

2022 State of the County Address

Zack Scrivner, District 2 Supervisor, Chairman

Welcome to the 2022 State of the County. My name is Zack Scrivner and I'm Kern County's Second District Supervisor and this year's Chairman of the Board.

I was first elected to represent District 2 in 2010, and it's an honor and privilege to serve the communities of Bakersfield, Boron, Caliente, California City, Frazier Mountain communities, Maricopa, Mojave, North Edwards, Rosamond, Taft, and Tehachapi.

This year, as your Chairman, I am honored to lead this County forward, as we push back on state regulations and secure the resources necessary to our region's success.

I want you to know that Kern County is an organization grounded in ideas, energy, and innovation. We are a driving force in California's economy – the fifth largest in the world. We're proud to feed and fuel communities, providing essential services to the people in our state, nation, and beyond.

Kern County is a hub for aerospace and defense, agriculture, energy, oil, mining, and logistics. Our region ranks third in the nation for most diversified economy and fifth in the nation for millennial attraction, as our tech scene continues to flourish.

Kern County's mission is to exceed expectations of the communities we serve, changing the way people feel about government, those who manage it, and the service it provides. I hope our 2022 State of the County shows you, our residents, that we have the right people in place to continue to move Kern County forward.

Our strategic business plan for the next five years sets high-level goals and objectives to guide decision-making across all County functions to support measurable outcomes for our organization. We are guided by the pillars of innovation, collaboration, accountability, service, financial excellence, and transparency. We are working to be a model of excellence in managing our business and workforce, prioritizing enhancing quality of life for all Kern County residents by developing and growing a thriving and resilient regional economy.

Right now, we are at a crossroads, as Kern County continues to fall under attack of federal and state regulations. It is imperative we push back hard on policy decisions impacting our critical energy and agriculture industries that are detrimental to local jobs and tax revenues.

Now is not the time to give up hope, but instead, this is the moment Kern County leans in and strives to find resolution with policy leaders. This is the year Kern County must secure state and federal support of our essential industries, which in turn, are vital to the success of this state, and frankly, our nation. Right now, Kern County produces 60% of California's wind and solar energy, 80% of California's oil, and 46% of California's natural gas. Our County is also in the process of becoming the National Center of Excellence for Carbon Management in technical partnership with the United States Department of Energy.

It is imperative our policy leaders, and society as whole, recognize there can't be one form of energy without the other. Petrochemicals and green energy work in harmony to power our world... and here in Kern County, we do it better, cleaner, and more environmentally conscious than anywhere else.

Eight of the top ten taxpayers in Kern County are energy companies. This revenue funds essential quality of life services such as public safety, road maintenance, libraries, and schools. Governor Newsom's misguided attack on our highest tax producing industry – oil and gas – is an attack on the families and communities of Kern County, pure and simple, and on County government's ability to support the daily functions that make our region a great place to live.

The average wage of someone who works in the oil and gas industry is nearly \$30,000 more per year than that of Kern County's average income earner. Right now, we are fighting for this high-paying job opportunity to remain in our communities.

Now, it would be one thing if people stopped using oil and gas...and people gave up products such as clothes, makeup, medicine, cooking on gas stoves, heating homes, and of course, driving cars. But the demand for these petrochemicals has not gone away, and instead, have only increased within the last two years.

The state knows the demand for oil and gas continues to rise, but they hide it under the guise of irrational policy decisions tied to arbitrary numbers to further a governor's political agenda.

So instead, California imports oil from foreign countries in the Middle East and South America, with little to no environmental regulation and poor human rights records, to backfill this demand, while exporting much of our oil produced locally, here in Kern County, under the strictest and most environmentally conscious regulations in the world.

Now if you think this sounds hypocritical and foolish...then you are right. We need the governor and those who support his agenda to see the folly in their approach to domestic energy production.

We must demand they understand that their actions are not just about simply checking a box on a political agenda. Rather, it is about the loss of tens of thousands of jobs, hundreds of millions in local tax revenue, a reduction in quality of life and increased economic uncertainty. The governor's anti-oil agenda has a disproportionate impact on the poorest among us, those in disadvantaged communities, the same people the Newsom Administration claims to care for most.

Now, I want to introduce you to two local leaders within Kern County's energy industry, Mayor Dave Noerr of Taft, CA, and the President and CEO of Aera Energy, Erik Bartsch. They join us now to provide a deeper look at the future of Kern County's energy industry – a critical component of our economy and workforce.

Kern County is also the second top agricultural-producing County in the nation. One out of every five jobs locally is directly related to agriculture. Our farmers are continually innovating to produce more food with less resources, specifically due to continued state restrictions on water.

Kern County feeds the world and is a leader in farming and ranching best practices. In order for our region to continue to produce the quantity and quality of the commodities the world demands, it's crucial we receive the necessary resources and backing from the state to do so.

Please welcome two leaders from our local agriculture industry, President of Grimmway Farms, Jeff Huckaby, and past President of the Kern County Farm Bureau, John Moore. They join us now with a look at the leadership, innovation, and production happening right here in Kern County, that makes an impact not just on our community, but truly moves the world forward.

The Eastern Kern County portion of my district is home to some of the most innovative and specialized technologies in the world. Kern County's aerospace programs stand at the forefront of an industry gaining international recognition for space tourism and the first-ever privately funded spaceflight, as well as our defense and advanced weapons development supported by two military installations.

