

Why I Picked California

By John Benson

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1. Introduction

I started out in Texas – born and raised there. Mostly in the DFW Area. Then, the year after I graduated from High School, my dad received a major promotion. He worked for ADT (yes, the electronic security firm), and was promoted to the city-foreman of the Houston Branch. I probably could have come up with a plan to stay in the DFW Area, but I decided to move with the rest of my family. To make a very long story, very short, I hated Houston. After a couple of years there, I joined the army to get out of Houston.

The Army was a good experience for me, but the best part of it was that, after six-months of technical training at Fort Bliss in El Paso (Motto, Bliss is Hell, but not so much for me, because I had family there), I was transferred to the SF Bay Area for the rest of my 3-year tour.

My Dad had moved to Lubbock with ADT, when I was in the Army. When I got out of the Army, I moved in with my family in Lubbock, and eventually graduated from Texas Tech University there, with a BSEE degree. I was lucky, as Texas Tech had a very highly rated Electrical Engineering Department. However, once I graduated, I promptly moved back to (Southern) California, and it the first opportunity again moved, back to the SF Bay Area. I've been here ever since. I love the SF Bay Area, and will never leave it.

2. Other Viewpoints

There is another gentleman in California. Officially, he resides in Sacramento (State Capital), but is originally from San Francisco, where he served as that City's Mayor. He will term-out of the Governor's Office shortly, and I believe he will probably apply for another chief-executive's job (in DC). I believe he will succeed. He very smart, good looking (that counts with many voters, you know), and a really great politician and public-speaker. The text below is from his website.

2.1. California per Gavin

SACRAMENTO – California's economy continues to lead the nation and outperform global competitors, according to a new report from the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC). Highlighting the state's long-term growth, resilience, and innovation-driven economy, this report demonstrates the Golden State's dominance in various fields.¹

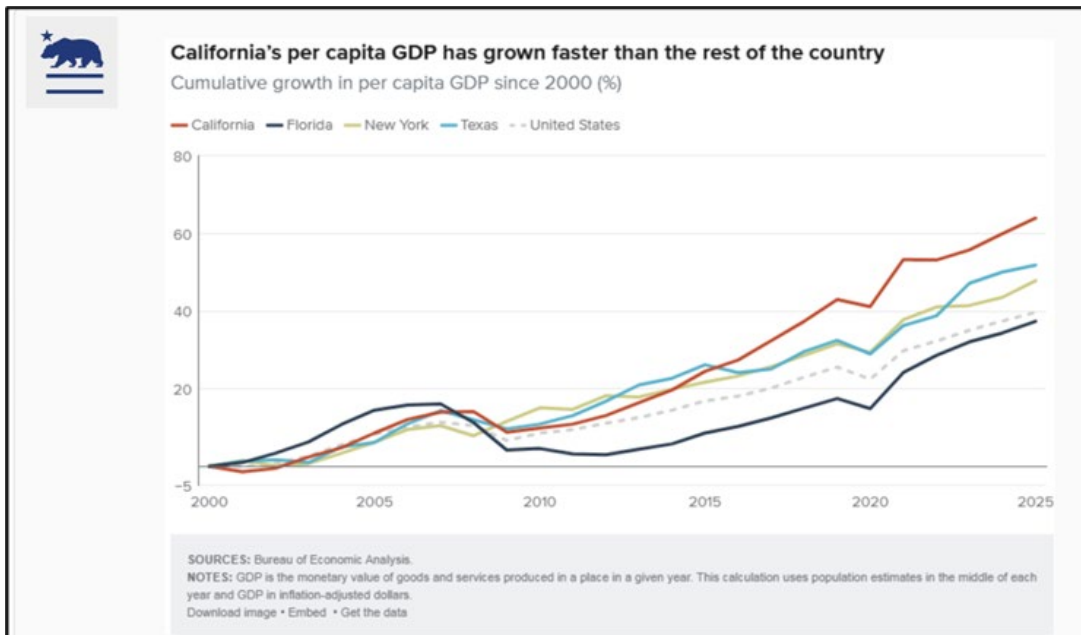
The report found California's gross domestic product reached \$4.3 trillion in 2025, representing 14% of the entire U.S. economy. Over the past 25 years, California's economy has grown 90%, significantly outpacing national growth of 69%.

California isn't just keeping pace with the global economy — we are setting it. Our state continues to be the nation's engine for innovation, entrepreneurship, job creation and economic growth. These findings reinforce what we already know: California succeeds because we invest in people, support businesses and workers, and continue building an economy that creates opportunity for all.

¹ Governor Gavin Newsom, "ICYMI: California's economy continues to outpace the nation, new report finds," May 22, 2026, <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2026/05/22/icymi-californias-economy-continues-to-outpace-the-nation-new-report-finds/>

The report also found that California has added nearly 3 million jobs since 2005, while the number of businesses with paid employees has increased by 52% — far outpacing population growth. On a per capita basis, California’s economy outperformed every other large state and the nation over the long term.

