



The



# Joshua Tree

August 18, 2026

## TAXES, TECHNOLOGY AND AI

The Rotary Club of Victorville welcomed U.S. Congressman **Jay Obernolte** this week for an informative update from Washington, D.C., covering issues ranging from federal tax policy and the economy to one of the fastest-growing areas of public policy, Artificial Intelligence.

Congressman Obernolte represents California's 23rd Congressional District and currently serves on the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, House Budget Committee, and House Committee on Science, Space and Technology, where he chairs the Subcommittee on Research and Technology. Before being elected to Congress, Obernolte represented the 33rd District in the California State Assembly and previously served as Mayor of Big Bear Lake.

A business owner and longtime video game developer, Obernolte also brings a particularly unique perspective to discussions about emerging technology. He holds a bachelor's degree in Engineering and Applied Science



from Caltech, a master's degree in Artificial Intelligence from UCLA, and a doctorate in Public Administration from California Baptist University. He is currently the only serving member of Congress with a graduate-level degree in Artificial Intelligence.

During his presentation, Obernolte discussed H.R. 1 and several of its tax provisions affecting individuals, families and businesses. Among the provisions he highlighted were changes to the standard deduction, tax relief involving tips and overtime, additional deductions for seniors, changes to the State and Local Tax (SALT) deduction cap, and provisions aimed at encouraging small-business investment and domestic manufacturing. The Congressman discussed the legislation in the broader context of taxes, federal spending and the challenge of encouraging economic growth while addressing the nation's fiscal future.

Another major focus of the program was an issue in which Obernolte has become a leading voice in Congress: Artificial Intelligence.

Obernolte spoke about his work on the bipartisan Great American AI Act, a comprehensive proposal he developed with Congresswoman **Lori Trahan** of Massachusetts to establish a national framework for the governance of Artificial Intelligence.

### This Week's Functionaries

**Invocation:** Brad Letner

**Flag Salute:** Ryan McEachron

**4-Way Test:** Mike Page

**Fine Master:** Ryan McEachron

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## LETNER'S LETTER

What a meeting!  
Thank you to  
Congressman Jay  
Obernolte for joining



us today, and to everyone who helped us welcome a packed house. Having leaders from across the High Desert gathered in one room was a great reminder of something important: Rotary brings people together.

We've talked a lot lately about making Rotary fun, and we should. But fun isn't the foundation of our club. It's the fuel. We are also business owners, educators, public officials, nonprofit leaders, and people who care deeply about this community. Put those people together, and we can make a difference.

Next Tuesday, join us for "Rotary Means Business", with a roundtable featuring some of the High Desert's most successful business leaders.

Today showed what happens when we fill the room. Next week, let's see what happens when we put that room to work.

*Brad*

## Jay Obernolte

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Rather than attempting to regulate every use of AI in the same manner, the proposal focuses on creating standards based on the potential risks associated with increasingly powerful AI systems. The framework addresses areas including transparency, cybersecurity, safety testing, independent auditing and accountability for developers of the most advanced AI models. It also seeks to create greater consistency at the federal level rather than developing a patchwork of differing AI regulations from state to state.

Obernolte emphasized the difficult balance lawmakers face as AI becomes integrated into more areas of everyday life and technology. Regulations must protect consumers, workers and national security while avoiding restrictions that could unnecessarily slow American innovation or put the United States at a competitive disadvantage internationally.

That work has already begun moving forward. In July, Obernolte and a bipartisan group of lawmakers introduced the FRONTIER Act, developed from the broader Great American AI Act framework. The legislation proposes tiered oversight requirements for the developers of the most advanced AI systems, including risk-management plans, independent audits, incident reporting and ongoing safety assessments.

With Artificial Intelligence continuing to develop at an extraordinary pace, Obernolte told Rotarians that lawmakers have an important responsibility to understand both the opportunities and potential risks presented by the technology and to develop thoughtful policies that can evolve along with it.

The program gave Rotarians a fascinating look at issues currently being debated in Washington and the unique role our local Congressman is playing in shaping the national conversation surrounding emerging technology and Artificial Intelligence.

**CREATE  
LASTING  
IMPACT**

## Big Blue Poker Chip



*Jon Hove had the chance to draw the Blue Chip but picked green and saved it for another!*

*We will continue next week with 12 chips and \$250 for the lucky Rotarian who can draw the Blue Chip.*

## Raffle



This week, **Chris Ackerman** donated a VVTA stadium bag that will be used by guests **Laura Dvareckas**, and **Mike Johnson** won a VVTA canvas bag. Ackerman then donated a rare VVTA Hydrogen Bus die cast model that is now owned by **Ben Tafoya**. Ackerman then

won a \$10 Starbucks gift card from **Don Lager**, while Don won a battery charger kit from **Steve Murray**.

Another guest received a Hi Grade Hat and Koozie from **Jon Hove**, and from the Apple Valley Rotary Club, **Jonathan Dvareckas** left the meeting with two gifts from **Brad Letner**, an i9 Sports football and a bottle of wine. Speaking if i9 Sports, staff member **Joseph Morales** also won a bottle of wine from Brad.

## Fine Session

**Ryan McEachron** was our Fine Master and gave everyone in the room who was running for political office a \$5 fine, which was quite a lot! The only additional fines levied were to **Rick Bui** and **Dr. Derek King**, who both were charged \$20 each for receiving Awards that this past weekend's High Desert Second Chance Gala.



