



**MEMORIAL** maker Roberto Marquez checks the one he erected in Altadena for victims of the Eaton fire.

## On alert for human error

It is perhaps the most pressing unanswered question from Los Angeles' January firestorm: How did officials fail to issue timely evacuation alerts for residents in west Altadena, where all but one of 18 Eaton fire deaths occurred?

Nearly five months after the deadly fire decimated Altadena, two possible scenarios have emerged as to what went wrong that chaotic night. Either there was some human error along the chain of command issuing evacuations or there was some type of technical error

Evidence grows that personnel caused delays in evacuation orders during the Eaton fire. But who is to blame?

> By Grace Toohey AND JENNY JARVIE

in sending the alerts.

An independent investigation was launched after The Times revealed the lapse in mid-January. But it's unclear what investigators have since discovered, and county officials have repeatedly declined to answer questions and have delayed responses to public records requests, often citing the ongoing inquiry.

But there is growing evidence that the critical shortfall — in which flames moved into west Altadena hours before [See Alerts, A6]

## **Medicaid rule** proposal may deal a blow to **Golden State**

Trump bill would require proof of work hours, a barrier for some that could lead to fewer applicants.

By Michael Wilner

WASHINGTON - How can Congress cut Medicaid without explicitly cutting Medicaid?

That has been a yearslong dilemma facing fiscal conservatives in the Republican Party who have sought cuts to the country's deficitdriving social safety net programs, including Medicaid, Social Security and Medicare, without generating political fallout from the tens of millions of Americans who will suffer the consequences.

Now, GOP lawmakers have settled on a strategy, outlined in legislation expected to pass the House in the coming days amid ongoing negotiations over the package that President Trump is calling his "Big Beautiful Bill."

Rather than lowering the income eligibility limit for coverage - an old policy proposal that would cut off Americans at the higher end of the eligibility range -Trump's bill will instead re-

quire applicants to provide proof of their work hours and apply for specific exceptions, creating new barriers for individuals to maintain insurance.

House passage of the bill is far from assured, and the Senate will still have its say. But if it does become law, the policy would affect more than 71 million of the poorest Americans, more of whom live in California than any other state.

If everyone eligible under the new work requirements were to apply for and receive Medicaid coverage, the cost savings to the government would be minimal. But the barriers themselves are the point, making it more likely that people with a right to Medicaid won't ultimately receive it, experts said.

"If you want to make a substantial cut to the program, how do you do that in a systematic way?" said Matt Bruenig, founder of People's Policy Project and a former lawyer at the National Labor Relations Board.

"With the work requirements, the number of people who seem to be actually ineligible because of it is quite small — so if it actually is perfectly administrated, you're not going to see a whole lot of savings," Bru-[See Medicaid, A5]

Veterinarian students are in high demand But they may also find themselves in high debt from school

By Anthony Solorzano



Flight to Africa violated order, U.S. judge says

Fourth-year veterinarian student Alexandra Ponkey maneuvered the camera and the surgical tools through the insertions on the belly of a 2-year-old German Shepherd named Jackie.

On her last day as a student, as part of her laparoscopic procedural class, Ponkey took on the role of primary surgeon to spay the dog and remove its ovaries. But before she could cross the graduating stage as a licensed veterinarian. she had to go back into the surgery room — this time as the assistant to another student taking on the job of primary surgeon.

Ponkey, 34, left her first career of teaching and training horse riding and care to achieve her childhood dream of becoming a veterinarian. The hands-on [See Veterinarians, A7]



ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times SEZA BOYAJIAN trains at Western University of Health Sciences in Pomona.

Migrants were denied a chance to contest being deported to a place with which only one person had ties.

By RACHEL URANGA AND ANDREA CASTILLO

The Trump administration violated a federal court order against deporting immigrants to countries where they have no ties without giving them a chance to contest their removal, a federal judge in Boston said Wednesday.

Federal officials confirmed that eight immigrants with serious criminal records had been deported Tuesday on a flight to a third

Can films convince people that AI is a force for good?

By Wendy Lee

MOUNTAIN VIEW For decades, Hollywood directors including Stanley Kubrick, James Cameron and Alex Garland have cast artificial intelligence as a villain that can turn into a killing machine.

Even Steven Spielberg's relatively hopeful "A.I.: Artificial Intelligence" had a pessimistic edge to its vision of the future.

Now Google — a leading developer in AI technology

-wants to move the cultural conversations away from the technology as seen in "The Terminator," "2001: A Space Odyssey" and "Ex Machina."

To do so, the Mountain View, Calif., tech giant is funding short films about AI that portray the technology in a less nightmarish light.

The Google initiative, called "AI on Screen," is a partnership with Santa Monica-based Range Media Partners, a talent management and production company that represents a wide variety of entertainment clients, including actors and writers. Range is producing the films.

So far, two short films have been greenlit through the project: One, titled "Sweetwater," tells the story of a man who visits his child-[See Google, A9]

## **U.S.** to dismiss **Studio highlights Enrollment down** Weather For the latest news, Les Paul's legacy consent decrees for a seventh year Sunny, slightly cooler. go to latimes.com. L.A. Basin: 82/59. B6 United Recording in Feds will cancel police State's number of public reform agreements school students dropped Hollywood boasts guitar by 0.54% over the last with Minneapolis and god's gear and a tour. **Opinion Voices** ...... A10 Louisville. NATION. A6 year. CALIFORNIA, B1 ENTERTAINMENT, E1

country. But they refused to publicly say where the men were being taken. Lawyers said the plane had been headed to strife-torn South Sudan.

U.S. District Judge Brian E. Murphy in Massachusetts said that migrants from Myanmar, Vietnam, Cuba, South Sudan and Mexico did not have a "meaningful opportunity to object to transfer" to the African nation, where only one had connections, in defiance of a court order last month. The judge said he would determine later what, if any, the punishment might be for the administration.

The decision came during a hearing to consider an emergency motion filed by attorneys after they learned their clients, two Asian immigrants detained in Texas, along with the others, had been sent to South Sudan, which is engulfed in armed ethnic and political conflict and a refugee crisis that has displaced over 4 million people.

Lawyers for the U.S. government said detainees had enough time to raise fears of harm, if sent to a third country, with immigration officials at the detention center. And the men needed only 24 hours' notice before being removed.

But Murphy balked at that. The time between when the men were told they would be deported Monday evening to when the plane took off was about 17 hours, the judge surmised --- "obviously insufficient."

He said the actions were "unquestionably violative of this court's order."

[See Deportations, A5]



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