



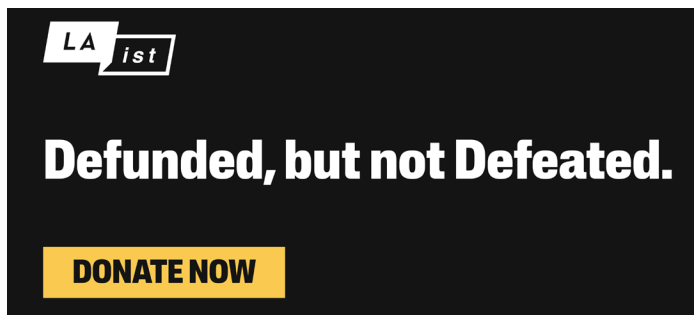
## Impact Report

(July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025)

### It's no secret that public media faces stiff headwinds.

At LAist, we're leaning into the challenge with grit, vision, and hope for the future. Whether reporting on critical elections, catastrophic wildfires, corruption in Orange County, or baby eagles in Big Bear, we're defying the odds, reaching bigger audiences with stronger journalism than ever. We're providing Southern Californians with the accurate, fair, and compelling local news they need to improve their lives, support their communities, and participate in our democracy.

"This has been a watershed year for our news operation," says LAist Editor-in-Chief and Senior Vice President of News Megan Garvey. "We're increasing the size and loyalty of our reading audience, and our ratings are up. We're listening to the needs of Southern California residents and working harder than ever before to serve them."



### A New Way Forward

The Trump Administration's campaign to defund public media cost LAist \$3.4 million in funding that Congress had already approved for the next two years, forcing a budget reduction that included layoffs of staff members who contributed significantly to our organization. Despite setbacks, we knew it was vital that we maintain the momentum of our transformation from a public radio station to a vibrant, multiplatform source of local news and information. Our continued progress requires a new strategy.

Newsroom leaders conducted a deep analysis of audience response to our content to find out what was working and what

was falling short. As a result of that study, they refocused our journalism on three key areas:

- DAILY NEWS
- WATCHDOG REPORTING
- STORIES THAT EXPLORE L.A.

At a time when traditional and nonprofit media alike are struggling, these three pillars of our coverage online, on air, and on demand are setting us on a sustainable path.

### Ramping Up Daily News

This past year unleashed a torrent of major news. LAist was ready to respond with the reliable daily news Southern Californians want – helping them understand what's happening in their backyards and beyond.

When the [wildfires](#) exploded in early January, our newsroom quickly mobilized to provide 24/7 coverage of urgent issues, including fire spread, evacuations, [outages](#), [air quality](#), [insurance claims](#), [renters' rights](#), and [how to talk to children](#) about fire losses. We invited readers to submit questions and addressed as many as possible in "[FAQs: The LAist newsroom is answering your questions about the fires.](#)"



Five LAist staff members were among the thousands of Southern Californians who lost their homes. [Weekend Edition host Josie Huang](#) offered an intimate perspective in a

piece about [navigating the days after the Eaton Fire](#) “ripped through our beautiful town of Altadena and took our home and neighborhood.” [AirTalk host Larry Mantle’s](#) Pasadena neighborhood was safe, but he could see the Eaton Fire’s flames as winds blew shingles off his home. He was [on the air](#) daily with experts and listeners, giving voice to the overwhelming shock and loss Angelenos were feeling.



Charel Bailey-Dickson, LAist Senior Producer Natalie Chudnovsky, LAist *Imperfect Paradise* host Antonia Cerejido and Alana Holland at the site of the Bailey family’s home.

A listener’s call to *AirTalk* inspired Senior Producer Natalie Chudnovsky’s moving story about the [Bailey family’s long roots](#) in Altadena’s Black community and their struggle over whether to rebuild or leave. On narrative podcast [Imperfect Paradise](#), [host Antonia Cerejido](#) spoke to the Baileys about the racist practices that shaped their community and the legacy that binds them to it.

Our comprehensive fire coverage produced the highest readership on [LAist.com](#) since Southern California Public Radio acquired the news site in 2018, surpassing the peaks of the pandemic.

On January 9, two days after the fires began, the website drew more than 690,000 users, far exceeding the normal daily average of 50,000. By early February, the number of monthly active users exceeded 5 million. [Science Reporter Jacob Margolis’](#) award-winning 2022 podcast [The Big Burn](#), which delved into California wildfire causes and solutions, drew 140,000 new downloads – another indicator that LAist was fulfilling Southern Californians’ hunger to understand the destructive forces transforming the local environment.

