



DAMON CONNOLLY
Assemblymember, District 12

NEWSLETTER

DEAR FRIENDS,

I want to extend my gratitude for your continued support and engagement with my office in both Marin and Sonoma County.

This January newsletter, the 25th issue, covers the past month serving as the North Bay's State Assemblymember. This opportunity is the privilege of a lifetime, and I look forward to the work we will accomplish together in this next legislative session.

For this issue, I want to recap some of our priorities going into the new legislative session, as well as new district updates. I hope you enjoy and stay tuned for announcements on plans for this new legislative session!



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SONOMA STATE UNIVERSITY CUTS

Like the rest of the community, I was shocked by the news that Sonoma State University decided to cut educational opportunities, academic programs, faculty positions, and athletics. I am working with colleagues and stakeholders both on the campus and in the community to come up with solutions. While these efforts are ongoing, my initial statement regarding these devastating cuts is as follows:

I am gravely concerned about Sonoma State University's decision to lay off faculty, eliminate academic departments and degree majors, and discontinue its intercollegiate athletics program. It is a disservice to the hardworking students, faculty, and staff to eliminate educational opportunities, employment, and athletic programs that enrich the academic environment and bring the university community together.

From the gravity of the situation, it is clear to me that SSU's problems are not simply a money issue but involve deeper and ongoing structural issues that have not been adequately addressed by SSU leadership. We are learning more about the precipitous decline in enrollment that has plagued many California State University campuses around the state over the past several years, but those declines have been particularly acute at SSU. This is an issue that has been known by SSU leadership and must squarely be addressed. With the risk now of a downward spiral due to potential further enrollment declines due to the elimination of programs and activities on campus, the key will be coming up with forward-looking strategies like better alignment of course offerings and degree programs with regional workforce needs and career trends, and other ways of attracting people back to campus.

I have met with my legislative colleagues both on the state and federal level, along with campus leadership and the California State University Chancellor, to look at alternative solutions and find a path forward that ensures professors may continue to teach their subject matter, students can continue to steward their degrees, and the campus community can continue to thrive. My legislative colleagues and I will be seeking the community's input at a public hearing on campus on Friday, February 21 at 2 p.m., with the overarching goal of holding the CSU system accountable. Additional details will be released in the coming weeks.

We are working together to chart a path forward where students do not have to sacrifice educational opportunities, faculty and staff do not have to lose their employment, and Sonoma State University can continue to serve our community and foster a bright future.

Committee ASSIGNMENTS



Budget



Judiciary



**Environmental
Safety & Toxic
Materials**

**Chair*



Agriculture



Budget Sub. 4

*Relating to the climate
crisis, natural resources,
energy, and transportation.*



**Natural
Resources**

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

This month, Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas announced each of the State Assembly's Committee assignments. Along with chairmanship of the Committee on Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials, which was announced in December, I was appointed to the Committee on Judiciary; the Committee on Agriculture; the Committee on Budget; Budget Subcommittee 4, and the Committee on Natural Resources.

I am excited to get to work on these robust committee assignments, and collaborate with my legislative colleagues to drive progress on the interests and values of the communities we represent. I am honored that Speaker Rivas has entrusted me with these committees, which oversee utilities, the environment, our judicial system, agriculture, and the State Budget; issues that are vital to communities in the North Bay and across the state.

Committee on Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials (Chair): Supervises issues regarding toxic substances and hazardous materials, hazardous waste regulation, drinking water regulation, and pesticides.

Committee on Judiciary: Includes family law, product liability, tort liability, Civil Code, and Evidence Code (excluding criminal procedure).

Committee on Agriculture: Handles agricultural commissions, Department of Food and Agriculture, expositions/fairs, farmers markets, food access, food labeling, labeling of agricultural commodities, livestock and poultry, milk and milk products, pest management, veterinarians: agricultural issues.

Committee on Budget: Oversees and manages the California State Budget.

