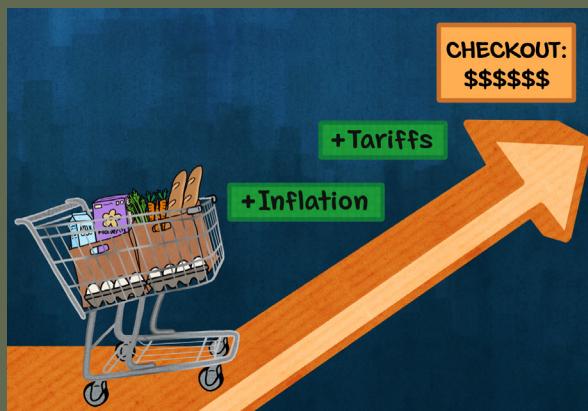
The import tariffs will increase prices for most manufactured goods, including food, gas, energy, and vehicles. The Department of Agriculture estimates fresh produce prices will likely increase by 8%, with a 2% increase in other food categories. These increases are only from tariffs, while the economy is already suffering from high inflation.

Inflation has been a major issue in the economy with prices rising, but basic necessities like groceries are becoming a concern for many Americans. Have you ever gone to the store and a bag of chips cost \$5 when it used to be \$2? This is inflation. You would think that you could afford all the groceries you need, but now, 10 items can easily equal \$100 or more.

Many households work two or more jobs to afford necessities like rent, gas, electricity, and groceries as a single income is often not enough to cover all expenses. Even with the help of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps, many families still struggle.

Trump's proposed cuts to low-income assistance programs, including potential restrictions on certain foods, could further make groceries even more inaccessible.

In short, inflation remains a major economic issue, and the added pressure of tariffs, especially under policies that limit support for low-income households, only deepens the hardship faced by millions of Americans.



The Ongoing Battle With Homelessness

by Melina Jauregui

Homelessness remains a significant issue in the United States, affecting hundreds of thousands of individuals.

According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, 771,480 people were homeless in January 2024, with numbers likely increasing due to rising homelessness in recent years.

Several factors contribute to this crisis, including a lack of affordable housing, poverty, mental illness, substance abuse, and discrimination. Understanding these causes and their effects is crucial for finding solutions.

A major contributor to homelessness is the lack of affordable housing. As rent prices rise faster than wages, many low-income individuals struggle to find stable housing.

Mental illness and substance abuse also play a significant role, as untreated conditions can make it difficult for individuals to maintain stable housing and employment. Family issues, such as divorce or domestic violence, and systemic racism further contribute to homelessness, particularly among marginalized groups like Black Americans and Indigenous people.

Homelessness has a wide-ranging effect on individuals health, safety, and well-being. Physically, it leads to poor health outcomes due to exposure to harsh weather, lack of medical care, and constant stress, making individuals more vulnerable to chronic illnesses. Mental health also deteriorates as instability causes anxiety and depression.

Children and families are one of the main ones impacted, with children facing educational



disruptions, developmental delays, and long-term mental health issues.

Families without stable housing struggle to provide consistent support, exacerbating these challenges.

Homelessness also limits access to education and employment, as individuals without a stable address cannot apply for jobs, receive medical treatment, or attend school.

Social isolation is another harmful effect, as stigma prevents individuals from seeking help, deepening feelings of hopelessness.

The issue also strains public services, such as emergency healthcare and law enforcement, which are burdened by the increasing demand for support.

To effectively address homelessness, a multifaceted approach is needed.

Increasing affordable housing, protecting existing options, and raising the minimum wage can help reduce financial instability. Expanding access to mental health care and substance abuse treatment is critical in preventing homelessness and aiding recovery.

Social support services, such as family counseling, job training, and education, are essential for helping individuals transition out of homelessness.

Veterans, disproportionately affected by homelessness, require targeted support, including mental health care, housing assistance, and career programs, to rebuild their lives.

Homelessness in America is a complex issue driven by factors such as the lack of affordable housing, poverty, mental illness, substance abuse and discrimination. It severely impacts individuals' health and well-being while straining public services.

A comprehensive approach, including affordable housing, mental health care, substance abuse treatment, and social support services, is crucial to reducing homelessness and helping individuals rebuild their lives.