**“Thank you so much for your fire coverage, I didn’t know where to turn until I found LAist.”**

*Santa Monica resident*

When tensions rose over the actions of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers in L.A., our newsroom mobilized to keep audiences informed about [raids, protests, arrests, and efforts to curb violence](#). Our education team reported on [Homeland Security agents’ attempts](#) to enter two elementary schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District in April, purporting to conduct wellness checks on children who arrived at the U.S. border without adult guardians. [Civics & Democracy Correspondent Frank Stoltze](#) reported on immigrant communities’ [preparations](#) for the federal crackdown and was on the scene when thousands of protestors took to the streets around the downtown Civic Center in early June. Reporter [Julia Barajas](#) interviewed legal experts on [immigrants’ rights](#) and, with the California Newsroom, a collaboration with other major public media newsrooms in the state, reported on the ordeal of a [Honduran asylum applicant](#) with no criminal record arrested during his regular check-in with immigration officials. Our



After curfew the LAPD guard the empty streets near Los Angeles City Hall.

audiences learned of another shocking case when [Watchdog Correspondent Jordan Rynning](#) investigated the story behind [a widely shared video](#) showing a man screaming for help in Chinese as masked agents pinned him to a wall outside a downtown ICE office and forced him into an unmarked car.

Reporter [Yusra Farzan](#) went to downtown [Santa Ana](#), where a tight-knit community of proudly Latino shopkeepers rallied to support protesters and street vendors hurt by the presence of ICE agents and the National Guard. The crackdown, like the COVID-19 pandemic, had “disrupted businesses but not the community’s spirit,” Yusra reported.

Another big driver of readers to LAist was our reporting on [Jackie and Shadow](#), the bald eagles whose [livestreamed mating odyssey](#) has earned millions of fans nationwide. After two disappointing seasons that ended in empty nests, their saga heated up in January with the appearance of [three eggs](#). Reporter [Makenna Sievertson](#) closely watched the feathered pair’s fortunes, including the first two [hatchings](#). Her report on the widely mourned [death of one chick](#) in a severe snowstorm was one of LAist’s 10 most popular stories of the past year.

### Enlarging Our Watchdog Role

One of LAist’s [core beliefs](#) is holding the powerful accountable. This commitment is evident in the creation of our watchdog team, which includes correspondents Jordan Rynning, [Kavish Harjai](#), and [Nick Gerda](#) and editor [Jared Bennett](#).

With this investment, LAist is moving to a new model for investigative and enterprise journalism. Instead of the traditional approach that removes reporters from daily coverage for months as they complete investigative projects, we are setting a faster pace.

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**“We’re getting tips all the time now. It shows Southern Californians trust LAist to do the hard work to get to the truth.”**

*Megan Garvey, Senior Vice President, News and Editor in Chief*

Their efforts have illuminated issues such as [soaring liability payments](#) in the City of L.A., the hiring of an [accused sex offender](#) as a Metro transit ambassador, and dysfunction at the [Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority](#), including an investigation into the agency’s [top executive](#) for signing a \$2.1 million contract that benefited her husband’s employer.



Watchdog team (left to right): Jared Bennett, Editor; Nick Gerda, Senior Correspondent; Megan Garvey, Senior Vice President, News and Editor-in-Chief; Kavish Harjai, Correspondent; Mary Plummer, Managing Editor; Jordan Rynning, Correspondent

LAist’s hard-hitting 2024 investigation into former Orange County Supervisor [Andrew Do](#) continues to reap top honors. Nick Gerda’s reporting, which led Do to resign and plead guilty to a federal bribery charge after stealing millions in taxpayer dollars, earned the public service award from the Los Angeles Press Club and was a national finalist in the 2025 Investigative Reporters & Editors Awards. Nick also won the [Dan Rather Medal for News & Guts](#) and Journalist of the Year from the Los Angeles, Orange County, and Sacramento press clubs. We couldn’t agree more with the [Los Angeles Times profile](#) that described Nick’s work as “an exemplar of what happens when news organizations invest in local journalism.”

Enterprise and watchdog reporting happens across the newsroom. For example, reporter [Libby Rainey](#) broke the story about the city of Los Angeles’ plans to [hand over control](#) of most of its public preschools to private providers despite a multimillion-dollar investment. To further grow the newsroom’s accountability reporting capabilities, we trained the entire staff on California public records law and how to make successful records requests. Mining public records led to exclusive stories, from details on toxic debris from the Tustin hangar fire to [concealed whistleblower accusations](#) about L.A. County’s main homeless services agency. Quickening the pace of our accountability work across the newsroom is making an impression on our audiences.



