

# The Inspirery Interview With: Leo Zacky

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**Leo Zacky** is running for Governor of California 2024. As part of the Zacky Farms poultry family, Leo embodies the entrepreneurial spirit and determination passed down from his great grandfather, Samuel, who immigrated to California and established a successful poultry enterprise. Raised with the values of hard work and resilience by his grandparents, Robert and Lillian Zacky, Leo learned early on that “life is not fair.” His active involvement in the business began at a young age, accompanying his grandmother on lobbying trips and later becoming a board member of the California Poultry Federation. In 2012, Leo left college to help save the family business, working from the ground up and gaining extensive knowledge in business operations and management. As an executive, he tackled challenges posed by state regulations and economic fluctuations. Now, with vast experience in agriculture and a reputation for hands-on problem-solving, Leo aims to leverage his knowledge and passion to address California’s political and economic issues, aspiring to bring effective solutions and governance as a Constitutionalist and man of the people.

**Your family has a long history in California’s agriculture industry. How did growing up in the Zacky Farms family shape your perspective on business and politics?**

Growing up in agribusiness in densely populated Los Angeles, I frequently traveled to California’s rural San Joaquin Valley, gaining hands-on experience with ranches and animals. This exposure contrasted with the factory environment, emphasizing the complexity of

working with living creatures. My involvement deepened as I lobbied for the poultry industry and, at 18, joined the California Poultry Federation board, engaging with high-level officials in Washington, DC, and Sacramento. However, I became disillusioned with the political system, observing that elected officials prioritized personal gains over public service. I felt compelled to run for governor to effect change.

**What deeply motivated you to transition from a career in the agricultural industry to running for Governor of California?**

The drive to enter politics was sparked by my initial interest to better California but more so fueled by losing our successful California business due to the state's arbitrary regulations. Our business, once thriving due to vertical integration, lost its competitive edge as competitors from states like Georgia could undercut us despite shipping costs. This challenge was compounded by factors like the ethanol mandate under Obama, which spiked corn prices by 450%, and California's rising minimum wage. These issues, including high fixed costs like taxes and labor insurance, crippled our ability to remain competitive, both locally and globally, severely impacting our operations and ultimately leading to our business's downfall.

**California is known for its stringent regulations. As someone who has dealt with these regulations firsthand, what specific regulatory changes would you prioritize to support businesses?**

In California, high taxes and stringent environmental regulations significantly hinder businesses. Lowering business taxes is crucial, as it allows companies to grow by approximately 2% annually, essential for staying competitive. Growth leads to more hiring and increased tax revenue despite lower rates. Environmental regulations, such as those aimed at protecting the Sacramento River smelt, have driven up water and electricity prices. Transitioning to green energy and implementing strict carbon emissions standards for trucks have further increased operational costs. These challenges make it more economical for companies to lease trucks rather than own them, as leasing firms handle costly emissions inspections and compliance, adding another layer of expense and complexity for businesses.

**How do you plan to stop the exodus of residents and businesses to other states?**

California faces numerous challenges that can be addressed through common sense solutions. High crime rates, particularly in densely populated areas like San Francisco, are driving people away due to laws allowing thefts up to \$950 with minimal consequences and the catch-and-release policies for criminals. Additionally, the high cost of living, particularly rent averaging \$2,850 per month, is a significant issue. This is driven by stringent environmental regulations and arbitrary rules imposed on property owners, leading to increased costs for building materials and labor. Landlords, burdened by these expenses and

the need to maintain utilities often included in rent, must charge higher rents to recoup their investments, which typically take around 11 years to break even. These factors collectively make living in California increasingly unaffordable and unattractive.

**In what ways do you plan to involve everyday Californians in your decision-making process as Governor?**

Many Californians feel voiceless, and I aim to change that by being accessible and communicative. When elected, I plan to address the state weekly from the governor's office, discussing current issues and future directions. Additionally, I will establish a platform for citizens to submit their concerns, which my team will review and address. Using social media, I will hold legislators accountable, especially those hindering progress. I will build relationships with all elected officials, regardless of party, to understand their perspectives and collaborate on solutions. For those obstructing progress, I will ensure the public is aware so they can make informed decisions in future elections, ideally supporting grassroots candidates who genuinely care about the people.

**California's political landscape is often divided. How do you plan to bridge the gap between different political ideologies and work towards bipartisan solutions?**

Our goal is to make California great, affordable, and functional for everyone, regardless of political affiliation. It's clear that things aren't as they should be, but we're all on the same team—Democrats, Republicans, independents, libertarians, Green Party members, and socialists alike. We should work together to improve affordability and accessibility for all residents. My focus is on key foundational issues, and many of my proposed solutions are interconnected. For instance, my water solution also addresses homelessness and helps mitigate state debt, creating jobs in the process. These solutions have symbiotic relationships, and when people hear them, they often realize their practicality and wonder why they haven't been implemented yet.

**What measures will you take to combat corruption and wasteful spending in California?**

As governor, my primary responsibility is to balance the budget, addressing California's significant wasteful spending. The most obvious waste is the bullet train project, originally promised to connect Los Angeles and San Francisco but now only running from Bakersfield to Modesto. This project has become a costly and ineffective endeavor, taking up valuable farmland and progressing slowly. Terminating this project will be my first action. Additionally, I plan to cut budgets across the board, enforcing a more frugal mentality among state departments. Currently, there's a "use it or lose it" approach to budgeting, where departments spend their entire allocation to ensure they receive the same or more funding

next year. This mindset needs to change. Implementing oversight with a focus on cost-effective purchasing, similar to a business purchasing department, will ensure that we achieve the best quality at the best price, optimizing state spending.

**Where do you see California in the next decade, and what role do you envision yourself playing in shaping that future?**

When elected, I envision a flourishing California within the next decade. Words like drought, homelessness, and crime will no longer define our state. Instead, California will be admired across the country, eliciting awe and admiration rather than disdain. People will see California as the golden state, a beacon of opportunity and prosperity, achieved through common-sense solutions. The state will become an even greater economic powerhouse, attracting and growing businesses and creating abundant jobs. Our agricultural sector will thrive, increasing production of key crops like avocados, almonds, artichokes, and strawberries, and expanding our export markets. California will be a clean, safe place where people are eager to visit and live, embodying the ideal it should always have been.

**What do you want the voters to know about you that they might not see in your campaign ads or speeches?**

I'm a regular guy with a unique background in agriculture, largely thanks to my grandfather and great-grandfather. I play ice hockey, have a large group of friends, and care deeply about our community. Like many, I feel disheartened by the sight of homeless tents, pothole-filled roads, and shuttered businesses driven out by crime. The state's uninsurability due to legislative and executive failures also frustrates me. Effective leadership, which motivates and sets a clear path, is crucial. I don't seek fame or the job for its own sake; I want a safe, prosperous California where kids get a good education and public spaces are enjoyable. My business experience has taught me how to bridge gaps and optimize operations. I know this state well, including its history of greatness, and I want to restore that for all Californians.