



ERIC THAYER Los Angeles Times

**SKIERS** and snowboarders try to make the most of scant snow in unseasonably warm weather in Big Bear.

## Reporter says CBS held story due to politics

A ‘60 Minutes’ piece on imprisonment of Venezuelan deportees was to air Sunday.

By STEPHEN BATTAGLIO

A “60 Minutes” story about the Trump administration’s treatment of hundreds of Venezuelan migrants who were deported to El Salvador was pulled by CBS News Editor in Chief Bari Weiss shortly before it was scheduled to air Sunday night.

The unusual call drew a sharp rebuke from Sharyn Alfonsi, the correspondent for the piece, and brought more attention to the actions of Weiss since she was tapped to remold the network that was home to broadcast news giants Walter Cronkite and Mike Wallace.

Alfonsi said the decision was motivated by politics, according to an email she circulated to colleagues that was viewed by The Times. Alfonsi noted that the story was ready for air after being vetted by the network’s attorneys and the standards and practices department.

“It is factually correct,” Alfonsi wrote. “In my view, pulling it now — after every rigorous internal check has been met is not an editorial decision, it is a political one.”

According to the CBS News press department’s description of the segment, Alfonsi spoke to released deportees who described “the brutal and torturous conditions they endured inside CECOT,” one of El Salvador’s harshest prisons.

In a statement, a representative for CBS News said the report, called “Inside CECOT,” will air in a future “60 Minutes” broadcast. “We determined it needed additional reporting,” the representative said.

Weiss viewed the segment late Thursday, according to people familiar with the matter who were not authorized to comment publicly. She had a number of issues with the story and asked for additional reporting, which could not be completed in time for airing Sunday. A news release promoting the story went out Friday.

Weiss reportedly wanted the story to have an interview with an official in President Trump’s administration.

But Alfonsi said in her email that the program “requested responses to questions and/or interviews” with the Department of Homeland Security, the White House and the State [See ‘60 Minutes,’ A12]

## Will Christmas miracle save the ski season?

California’s snowpack is low, leaving bare dirt on many runs. But an atmospheric river is coming.

By Jack Dolan

Nothing but dirt and dry, brown chaparral rolled beneath skis and snowboards dangling from a chairlift at Big Bear Mountain Resort on Friday, as forlorn adventure seekers joked they should rename the place “Big Bare.”

Unseasonably high temperatures even left the impressive array of high-tech artificial-snow makers below mostly useless, their fans spinning idly in the warm breeze.

“The word I’ve been using is ‘abysmal,’” said Cameron Miniutti, 29, who was riding the lift in a light cotton shirt, with the hot sun glinting off his ski goggles. “This is, for sure, the toughest start [to a season] I’ve seen.”

Similarly bleak panoramas can be found at ski areas across the American West so far this year, but especially in California, where a wet November gave way to one of the driest Decembers in recent memory.

As of Friday, the state had only 12% of the snow that’s normal for this time of year, and only 3% of what water managers hope for in an average year, according to the California Department of Water Resources.

Which is why water managers — and skiers — are hoping for a Christmas miracle as an enormous atmospheric river takes aim at California this week. The soaking rains may threaten coastal cities with flash floods and nightmarish traffic, but they promise sweet relief for snow-starved thrill seekers from Lake Tahoe to the San Bernardino Mountains in Southern California.

Mammoth Mountain, the tallest commercial ski resort in California, could get up to 7 feet of snow this week, according to On the Snow, a website that tracks conditions at ski areas.

Resorts on the north end of Lake [See Snow, A7]

## Trump suspends major wind projects, cites national security

By HAYLEY SMITH

The Trump administration on Monday escalated its battle against offshore wind by ordering a pause on all leases for large-scale wind projects under construction in the United States, this time citing national security threats.

The Department of the Interior said it is halting offshore wind leases effective immediately “due to national security risks identified by the Department of War in recently completed classified reports.”

“This pause will give the Department, along with the Department of War and other relevant government agencies, time to work with leaseholders and state partners to assess the possibility of mitigating the national security risks posed by these [See Wind, A8]



JULIA DEMAREE NIKHINSON Associated Press

**SOME EXPERTS** described the justification as nonsensical. Above, a wind farm off Rhode Island’s coast.



Los Angeles Times

### RIVALRY INTERRUPTED

USC and Notre Dame are unable to reach an agreement to keep one of the most storied matchups in college football going. **SPORTS, B10**

### Ellison bolsters Paramount bid

Entertainment giant says tech mogul would guarantee part of its offer for Warner Bros. Discovery. **BUSINESS, A10**

### Year’s best feats of architecture

After fire destroyed so many structures, these new area landmarks deserve recognition. **ENTERTAINMENT, E1**

**Weather**  
Shower, thunderstorm. L.A. Basin: 65/55. **B6**



## How investors profit from sex abuse payouts

Multiple firms behind costly L.A. lawsuits are backed by opaque out-of-state financing.