- Governor Gavin Newsom



2.2. California’s Economy is Dominating

California continues to lead the nation economically, outpacing all states and every developed nation, according to a recent Bloomberg analysis. In 2025, California continued a 16-year growth streak, growing faster than the second-largest state, Texas.²

The state has more businesses than any other state, including Florida and Texas, supporting strong job creation and expanded economic opportunity for workers across the state. California is also home to more than 4.3 million small businesses, representing 99.8 percent of all businesses in the state and employing 7.6 million people.

California continues to lead the nation as the #1 state across key areas of economic strength and innovation, including:

- Fortune 500 companies
- New business starts
- Manufacturing
- Venture capital funding
- High-tech business
- Agriculture

² Governor Gavin Newsom, “ICYMI: California’s economy continues to outpace the nation, new report finds,” May 22, 2026, <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2026/05/22/icymi-californias-economy-continues-to-outpace-the-nation-new-report-finds/>

2.3. California's Contrasting Patterns

California's economy presents a contrasting pattern: strong output growth paired with weak payroll employment.³

As the March 2026 California report notes, "Normally, one would expect employment to grow in step with output and income; however, the opposite has occurred." Using a monthly GDP methodology developed by the Forecast, economists estimate California's fourth-quarter growth at 3.8% annualized, well above the initial 1.4% U.S. GDP estimate. The state has now grown faster than the nation for four consecutive quarters.

Yet payroll employment declined in 2025, marking the first sustained contraction since the pandemic. The unemployment rate has remained above 5% for nearly two years. As of December 2025, it stood at 5.5%.

Author's comment: The major metro areas (MSAs) in California are:

California's most populous metropolitan areas are ranked primarily by population size, reflecting both the central city and surrounding integrated counties:

- *Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim MSA is the largest, with over 13 million residents, making it the most populous metro area in the state and the second-largest in the U.S.*
- *The San Francisco-Oakland-Berkeley MSA follows, with approximately 4.7 million people, encompassing the Bay Area's core counties.*
- *San Diego-Carlsbad MSA has around 3.3 million residents*
- *The Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario MSA in Inland Southern California has about 2.5 million.*
- *Sacramento-Roseville-Folsom MSA rounds out the top five with roughly 2.4 million residents.⁴*

The average weekly wages in these areas are below. Note that these don't precisely align with the above MSAs, but cover roughly the same area, even though there are just four of the categories below:

- *Los Angeles–Long Beach–Anaheim, CA – \$1,650/week*
- *San Francisco–Oakland–Fremont, CA – \$1,685/week*
- *San Diego–Chula Vista–Carlsbad, CA – \$1,580/week*
- *Sacramento–Roseville–Folsom, CA – \$1,550/week*

³ Paul Feinberg, UCLA Anderson School of Management, "U.S. Economy Poised to Reaccelerate in 2026 as Fiscal Stimulus and AI Investment Intensify; California Growth Outpaces Nation Despite Ongoing Employment Weakness," March 4, 2026, <https://www.anderson.ucla.edu/news-and-events/us-economy-poised-reaccelerate-2026-fiscal-stimulus-and-ai-investment-intensify>

⁴ Wikipedia article: "List of California urban areas."
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_California_urban_areas

The report characterizes the state's structure as a "new bifurcated economy," driven by AI, aerospace and other high-productivity sectors on one side, and slower-growing sectors such as construction, retail and segments of leisure and hospitality on the others. Venture capital concentration remains significant, with nearly 70% of U.S. venture funding flowing to California in early 2025.

Encouraging signs are emerging in aerospace and computer systems design, where hiring has begun to recover. If sustained, these sectors could provide a basis for stronger employment growth in 2027 and 2028. Goods movement also shows improvement, with port activity and air cargo volumes rebounding to or above pre-pandemic levels.

Housing remains constrained by workforce shortages, tariff-related input costs and financing conditions. Lower mortgage rates may spur some additional activity, but permit levels remain subdued and multifamily development is not expected to accelerate materially in the near term.

Final author's comment: After reading the above, it occurred to me that perhaps I'm a prototype for the typical Californian. I officially retired in 2013, from a long (1975 to 2013) career as an engineer and engineering manager (all in California). I accumulated enough assets where I could afford to retire, and retain enough other activities that I enjoy (like writing these papers, and hiking in near our second home in the Sierra-Nevada Mountains) and where I could stay busy and productive without gainful employment. Furthermore, I could lose activities associated with prior gainful employment that I really hated (mainly, millions of miles of airline flights).

Also, in my neighborhood in Livermore, I have seen many individuals like myself. From the above statistics, we are not considered "employed," although we are happily active.

Bottom line is that California is a good place to have a good and lucrative-career, followed by a post-retirement rest of my/your life. I can't think of a better place to live.