

## SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

## Wages jump 5%, beating US increases

Southern California workers got an average 5% increase in wages and salary last year compared with 4.6% nationally.

My trusty spreadsheet looked at the Employment Cost Index for private industry workers.

The index tracks what bosses pay in wages and salaries for 15 regions — including a local area comprising Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura counties — as well as national patterns.



**Jonathan Lansner**  
Columnist

Local data dates to the end of 2006.

#### Quick analysis

It's the ninth consecutive year Southern California pay raises topped what US workers got.

Southern California pay hikes for 2023 ranked No. 5 of the 15

regions, topped by Philadelphia (5.8%), Washington, DC (5.5%), Miami (5.4%), and Seattle (5.1%). The Bay Area was second-to-last at 3.9%. Houston raises were lowest at 3.7%.

This is the third-straight year local wages were 5% or better.

In 2022, Southern California raises ran 5.8% compared with 5.3% nationally. And in 2021, local hikes averaged 5.5% vs. 4% nationally. That 1.5 percentage-point advantage was the largest gap in this pay benchmark's 17-year history.

The substantial pay hikes help explain how the local economy keeps afloat despite the region's lofty cost of living — not to mention high inflation rates. The average Southern Californian during the past three years

got a 5.4% raise while local Consumer Price indexes jumped 5.8% annually.

#### Tidbits

During the nine-year winning streak, Southern California workers enjoyed 4.2% average raises compared with 3.3% nationally — and 0.9 percentage-point advantage for the region.

Those Southern California raises were the largest among the 15 U.S. regions. No. 2 was Phoenix at 3.8% then Seattle at 3.7%. The Bay Area was No. 6 at 3.4%. Again, Houston raises

were lowest at 2.7%.

This was quite a switch from the previous eight years — economic times scarred by a real estate bust, a global financial crisis, and the Great Recession. Between 2007 and 2014, Southern California pay raises only averaged 2% compared to 2.1% nationally — a 0.1 percentage-point shortfall locally.

*Jonathan Lansner is the business columnist for the Southern California News Group. He can be reached at jlansner@scng.com*

## STATUS UPDATE



**Samantha Gowen** has the latest on movers and shakers in Orange County

Send items about business expansion, milestones and promotions to sgowen@scng.com

## Discount retailer opening store in Westminster

A discount store "with the big brands and small prices" is opening Sunday in Westminster.

Hasco Stores, a reseller that features an array of inventory from big-box retailers, is opening in the former Walgreens at 7001 Westminster Blvd.

The store is just walking steps to another discounter, Aldi, the low-cost grocery store.

The retailer also has stores in Montclair and Ontario. A look through its Yelp photos shows aisles loaded with household merchandise including electronics, cleaning supplies and furniture for indoors and out. It also sells clothing.

Keen shoppers will note popular labels from Costco and Sam's Club among the merchandise.

Hasco says it's also looking to add to its team. All positions are available, according to an Instagram post on April 11.

For more, go to [hascostores.com](http://hascostores.com)

## Dog owners can get free toys on Sunday

The SoCal Animal Response Team is hosting a free dog toy event from 8 a.m. to noon April 28 at Patriots and Paws in Anaheim.

The nonprofit received 88 pallets of donations from a local pet toy company in Orange County. The items were left over from a Christmas project, so SCART gave a few of the pallets' toys and treats to local animal shelters. At least 60 pallets remain, chock-full of apple and peanut butter dog treats and balls, ropes and plush toys.

The nonprofit, which helps agencies and other animal rescues dealing with animal crises, said the toys and treats are all free. More information about SCART can be found at [scart.us](http://scart.us)

Address: 1825 Vía Burton, Anaheim

## New restaurant opens in JWA-Santa Ana hotel

Citra Bar & Kitchen recently opened at Hotel Zessa Santa Ana.

The hotel at 201 E. MacArthur Blvd. was formerly called DoubleTree by Hilton Santa Ana — Orange County Airport.

The eatery offers "a fusion of south of the border flavors" by chef Michele Bailey.

