

## 2022 IMPACT REPORT

### Improving California's Democracy

Behind everything we do at CalMatters is our determination to improve California's democracy – it's the first three words of our mission statement. We're pleased to highlight examples showing how we hold decision-makers accountable and educate Californians about how our state government works. Or doesn't.

You'll also find new initiatives we launched this year to support our mission. This work is made possible through the generous support of our members, major donors, grantmakers, and sponsors. Our deepest gratitude to all who've invested in CalMatters and are joining with us to make California a better place to live.



**Neil Chase**, CEO



**John Boland**, Board Chair

#### STATE EXPANDS HEARING AID PROGRAM FOR KIDS

Elizabeth Aguilera reported on a [program intended to provide hearing aids and services to thousands of children without health insurance](#). A year after the program launched, it had delivered devices to only 39 children out of an estimated 2,300 who qualify. Parents complain the application process is cumbersome, while doctors say the state reimburses slowly or not at all. After our story was published, Senate Republicans demanded to know why the program has reached so few children and what corrective action has been taken. Legislators then extended the hearing aid program to serve more children. We'll keep an eye on the program to see if it improves.



Sisters Sophie Nguyen, 10, and Chloe Nguyen, 7, both require the use of hearing aids. Photo by Rahul Lal.

#### NURSING HOME LICENSING RULES IMPROVED

In January 2022, the Assembly Health Committee [advanced licensing reforms](#) for nursing homes after [Jocelyn Wiener's 2021 investigation](#) spotlighted an opaque process plagued by indecision, delays and misleading information. Jocelyn found that the state allowed the largest nursing home owner to operate facilities for years, even as applications were pending or denied, by using a web of companies. Her reporting was referenced multiple times by the committee, and the resulting rule changes were signed into law by the governor in September.

## STUDENT STRUGGLES EXPOSED

After Mikhail Zinshteyn reported that the California State University system was [hiding the struggles of Black and Native American students](#), CSU Trustee Julia Lopez asked the staff to provide deeper graduation-rate data. Referencing Mikhail's story, she noted that "...smaller groups get forgotten" and "it's important that we keep them front and center." CalMatters partnered with CBS News on a two-part investigative report that aired on CBS stations statewide, bringing the story to millions who rely on TV news.

## POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS SCRUTINIZED

After political reporter Alexei Koseff [raised questions](#) about donations to Republican gubernatorial candidate Brian Dahle, his campaign said he would return the contributions and seek new ones to correct the error. Dahle received three maximum contributions of \$32,400 on March 2, all from companies registered to Marcos Gomez of El Dorado County. Dahle initially told CalMatters that Gomez shared ownership of the businesses with his two brothers, allowing them to cut three checks to his campaign. But under California law, the three would be counted together for purposes of campaign finance limits. Following publication of CalMatters' findings, Dahle's campaign said that, upon further reflection, the Gomez brothers had decided to contribute individually to the campaign instead.



Manuel Chavez is involved in a protracted wage theft case. Photo by Pablo Unzueta for CalMatters.

**“CalMatters reports on state-impact issues of which I cannot seem to learn about anywhere else. With local and state reporting having been gutted over the past few decades, it's vital that politicians have oversight on what they do and how they spend taxpayer money.”**

— Richard, San Francisco

## WAGE THEFT RECOVERY DELAYS EXPOSED

Our California Divide team's powerful and ongoing [series on wage theft](#) identified significant gaps in the state's protection of workers. A deep analysis of state data showed that it took twice as long as the law allows to settle the 19,000 wage theft claims filed last year. Those claims total \$338 million. But getting a judgment may be the easy part. Even five years after a court order, only 1 in 7 employers have paid up. Prosecutors are beginning to go after these employers, and a new law allows DAs to aggregate losses of multiple employees of the same company to meet the threshold for felony prosecution. Our reporting helped to empower workers and press lawmakers and law enforcement to protect them.

