

FCC ISSUES REPORT – 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2021

Oct-Dec

**KABC-TV**

**ABC7 -CORE ISSUES**

**4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2021**

CORE ISSUES

ABC7 gave significant coverage to the following community issues and concerns arising in the fourth quarter of 2021:

- 1. Health**
- 2. Community**
- 3. Public Safety and Crime**
- 4. Politics**

The station's coverage of these core issues is detailed in the next section of this report.

## ABC7 - CORE ISSUES COVERAGE

4<sup>th</sup> Quarter

### HEALTH

*Eyewitness News*. Air Dates: Oct 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31. Nov 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30. Dec 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31.

**Total Coverage: 1 Day 2 Hours 57 Minutes**

*ABC7 Eyewitness News* covered the various health topics of interest to its Southern California audience. The newest strain of the coronavirus known as the Omicron variant dominated health headlines in the latter half of fourth quarter of 2021.

ABC7 has continued to inform viewers on the latest development of COVID-19. First detected in South Africa in November of 2021, the Omicron variant had spread to over eighty countries by mid-December 2021. The first U.S. case of the variant was reported in a San Francisco resident at the end of November, with the second case being detected and confirmed in a patient from Los Angeles County just days later. Both patients had travelled to South Africa and had been vaccinated.

*Eyewitness News* covered how the highly contagious Omicron variant was evident in 50% to 70% of new coronavirus cases in parts of California heading into the December holiday season. Federal officials had said that Omicron was quickly becoming the most common form of the coronavirus in the U.S., accounting for 73% of all cases. Initially as scientists waited to learn how contagious the Omicron coronavirus variant might be, the Biden administration had rolled out travel bans on arrivals from eight nations in southern Africa. But on December 31, 2021, the U.S. travel bans on Africa had been lifted.

ABC7 viewers learned that the World Health Organization (WHO) had said that although it was almost certain that the new Omicron variant was more contagious, it was less dangerous than the Delta variant, as it was less able to penetrate deep lung tissue, thereby reducing the risk of severe disease and requiring hospitalization. Pfizer had said that a booster dose of its COVID-19 vaccine might protect against the new omicron variant even though the initial two doses appeared significantly less effective. Moderna had said its booster shot significantly increased antibody levels against Omicron variant. That company said within twenty-nine days of getting current a fifty micogram booster shot, antibody levels increased about thirty-seven times. Researchers said a 100-microgram dose would increase levels eighty-three times. Both doses produced side effects comparable to two-dose primary series, but 100 micrograms showed slightly more frequent adverse reactions. Moderna plans to start clinical trials early next year on an Omicron specific booster.

## **HEALTH (continued)**

One local story that interested *Eyewitness News* viewers involved the foul smell that permeated the city of Carson. First detected in early October 2021, residents of Carson had to deal with a noxious odor that lingered in the air for weeks. The odor was believed to be coming from an organic material drying out in the nearby Dominguez Channel. The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health and Public Works had said that the material was left on the channel banks during low tide. Authorities had ruled out any kind of release from a nearby oil refinery or waste facility. According to Carson Mayor Lula Davis-Holmes, the odor, which had been described as a combination of "The Walking Dead," rotten eggs and burning tires, was hydrogen sulfide. The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors declared the situation as a local emergency as a way to speed up the process of getting state and federal help to solve the problem. Los Angeles County Public Works sprayed a non-toxic, biodegradable deodorizer into the channel to try to eliminate the pungent odor. The county also reimbursed residents for air filters and air purifiers, along with meals and hotel stays.

But some Carson residents said the odor was no longer just a nuisance. They believed it was a health emergency and filed a class action lawsuit against the companies involved in a fire which left debris flowing into the channel. The lawyers claimed the companies failed to clean up the debris, leaving it to float in the channel to create the odor from the hydrogen sulfide. Attorney Carlos Urzua said an investigation showed that owners of a warehouse started a fire September 30, 2021, and allowed debris and other chemicals into the Dominguez Channel, causing a combustion leading to the hydrogen sulfide. The complaint also named the owners of the warehouse, Prologis, Inc. and Liberty Property, LP. The attorneys claimed that the odor was dangerous for residents to inhale and made many of their clients sick.

According to public works officials, the county has spent about \$5.4 million so far to clean the channel and help residents. If the job extends through March 2022, the cost could be between \$50 million to \$358 million.