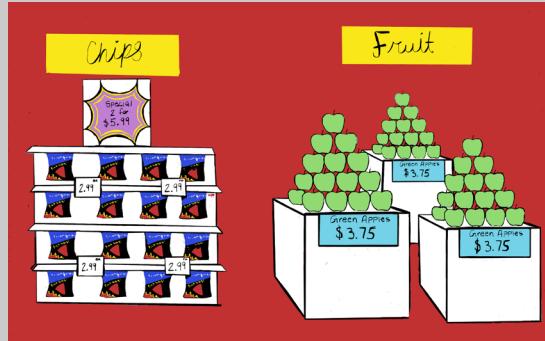
RACE/ETHNICITY	PERCENTAGE OF HOMELESS POPULATION
White (Non-Hispanic)	47%
Black/African American	37%
Hispanic/Latino	22%
Indigenous (Native American, Alaska Native, Pacific Islander)	5%
Asian	1%
Other/Multiracial	8%

Growing Food, Going Hungry : The Reality of Food Access in Fresno

by Cynthia Ocampo

Fresno is known for its agriculture, but a major problem that not many speak about is food insecurity.

What is food insecurity? Food insecurity is the condition of not having access to nutrient-rich, high-quality food.



Fresno has nearly 1.88 million acres of farmland and production of over 300 premium crops, yet many Fresno residents still suffer from food insecurity. According to CVS Health, Fresno has the third-highest rate of food hardship in the entire country. About one in four people in the county of Fresno face food insecurity. In an agriculturally rich region, it should be crucial to ensure that the food grown in Fresno is accessible to everyone who needs it, highlighting the importance of addressing food insecurity.

To better understand the range of the problem, it's essential to examine the underlying causes of food insecurity in Fresno. Some of these key factors include poverty, transportation barriers, and limited access to grocery stores in certain neighborhoods.

According to USDA Economic Research Service, people who don't have access to grocery stores have to travel a lot farther in order to have access to a wider range of food. This lack of access to a wide range of foods and produce can lead to poor diets, which can cause health conditions such as obesity or diabetes.

As if limited food access weren't enough, affordability remains a major barrier. According to Farm Progress the prices for much of the fruits in Fresno has risen significantly in 2022, with apricot prices going up by almost 89%, plums increased to 82%, and peach prices varying between 15.5% and 39%.

With food prices reaching an all-time high, it becomes more and more difficult for families unable to afford fruit, vegetables, and other produce, to meet their nutritional needs.

As a result more and more people are forced to go for a cheaper and feeble alternative, deepening the cycle of poor health and continued food insecurity.

But what happens when families do gain consistent access to healthy, affordable food? When children are able to eat nutrient-rich meals, their development improves significantly. For example, a student who starts the day with a balanced breakfast is more likely to concentrate in class, retain information, and perform better academically. Good nutrition is linked to higher test scores, improved behavior, and better attendance, laying a stronger foundation for long-term success.

For future generations, this access to healthy food means more than just avoiding hunger. It means unlocking potential. It means giving young people the fuel they need to succeed in school, pursue higher education, and contribute meaningfully to society. Investing in food security today is an investment in a healthier, more equitable, and more prosperous tomorrow.

The Pressure and Struggle to Establish a Savings in California

by Alexis Zuniga

Due to inflation, many individuals struggle to establish savings.

Based on a survey I conducted, 54% of respondents expressed their difficulty to save due to obstacles consisting of high living cost, low paying jobs, impulse spending, and having high levels of debt. As expected, the cost of living was the main factor hindering the ability to save. The price of houses and rent has skyrocketed, forcing most individuals to rely on splitting essential expenses with someone else or living with family.

In addition to housing costs, 92.6% of respondents said that the increase in food prices have drastically affected their expenses. Since 2020, the cost of food has steadily increased, reaching a historical high in 2022 with a 9.9% rise - the highest since 1979, as reported by the Economic Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Throughout the years, this continued to rise, setting our food cost to unaffordable levels.

When it comes to job salaries, 55.6% of survey respondents said that their current income does allow them to save but it is tight whereas 18.5% of other respondents said they struggle to pay their essential expenses. This has led some people to make financial decisions to purchase cheaper items, become more conscious of spending, and avoid non-essential purchases. Some individuals have even needed or considered to take on additional work in order to pay off their expenses or save.

A significant 87.5% of survey respondents said that they either occasionally or constantly felt a pressure to save money with their current financial situation.