By REBECCA ELLIS

Walking out of a Skid Row market, Harold Cook, 42, decides to play a game.

How long after opening YouTube will it take for him to see an ad asking him to join the latest wave of sex abuse litigation against Los Angeles County?

“I can literally turn my phone on right now, something’s going to pop up,” said Cook, opening the app.

Within a few seconds, a message blares: “*They thought you’d never speak up. They figured you was too young, too scared, too Black, too brown, too alone. ... L.A. County already had to cough up \$4 billion to settle these cases. So why not you?*”

Since the historic April payout to resolve thousands of claims of sex abuse in county-run facilities, law firms have saturated L.A.’s airwaves and social media

with campaigns seeking new clients. For months, government officials have quietly questioned who is financing the wall-to-wall marketing blitz.

The ad Cook heard was from Sheldon Law Group, one of several law firms active in sex abuse litigation in California that receive backing from private investors, according to loan notices and SEC filings. The investors, which often operate through Delaware companies, expect to profit from the payouts to resolve the cases.

Sheldon, based in Washington, D.C., has been one of the most prolific L.A. advertisers. The firm has already gathered roughly 2,500 potential clients, according to a list submitted to the county. The lawsuits started being filed this summer, raising the prospect of another costly settlement squeezed out of a government on the brink of a fiscal crisis.

“We act in the best interests of our clients, who are victims in every sense of the word and have suffered real and quite dreadful injuries,” a spokesperson for Sheldon [See Investors, A6]

## Vance declines to condemn bigotry

Tension at gathering highlights difficulty of finding next unifier for conservatives.

By JONATHAN J. COOPER AND SEJAL GOVINDARAO

PHOENIX — Vice President JD Vance said Sunday that the conservative movement should be open to everyone as long as they “love America,” declining to condemn a streak of anti-semitism that has divided the Republican Party and roiled the opening days of Turning Point USA’s annual convention.

After a long weekend of debates about whether the movement should exclude figures such as bigoted podcaster Nick Fuentes, Vance came down firmly against “purity tests.”

“I didn’t bring a list of conservatives to denounce or to de-platform,” Vance said during the Phoenix convention’s closing speech.

Turning Point leader Erika Kirk, who took the helm after the fatal shooting of her husband, Charlie Kirk, has endorsed Vance as a potential successor to President Trump, a helpful nod from an influential group with an army of volunteers.

But the tension on display at the four-day gathering foreshadowed the treacherous political waters that Vance, or anyone else who seeks the next Republican presidential nomination, will need to navigate in the coming years. Top voices in the “Make America Great Again” movement are jockeying for influence as Republicans begin considering a future without Trump, and there is no clear path to [See Conservatives, A7]

## Bay Area quake swarm stirs fears of ‘Big One’

Latest tremors rattle residents, but experts say clusters aren’t a hint of major rupture.

By RONG-GONG LIN II AND SEAN GREENE

For more than a month, the Bay Area has been subjected to a seemingly ceaseless stampede of earthquakes — the latest in a series of seismic swarms that have rattled windows and raised fears across California.

The latest swarm has been centered in the East Bay suburb of San Ramon, where a magnitude 4.0 earthquake struck Friday night — the largest since the cluster began — and a magnitude 3.9 on Saturday night. Since Nov. 9, there have been at least 80 earthquakes of magnitude 2.0 or greater in the area, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

Although none of these quakes have been particularly potent — which was also the case in similar swarms recorded in Malibu, El Sereno and Ontario since 2024 — some fear the persist-

ent seismic activity could foreshadow a back-of-mind concern for many Californians: the “Big One.”

But while experts acknowledge that some major earthquakes are preceded by more-modest temblors, they caution that the swarms by themselves probably don’t offer a hint of when, or where, the next major quake will hit.

“There’s gonna be a big earthquake in the Bay Area. We just can’t say exactly when and where. So you should be prepared for that,” said Annemarie Baltay, a U.S. Geological Survey seismologist.

The threat of a large earthquake always looms in California regardless of the appearance of small shakers. There is a 60% chance of an earthquake of magnitude 6.7 or greater in the Los Angeles region by 2043, and a 72% chance of the same in the San Francisco Bay Area, according to 30-year estimates calculated by USGS in 2014.

Across California, there’s also a 48% chance of a magnitude 7.5 quake or greater by 2043, and a 7% chance of a magnitude 8 or greater [See Quakes, A8]