

STEVEN P. DINKIN A Path Forward

# BASKING IN THE GLOW OF CONGRESSIONAL BIPARTISANSHIP

Summer conjures up beaches, baseball, beer — and bipartisan-ship?

This month, Congress passed three different pieces of legislation and may be getting closer to agreement on a massive infrastructure bill.

The legislative spree began on June 8, when the Senate voted 68-32 in favor of the Endless Frontier Act — a five-year, quarter-trillion-dollar federal investment in scientific research and development to bolster U.S. competitiveness against China.

That's a big number — which makes it even more noteworthy that some Republicans joined with Democrats to support what's been described as the most significant government shaping of industrial policy in decades.

Along with funding for emerging technologies, the legislation provides \$52 billion for the semiconductor industry.

As the adage goes, necessity is the mother of invention (or in this case, cooperation). The pandemic led to shutdowns in production caused by unprecedented shortages in semiconductor microchips. There were delays in delivering

everything from cars to smart-phones to refrigerators, just as demand was increasing. And the scarcity of the chips drove up prices.

Christopher Thomas, a senior fellow in foreign policy at the Brookings Institution, writes that microchips have become a heated area of geopolitical competition for the 21st century. Right now, the U.S. and China are dependent upon each other — both as customers and collaborators, in product design and development efforts — but Thomas says that complexity makes semiconductors a "winner-take-all" industry.

Republicans and Democrats alike believe this act will tip the scales for the United States. Republican Sen. Todd Young of Indiana asked on the Senate floor, "When future generations of Americans cast their gaze toward new frontiers, will they see a red flag planted on those new frontiers that is not our own? Today, we answer unequivocally, 'No.' Today we declare our intention to win this century, and those that follow it as well."

One week later, on June 15, the Senate rushed through a measure

to make Juneteenth (June 19) a federal holiday to commemorate the end of slavery in the United States. There was no debate. The next day, it was approved in the House of Representatives by a vote that is virtually unheard of in modern times, 415-14.

Then on June 17, the House moved to repeal the 2002 Authorization for Use of Military Force that green-lighted then-President George W. Bush's plans to invade Iraq. Democratic Rep. Barbara Lee of California, who sponsored the repeal bill, had 130 co-sponsors from both parties. The vote to repeal was 268-161. The measure now heads to the Senate, where a similar bipartisan bill is under review.

Progress is also being made on the passage of a \$973 billion, five-year infrastructure package that is being crafted by a bipartisan group of 10 senators. Eleven additional senators recently announced their support for the framework, meaning it could have sufficient votes to overcome a filibuster. On Thursday, President Joe Biden proclaimed, "We have a deal."

Even so, it's unclear whether

progressives — who take a more expansive view of infrastructure that includes social programs like child care — will catch the bipartisan spirit.

The Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC) is a Washington, D.C.-based think tank that actively fosters bipartisanship to solve issues of importance to American families. The BPC website (bipartisanpolicy.org) includes a "History of Bipartisanship." Reading it makes you realize that bipartisanship was at the core of some monumental legislation, including the Civil Rights Act, the Endangered Species Act and Social Security reform.

The last entry was made in 2017, when the late Republican Sen. John McCain proved to be the decisive vote in killing a Republican effort to repeal key provisions in the Affordable Care Act. I'll never forget his appearance on the Senate floor: McCain stepped forward, turned his thumb down and said "no" to the repeal measure, in defiance of his party and its leaders.

A year later, McCain died of brain cancer. NPR reporter Domenico Montanaro said that his

death symbolized the near-extinction of bipartisanship. McCain believed that, when facing the most intractable problems, one must work with the other side for the good of the nation. McCain said of the Senate, "The most revered members of this institution accepted the necessity of compromise in order to make incremental progress on solving America's problems and defend her from her adversaries."

So perhaps, three years after McCain's death, compromise is making a comeback.

Yes, issues like immigration and guns feel unsolvable. Maybe we are better served by setting our sights on incremental progress — finding common ground to achieve positive changes, however small.

Just like summer, we could wind up wishing that our season of bipartisanship never ends.

