VENTURA COUNTY
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Newsom cancels CA death sentences

Daniella Segura, James Powel and Amanda Lee Myers
USA TODAY

LOS ANGELES – Gov. Gavin Newsom announced Nov. 5 that he is commuting all of California's death sentences to life in prison without the possibility of parole, an extraordinary use of his clemency authority that affects 548 people currently sentenced to death in the state.

In an open letter, Newsom argues that the state's death penalty is unjust, error-prone and incompatible with California's values.

More inside

15 death row inmates convicted in Ventura County
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"After nearly 30 years in public office, I have come to understand the limits of what government can justly accomplish. I take this action because I firmly believe that state-sanctioned killing is incompatible with California's values, undermines the foundations of our legal system, and diminishes each of us," Newsom wrote in his open letter to Californians. "I know we cannot execute people in our imperfect legal system and remain true to our core values, first among them justice and human decency."

Newsom, who imposed a moratorium on executions shortly after taking office in 2019, said the action does not repeal California's death penalty and applies only to current death sentences. Some commutations will require review by the California Supreme Court under the state constitution.

The Golden State has the largest death row population of any state at 564 incarcerated people, according to the Death Penalty Information Center. Of them, 546

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California Gov.-elect Xavier Becerra gestures at an election night event on Nov. 3 in Sacramento.
BENJAMIN FANJOY/GETTY IMAGES

Five things to know about Gov.-elect Xavier Becerra

Jeanne Kuang
CalMatters

California Gov.-elect Xavier Becerra will take the reins during a delicate time for California.

He faces the prospect of deeper federal healthcare cuts, skyrocketing wildfire costs and a persistent cost-of-living crisis. But many of the specifics of his policies are still unknown after he ran a quiet race as a Democrat in a safe blue state, promoting few programs and avoiding making commitments.

Here's what to know about what Becerra will tackle and how he'll govern.

"My values and my fiscal beliefs tell me that anyone who works hard in California should have access to the healthcare they need for themselves and for their family and they should be able to afford it, and that includes undocumented."

Xavier Becerra, California governor elect

He's open to new taxes

Becerra opposed the billionaire tax ballot proposition, saying he does not think taxing assets is a stable way to provide state revenues. And while he's said he believes the wealthy should pay their "fair share" in taxes, he hasn't explicitly endorsed any new income taxes.

But he has signaled that he supports the idea of taxing corporations whose workers are paid so little they qualify for public benefits, or potentially ending tax credits to those companies. The state Department of Finance is studying what that kind of tax would look like and is expected to deliver recommendations to lawmakers next year.

He has also said he's considering a controversial proposal for the state to tax drivers based on their

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October hiring tops expectations

Unemployment rate dips as 165,000 jobs added

Rachel Barber
USA TODAY

U.S. employers added a surprising 165,000 jobs in October, much higher than the average monthly gain of 48,000 over the prior year, the Labor Department estimated Nov. 6, surpassing forecasters' expectations and extending the recent trend of sharp swings in hiring.

Past months' payroll gains were revised up, reflecting a stronger demand for workers than previously estimated. The department now reports that U.S. employers added 60,000 jobs in September, up from the initial estimate of 29,000, and 186,000 jobs in August.

Worker pay also ticked up, though likely still not enough to outpace inflation. Mean hourly earnings for employees on private, nonfarm payrolls rose by 14 cents to $38 in October. Over the year, they were up 3.1%. In comparison, consumer prices rose 3.7% over the year in September.

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Progressive Raman elected as mayor of LA

Bass is first incumbent to be defeated since 2005

Paris Barraza
USA TODAY

Nithya Raman has ousted incumbent Karen Bass for Los Angeles mayor, according to projections from Decision Desk HQ, CBS News and NBC News.

The progressive city council member won by about 4 percentage points, according to the latest Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk results. County elections officials are scheduled to certify election results on Nov. 27.

It is the first time since 2005 that an incumbent Los Angeles mayor has lost.

"Here in Los Angeles, this election is about change, too," Raman told supporters after polls closed on Nov. 3. "A city that was engineered over the last few decades to resist change, and the people right here who said enough is enough."

It's not the first time Raman has defeated an incumbent; she won a city council seat in 2020, backed by the Democratic Socialists of America Los Angeles chapter.

Bass, who made history as the first woman to serve as mayor of Los Angeles when she was elected in 2022, is an experienced elected official who found herself tasked with overseeing a city facing devastating fires, clashes with federal immigration enforcement and persistent concerns about homelessness. Prior to her mayoralty, she served in the House of Representatives and in California's Legislature.

"Four years ago, you elected me as the first Black woman mayor in the history of Los Angeles," Bass said in a statement. "You gave me the honor of serving the city that raised me, and every single day since, I have carried that responsibility with me."

Bass said she's called Raman to congratulate her on the victory, and said she's committed to "ensuring a smooth and seamless transition." She said Los Angeles has taken on "some of the most difficult challenges facing any major American city" during her tenure.

"Coming out of the pandemic, when encampments lined our streets and businesses were trying to reopen – we got Angelenos off the streets, made our neighborhoods safer, built more affordable housing, and created new opportunities for working families," she said. "We stood together through devastating wildfires and protected our immigrant communities when Donald Trump sent federal troops into our streets to spread fear and intimidation. That progress

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Los Angeles Mayor-elect Nithya Raman has been compared to New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani for their democratic socialist ties.
EVELYN HOCKSTEIN/REUTERS

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