## **COMMUNITY**

***Eyewitness News*. Air Dates: Oct 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31. Nov 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30. Dec 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31.**

**Total Coverage: 1 Day 20 Hours 55 Minutes**

*ABC7 Eyewitness News* reported on community happenings that affected the station's viewing area in the fourth quarter of 2021. One area that interested Angelenos was the backlog at two Southern California ports and the ripple effects that that had on global and local supply chains.

ABC7 viewers learned how the Port of Los Angeles has a major role in the global supply chain, the disruption of which by the pandemic has led to shortages of items such as diapers, computer chips and pet food, as well as inflation and price hikes that worsened as the holiday shopping kicked off. Along with the Port of Long Beach, these two Southern California ports account for 40% of all shipping containers entering the U.S. The major backlog of container ships at the two

## **COMMUNITY (continued)**

ports had 100 ships waiting to enter and unload by mid-October, 2021. Typically, there would be about seventeen ships at anchor in pre-pandemic times. The backlog prompted President Joe Biden's announcement of how the Port of L.A. would shift to become a twenty-four hour, seven-days-a-week operation as part of an effort to relieve supply chain bottlenecks and move stranded container ships that were driving prices higher for U.S. consumers.

ABC7 reported on how the ports at Los Angeles and Long Beach had planned to start charging ocean carriers fees for containers left sitting at port terminals beginning in November 2021. For containers waiting to be picked up by train, after three days at the ports, shippers were charged \$100 a day per container. For containers waiting to be picked up by trucks, fees would be imposed after nine days. In both tiers, the fees would go up \$100 per container per day until the container leaves the terminal. The threat of fees made a difference as officials started to see the number of containers subject to fines go down at both ports just prior to enforcing the charges, thereby delaying the actual implementation of imposing the fees. The ports reported a 41% combined decline in aging cargo on the docks since the original fees were announced. Barring any more delays, the fees are now scheduled to take effect on January 30, 2022.

*ABC7 Eyewitness News* covered how supply chain problems impacted farmers and California agriculture exports. Some farmers had issues with the parts they needed for broken farm equipment not coming in. Others had nowhere to take their harvests because many silos were full because of the trucking and rail shortages. Farmers also mentioned that some petroleum-based fertilizers were not available because of rising petroleum prices. And shipping costs were so high that ships did not bother to stop in smaller ports like the one in Oakland where most of the state's nuts are shipped. California is the nation's only supplier of almonds, walnuts and pistachios. In October 2021, 80% of scheduled nut shipments were canceled. Those products accounted for over eight billion dollars worth of exports two years ago.

Supply chain issues also impacted the supply of alcohol to the U.S. Experts said there were several factors in addition to transportation, including a shortage of glass and aluminum, that made it harder to ship out product. The worldwide shortage of glass left many Napa Valley wineries left with too much wine and not enough bottles. Many wineries have seasonal schedules and needed to make room for the next harvest, so some businesses were forced to stop production altogether due to the glass shortage.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY AND CRIME**

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**Total Coverage: 1 Day 16 Hours 24 Minutes**

ABC7 Eyewitness News devoted significant airtime to public safety and crime issues during the fourth quarter of 2021. One public safety story of interest was in regards to the massive oil spill in Orange County and its impact on the environment and wildlife. The other story that grabbed

## **PUBLIC SAFETY AND CRIME (continued)**

Angelenos' attention involved Los Angeles City Councilman Mark Ridley-Thomas, who was indicted on federal corruption charges in October of 2021.

*Eyewitness News* followed the story of the oil spill that occurred on October 1 of 2021. That day, California's largest oil spill of more than 120,000 gallons of oil leaked from an offshore rig pipeline and into the waters off the coast of Orange County. The Coast Guard rushed to contain the large oil slick that stretched thirteen square miles along the Orange County coast from Newport Beach to Huntington Beach. Cleanup crews arrived on the scene and deployed pressurized equipment to retrieve as much oil as possible. California Governor Gavin Newsom declared a state of emergency in Orange County that helped to mobilize state resources to clean up the oil spill as well as assisted in cutting the red tape, allowing for contracts to quickly be signed to assist the efforts.