I personally feel a great deal of pressure to save due to my fear of financial instability. I grew up learning the value of money because my family financially struggled at times. Although we always had meals on the table, for many years, most of our possessions were second-hand or thrifted. There were also periods when we shared a living space with other family members.

This upbringing has strongly influenced my current spending habits. I tend to gravitate towards purchasing cheaper items or things on sale but have also experienced a sense of guilt for purchasing these items. At times, I struggled with making decisions to purchase things and can get overwhelmed with following through with purchases. I've had to teach myself that some impulse purchases are acceptable as long as they don't become a constant habit.

Although saving in general remains a challenge, I believe that addressing inflation would alleviate much of the anxiety and stress people face.

One solution is establishing higher paying jobs with essential benefits, including paid time off (PTO), paid holidays, 401(k) contributions, and healthcare. Additionally, accessible financial resources that help individuals budget their expenses would be highly beneficial, as well as courses or workshops that guide individuals on how to best invest within their 401(k) or Roth IRA to secure their financial future.

Ultimately, everyone is trying to navigate through the impact of inflation, and over time, I hope things will balance out so the American dream of financial success and security becomes achievable once again.

The Vanishing Workforce

by Samantha Jauregui

As early as January 28, 2025 - just three days into Donald Trump's presidency - a mass deportation operation began in the United States. President Trump followed through on his campaign promise, leading to a sharp increase in deportations, mostly affecting individuals of Hispanic descent.

These deportations caused major economic consequences, disrupting industries, labor markets, and consumer spending.

Some believed that stricter immigration enforcement would open up more job opportunities for native-born workers, but the reality was far more complicated. Instead of strengthening the economy, the removal of thousands of workers led to labor shortages, financial distress for many families and ultimately weakened local economies.

One of the biggest effects of these deportations was the damage done to industries heavily dependent on immigrant labor. Agriculture and construction were among the hardest hits.

According to the National Agricultural Workers Survey, approximately 78% of farmworkers in the U.S. are foreign-born. The removal of these workers led to significant labor shortages resulting in crops being left to rot in fields due to the lack of available labor.

In states like California and Texas, where agriculture is heavily dependent on immigrant labor, this had devastating effects on local economies. Employers struggled to find replacements since many native-born workers were either unwilling or not qualified to take on these physically demanding and low-wage jobs. This labor shortage not only affected farmers but also had a ripple effect on related industries, including food processing and distribution.

The construction industry also faced several challenges. In 2024, the industry experienced a labor shortfall of about half a million workers. The mass deportations in 2025 exacerbated this shortage, leading to delays in projects and increased costs.

The National Association of Home Builders estimated that to keep pace with the industry's needs, approximately 728,000 new hires were required annually. With 89% of construction firms reporting challenges in hiring skilled workers, the deportations further strained the industry's capacity to meet housing and infrastructure demand.

Beyond labor shortages, mass deportations also placed a financial burden on taxpayers. The government had to spend more money on immigration enforcement, detention centers, and deportation procedures - funds that could have been allocated to other public needs. For example, Delaney Hall detention center in Newark, New Jersey secured a \$60 million annual contract for 15 years with immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).



Additionally, the administration attempted to freeze federal grants and loans. This move threatened funding for numerous nonprofits and social service agencies. Many families were left struggling when their main source of income was taken. This had led to an increased need for government assistance programs, putting even more pressure on public resources.

Another major economic impact was the decline in consumer spending. Hispanic immigrants - both documented and undocumented - contribute billions of dollars to the economy by purchasing goods and services. With so many people deported, there were fewer workers earning wages, meaning they could no longer spend money in their communities.

This drop in spending hurt local businesses, causing many to struggle or even shut down. The housing market also felt the effects, as fewer people could afford rent or mortgage payments, leading to higher vacancy rates and financial losses for landlords.

The mass deportations of 2025 have severe and far-reaching economic consequences. While the policy was intended to create job opportunities for native-born workers, the reality proved to be far more damaging.

The resulting labor shortages in the agricultural sector directly affected my own family. I witnessed firsthand how prices for fresh produce surged, making it harder to afford and access these essential goods due to limited availability and inflation. Rather than strengthening the economy, these deportations weakened vital industries, placed additional financial pressure on public resources and destabilized communities across the country.



