



P R E S S R E L E A S E

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Lucky California Lottery Player Came OH SO CLOSE to Hitting a Billion-Dollar Jackpot, Still Walks Away With Millions

SACRAMENTO – One lucky California Lottery player who bought a Mega Millions® ticket ahead of this past summer’s billion-dollar jackpot draw has now come forward to claim her prize!

Sara Bailey hit five correct numbers, missing only the Mega number. The thing is, she actually *did* hit the Mega number – which was 14 – but on a separate line on her playslip given she bought 10 tickets all at once (picture of actual winning playslip below). The five-number combination still netted her a \$4.2 million prize, and even though she didn’t hit the jackpot, she was elated.

Bailey bought her ticket at the Vons on North Cedar Avenue in Fresno and shared her story with the California Lottery. Here it is in her own words:

I was making a late dinner the night of the drawing. Partway through, I remembered the drawing was happening, so I checked the winning numbers online. Down toward the bottom of the ticket, I saw the first two numbers 13 and 36 and quickly realized I had matched 5 numbers. My heart sank just a little bit when I saw I didn't match the mega number, but that quickly dissipated when I realized I was still a big winner! Needless to say, dinner got cold, and celebrations ensued.

When I realized I hit 5 numbers, I actually had no idea that I had won more than \$4 million! I searched online to see the prize for players who hit five numbers and initially thought it was \$1 million. That's apparently how it works in all other states except California. My first reaction was yelling out loud that we had won a million dollars, and I think there was a fair amount of jumping and doing the running man in place. After the excitement settled down a bit, I did some digging into the prize and realized we actually probably won a lot more. I saw there was someone else in California who had matched 5 numbers in a drawing, and their prize was \$2.9 million. With the jackpot amount so much higher on this drawing, and the number of tickets being sold, I knew I had probably won more than \$2.9 million. I didn't know until the next morning when I got up that I had actually won \$4.2 million!

I did think about how awesome it would have been if the 14 had been on the winning line and I'd hit the billion-dollar jackpot, but I wasn't about to start complaining about a \$4 million win! I don't want to elaborate on what I did next, but I will say it's a strange feeling to be suddenly holding onto a little piece of paper worth \$4.2 million.

As for what I'm going to do with the money, I plan to give some away to my family – especially to my parents to help in their retirement because they have done so much to support me! I'll also donate to charitable organizations whose causes I believe in, and of course I'll invest and save and definitely take a vacation.

Last, but not least, I think it's great that Lottery provides funds for public education in our state. It's great to have fun playing while also having a few dollars of your playing money go to schools.

The total raised for California's public schools from this particular 30-draw Mega Millions sequence was approximately \$124 million.

Bailey's initial research indicating that players who hit five numbers would win \$1 million led her to discover one aspect that makes California Lottery unique. As she learned, in California, Mega Millions prize amounts are pari-mutuel, which means they'll vary depending on ticket sales and number of winners. The second prize essentially amounts to a secondary jackpot fueled by sales, unlike other states where the second prize is a fixed \$1 million.

Bailey also told the California Lottery that she doesn't play Mega Millions that frequently but because the jackpot had grown so huge, she bought tickets for a couple of weeks leading up to her big win. Since then, she now buys Mega Millions and Powerball® tickets more often because, as she says, "you never know if you can get lucky twice!"

Bailey respectfully declines any further media requests for interviews, having shared her story here.



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The California Lottery's mission is to provide supplemental funding to California public schools, including kindergarten and grades 1-12, community colleges, the California State University, the University of California, and other California public educational entities. The funds the Lottery transferred to public education totaled more than \$1.88 billion for fiscal year 2020-21, which amounted to a modest percentage of education's overall budget. However, this funding is largely discretionary, meaning schools can use this for important, yet unfunded instructional programs they would otherwise not afford. During the same period, the Lottery generated almost \$8.4 billion in sales, more than 95% of which went back to the community in the form of prize payments, retailer commissions and bonuses, and contributions to education. The California Lottery urges its customers to play responsibly. Problem gambling resources are available to anyone at 1-800-GAMBLER.

www.calottery.com