



White House's X Account

PROJECTING STRENGTH IN BEIJING

President Trump arrives Wednesday in China for a summit with leader Xi Jinping, with topics expected to include the Iran war and trade. The visit comes as Trump faces sagging popularity at home. **WORLD, A2**

VANCE ALLEGES FRAUD, TARGETS MEDICAID

He says feds will defer \$1.3 billion in funds to California, affecting seniors and disabled.

By Kevin Rector

Vice President JD Vance said Wednesday that the Trump administration is deferring \$1.3 billion in Medicaid reimbursements to California over concerns the state is allowing “fraudsters” to drive up costs to taxpayers, including by pushing unnecessary medications on unsuspecting patients.

“There are California taxpayers and American taxpayers who are being defrauded because California isn’t taking its program seriously. But also, you have people who’ve been prescribed medications that they don’t even need,” Vance said. “Sometimes they’ve had drugs put into their bodies that they don’t need because fraudsters have actually encouraged false prescriptions and false administration and medications.”

Vance, standing alongside Dr. Mehmet Oz, the administrator for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, said the administration is also sending letters to all 50 states informing them that if they do not “effectively and aggressively prosecute Medicaid fraud in their states,” they will see federal funding cut off as well.

“We want California to get serious about this fraud,” said Vance, whom President Trump named his “fraud czar” last month.

Oz called out what he said was widespread fraud in hospice services and similar in-home care programs nationally — and particularly in the Los Angeles region — and announced a six-

[See Medicaid, A8]

40,000 UC workers are girding for a strike

All schools, hospitals in the system would be hit

By Jaweed Kaleem

The University of California is bracing for a massive strike Thursday that would disrupt services at all campuses, hospitals and medical centers as more than 40,000 workers — patient transport staff, nursing aides, custodians, campus dining hall employees — are prepared to walk out if an agreement is not reached.

The threatened strike could halt or delay scores of medical appointments, although hospitals and medical offices will remain open, and it would limit campus dining operations. UC campuses and hospitals are making contingency plans and communicating with patients, students, faculty and staff about potential disruptions.

Late Wednesday afternoon, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 3299 remained deep in contract negotiations

and had not reached an agreement with UC. The union is poised to launch an open-ended strike that its leaders say would not stop until its demands are met for better wages, lower healthcare costs and opening talks with UC over how the university can help alleviate ballooning housing costs.

UC has said it has offered to increase salaries, give contract ratification bonuses and cap some healthcare premium increases. When the union announced the strike nearly a month ago, a UC spokesperson said the university was “disappointed” by the decision “despite the significant progress made at the bargaining table.”

The union said picket lines and rallies would begin 8 a.m. Thursday at every UC campus and medical center, including Ronald Reagan [See UC, A7]



Genaro Molina Los Angeles Times

THE DROP may be an early sign of broader weakness in the market. Above, the three towers of the Marina City Club condo complex in Marina del Rey in 2021.

Condo market mired in slump

Purchases for first two months of year in L.A. County were lowest since 2005, data show.

By Roger Vincent

As the relentless rise in Los Angeles housing costs seems to have paused, condominium sales have slowed to a trickle this year.

The number of condo

units sold in the first two months slid to a more than 20-year low, according to figures from property information provider Attom. The median price of a condo fell nearly 5% in February compared with a year earlier, Attom said.

The decline in condo sales, which is happening in many regions across the country, may be an early sign of broader weakness in the market.

Stubbornly high home-

loan rates, a decline in the construction of new units, and economic angst are all keeping people and property developers from doing more deals, said Richard Green, director of the Lusk Center for Real Estate at USC.

“When the housing market softens, and it has, condos usually go softer faster than single-family homes,” he said. “People prefer single-family houses to con-

[See Condos, A12]

Bass and Becerra lead poll on L.A., governor races

Incumbent mayor may have to face runoff. Former Biden official is gaining momentum.

By Noah Goldberg

Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass continues to hold the lead among likely voters in her bid for reelection, but not by a big enough margin to avoid a likely runoff with either Spencer Pratt or Nithya Raman, who are battling for second position, a new poll found.

The same poll found Democrat Xavier Becerra continuing his surge in the race for California governor, emerging as a front-runner, with Democratic billionaire Tom Steyer and Republican commentator Steve Hilton vying for the second spot in a tight primary election.

The latest poll comes just three weeks before the June 2 primary and offers new insights into two pivotal races that have been marked by twists and uncertainty.

In the governor’s race, Democrats have been struggling for months to find a front-runner in the large pool of candidates.

