



Photographs by LAURA DICKINSON For The Times

SURFERS WALK to the waves in Cayucos, a town of about 2,500. As cities get denser up and down the coast, Cayucos has seen almost no new development in recent decades, but an influx of short-term rentals.

How Cayucos, a coastal gem, is losing its identity

As full-time residents are replaced by Airbnb renters, the San Luis Obispo County spot is turning into a seasonal ghost town

By JACK FLEMMING

It's quiet in Cayucos. Perhaps too quiet.

In fact, on a cloudy fall day on the beach in Cayucos, you might not find any Cayucans at all. You'll find fishermen from Fresno and a few families vacationing from Visalia and Bakersfield. You'll find a pair of European road-trippers scouring the sand with metal detectors and a handful of part-time workers commuting from Morro Bay and Los Osos.

But these days, Cayucos locals are few and far between.

The charming gem along the Central Coast calls itself "the last of the California beach towns," and it might be right. As cities get bigger and denser up and down the coast, Cayucos has been seemingly preserved in formaldehyde for the last few decades — floating in limbo with virtually zero new development and a population hovering under 3,000.

[See **Cayucos**, A5]



TOURISM HAS always been vital to the town, but there was also a permanent population. Above, Duckies Chowder House.

Hochman's lead against Gascón expands in poll of D.A. contest

51% of respondents favor challenger, compared with 21% for incumbent. 94% call crime a problem.

By CONNOR SHEETS AND JAMES QUEALLY

With less than a month remaining before the Nov. 5 election, challenger Nathan Hochman is 30 percentage points ahead of incumbent Los Angeles County Dist. Atty. George Gascón in a new poll.

If the election were held today, according to the survey from the UC Berkeley Institute of Governmental Studies, co-sponsored by The Times, 51% of likely L.A. County voters would choose Hochman, and 21% would cast a ballot for Gascón. That leaves 28% undecided.

Hochman has improved his standing since Aug. 18, when the last Times-UC Berkeley poll of the race had the former federal prosecutor winning by 25%.

"It's not even close," said Mark DiCamillo, director of the poll. In order to keep his seat, he said, Gascón would have to significantly alter voter perceptions in the coming weeks.

"This now appears to be Hochman's race to lose. He's way ahead," DiCamillo said.

In an interview Friday, Gascón said he "came from way behind in 2020," and he anticipates doing so again to win by "a tight margin" next month.

"I feel very bullish about the final outcome," he said. "When people ask me about the polls, I say it's the poll on election day that really counts."

Although Gascón did lag

far behind incumbent Jackie Lacey in a 2020 primary, he received a huge groundswell of endorsements and outside donations in the summer leading up to his general election victory. And at no point did he face polling this dire.

Of those who support Hochman, past president of the L.A. City Ethics Commission and assistant U.S. attorney general, 66% said an "extremely important" factor was the need to "reduce turmoil and bring needed change to the district attorney's office."

[See **Poll**, A7]

Justices to tackle trans rights, gun cases

The major Supreme Court arguments both arose from appeals by lawyers for the Biden administration.

By DAVID G. SAVAGE

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court opened a new term Monday, facing major decisions on whether states can ban "gender-affirming care" for transgender teens and if the U.S. government can restrict the sale of untraceable "ghost guns."

Both cases could have a broad impact in the years ahead.

The first could outlaw discrimination nationwide against transgender youth, or instead uphold the power of red states to decide the divisive issue on their own.

The other — to be argued Tuesday — could score another victory for gun rights groups, making it easier for criminals and many others to get firearms they cannot obtain legally.

They are among the many contentious issues due to be decided in the coming term, including whether the government can restrict the marketing of new e-cigarettes that appeal to minors and whether states can set age limits for pornographic websites.

The transgender and gun cases both arose from appeals by Biden administration lawyers. They are asking the conservative-dominated Supreme Court to overturn decisions from even more conservative lower courts.

Last year, Tennessee joined 23 other conservative states to outlaw the use of puberty blockers and other hormones that allow "a minor to identify with, or live as, a purported identity inconsistent with the minor's sex."

The Williams Institute at UCLA told the court that "more than 100,000 youth aged 13 to 17 identify as transgender and live in states where their access to puberty-blocking medication and gender-affirming

[See **High court**, A7]



GENARO MOLINA Los Angeles Times

DEMOCRAT Rudy Salas, shown in August, lost to incumbent Republican Rep. David Valadao in 2022 by about 3,100 votes in a district of 775,000 residents.

A district that defines swing

In a hard-fought race for this Central Valley seat, both candidates know that every vote matters

By MELISSA GOMEZ

BAKERSFIELD — The sky was graciously cloudy on a late summer Saturday as a group of people from all corners of Kern County gathered in a parking lot.

The mood was light, and many wore shirts declaring support for Rudy Salas, the Democrat running to represent Congressional District 22, a sprawling, largely rural

expanse in the southern Central Valley. A white board reminded the volunteers of the impending deadline: Election Day is Nov. 5.

"You guys excited? Ready? Revved up?" Salas asked the crowd of about 40, who responded with applause and cheers. He instructed the canvassers to remind voters about his accomplishments while serving in the California Assembly for 10 years. That in-

cluded his work securing \$100 million for the California State University system and another \$100 million for Bakersfield College.

"These elections really come down to just a handful of votes," he said. "At the end of the day, you guys are going to be the difference."

In a way, Salas summed up what Central Valley congressional races often come down to: close margins. In

[See **Election**, A5]

A renewed focus on election denial

Tim Walz's query at debate and a new court filing on Jan. 6 attack magnify issue.

By KEVIN RECTOR

In the waning minutes of the vice presidential debate on Oct. 1, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz hit on a question that has become central to the 2024 presidential race — and to America's political future more broadly.

Walz, who is Vice President Kamala Harris' Democratic running mate, was

sparring with Sen. JD Vance, an Ohio Republican and former President Trump's running mate. The topic was the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol by Trump supporters intent on overturning the 2020 election of President Biden.

The governor called the attack "a threat to our democracy," and one driven by Trump's refusal to admit defeat. "He is still saying he didn't lose the election," Walz said to Vance. "I would just ask that: Did he lose the 2020 election?"

Vance, unwilling to buck Trump's false claim that the

[See **Election**, A10]

A year after Oct. 7 attack, war rages

Israelis hold somber ceremonies as Hamas and Hezbollah fire barrages into the country. **WORLD, A3**

Category 5 storm heads for Florida

The state cleans up debris from Hurricane Helene as Milton churns closer. **NATION, A4**

Weather

Clouds, then sun.
L.A. Basin: 85/61. **B6**

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Dodgers fans lose their cool

Some at Game 2 made a tattered image even worse, Bill Plaschke writes. **SPORTS, B10**

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