Budget Subcommittee 4: Addresses State Budget issues and allocations relating to the climate crisis, natural resources, energy, and transportation.

Committee on Natural Resources: Oversees air quality, climate change, energy efficiency, renewable energy, coastal protection, forestry, land conservation, oil spills, solid waste and recycling.



AB 258 INTRODUCED

AB 258

On January 21st, I introduced AB 258, my second bill of the 2025 legislative session. This legislation will increase the amount of funding available for the Network of California Fairs. Our fairgrounds across California serve as hubs for events, local businesses, livestock, arts, and emergency response, and it is vital that they receive the funding they need to serve the community and prepare for emergencies.

Since 2012, California's 78 fairgrounds have been called into service more than 330 times, as medical sites, staging for emergency equipment, personnel and fire evacuations to those displaced by the wildfires. On average, 28 fairs are called into service every year to address emergency situations. Fairs up and down the state are facing fiscal challenges, and I have been impressed by the caliber of leadership and innovation as fairgrounds maintain what we love about them while evolving to serve community needs.

In September, I took a tour of fairgrounds up the North Coast, having conversations around ensuring that these spaces have what they need to serve their communities. Under current law, the Governor's budget includes an amount for the Legislature to consider for the funding of fairgrounds. The amount is equal to $\frac{3}{4}$ of 1 percent of the gross taxable sales that occur on fairgrounds throughout the year. This funding formula was created to replace about \$32 million per year of historical funding for fairgrounds generated through wagers on horseracing. Unfortunately, the current formula has not come close to providing the same level of support.

AB 258 will increase the formula to an amount equal to 5 percent of the gross taxable sales that occur each year on our fairgrounds. The legislature will then decide if we allocate that level of funding based on the condition of state finances. This increase will move us close to achieving the original funding goal established and envisioned by the Legislature, and the first step to securing a reliable and positive funding future for the Network.

WILDFIRE SPECIAL SESSION

On January 23, the California State Legislature convened in a special session, where we approved further wildfire relief for the devastating wildfires in Los Angeles. The approved aid, ABx1-4 by Assemblymember Jesse Gabriel (D-Encino) and SBx1-3 by Senator Scott Wiener (D-San Francisco), includes at least \$2.5 billion in additional funding for emergency response and recovery in Southern California. These funds will support recovery and cleanup, future disaster preparedness, and reopening schools, businesses, and community centers that have halted operations as a result of the fires.

The wildfire legislation approved in the special session includes provisions for the following:

- \$1 billion to improve state emergency response funding available to promptly fund costs, which should be eligible for reimbursement by FEMA for emergency response, cleanup, and recovery of areas affected by the January 2025 emergency conditions in the Los Angeles area;
- Provide funding for technical assistance to local educational agencies regarding efforts to rebuild and repair schools;
- Accelerate the availability of \$1.5 billion in funding for greater preparedness against the threats of firestorms, windstorms, and other natural disasters – adding to the response and recovery funding provided by the federal government.

All across the state, we are coming together to support our neighbors who have been impacted by the fires in Southern California. Whether you're helping locally or from afar, your involvement makes a difference. Recovery takes time -- let's stay ready to lend a hand. Visit CaliforniansForAll.ca.gov for resources, volunteer opportunities, and ways to help.



LOCAL RESOURCES

I know a lot of people in our community are extremely concerned about the Federal government's recently announced policies. Local nonprofits, legal aid organizations, and immigration advocates are jumping in to help and determining how we can best help residents who might be targeted. Take care of yourself, check in with others, and look to our local resources for support.

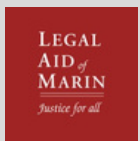


NAMI Marin County & NAMI Sonoma County provide resources and advocacy for those struggling with their mental health

Crisis Line: 988

(415) 444-0480

(800) 950-6264



Legal Aid of Marin & Legal Aid of Sonoma provide low income and vulnerable residents with access to high quality, effective legal services.