With support for the Democratic candidates split among their party’s electorate, Hilton — who is backed by President Trump — has emerged as one of the strongest candidates. But in the weeks since former Rep. Eric Swalwell exited the race amid sexual assault allegations, Becerra — the former secretary of Health and Human Services — has risen to the top of the field.

The poll released on Wednesday by Emerson College Polling/Inside California Politics found Becerra at 19%, with Steyer and Hilton at 17%. The pollsters noted Becerra’s support has “increased by nine points since mid-April.”

Republican Chad Bianco, the Riverside County sheriff, was at 11%, Democratic former Rep. Katie Porter was at 10% and San José Mayor Matt Mahan, also a Democrat, was at 8%. The two top voter-getters in the primary advance to the Nov. 3 runoff election.

The poll also offered some clarity in the mayor’s race, in which the top two will advance to November unless a candidate gets more than 50% of the vote.

Bass jumped to 30% support in the poll, up 10 points from the last poll conducted by the same group released in March. The new poll of 350 likely voters in Los Angeles was conducted Saturday and Sunday — after a televised debate among Bass, Pratt and Raman — and has a margin of error of 5%.

Pratt, the former reality TV star whose home burned in last year’s Palisades fire, is now at 22% support, gaining 12 points from the last poll. [See Poll, A7]



Ronaldo Bolaños L.A. Times

THE POLL found 30% support for L.A. Mayor Karen Bass, up 10 points.

Mayoral hopefuls lean into social media

Pratt and Raman rely on videos in their campaigns. With more cash, Bass bets on TV.

By Noah Goldberg

Spencer Pratt speaks into his smartphone camera, blaming Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass for the environmental catastrophe of the Palisades fire, which burned his house, and the homeless crisis that triggered “a sudden outbreak of a medieval disease,” which we learn is typhus.

Then there’s City Councilmember Nithya Raman, holding a tiny microphone, walking and talking in an influencer style as she explains to viewers how she’ll bring back Hollywood, make sure the streetlights work and oppose rich contracts for the city’s police union.

Bass is running a more traditional campaign, but even she is pushing her ads out on streaming platforms and social media, and posting videos on Instagram.

“This is the new era of campaigning,” said Sara Sadhwani, a politics professor at Pomona College. “Social media has changed the game. People have always looked for candidates they could have a beer with, but now it’s about the ways in which they’re able to connect with voters online.”

TV ads used to dominate in Los Angeles mayoral election campaigns. This year, candidates are increasingly pivoting to social media to post snappy, off-the-cuff videos that could fuel momentum for their campaigns if they go viral. [See Campaign, A7]

More sharks off SoCal? It’s good, really

Uptick in great whites benefits ecosystem; humans not on their menu, researchers say.

By Clara Harter

As the early morning breeze tickles the top of the Santa Monica Bay, three scientists pack into a small whaler boat and push out to sea in pursuit of great white sharks.

Armed with a set of drones, a GoPro camera on a stick and a tracking device atop a spear, the team from the Cal State Long Beach Shark Lab has many questions it is seeking to answer about this sharp-toothed species.

What is driving the ongoing shark surge in Southern California? Which beaches do the predators frequent? And, perhaps most important, why do they, on rare occasion, attack people?

While the drone flies above, one of the researchers crouches underneath a blanket shielding the video feed from the sun and scours the screen for a dark black flash amid a sea of blue.

The team sits and waits, patiently bobbing until ... “Shark!” the spotter yells.

And the boat sets off in pursuit. Once the fish is located, a flash of the GoPro underneath the animal’s belly helps the crew determine its gender, while a stab of the

spear below the dorsal fin implants a tracker.

Using this method, the Shark Lab has successfully tagged 390 sharks since 2010, of which about 233 remain active in their tracking system. They use the data to study the giant fish’s movements and behaviors, with a goal of gaining insights that can improve ocean safety.

As juvenile great white sightings are on the rise in Southern California, that mission is perhaps more im-

[See Sharks, A8]

S.C. murder convictions overturned

Alex Murdaugh, who had been found guilty in the killings of his wife and son, will be retried. **NATION, A4**

Research criteria in the Trump era

Critics say the president’s definition of “gold standard” methodology favors preferred outcomes. **SCIENCE, A10**

NFL on Netflix spotlights Rams

Games against 49ers in Melbourne on Sept. 10 and Packers on Thanksgiving eve are added to schedule. **BUSINESS, A11**

Weather Partly sunny. L.A. Basin: 74/58. **B5**

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Annie Barker Associated Press **A STUDENT** in Modesto reads a passage.

In U.S., reading skills still sliding

Schools report better scores in math. L.A. and Compton are among the Golden State’s bright spots. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Markets **A13**
Opinion Voices **A14**