



ARIANA CUBILLOS Associated Press

**POLICE SEARCH** for survivors in La Guaira, Venezuela. The death toll approached 1,000 Friday. **WORLD, A3**

## Mistrial declared in the Palisades fire case

Decision comes after the jury deadlocks. Prosecutors say they plan to retry suspect.

BY BRITTNY MEJIA AND REBECCA ELLIS

A mistrial was declared Friday in the federal trial of a 30-year-old former Uber driver accused of setting what would become the most destructive wildfire in Los Angeles history.

Jonathan Rinderknecht was on trial for destruction of property by means of fire, arson affecting property used in interstate commerce and timber set afire. But on Friday, the 13th day of trial, U.S. District Judge Anne Hwang declared a mistrial after the jurors said they were unable to reach a verdict on any of the felony charges, with a final vote of 10 to 2 for acquittal.

"The court finds there's a manifest necessity to declare a mistrial in this case due to a jury deadlock," Hwang said.

First Assistant U.S. Atty. Bill Essayli said on the social media platform X that his office would retry the case.

"The evidence is strong that Jonathan Rinderknecht is responsible for igniting the fire on January 1, 2025, which eventually became the Palisades fire. We fully intend to retry this case before a new jury and obtain guilty verdicts on all charged counts."

Hwang ordered Rinderknecht to remain in custody and scheduled a new trial for Oct. 19.

Outside the courtroom, defense attorney Steve Haney said the jury "was not convinced beyond a reasonable doubt ... and it wasn't even close."

"Ten to 2 is a pretty re-sounding indication of what the jury felt about this case," he said, "and we felt that way from the very beginning."

In a news conference later, he added that "a hung jury on a 10-2 verdict, to be frank, in most districts, you're not going to have a retrial. But you will in this district."

Rinderknecht's father, who attended the whole trial, said he was disheartened by the judge's decision to keep his son in custody.

"We know, from day one, our son is innocent," said Joel Rinderknecht, flanked by his two other children. "It feels like the government is [See Mistrial, A6]

## Shaken and rattled by a seismic one-two punch

'Doublet' earthquakes add to unease in California

BY RONG-GONG LIN II

The first earthquake, measuring magnitude 7.2, struck Venezuela on Wednesday evening with horrific force. But just 39 seconds after it started, an even more powerful magnitude 7.5 temblor struck, making a catastrophic disaster even worse.

A seismic one-two punch, which seismologists call a "doublet," has added to the unease over what is shaping up to be one of the Western Hemisphere's worst quakes in years.

Though less known to the public, doublet earthquakes have long been studied by seismologists. Some have

occurred in California, including in Imperial County and near Mammoth Mountain, as have big quakes followed by a substantial aftershock, as occurred in 1992. They prompted officials to issue an unprecedented public warning.

"It's obviously not the most common thing that happens with earthquakes, but it's definitely not like an unusual physical phenomenon," said Julian Lozos, an associate professor of geophysics at Cal State Northridge.

The widespread destruction in Venezuela — with more than 900 dead and

countless structures flattened — is expected to focus more attention on the seismic phenomenon and how to make buildings and infrastructure more resilient.

Turkey and Syria were devastated just three years ago, where a magnitude 7.8 earthquake, rupturing 220 miles of the East Anatolian fault, was followed nine hours later by a magnitude 7.5 quake on the Cardak fault, rupturing an additional 100 miles, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

The twin earthquakes, plus a dizzying number of substantial aftershocks, [See Doublet, A5]

## 'Mass grave' and missing dogs

BY CLARA HARTER

For nearly 20 years, animal advocate Jennifer Raymond was convinced something suspicious was going on at Miranda's Rescue, but her repeated cries for authorities to investigate the Northern California animal sanctuary fell on deaf ears, she said.

She could see they were being paid handsomely to take in hundreds of shelter

dogs annually, based on public records requests she filed. But she couldn't understand where all these dogs were then going, given how tough it can be to find foster homes for rescue dogs in this rural area of Humboldt County, she said.

But after moving in next door to the Fortuna rescue, she claimed she saw large objects being dumped into a deep hole on the property, and had a feeling she had figured it out. On the night of

April 26, Raymond and fellow animal advocate Jenna Moore decided to take matters into their own hands, trespassing onto her neighbor's property in pursuit of answers, she said.

