



RELATIVES of victims walk out of court in Los Angeles after the verdict against Instagram and YouTube.

L.A. jury finds social media are built to addict

Landmark verdict holds Instagram and YouTube liable for harms to young users.

By SONJA SHARP

After a grueling seven weeks of court proceedings and more than 40 hours of tense deliberations across nine days in one of the country's most closely watched civil trials, jurors handed down a landmark decision in Los Angeles County Superior Court on Wednesday, finding Instagram and YouTube responsible for the suffering of a Chico, Calif., woman who charged the platforms were built to addict young users.

Kaley G.M., the 20-year-old plaintiff, who testified in February, arrived in court just before 10 a.m. She remained stoic as the verdict, an award of \$3 million and a decision warranting additional punitive damages were read out. A companion fought back tears, her chin quivering. Several observers wept silently despite Judge Carolyn B. Kuhl's repeated warning not to respond.

"We need to have no reaction to the jury's verdict — no crying out, no reactions, no disturbance," Kuhl

warned. "If there is we will have to have you removed from the courtroom, and we sure don't want to have to do that."

Less than two hours after they delivered its initial verdict, the jury returned to award \$2.1 million in punitive damages against Meta and \$900,000 against Google, bringing the total judgment against the companies to \$6 million combined.

Attorneys for Snapchat and TikTok also appeared in court Wednesday morning to hear the decision. The two platforms settled with Kaley out of court for undisclosed sums before the trial.

"We respectfully disagree with the verdict and are evaluating our legal options," a spokesperson for Instagram's parent company, Meta, said.

The verdict arrived less than 24 hours after a New Mexico jury found Meta liable for \$375 million in damages related to Atty. Gen. Raúl Torrez's claim it turned Instagram into a "breeding ground for predators."

Meta ordered to pay \$375 million

Jurors in New Mexico hand down a verdict against firm for endangering kids. **BUSINESS, A10**

JUSTICES LIMIT ONLINE PIRACY LIABILITY

Supreme Court rules internet providers are not on hook for users' copyright violations.

By DAVID G. SAVAGE

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Wednesday made it harder for music and movie makers to sue for online piracy, ruling that internet providers are usually not liable for copyright infringement even if they know their users are downloading copyrighted works.

In a 9-0 decision, the justices threw out Sony's lawsuit and a \$1-billion jury verdict against Cox Communications for copyright infringement.

Lower courts upheld the lawsuit against Cox's internet service for contributing to music piracy, which the company did little to stop.

Sony's lawyers pointed to hundreds of thousands of instances of Cox customers sharing copyrighted works. Put on notice, Cox did little to stop it, they said.

But the high court said that is not enough to establish liability for copyright infringement, which remains a hot-button issue in the music and film industries with the advent of AI tools that have spread the misuse of copyrighted content and sparked lawsuits between studios and AI companies.

"Under our precedents, a company is not liable as a copyright infringer for merely providing a service to the general public with knowledge that it will be used by some to infringe copyrights," Justice Clarence Thomas wrote for the court.

Two decades ago, the court sided with the music and motion picture industry in *Grain Processing*. [See Copyright, A11]

A skeptic runs the vote

Shasta County's registrar claims election fraud in his own office, even asking the FBI to come look

By Hailey Branson-Potts

REDDING — At a Board of Supervisors meeting in rural Shasta County last month, Clint Curtis dropped a bombshell: A sheriff way down in Riverside was going to confiscate all the ballots from a recent election.

Curtis, the county registrar of voters, was the first to announce the planned ballot seizure. Even the sheriff himself, Chad Bianco, had not publicly revealed his intentions.

Later, as Bianco's move grabbed headlines — he is a leading Republican candidate for governor — Curtis' behind-

the-scenes maneuvering remained largely unknown. The registrar had worked with the Riverside County citizens group whose fraud allegations had sparked Bianco's investigation, even traveling 600 miles south to speak on their behalf.

In his short time in Shasta County, Curtis, whose claims about rigged voting machines stretch back to the early 2000s, has solidified his position as a torchbearer of the election denialism movement, vowing to take his message about untrustworthy machines and potential fraud across the state. [See Elections, A6]



SCREENS in the public observation room at Shasta County's election office.

\$8.71 a gallon? This is L.A.'s most infamous gas station

By SUHAUNA HUSSAIN

The drab Chevron at the edge of Chinatown always makes the news. It's one of those Los Angeles gas stations that garners gasps, even shrieks, from Angelenos shocked by the cost per gallon, which is perpetually priced above other pumps across the city.