## Rotary Guests



We had a full room of elected officials, business leaders, guests and Rotarian friends at this week's meeting to hear Congressman **Jay Obernolte**.

Guests included **Joseph Morales** from i9Sports, **Kimberly Cox** and **Charlene Engeron** from Mojave Water Agency, **Esteban Rodriguez**, the new COO at VVTA, **Rick Stonestreet**, **Aly Martinez** from Raymond James Financial, **Rosa Rivera** from Robar Enterprises, **Teresa Barden**, **Vivian Baun**, **Jaimee Boucher**, **Marissa Gomez**, **Natalee Pulver**, and **Monica Vazquez**, all from Options for Youth, **Henry Phan** from Providence St. Mary, **Eric Camerena** from the VESD, **Corrine Mora** from Obernolte's office, **Tracey Hams** from Smith Ironworks, **Chris Ware** from Hi Grade Materials, **Laura Ellers**, **Annette Stolfus**, **Kory Thompson** from the VVWRA, **Leslie Murray**, and Stand-in for **Bryan Gillespie**, **Stefanie Montoya**.



From the Rotary Club of Apple Valley we welcomed **Val Emick**, **Laura & Jonathan Dvareckas**, **Rick Bui**, and **Joe Jackson**.

Elected officials included Victorville Mayor **Liz Beccerra**, Apple Valley Mayor **Scott Nassif**, **Curt Emick**, **Kari Leon**, and **Bob Harriman**.



### VICTORVILLE ROTARY CLUB OFFICERS

#### Board of Directors

|                                 |                          |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| President 2026 - 2028 .....     | Brad Letner              |
| Immediate Past President .....  | Steve Murray             |
| Executive Secretary .....       | Pam Murray               |
| Treasurer .....                 | Darron Poulsen           |
| Foundation.....                 | Jon Hove                 |
| Membership .....                | Bryan Gillespie          |
| Club Service .....              | Arsalee Morales          |
| Community Service .....         | Craig Garrick            |
| Vocational Service .....        | Angel Espino             |
| International Service.....      | Ben Tafoya               |
| Youth Service .....             | Ryan McEachron           |
| Directors/Members-at-Large..... | Bob Basen & Dr. Ron Boyd |
| Joshua Tree/Marketing .....     | Chris Ackerman           |
| Recording Secretary.....        | Pam Murray               |

#### Positions & Committee Chairs

|                                |                             |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Scholarships.....              | Kirsten Acosta              |
| Billing .....                  | Pam Murray & Darron Poulsen |
| Public Service Awards.....     | Arsalee Morales             |
| Teacher Mini-Grants .....      | Angel Espino                |
| Special Projects.....          | Rob Kilpatrick              |
| Dan Stover Music Contest.....  | Angel Espino                |
| Read B4K .....                 | Brad Letner                 |
| Grants.....                    | <b>Please Volunteer</b>     |
| Food Baskets.....              | Ben Tafoya                  |
| Interact (Junior Rotary).....  | <b>Please Volunteer</b>     |
| Programs .....                 | Mike Page                   |
| Fundraising .....              | Brad Letner                 |
| S.T.A.R. Students .....        | Chris Ackerman              |
| Club Learning Facilitator..... | <b>Please Volunteer</b>     |

The Victorville Rotary Club meets every Tuesday for fellowship  
at 11:30 a.m. and meeting at 12:00 noon at the Bear Valley  
Country Club, 13229 Spring Valley Parkway, Victorville

#### Make-up Days and Locations

|                   |                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>MONDAY:</b>    | San Bernardino East, Imperial Palace, noon                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>TUESDAY:</b>   | Rancho Cucamonga Sunrise, 7:15 a.m.<br>Empire Lakes Golf Course<br>Rancho Cucamonga, 12:00 p.m., Etiwanda Gardens                                                                        |
| <b>WEDNESDAY:</b> | San Bernardino Crossroads, Hilton, noon,<br>Barstow, DiNapoli's Firehouse, 1358 E Main St,<br>Barstow, CA                                                                                |
| <b>THURSDAY:</b>  | Apple Valley, Rusty Bull, 13685 John Glenn Rd, Apple<br>Valley, Noon. Ontario, 12:15 p.m., Doubletree Hotel<br>San Bernardino, Denny's at I-15, 7 a.m.<br>Redlands, Masonic Temple, noon |
| <b>FRIDAY:</b>    | San Bernardino North, Elks Lodge, 12:05 p.m.                                                                                                                                             |

## Calendar Dates

**Aug 3**

### Board of Directors Meeting

5:30pm Board Meeting  
Coldwell Banker  
12138 Industrial Blvd., Suite102  
Victorville, CA 92395

**Oct 7**

### 76th Anniversary Fundraiser

5:30pm Doors  
6:00pm Dinner • 7:15pm Drawing  
Spring Valley Lake Community Center  
12975 Rolling Ridge, SVL

# Rotary



## Club of Victorville, CA

## Upcoming Programs

**Aug 25**

**"Rotary Means Business"** , A  
Roundtable Discussion from some  
of the High Desert's most Successful  
Business Owners (Letner)

**Sept 1**

**OPEN**

**Sept 8**

**2nd Tuesday Fun: Pick Your Pleasure  
Wine, Whiskey & Cigar Night**  
Letner Lakeside Lounge

**Nov 17**

**2026 Teacher Mini-Grants**

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