Dinkin is president of the National Conflict Resolution Center, a San Diego-based group working to create solutions to challenging issues, including intolerance and incivility. To learn about NCRC's programming, visit [ncronline.com](http://ncronline.com)

# S.D. UNIFIED AGREES TO 4% RAISE, MORE STAFF

BY KRISTEN TAKETA

## SAN DIEGO

San Diego Unified School District agreed to give all educators a 4 percent raise and increase staffing of teachers, nurses, counselors and special education, according to a tentative agreement with the teachers union announced Friday.

The district said it will add 86 new elementary teaching positions to reduce class sizes at schools, as well as 12 school psychologist positions.

The district said it will "make every effort" to hire at

least 16 more full-time school nurses in the coming school year and to staff all school health offices five days a week with qualified staff, according to the agreement. Most San Diego Unified schools are not given a full-time nurse.

The San Diego Education Association, the local teachers union, told its members in a letter, "These improvements serve as a major down payment on larger and long-term improvements we can make once we return to the bargaining table next school year and as we organize with

educators across the state to demand permanent public education funding increases."

The 4 percent raise would come on top of already scheduled step-and-column raises, which raise teachers' pay as they accumulate years of experience and higher levels of education.

California's public schools are expected to get a significant boost in state funding, thanks to increased state revenue from wealthy corporations and individuals.

San Diego Unified is expecting a 5 percent increase

in general state funding next school year. On Tuesday the school board approved a \$1.7 billion annual budget.

The district also has received about \$658 million in federal and state COVID relief funding, which is one-time money.

According to current staffing ratios, most of the district's elementary schools qualify for having a school nurse and a school counselor for only one day a week.

A San Diego Unified school would have to have at least 2,367 students to qualify for a school nurse five

days a week, which is the case for two of the district's more than 170 schools.

For counselors, most elementary schools qualify for a counselor just one day a week. Middle schools get one counselor for every 481 students and high schools get one counselor for every 459 students.

Friday's tentative agreement does not change those ratios, but it includes promises to try to hire more nurses.

The new agreement also promises that no elementary school counselor will be

assigned to more than two schools. Currently elementary counselors are assigned to as many as three schools at a time.

Special education teachers would be assigned a maximum of 12 students. If their school exceeds that limit for more than 10 consecutive days, the school will get more staff allocated to it.

Currently teachers of students with mild to moderate disabilities have a cap of 20 students.

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## VOICE

FROM B1 side English versions — a feature not yet seen provided by other cities in San Diego County. Chula Vista is paying about \$7,500 a year for the Spanish streaming and up to \$25,000 per year for interpretation services.

Bringing in these new services is not credited solely to the city, however. Community groups are playing a critical role in perfecting them for the local Spanish-speaking population, said Hernandez.

**How it started**

Much of the conversation to have agendas and meetings in Spanish started before the pandemic with city officials meeting with residents who are part of the South Bay Community Services' Resident Leadership Academy, a program focusing on encouraging people to actively engage in topics that affect their lives, such as public safety and civic engagement.

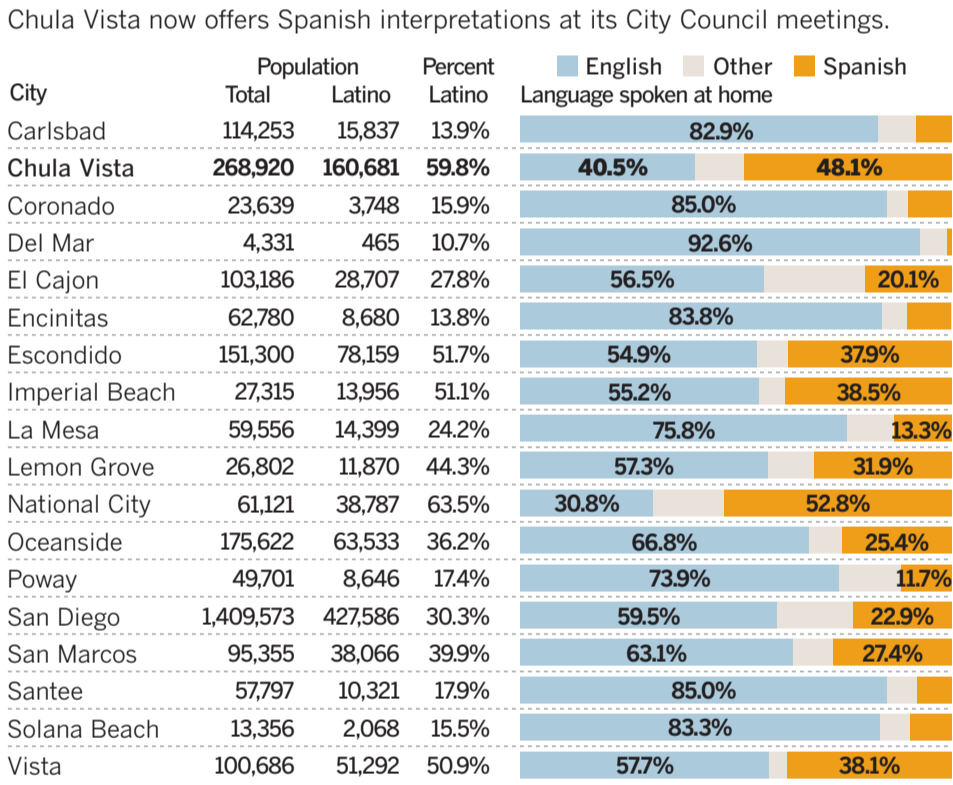
Among those involved was Chula Vista resident Veronica Marquez, who has been with the Academy for more than two years. Through translations, she learned about the city's departments and its permit process but when it came to council meetings, it was too complex to understand.