## 2022 PROJECTS

### Our dedication to democracy

- We **partnered with iCivics** to turn our election reporting into civics curriculum for California teachers.
- Modeled on our College Journalism Network, we launched a **high school journalism initiative** to bolster current programs and create new opportunities for students.
- Our ambitious **Voter Guide** and election reporting published in English and Spanish this year, including new interactive tools. And we launched **Pizza & Politics**, a fun effort to promote and support local conversations about the ballots across the state.

## AWARDS

### Recognition for our quality reporting

Our reporters and their work continue to be recognized and honored with many local, state, and national awards. Time and time again, judges praise our entries not only for the quality of the reporting and editing but also for the public service our articles provide.



#### **GENERAL EXCELLENCE & 16 OTHER AWARDS**

California Journalism Awards

#### **BEST LARGE NEWS WEBSITE IN AMERICA**

2022 Editor & Publisher EPPY Awards

#### **FIRST PLACE FOR MANUELA TOBIAS IN HOUSING**

Sacramento Press Club

#### **BEST WATER REPORTER IN THE WEST, RACHEL BECKER**

Water Education Foundation

#### **TWO FINALIST DESIGNATIONS, ROBERT LEWIS**

American Bar Association's Silver  
Gavel Award

## DONOR SPOTLIGHT

### Dawn Brewer

#### **What motivates your support for nonprofit journalism?**

We all need reliable information. CalMatters distills California's issues. It's useful journalism at its best.

#### **What do you appreciate the most about CalMatters?**

For me, CalMatters explains complex ideas and problems. I became a supporter after reading a CalMatters article describing how California's nursing homes are often operated by those already determined to be unfit to do so. Families and lawmakers needed to know how this happens and why it puts Californians at risk. CalMatters is the only source I read that objectively connected the problem with a solution.



**Dawn Brewer**  
Health Care Lawyer

## The Accountability Desk

Veteran CalMatters reporters Byrhonda Lyons and Lauren Hepler joined Robert Lewis on our investigative team this year. Investigative reporting is time and resource intensive, but it's badly needed in statehouse reporting. Growing this team gives us greater capacity to do the deep investigative reporting that brings lasting change for the people of California.

[Glass House](#), our legislator tracker that brings greater transparency to state government, launched last fall and we continued to add data throughout the year. Detailed information on the campaign finances and voting histories of individual legislators has never been easier to access.

Next up... Digital Democracy. Deepening accountability demands an innovative solution – combining a team of trained, independent investigative reporters with comprehensive data-driven journalism and new artificial-intelligence technologies to track policymaking. In 2023, we'll bring this tool, first developed at CalPoly in San Luis Obispo, to CalMatters. We're confident this technology will change California. For the better.

### BY THE NUMBERS

#### We continue to grow



#### 1M MONTHLY WEBSITE VISITORS

and millions more through our partners



#### 62 STAFF MEMBERS

8 reporters and 3 editors added this year



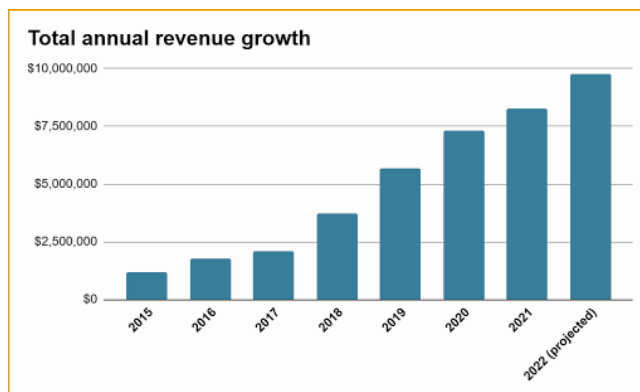
#### 250+ MEDIA PARTNERS

share our reporting with their audiences



#### 1 IN 5 VOTERS

used our Voter Guide and election reporting



CalMatters depends on the generous support of people just like you. For information on how you can improve California's democracy, go to [calmatters.org/gifts](https://calmatters.org/gifts) or contact Kate Looby, Chief Development Officer, at [kate@calmatters.org](mailto:kate@calmatters.org) or 415-933-0480.