For more information, go to [hotelzessa.com/citra-bar-kitchen](http://hotelzessa.com/citra-bar-kitchen). Address:

## Sky Zone coming to Huntington Beach

The bounce emporium Sky Zone is coming to Bella Terra in Huntington Beach by late 2025.

The company tells us the new location will span 40,000 square feet.

This particular Sky Zone will come with some enhanced features including iWall and Cyclobeat in ad-

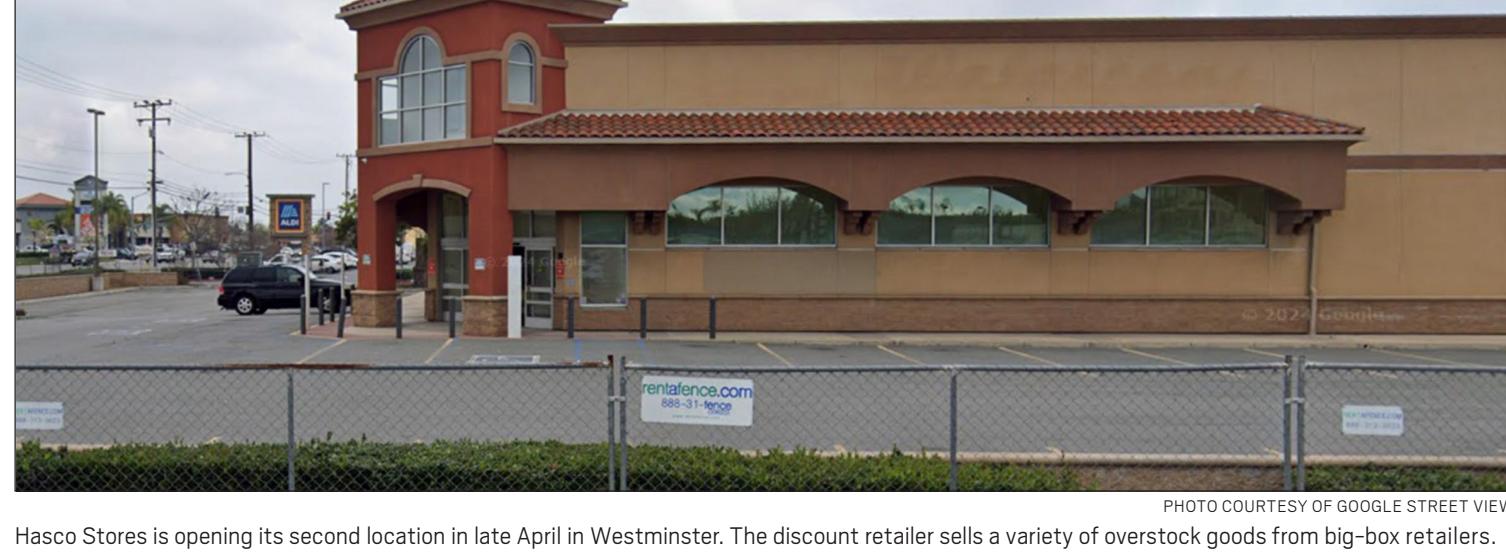


PHOTO COURTESY OF GOOGLE STREET VIEW



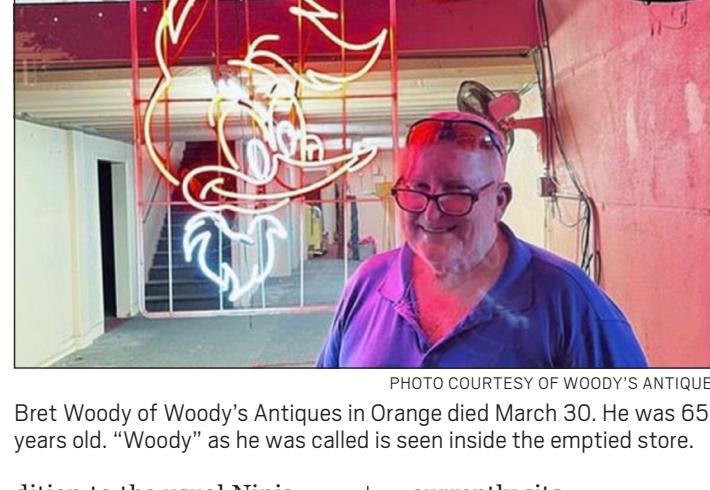
PHOTO COURTESY OF HOTEL ZESSA SANTA ANA

Citra Bar & Kitchen recently opened at Hotel Zessa Santa Ana. The eatery offers "a fusion of south of the border flavors."