## We Love L.A.

No one can live on hard news alone, which is why we created a new beat, [Explore LA](#), which aims to spark curiosity and delight in the unique region we call home. To that end, we promoted [Fiona Ng](#) to deputy managing editor in charge of a team of talented storytellers covering food, culture, history, events, and more.



LAist Food Editor, Gab Chabrán. Hawaiian, White Ferrari and Pepperoni pizza at Loosies Pizza in Santa Ana.

Their stories spur listeners and readers to experience new tastes, like [pickle lemonade](#) at the L.A. County Fair and an “[actually good](#)” Hawaiian pizza highlighted in [Cheap Fast Eats](#). Explore LA also spotlights finds like a coffee spot [5,700 feet above the city](#) and local history such as the 1978 landslide that turned a [Sunland-Tujunga cemetery](#) into a ghastly landscape. The team also augmented daily coverage of Big Bear’s Jackie and Shadow with engaging features on developments such as the [flying squirrel](#) that visits their nest for snacks and grifters seeking to profit from the eagles’ fame through [fake social media accounts](#).

To help expand LAist’s reach among younger, more diverse audiences, the Explore LA team is taking a leading role in experimenting with new story formats and video for social media, such as in a touching Instagram post about Altadena residents getting [tattoos](#) to memorialize what they lost in the fires. A post on preservation



Tattoo art, a form of healing and remembrance for an Altadena resident impacted by the wildfire.

efforts at [Elephant Hill](#), a little-known swath of natural open space in Northeast L.A., was the best-performing video, drawing 113,000 views on major platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and LinkedIn. Explore LA content accounts for nearly 15% of LAist’s overall social reach.

“We’re seeing real success here,” Garvey says. “We have big plans over the next year to expand across all platforms with more coverage of the zeitgeist, history, culture, food, and events that make Southern California such a great place to live.”

## Aligning LAist Studios with the Newsroom

Our podcast division is evolving to support the newsroom’s new imperatives. “We’re leaning into the award-winning reporting the newsroom is already providing, so we can be more nimble and pivot to breaking news,” Studios Director of Content Development Catherine Mailhouse says.



Protesters clash with authorities in downtown Los Angeles in June 2025.

For example, as the Palisades Fire spun out of control, *Imperfect Paradise* quickly turned out an episode on the [public feud](#) between Mayor Karen Bass and L.A. Fire Chief Kristin Crowley, who wound up [losing her job](#). In “[The First Five Days: Inside L.A.’s Most Destructive Wildfires](#),” Larry Mantle shared insights from four decades covering L.A. triumphs and tragedies as host of the city’s longest-running daily talk radio show. And after the federal immigration crackdown began, *Imperfect Paradise* turned to Frank Stoltze to share his [ground-level reporting](#) on a tumultuous week of clashes, [curfew orders](#), and the arrival of federal troops.



The podcast also showcases the newsroom's enterprise and watchdog work. A prime example is an episode on the tenants' rights group [Rent Brigade](#), which featured [Housing Reporter David Wagner's](#) report on [skyrocketing rents](#) in the fires' wake. His story cited a furnished home in Bel Air listed for \$29,500 a month, a nearly 86% hike compared to the property's pre-wildfires price. As a result of David's reporting, the listing was taken down.



[The L.A. Report](#), our no. 1 podcast with 2.5 million downloads, has expanded with a midday edition hosted by [Nereida Moreno](#). [The L.A. Report](#) is also going in-depth on issues with special editions such as ["100 Days, 2 Americas."](#) a collaboration with the Texas Standard and the California Newsroom that examined the effects of President Donald Trump's second term on California and Texas.



LAist Studios continues to excel at long-form storytelling. The four-part series [LA Made: The Other Moonshot](#) focuses on three Black aerospace engineers in 1960's Los Angeles whose crucial contributions to the space race were overlooked by history.



The 10-part series [Inheriting](#), which explored traumatic moments in Asian American and Pacific Islander history through the eyes of seven families,

earned LAist's first Ambie, the audio industry's Oscar, for [Best Society and Culture Podcast](#). In another first, *Inheriting* also received the [Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award](#). A second season is planned for 2026.