Right now, there are over 20,000 aerospace jobs in Kern County. These high-wage, full-time jobs have staying power thanks to vast open land, smart limits on development encroachment, proximity to Los Angeles, and higher education levels per capita than in most other regions in the country.

The annual economic impact of Kern County's aerospace industry on our local economy is gargantuan with Edwards Airforce Base producing \$2.27 billion annually, and Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake producing \$1.2 billion annually.

We're joined now by the Commander of Edwards Airforce Base, Brigadier General Matthew Higer, and NASA's Armstrong Flight Research Center Director, David McBride. These two leaders within Kern County's aerospace industry are here to provide insight on a sphere of our workforce whose influence is vital to the safety of our country, and whose innovation is felt around the world.

Now that you've heard about our top industries, I want to shed light on what our County is doing to improve quality of life for residents by investing in technology incubators, art, entertainment, and culture.

Kern County has joined with Bitwise Industries to bring another resource for innovation to Kern County through our partnership with [The City of Bakersfield](#) and [B3K Prosperity](#). Our new Ignite Innovation Lab, located in downtown Bakersfield, is a technology incubator that will allow members of the community the opportunity to take part in six-month long cohorts, primarily focused on creating new businesses and local jobs. Bitwise Industries creates a bridge between people from marginalized communities to the skills and resources necessary for them to access opportunities in the tech industry.

Right now, Kern County is one of the top five metros in the nation for startups and it's important we provide support to our budding entrepreneurs and continue to foster this aspect of our community, which continues to skyrocket.

Other investments include signing a five-year contract with Lightening In A Bottle music festival, which will be held on the banks of Buena Vista Lake. This major event will continue to draw crowds from around the state, as well as provide our residents with local state-of-the-art entertainment.

This year, we also plan to see shovels in the ground for the construction of the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino Tejon. This project will provide jobs to thousands of Kern County residents, and of course, continue support our booming tourism industry.

Other investments we're proud of that elevate quality of life in Kern County include the millions of dollars poured into the renovations of our local parks. Recently, we were awarded \$6.5 million in Proposition 68 funding to completely transform Lamont Park, an endeavor that will greatly elevate one of the most underserved areas of our community.

While we have many achievements, such as this, that we're proud to celebrate tonight, Kern County's road ahead is not without challenges.

Currently, our Board is working to find solutions as we deal with the problems of homelessness, mental health, and addiction. Our priority is to reduce homelessness and mitigate its impacts on public safety and quality of life in our community.

Our Board of Supervisors has recently passed an ordinance that specifies the times and locations where it shall be unlawful to camp or place personal items in public areas. We've also began construction on a safe camping space at the M Street Navigation Center for residents experiencing homelessness who are not ready to enter a shelter, but still have a place to go that's not outside the storefronts of our downtown businesses.

We are also in the process of developing a multi-departmental strategic action plan, which invests \$8.3 million in a variety of services to aid and support Kern County residents experiencing homelessness, including critical partnerships between law enforcement and behavioral health and recovery services. Another issue we are facing is what has become a national crisis for law enforcement agencies, where recruitment and retention of officers is at an all-time low. Public safety is our number one priority in Kern County, as it directly impacts our quality of life.

We want to make Kern County among the safest communities in the Central Valley. Over the next five years, we will focus on increasing and strengthening the efficacy of front line, first responder services. This will require working closely with our Sheriff, District Attorney, Probation Chief, and our Fire Chief, to make sure they have the resources necessary to be successful.

We will also deal with recruitment and retention issues in our Sheriff's Department, which is a nationwide problem all law enforcement agencies are facing. We will put more sheriff's deputies on the streets across our County, so their presence is both seen and felt. We will also ensure our firefighters have the equipment and resources necessary to do their jobs, which will require regular, annual investment.

While these issues are serious, so are we about facing our challenges head-on. From our robust industries to our local innovation and leadership, I am confident that, together, we can continue to move Kern County forward.

We will be the very best place to start and grow a business in this state, by developing and practicing long-term, comprehensive land use, permitting, and other public policies aligned with regional economic development strategies and industry preferences. We will strengthen and sustain a supportive environment for entrepreneurship and business ecosystem development, by continuing to promote and apply our Advance Kern and workforce development incentives to attract, develop, and retain new and existing business ventures.

We will strengthen and diversify our regional economy by ensuring and sustaining full implementation of B3K strategies on economic growth and inclusion. We will attract and support new business in sectors such as carbon management and renewable fuel production and innovation, aerospace, business services, and advanced manufacturing.

Finally, we will continue to promote and support our position as a national energy and agricultural leader by further strengthening our County as the alternative energy leader among all other counties in this state. This also means we must double down and strengthen our position as a national leader in oil and gas production through responsible, streamlined permitting, long-term planning and industry evolution.

We must also support and advocate for the development of state policies on innovative water reuse, banking, surface storage, water capture, and conjunctive use that supports our position as the one of the nation's top agricultural leaders.

I am confident all of this can be accomplished.

It's been a pleasure to share our vision for Kern County with you tonight. If you take one thing away from this year's State of the County, let it be this:

There is no better place to live and work in California than right here in Kern County, and I'm proud to call it "home."

Thank you, and I wish you a prosperous and blessed 2022!