The Paper's Verdict By Samantha Jauregui

Applied to several, rejected by all.
Is my worth decided by what's on a piece of paper?
Does the ink define me before I can prove myself?
Could it be my descendant?
Or just the process, unresponsive to my reach?

I take a leap toward something I've never possessed
My first time, my first chance
I know its value, but does it know mine?
Or am I only what that paper says?

How do I gain experience
If no one hands me the key?
I've put in the time, the effort, the hope
But still, no door has opened

I stand at the threshold, knocking
Still, I wait
Watching those doors close.
I search for a way
A crack, a light, even just a glimpse
But nothing yet.

The kN0w Weighs In

We asked our youth 3 questions :

1. In your own experience, have you noticed a shift in the economy?
2. Have you seen how changes in the economy have affected the community you live in?
3. Do you think those in power have your best interests in mind and are actively working toward making things easier for you and the communities you live in?

Below are their responses :



D The price for groceries have gone up significantly. What I'd usually buy for a house full of 4 people has doubled. A trip to the grocery store went from \$100ish to \$250. This significant increase started this year. Gas has always shifted from high to moderate prices, but it's been constantly high recently.
Domaris Cid (she/her)

A ABSOLUTELY. It has been so damn horrible and NOBODY is properly acknowledging it. Everything, and I mean everything, has risen exponentially while wages stay stagnant.
Rami (they/them)

D I have definitely noticed a shift in the economy. When it comes to the cost of living, I'm concerned that I won't be able to afford all my necessities once I move out on my own. I also fear that living independently may not be possible due to the high expenses.
Alexis Zuniga (she/her)

A Yes, I have noticed a shift in the economy. My family rents a house and the rent went up. Going to the store I can't afford as much food because of how expensive the food is.
Aileth Aguilar (she/her)

D I have noticed a change in the economy. EVERYTHING has become more expensive than when I was a toddler. At this point, eggs have become a luxury food with how expensive they are getting, when before they used to be what we would eat if we had nothing else.
Cynthia Esmeralda Ocampo Jauregui (she/her)

A I've noticed that food prices are starting to get higher and people aren't really able to afford food.
Sky Barrita (she/her)

?? \$?? \$??

I work at a homeless shelter and I've seen people struggling so much more than normal. Their food stamps are stretching the whole month and people are more moody day to day.

Lauren Webb (she/they/he)

I do not believe that the current administration has the best interests of anybody who isn't rich. However, I believe that local organizations and my community college are actively seeking to fight back against the administration by providing resources for their communities. I also believe that California's governor is tackling down on what the administration throws at our state.

Domaris Cid (she/her)

I don't think that people in power have the best interest at all they only care about the money and not the community.

Angel Michelle Alonso Arreola (he/him)

??????

There are a lot of people leaving because it is too expensive to rent and a lot of people are becoming homeless. Most people cannot afford bills where lights and water bills are being shut off. Many people have also been getting laid off and not enough jobs are actually hiring.

Melina Jauregui (she/her)

Yes. There are a lot of people that are now leaving Fresno because it's too expensive or becoming homeless. Our neighborhood is struggling to keep up and a lot of the money is being put on roads.

Moises Jauregui (he/him)

I do not think those in power have EVER had our best interests in mind. No matter which party had control, foreign ties and money will always come before the people. I think the people in power right now are destroying things at a faster rate than we've seen in history.

Lauren Webb (she/they/he)

HELL NO [the people in power don't have our best interests in mind]. If anything they're making it harder.

Samantha Jauregui (she/her)

Federal Judge Blocks Trump's Attempt to Dismantle Education Department

by Rami Zwebt

A federal judge in Boston has temporarily stopped the Trump administration from gutting the U.S. Department of Education, issuing an injunction that blocks the firing of over 2,000 staff and halts the transfer of key responsibilities like student loan oversight to other agencies. The ruling is a clear rebuke of Trump's broader effort to weaken federal involvement in education under the false premise of "efficiency."

The decision from U.S. District Judge Myong Joun comes after two lawsuits argued that Trump's executive order in March was an illegal attempt to shut down the department without congressional approval. The lawsuits, filed by multiple Democratic state attorneys general, school districts, and advocacy groups, warned that the mass layoffs had already crippled the department's ability to carry out its legal obligations, especially for students with disabilities, low-income families, and civil rights enforcement.