(628) 253-575

(707) 542-1290



Canal Alliance provides affordable and comprehensive immigration legal services in Marin County.

(415) 306-0437



The Multicultural Center of Marin provides resources to prepare community members to assert their rights.

(415) 526-2486



Marin Housing Authority & Marin Health and Human Services assist residents in finding affordable housing.

(415) 491-2525



Latino Service Providers provides a variety of resources to Latinx residents in Sonoma County.

(707) 837-9577



Center for Domestic Peace provides refuge, resources, and support for those experiencing domestic violence.

(415) 924-6616



Community Action Marin provides services to help residents meet basic needs.

(415) 526-7500



Community Action Partnership Sonoma County provides multi-generational support for families.

(707) 544-6911



Marin Center for Independent Living provides peer-led, person-centered, one-to-one care navigation and other social services.

(415) 459-6245

LOCAL RESOURCES

The AD 12 community stands up for our immigrant community and neighbors. The North Bay Rapid Response Network provides a 24 hour hotline for those fearing a raid by federal immigration agents, dispatches trained legal observers to the raid location, provides legal defense to affected communities, and offers aid to victims and families. If you have witnessed potential ICE activity, please reach out to the Rapid Response hotline with as much information as possible.

La comunidad del distrito de asamblea 12 defiende a nuestra comunidad inmigrante y a nuestros vecinos. La Red de Respuesta Rápida de North Bay (North Bay Rapid Response Network) proporciona una línea directa las 24 horas para los que temen una redada de agentes federales de inmigración, envía observadores legales capacitados al lugar de la redada, brinda defensa legal a las comunidades afectadas y ofrece ayuda a las víctimas y sus familias. Si ha presenciado una posible actividad de ICE, comuníquese con la línea directa de Respuesta Rápida (Rapid Response) con la mayor de información posible.

NAPA, SOLANO AND SONOMA COUNTIES

LÍNEA DIRECTA LAS 24 HORAS PARA LOS CONDADOS DE NAPA,
SOLANO Y SONOMA

24 HOUR HOTLINE: 707-800-4544

MARIN COUNTY

LÍNEA DIRECTA LAS 24 HORAS PARA EL CONDADO DE MARIN

24 HOUR HOTLINE: 415-991-4545

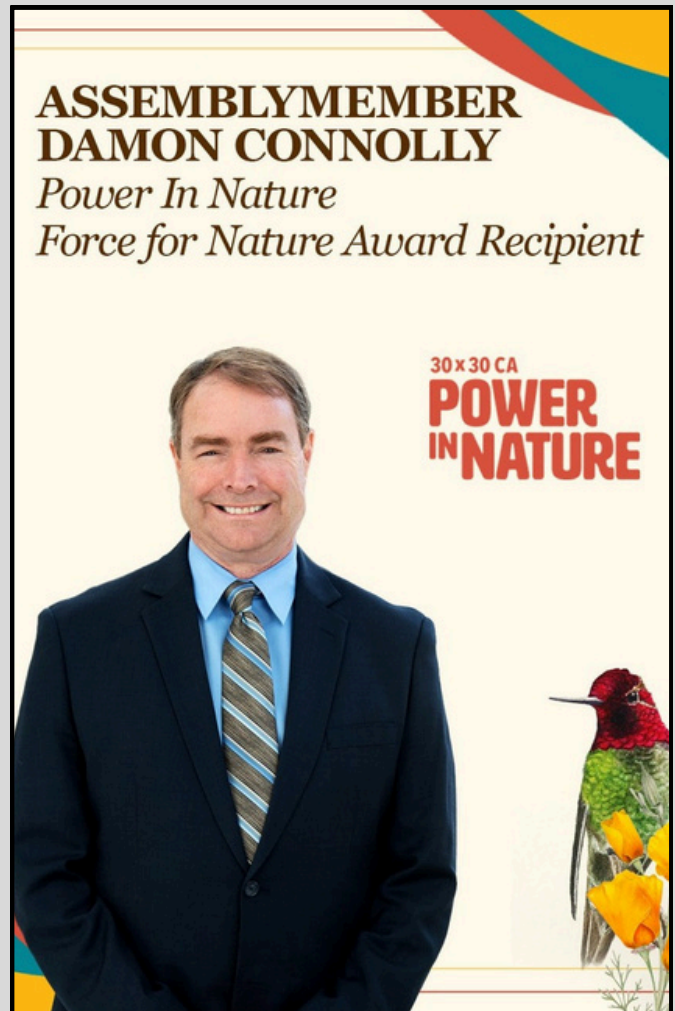
If ICE comes to your home, workplace, or neighborhood, report this action by calling the hotline and send help to those impacted.