This year, LAist Studios began co-producing [This Old House Radio Hour](#), a one-hour spinoff of the long-running public TV show [This Old House](#). "It's got real potential for us," Vice President of Programming Jeff Rowe says of LAist's first nationally syndicated radio show. A blend of practical advice and in-depth storytelling, the newest podcast on our roster is distributed by American Public Media and airs on 160-plus stations and counting.

### Proof in the Numbers

Our focus on daily news, watchdog journalism, and exploring L.A. is turning LAist.com into a habit for 1.8 million Southern Californians monthly.

"We're averaging a higher number of daily readers now than we ever have before," says Vice President of Product Andy Cheatwood. Daily active users of [LAist.com](#) are up more than 70% over the previous year. Audience loyalty, measured by the number of people visiting the website at least two to five times monthly, increased 105% over the past year. Overall web traffic increased 74% from 2024 to 2025.



**"When it comes to being well-informed about the large and small details of this complex election, Voter Game Plan was indispensable."**

*LAist supporter*

A cornerstone of our online success is [Voter Game Plan](#), the nonpartisan guide that helps voters understand long, complicated ballots. Last November's general election edition drew record-breaking traffic, with over 2 million users and 3 million page views. More than 118,000 users and 1 million page views came from our [Orange County Voter Game Plan](#) alone.

Angelenos' desire to make well-informed decisions all the way down the ballot is evident in the popularity of our guide to [L.A. Superior Court elections](#), which consistently appears on the list of our website's most popular content.

"I want to give a virtual high five to the tremendous team that assembled the LAist Voter Game Plan," a supporter wrote last fall.

While newsrooms nationwide constrict or close, we're helping lead the movement to keep local journalism alive and well. Our success is reflected in [Nieman Lab's list](#) of the top 25 local public media sites. The rankings released in August show LAist is No. 2, after Minnesota Public Radio, which operates with a far larger staff and budget. According to Nieman Lab, LAist.com and the other top sites "have built online audiences that'll help them survive federal cuts."

### Thriving in a Digital Era



@laistofficial Instagram post

LAist's digital transformation is crucial in an age when [most Americans prefer](#) to consume news and information on a phone, tablet, or computer. The key challenge for most news organizations is turning online users into members and donors.

Effective social media, [newsletters](#), and [live events](#) are

key components of a strategy that is paying off for LAist in donations and member support, our primary source of revenue.

Overall digital revenue grew 39% over the past year, to nearly \$1 million. "We are building a strong digital audience," says Rob Risko, Vice President of Development and Membership.

Under Audience Engagement Director Chanelle Berlin Johnson, our social reach increased 330% over the past year, with more than 150 million unique views across Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok.

Our continued investment in video production; partnerships with NPR, CalMatters, and other newsrooms; and quick responses to major breaking stories helped drive the growth.

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**"We also doubled down on culture and topics that spark curiosity, like the Big Bear eagles,"**

*Jon Cohn, Vice President for Audience and Community Engagement*

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Every time reporter Makenna Sievertson updated the Jackie and Shadow saga for LAist.com, Chanelle and her team alerted our social audiences, producing viral posts on the [first chick](#) to hatch and the [death](#) of another. Eaglet posts drew more social engagement in one month, March, than all of our social activity in the previous year.

Newsletters are an increasingly important part of the strategy. Since 2024, we've added more than 30,000 subscribers for a total of 209,000.

More than 10,000 people signed up for the [Wildfire Updates newsletter](#), which was conceived and produced in collaboration with PBS SoCal, CalMatters, and KCRW. Published daily throughout January and continuing biweekly, it highlights daily coverage, including stories that seek to [dispel misinformation](#) around topics such as red flag warnings and the viability of fire hydrants in Pacific Palisades.

The [Make It Make Sense](#) newsletter, which attracted 6,000 new subscribers, amplified the impact of our election coverage with explanations of campaign funding and issues such as how [ballot curing](#) could affect tight races.

Live events accounted for the largest increase in newsletter subscribers, with 12,000 new sign-ups. One of the top





Win-Dow's winning Cheeseburger

attractions was our second annual [Tournament of Cheeseburgers](#). Ten thousand people – our largest crowd yet – came to [Smorgasburg L.A.](#) at Row DTLA to sample the top audience-rated burgers, including the no. 1 pick [The Win-Dow](#).

We also feted Larry Mantle on his 40th anniversary as *AirTalk* host in a series of live events, including [a panel at The Crawford](#) with some of his frequent guests, including former Los Angeles County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky and seismologist Dr. Lucy Jones.