Judge Joun agreed, calling the administration's narrative of "reorganization" misleading and unsupported. His ruling noted that there was no evidence of increased efficiency, only chaos, delays, and loss of essential services. He also made it clear that a president cannot dismantle an entire federal department on their own. Congress created the Department of Education, and only Congress can end it. Despite that legal reality, the Trump administration had already eliminated half the department's workforce. Secretary Linda McMahon pushed forward with what she described as a plan to "uncreate" the agency, openly aligning with Trump's campaign promise to abolish it.

But the administration's actions weren't paired with any real legislative strategy. Instead, it was an aggressive and unilateral move to shrink the agency from within, bypassing the checks built into the system. The push to dissolve the department didn't just threaten jobs, it directly endangered students who depend on federal support, especially when it comes to financial aid, civil rights protections, and oversight of special education programs.

"It just makes no sense to me why they would want to get rid of something that helps students pay for college," said Adriana Rosas, a third-year student at Fresno State. "It's not perfect, but without federal aid, I literally wouldn't be in school right now."

That disconnect between who's making decisions and who's affected isn't new, but this latest move by the Trump administration pushed it to a breaking point. Critics say this is part of a longer-term effort to sabotage public institutions under the guise of reform.

"They always talk about efficiency, but really it's just a way to cut services," said Elijah Bulsara, a sociology major at Fresno City College. "They don't want the government doing anything that actually helps people unless it's profitable." The administration insists this is about streamlining. But when asked for proof of improvements, they had nothing. In fact, Judge Joun pointed out that the department was already failing to meet its legal duties, because so many experienced staff had been forced out. There's no world where that's efficient.

"Every time they say they wanna fix stuff, they just end up making it worse," said Maya Sahakyan, a student at Clovis Community College. "It's not about fixing, it's about controlling who gets help and who doesn't."

The ruling isn't the end of the fight. The administration immediately appealed, and conservative officials have already started framing the judge's decision as partisan

overreach. But the legal consensus is clear: Trump cannot legally abolish the Department of Education through executive action alone.

What's left now is a department gutted by ideology, limping along after mass firings, with thousands of students caught in the fallout. For now, the courts have hit pause. Whether that's enough to stop the damage is still an open question.



Big Corporations in Small Towns

by Soila Perez

When most people think of a coffee shop, the image that often comes to mind is a Starbucks - sleek branding, green aprons, and a familiar menu. But for those living in small towns, the image is different. They picture a cozy shop with a chalkboard welcome sign, the smell of fresh brew, and a warm, homey atmosphere.

For those who resonate more with the second image, there's growing concern: big coffee corporations are expanding into small towns, threatening the livelihood of beloved local spots.

In the Central Valley, towns like Kerman and Mendota have recently seen a surge in corporate chains. In Mendota, a Starbucks was recently built near the popular local coffee shop, Di Amici Coffee. Di Amici has long been a community favorite, especially among teens due to its convenient location near the junior high and high school.

Curious about the impact of the new Starbucks, I spoke to a Di Amici employee who chose to remain anonymous. They shared that business has indeed shifted - particularly during the morning rush and after school hours. Both students and faculty used to stop by Di Amici regularly, but the employee said Starbucks having a drive-thru became more convenient for the students and faculty. While Di Amici has seen a dip in business, they aren't at risk of closing anytime soon - a relief for loyal patrons.

Unfortunately, not all small businesses are as lucky. In Kerman, a local coffee shop called Clash Coffee closed at the end of February. Originally a mobile drink truck stationed at the town's entrance, Clash Coffee later moved into a market space, but the opening of a Dutch Bros and construction of additional shops nearby significantly affected their visibility and sales, especially since their main customer base was students from a nearby school.

In an interview with Your Central Valley, owners Bill and Teresa Beukers explained the impact: "We took a big hit. Our sales dropped drastically." The arrival of Dutch Bros brought stiff competition that Clash Coffee couldn't overcome. Although they're closing their current location, the owners remain hopeful and optimistic about a future comeback. Stories like these are becoming all too common. Small businesses often can't compete with the convenience, marketing, and brand power of corporate chains. But these local businesses offer something unique - authenticity, personal connection, and a true sense of community.

Supporting small businesses isn't just about buying a cup of coffee. It's about preserving the character and identity of our towns. In the face of corporate expansion, choosing local is an act of care - for neighbors, for tradition, and for the soul of the community.