"No entendíamos lo que nos trataban de decir y aparte usaban un tipo de vocabulario como de abogados, con términos muy elevados," said Marquez, saying residents of the Academy had trouble understanding the meetings, especially because of the government jargon involved.

In hearing their concerns, the city not only worked to bring accurate translations to agendas and live interpretations but also offer a Spanish glossary of agenda terms and descriptions, as requested by Academy members.

"Even English-speaking people may not necessarily know all the terms. So, then imagine English not being your primary language," said Hernandez. "I think we took almost every single one of their suggestions and I really appreciated their candidness."

## Demographics by city and language spoken at home



## By the numbers

Nearly half of Chula Vista's 251,000 total residents ages 5 and up speak Spanish at home, and of that population, about 16 percent have limited English fluency, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2015-19 American Community Services.

In fact, several cities across San Diego County have large populations of residents who are Spanish speakers and who speak English "less than very well." Among them are Escondido, Vista and National City, which has the highest population of those who speak Spanish at home. Of about 60,000 residents ages five and older, 52 percent speak the language at home and 18 percent speak English "less than very well." The city of San Diego's 1.3 million residents includes 8 percent with limited English fluency, and San Diego County's 3.1 million has 9 percent, according to the report.

## Worth the investment

Currently, other cities outside of Chula Vista and National City offer translations of their city websites, including agenda titles, in multiple languages via Google Translate, and some

provide interpreters upon request only.

For some cities, bringing in Spanish translations or additional languages boils down to funding and demand.

"The truth of it is that I have never received a request for it. I've been on the council for 20 years but certainly, we're very diverse," said Oceanside Mayor Esther Sanchez, who is bilingual and the first Latina to take office in the city, which has about 25 percent of its population whose language spoken at home is Spanish. She said adding these linguistic services is something "we probably should start looking at."

Some government officials see it as a vital investment.

"When you're thinking about the cost of civic engagement, it's a worthwhile investment," said Mayor Alejandra Sotelo-Solis, who said the move came when the city became a "compassionate city," or one that is more immigrant-friendly. "To have people feel empowered, to have people feel like, 'They really want to hear my voice, even if I'm not fluent in English,' is pretty cool."

County Supervisor Nora

Vargas, whose First District includes the South Bay cities and who is the first Latina Board Supervisor, agreed. She has been providing COVID-19 updates during county news briefings in Spanish throughout the pandemic. Access to vital information in Spanish began with "Conexiones," a virtual bilingual resource hub for residents that she started during her campaign trail.

"Anything I do I try to do bilingual and bicultural. It's very normal for me because I'm a binational kid," said Vargas. "We should all be engaging, and more importantly, people should be holding us accountable no matter what your background or your culture and your language are."

Vargas is encouraging that cities consider investing in services that will help non-English speakers participate in government.

"The positive things we can take from COVID is community, working together, finding ways of reducing not only language barriers but barriers to government so that people can have access because they need access to vital services," she said.

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## SMOLENS

FROM B1 probable cause.

"I think law enforcement, myself included, need to do a better job of educating the public on that," he said.