The price of gasoline has surged since the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran more than three weeks ago. Californians, who consistently face

some of the highest prices in the nation for fuel due to taxes and clean-air rules, are certainly feeling the ripple effects.

But the infamous gas station at Alameda Street and East Cesar Chavez Avenue across from Union Station on a recent afternoon was busy nonetheless, with a steady stream of customers.

For decades now, the station has been the place news photographers, camera crews and now social media influencers go when prices spike. It looks like any other

gas station, until you check out the price per gallon on the digital sign.

The war in Iran, which has roiled the oil market, has made this Chevron arguably the world's most famous.

One customer who would provide only his first and middle names, James Michael, had driven into town from Upland with his girlfriend for a concert at the Hollywood Palladium. He navigated to the nearest station expecting high prices, he said. But \$8.71 for regular? [See Gas, A11]

Iran sees Trump plan as nonstarter

Truce offer reportedly includes 'excessive' limits on weapons and nuclear program's end.

By GAVIN J. QUINTON

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration has offered Iran a 15-point ceasefire plan aimed at temporarily halting the war in the Middle East, as the Pentagon simultaneously orders thousands of Marines, paratroopers and a warship to the region.

The plan presented to Iranian leadership Tuesday broadly included a 30-day ceasefire and sanctions relief for Iran in exchange for a laundry list of U.S. demands, according to the Associated Press and other outlets.

But the Islamic Republic dismissed the proposal Wednesday, criticizing the White House's terms as "excessive" and out of step with reality, according to Iranian state-run media.

Those terms included limitations on Tehran's missile stockpiles and the permanent end to its nuclear program, its support for regional militias including Hezbollah and the lifting of its blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, various outlets reported, citing Pakistani officials mediating the negotiations.

Several of those provisions have long been considered nonstarters for Iran, which sees its missile arsenal and regional alliances as central to national security.

"Iran will end the war when it decides to do so and when its own conditions are met," an Iranian official told state media. "Not when Trump envisions its conclusion."

The official outlined the Islamic Republic's terms for ending the conflict, which included a halt to "aggression and assassinations," an end to fighting on all fronts, enforceable guarantees that hostilities will not resume. [See Iran, A3]



IN LEBANON, funeral prayers are held Wednesday for two healthcare workers killed in an Israeli strike.

Suit filed without his consent, man says

Plaintiff says he never agreed to sue county, resisted pressure to sign abuse settlement.

By REBECCA ELLIS

Melvin Dunlap says he doesn't know how he became a plaintiff in the nation's largest sex abuse settlement.

He grew up in Missouri, halfway across the country from L.A. County's juvenile halls — the subject of a del-

uge of lawsuits from people who say they were sexually assaulted while detained as children.

Dunlap says he has never been to juvie, and he's never been abused.

And yet he's part of L.A. County's \$4-billion sex abuse settlement, identified in court filings as JOHN DOE M.D. His lawsuit claims he was "physically assaulted, sexually harassed and abused" by staff at a Los Angeles detention center in Boyle Heights when he was 15.

"I can put my hand on a

Bible and say 'I ain't ever been abused sexually,'" said Dunlap, who provided text messages and emails showing he sought to report the matter to the State Bar for investigation last July.

Dunlap's lawsuit was filed Oct. 15, 2024, by Downtown LA Law Group. The firm, also known as DTLA, is under investigation by the district attorney, State Bar, and the county after nine clients told The Times last year they were paid to file sex abuse claims, some of which were fraudulent. DTLA has asked for at least three of the

lawsuits to be dismissed.

The firm has denied all wrongdoing and maintained its lawyers "operate with unwavering integrity, prioritizing client welfare." The firm said through a spokesperson that DTLA rejects most cases that filter through its office and could not discuss specific clients due to "the constraints of attorney-client privilege."

"Having said that, no one in the firm to our knowledge has coerced its clients or anyone else to sign anything," DTLA said in a statement. [See Settlement, A5]

Mosquito control solution hits a snag

L.A. County officials are releasing sterilized males. The approach is promising but costly. **SCIENCE, A8**

Last days at an old French spot

As it prepares to close, Taix sees an influx of fans. Some steal keepsakes. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Weather
Mostly sunny.
L.A. Basin: 81/57. **B6**

Markets **A11**
Opinion Voices **A12**

Leaders at the quarter pole

Bill Shaikin chooses top Angels, Dodgers players as a team for the last 25 seasons. **SPORTS, B10**

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