Si llega ICE a su hogar, lugar de trabajo o vecindario, informe esta acción llamando a la línea directa y envíe ayuda a los afectados.



ENVIRONMENTAL RECOGNITION

I was proud to be recognized by Power in Nature with the "Force for Nature" award this month! The Power in Nature coalition plays a vital role in advocating for a more sustainable future for all Californians and advancing our 30x30 goals across the state. It is my pleasure to stand with this incredible coalition and commit to keeping California in the lead on innovative solutions to the climate crisis. A big thank you to Power in Nature! I look forward to continuing to work with this incredible organization for a cleaner, brighter future for all Californians.



Additionally, this month I was awarded a 100% on my California Envirovoters legislative scorecard for 2024! We had some major climate wins this year, including the once-in-a-generation Climate Bond that I was proud to coauthor and help pass. I am looking forward to working with Envirovoters on innovative solutions to the climate crisis, advocacy for our natural resources, and more climate wins in the 2025 legislative session!

DISTRICT UPDATES:

SNAPSHOTS

Even though I'm staying busy up in Sacramento during the week, I greatly value my time at home connecting with constituents in AD12. I have had many great opportunities to attend events, tours, and productive meetings with constituents throughout the North Bay in both Marin and Sonoma Counties. Here are some snapshots of some of the meetings and events my office participated in over the past month. As always, our door is open, if you want to schedule a meeting or send an event invite, please reach out through our website by clicking [here](#).



ATTENDED MARIN CITY'S ANNUAL MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY CELEBRATION



CELEBRATED PETALUMA NORTH SMART STATION RIBBON CUTTING



HONORED BILL LONG, CITIZEN OF THE YEAR, AT NOVATO'S ANNUAL "PAINT THE TOWN RED" BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION



ENJOYED THE NAACP SONOMA GALA WITH STATE CONTROLLER MALIA COHEN AND SANTA ROSA MAYOR MARK STAPP



CELEBRATED THE OPENING OF THE SMART MULTI-USE PATHWAY IN SAN RAFAEL



HOPMONK TAVERN IN NOVATO HOSTED BENEFIT CONCERT FOR LA FIRE DEPARTMENT FOUNDATION

CAPITOL UPDATES:

SNAPSHOTS

It's especially exciting when I have the opportunity to meet with constituents from AD12 lobbying out in Sacramento! Here are some snapshots of some of the meetings and events my Capitol office participated in over the past month. As always, our door is open, if you want to schedule a meeting or send an event invite, please reach out through our website by clicking [here](#).



**MET WITH ORGANIZERS FOR THE 2026
FIFA WORLD CUP IN THE BAY AREA**



**MET WITH SANTA ROSA JUNIOR COLLEGE
SUPERINTENDENT AND TRUSTEES**



**MET WITH MCE CLEAN ENERGY AND
SONOMA CLEAN POWER TO DISCUSS
ENERGY POLICY**



**MET WITH CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF
MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPISTS**

As always, my door is open and my staff are available to assist you. Feel free to contact me through my website, or by calling one of my offices.

With gratitude,

Damon

Damon Connolly
Assemblymember, 12th District



Capitol Office

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