ABC7 viewers learned how the impact on wildlife was almost immediate. It only took a few hours for the oil to be up on the beach due to the short distance and the persistent westward and southwestern wind. Officials in Huntington Beach closed the typically crowded beach in the evening of October 2. By the next morning, oil had already entered Talbert Marsh and other wetland areas of Huntington Beach. Crews worked to keep as much oil as possible out of ecologically sensitive areas with sand berms and floating booms. Less than two weeks later, wildlife officials had found 28 oil-covered birds which underwent a cleaning and rehabilitation program. Six of those birds died or were euthanized. Significant impacts can still occur to birds and marine life from the exposure. Marine mammals, like harbor seals and sea lions, could also face problems from ingesting or inhaling the oil. By the first week of November, about a third of the shoreline was nearing final cleanup approval as crews continued to collect tar balls along with sand, seaweed and driftwood tainted with oil.

*Eyewitness News* also informed its audience that by mid-December of 2021, federal prosecutors had indicted a Houston-based oil company and two subsidiaries on a misdemeanor charge related to that oil spill. Amplify Energy Corporation is accused of committing a series of negligent acts that led to the oil leaking. Authorities said the leak happened despite alarms that should have alerted workers to the pipeline rupture. If convicted, the company could face fines totaling millions of dollars.

ABC7 also followed the high-profile story involving Los Angeles City Councilman Mark Ridley-Thomas. The twenty-count indictment filed in Los Angeles federal court in October of 2021 alleged that Ridley-Thomas conspired with Marilyn Louise Flynn, 83, former dean of USC's School of Social Work, who prosecutors claimed agreed to provide Ridley-Thomas' son with graduate school admission, a full-tuition scholarship and a paid professorship at the university. She also allegedly arranged to funnel a \$100,000 donation from Ridley-Thomas' campaign funds through the university to a nonprofit to be operated by his son.

In exchange, the indictment purported, Ridley-Thomas, who was at the time a Los Angeles County Supervisor, supported contracts involving the School of Social Work, including contracts to provide services to the county Department of Children and Family Services and Probation Department, as well as an amendment to a contract with the Department of Mental Health that would bring the school millions of dollars in new revenue. Both defendants have vehemently denied any wrongdoing and said the evidence would clear their names.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY AND CRIME (continued)**

Ridley-Thomas had been suspended from his City Council post and his salary and benefits were frozen. Before his suspension, the councilman said he would not resign and would continue to focus on addressing Los Angeles' homelessness and housing crisis. He later said he would step back from attending meetings, but would remain in office. The trial is scheduled to begin in August of 2022.

## **POLITICS**

*Eyewitness News*. Air Dates: Oct 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31. Nov 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 28, 30. Dec 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31.

**Total Coverage: 12 Hours**

*ABC7 Eyewitness News* devoted noteworthy airtime to politics during the fourth quarter of 2021. Angelenos focused their attention on the film and television union that was prepared to go on strike, a move that would have crippled the industry and heavily impact the local economy.

*Eyewitness News* reported on how negotiations between the International Alliance of Theatrical State Employees (IATSE) and the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP) broke down in September 2021, after passing an original July 31 deadline, as well as multiple extensions. IATSE represents virtually all the behind the scenes workers in crafts ranging from motion picture animator to theater usher with members working in all forms of live theater, motion picture and television production, trade shows and exhibitions, television broadcasting, and concerts as well as the equipment and construction shops that support all these areas of the entertainment industry. Nationwide strike authorization votes were held from October 1 to 3. IATSE members voted 98.68% in favor of authorizing a strike, with ballots cast by 89.66% of sixty thousand eligible voters.

ABC7 viewers learned that IATSE and the producers' alliance were able to strike a last-minute deal and avoid a strike on October 16. When a new vote was to put its members in November 2021, the film industry crew members said yes to a deal with Hollywood producers and ratified the contract by a razor-thin majority. The tentative three-year agreement included a 3% pay increase, new protections for meal breaks and rest periods, which would put an end to so-called "Fratursdays," a work period spanning from Friday to Saturday that workers say doesn't allow them enough rest. It also included an increase in compensation to be paid by streaming services to IATSE members, observance of the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday and a rest period of ten hours between daily shoots and fifty-four hours on weekends. But some union members were not happy with it, saying it did not sufficiently improve working conditions, particularly in regard to long hours and on-set safety.

The ratification vote was conducted among the union's thirteen locals on the West Coast, for the basic agreement, and with twenty-three locals elsewhere on the area standards agreement. IATSE said the popular vote was 50.3% saying 'Yes' and 49.7% 'No.'