Nisleit emphasized such stops have resulted in recovering firearms and apprehending people wanted for crimes.

"To me, this kind of proactive police work is needed ... I want to have the ability to keep our proactive stops intact," he added. "I think that's important for everybody."

In general, SDPD and the San Diego Police Officers Association seek to take a more incremental approach to policy changes when compared with some of the sweeping proposals backed by social justice advocates, including San Diegans for Justice.

San Diegans for Justice is the leading organization behind Measure B, the successful November ballot measure to establish a board that conducts its own investigations into police misconduct, shootings, use of force and other matters. The Commission on Police Practices will replace the current panel that essentially reviews SDPD internal investigations.

The police officers union, which has worked against proposals for a stronger oversight panel for decades, stayed officially neutral on Measure B. Credit the POA for reading the room: The ballot proposal was approved by nearly 75 percent of city voters.

Measure B promised the new commission will be independent, have the power of subpoena, and have its own legal and investigative staff. The commission does not have the authority to take disciplinary action against officers, only recommend it to the Police Department.

Some advocates for Measure B didn't celebrate for too long after the election before starting to worry about the next hurdle — the writing of the ordinance that would determine how the commission would be set up and work. They now believe their concerns were justified.

The proposed ordinance drafted by City Attorney Mara Elliott's office "had a number of red flags ... that could truly gut Measure B," said Andrea St. Julian, an attorney who authored the ballot proposal.

She was concerned about how much of the commission's operation would be affected by city negotiations with the police union. The city has to hold "meet and confer" sessions with the POA about matters that

affect work conditions. But St. Julian said the way the draft ordinance was written, virtually the entire scope of the commission could be subjected to — and limited by — collective bargaining.

St. Julian and San Diegans for Justice offered their own ordinance and proposed it last week to the City Council's Public Safety and Livable Neighborhoods Committee, which is chaired by Councilmember Monica Montgomery Steppe, an outspoken supporter of Measure B.

Montgomery Steppe and other committee members sent the city's draft ordinance back to Elliott requesting revisions. Among other things, they expressed concern that the commission's subpoena power would be too restricted.

"We certainly hope and expect the mayor will support the changes we are requesting," St. Julian said.

Gloria backed Measure B, but has stressed his support for giving the Police Department the tools it needs and has noted an uptick in crime rates, particularly an increase in gun violence. He resisted some calls to cut police spending and instead boosted the department budget by \$19 million — most of which goes to pensions.

At the forum last week to discuss the report on racial disparities, Gloria noted his budget includes \$1.14 million to fund the commission.

"The dollars are important. The powers it has are also important," he said. "... I believe we are keeping faith with what the voters approved."

He has not publicly weighed in on the ordinance that will determine how the commission operates, but promised the panel will bring "true accountability" to the Police Department.

As if to challenge doubters, he added, "I say, watch this."

They already are.

**Tweet of the Week (extended version)**

Goes to Greg Dawson (@DawsonNBC), vice president of news, NBC 7, regarding the Padres-Dodgers series.

@SDPublicLibrary: "San Diego Public Library staff are feeling a bit groggy this morning. Must be from all that sweeping. @LAPublicLibrary how are you doing?"

@LAPublicLibrary: "Guess without any World Series titles you get excited about regular season sweeps."

**Dawson:** "You know you got a rivalry going when the librarians are talking smack."

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## TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Sunday, June 27.

### Today's highlight

On June 27, 1950, the U.N. Security Council passed a resolution calling on nations to help South Korea repel an invasion from the North.

### On this date

**In 1880,** Helen Keller, who lived most of her life without sight or hearing, was born in Tuscumbia, Ala.

**In 1944,** American forces liberated the French port of Cherbourg from the Germans.

**In 1985,** Route 66, which originally stretched from Chicago to Santa Monica, passed into history as officials decertified the road.

### Today's birthdays

Singer-musician Bruce Johnston (The Beach Boys) is 79. Fashion designer Vera Wang is 72. Actor Julia Duffy is 70.

Actor Isabelle Adjani is 66. Singer Lorrie Morgan is 62. Writer-producer-director J.J. Abrams is 55. Actor Edward "Grapevine" Fordham Jr. is 51. Actor Tobey Maguire is 46. Reality TV star Khloe Kardashian is 37. Actor Chandler Riggs is 22.

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