### Stronger Than Ever

It's a challenging time for local journalism, but our ambition is undiminished. In an [essay](#) looking back on his four decades on air, Larry captures the spirit that sustains us: "My goal, like LAist's overall, is to reflect the terrific breadth of our region and to provide in-depth discussions of critical issues and fun personal reflections. Both are important in building community and getting to know each other. It makes coming to work every day incredibly rewarding."



Larry Mantle in the Pasadena City College basement studio

**Your generosity is helping LAist not just survive, but thrive. Thank you for supporting our mission to bring Southern Californians the factual, balanced news and storytelling that uplifts communities and fuels democracy.**

# FY25 LAist by the numbers

**81,816** LAist members

**29 AWARDS**  
in 2025  
701 total since 2000

**Voter Game Plan**  
**2+ Million Users**  
(2024 November general election)

**48 Live Events**  
**26,518 Attendees**

**72 Newsrooms Staff**  
including 20 reporters



## Achievements

In Fiscal Year 2025, the LAist news team was recognized with 27 awards for excellence in journalism, including national and regional awards for local news reporting, podcasts, and watchdog journalism. LAist's revealing investigation into the corruption involving Orange County Supervisor Andrew Do that led to his guilty plea and conviction resulted in top honors for Correspondent Nick Gerda.

### LA PRESS CLUB AWARDS (REGIONAL)

*Including 6 first place awards:*

Journalist of the Year – Online Journalist

[Nick Gerda](#)

Print/Online – Public Service News or Feature

[Uncovering the Andrew Do corruption scandal](#)

Nick Gerda, Jill Replogle, Ted Rohrlich, and Yusra Farzan

Audio Journalism – News Feature

[Imperfect Paradise: Too young to vote, but not to care: 3 high schoolers watch the election](#)

Mariana Dale, Monica Bushman, Ross Brenneman, and the Imperfect Paradise team

Audio Journalism – Use of Sound

[Inheriting: Bao & the Vietnam War](#)

Emily Kwong, Anjuli Sastry Krbechek, James Chow, Sara Sarasohn, and the Inheriting team

Audio Journalism – Limited Series Podcast

[Imperfect Paradise: Lions, Coyotes, & Bears](#)

Antonia Cerejido, Emily Guerin, Jill Replogle, Erin Stone, and Makenna Sievertson

Audio Journalism – Talk/Public Affairs

[Imperfect Paradise: District Attorney Gascón](#)

Frank Stoltze, Meg Cramer, and the Imperfect Paradise team

### OC PRESS CLUB AWARDS (REGIONAL)

*Including 3 first place awards:*

Journalist of the Year

[Nick Gerda](#)

Best Politics Story

[Santa Ana's Measure DD could set precedent for noncitizen voting in California](#)

Yusra Farzan

Best Investigative Story or Series

[Exposing OC Supervisor Andrew Do's corruption scheme](#)

Nick Gerda, Jill Replogle, Yusra Farzan, and Ted Rohrlich

### SACRAMENTO PRESS CLUB JOURNALISM AWARDS (REGIONAL)

*Including 1 first place award:*

California Journalist of the Year

[Nick Gerda](#)

### GOLDEN MIKE AWARDS (REGIONAL)

*Including 3 first place awards:*

Best News Reporting

[Federal Searches at OC Supervisor's Home](#)

Best News Podcast

[Imperfect Paradise: The Gen Z Water Dealmaker](#)

Best Podcast Feature Reporting

[Inheriting](#)

### INVESTIGATIVE REPORTERS & EDITORS AWARD (NATIONAL)

Print/Online - Division II Finalist

[Orange County Corruption Scandal](#)

Nick Gerda, Ted Rohrlich, Mary Plummer, and Megan Garvey

### AMBIES AWARD (NATIONAL)

Best Culture and Society Podcast

[Inheriting](#)

### DAN RATHER MEDAL FOR EXCELLENCE IN NEWS & GUTS (NATIONAL)

Nick Gerda

[Do investigation](#)

### ROBERT F. KENNEDY HUMAN RIGHTS JOURNALISM AWARD (NATIONAL)

Radio

[Inheriting](#)

Emily Kwong with James Chow, Anjuli Sastry Krbechek, Catherine Mailhouse, Minju Park, and Sara Sarasohn

### REPORTERS COMMITTEE FOR FREEDOM OF THE PRESS AWARD (NATIONAL)

Catalyst Award

[Josie Huang](#)

**Your commitment fuels our public service mission. We cannot do our work, serve our region, and bolster democracy without your continued generosity.**