IMAGE COURTESY OF SKY ZONE

The bounce emporium Sky Zone is coming to Bella Terra in Huntington Beach by late 2025.



Bret Woody of Woody's Antiques in Orange died March 30. He was 65 years old. "Woody" as he was called is seen inside the emptied store.

dition to the usual Ninja Warrior Course, Open Jump and Toddler Zone.

Sky Zone reps noted that the toddler section will be separated from the usual chaos with sensory equipment and games that suited to individual or child-parent play.

Bella Terra, at 7777 Edinger Road, is undergoing a transformation as its owners reimagine the center with more apartments and a section of retail where the Burlington store

currently sits.

#### Bret Woody of Woody's Antiques dies at 65

Bret Woody of Woody's Antiques in Orange died March 30. He was 65 years old.

Woody (who went by Woody) and his mother Bettie Woody operated their namesake antique shop at 169 N. Glassell St. in Old Towne Orange for 43 years before moving the shop to a small studio on West Chap-

man Avenue in June 2023.

Bettie Woody recalled in an article with the magazine OrangeReview how the pair would sometimes deliver mid-century modern furniture to celebrities, including actor Rob Lowe.

"When Woody and I delivered furniture to his house, he refused to let me lift anything and helped my son take everything inside," she said.

The family posted a photo on Instagram of Bret Woody in the shop on June 1 after it was emptied out.

"Thank you to everyone who came in and said goodbye, it was an honor, knowing we had touched your life in this special spot in the Orange Circle."

Bettie Woody, who had a storied career working for Disneyland for 33 years, died just 10 days later.

Jeanie and Gil Viveros, owners of Tiddlywinks toy store which now occupies the former antique shop, offered their condolences last week.

"Rest in peace to Mr. Bret Woody of @woodysanitiquesorange. We are saddened to hear of the news but know he lived a full life being a part of Old Towne Orange for over 40 years. He and his business touched so many lives, and we will always be so honored and humbled to occupy the space that was once Woody's Antiques, a true part of Orange history. His memory will live on in the heart of this place at Tiddlywinks."

The Viveros launched renovations on the former Woody's store late last year and celebrated a grand opening April 13.

#### CHOC taps new vice president of safety

Emma Sandhu is the new vice president, chief quality and patient safety officer at Children's Hospital of Orange County in Orange. She has 30 years of healthcare experience, including serving as a critical care nurse and most recently led CHOC at Mission Hos-



pital as its chief nursing officer and administrator.

Sandhu got her start at Rady Children's Hospital,

she worked in the pediatric healthcare system.

CHOC and Rady last December announced a plan to merge the two children's hospitals under the name Rady Children's Health. If approved, both organizations will have subsidiary organizations that run the hospitals and associated charitable foundations and medical groups.

#### On board

Erika Sanchez, an alumna of the nonprofit KidWorks, recently joined the Santa Ana-based nonprofit's board of directors.

She has 10 years of experience in higher education access, scholarship development and first-generation support services.



Sanchez is the project director of Hispanic Serving Institutions at Concordia University in Irvine.

#### Good works

At least 80 active duty military personnel got some help recently from Working Wardrobes. The nonprofit provided a variety of career services for servicemen and women who are about to transition out of the military. Attendees heard about successful transitions from a panel of veterans, learned about potential careers, networked at an onsite job fair and got a professional wardrobe and headshot.

Beyond Blindness raised \$39,205 from 31 donors during the 24-hour Empowering Possibilities online fundraiser held April 10. The organization was one of eight participating organizations and will use the money to help children with visual impairments and other disabilities.

Beyond Blindness wants to help more than 2,600 individuals by 2027.

*Status Update is compiled and written by Business Editor Samantha Gowen. Submit items and high-resolution photos to sgowen@scng.com. Allow at least one week for publication. Items are edited for length and clarity.*