"We waited until dark and had our headlamps and shovels and gloves and phones and headed out to the hole and jumped in and started digging," she said.

An investigation into allegations of fraud and ani- [See Dogs, A7]

### COLUMN ONE

## 50 years of slow pitch go by fast

As Al Michel and Mike Sugerman tell it, the first rendition of their L.A. softball team was overflowing with "geeks," "nerds" and "goofs."

So they took a name straight out of National Lampoon, a humor magazine that featured "Doc Feeney's Scrapbook of Sports Oddities," showing outfielders making catches 40 feet in the air and providing tips to swimmers on proper drowning maneuvers.

"I'm thinking, we're not a bunch of athletes — we're a bunch of geeks," said Michel, the team's co-founder, current coach and catcher, reflecting on the loose band of UCLA law students, aspiring actors, accountants and other semi-athletic misfits. "Sports oddities? I thought, well, that's not going to work. ... Let's go with 'All Stars.'"

And thus, in the spring of 1976, Doc Feeney's All Stars was born.

Fifty years and thousands of runs later, six of the original players still take to the diamond nearly every Sunday, swinging for the fences. And if [See Softball, A9]

This softball team with a sense of humor is fielding a new generation of 'All Stars'

BY CHRISTOPHER BUCHANAN



GARY CORONADO For The Times

**PITCHER** Jeff Koppelman, 72, has played with Doc Feeney's All Stars for 48 years.

## Controversial billionaire tax proposal to be on the ballot

A last-minute effort to modify the labor union-supported proposal has failed.

BY SEEMA MEHTA

Proponents of a tax on California billionaires vowed on Thursday to move forward with their November ballot measure despite mounting opposition from many of the state's most powerful political forces.

A labor union spent \$31 million gathering signatures to qualify the measure for the ballot in an effort to offset federal healthcare funding cuts that will affect millions of California's most vulnerable residents. A representative for the campaign supporting the ballot measure, which would impose a one-time 5% tax on the assets of the state's wealthiest residents, pushed back at opposition to the effort as self-entitled wealthy Californians and entrenched Sacramento interests.

"While a few morally bankrupt billionaires and their buddies in Sacramento want to see California's hospitals close, and tax breaks for billionaires protected — I assure you, the vast majority of voters do not," said Debra Carthan, a spokesperson for the Billionaire Tax Now Coalition, which is funded by the Service Employees International Union-United

Healthcare Workers West, the sponsor of the proposal.

California Secretary of State Shirley Weber early Friday morning announced she had officially certified the measure to appear on the Nov. 3 ballot.

The healthcare workers union that crafted the proposal responded last week to growing opposition by proposing a legislative alternative that would create a 2% tax on billionaires' assets. It was flatly refused by the Newsom administration. No deal was reached by the Thursday evening deadline for the union to withdraw the proposal from the November ballot.

Carthan said the measure has support in public opinion polls, and from lawmakers, unions, community organizations and volunteers across the state, "something the billionaires and their buddies will never have." And she criticized Gov. Gavin Newsom for opposing the measure, saying that he is in "lockstep" with President Trump and billionaires.

"Gov. Newsom has no plan," Carthan said during a Thursday evening news conference. "He has no plan to stop emergency rooms from closing. He has no plan for your healthcare costs. He has no plan to make sure that your family doesn't have to drive further and wait longer to get medical care. Gov. Newsom has no [See Tax, A6]

## What's behind the rancorous inquiry into Newsom's wife

'First partner' earns money from charities and businesses she founded or controls.

BY NICOLE NIXON AND ANA CEBALLOS

WASHINGTON — Jennifer Siebel Newsom has spent more than a decade cultivating an identity distinct from her husband, Gov. Gavin Newsom, as an active documentary filmmaker and gender equity activist with her own organizations, staff and salary.

The 52-year-old calls herself California's "first partner," a title she coined herself to signal an equal footing with the governor and gender inclusivity.

Now, the governor says the Trump administration is targeting his wife, investigating her charity and business finances in what he calls a politically motivated abuse of power. At the center of that probe are the non-profits and a production company she founded,

which have received millions in donations over the years from corporations and political interests in the state.

Among the entities she has founded or led are the Representation Project, a nonprofit that advocates for gender equity through film and education programs, and Girls Club Entertainment, a for-profit production company she owns that holds the copyrights to her documentaries.

She also founded the California Partners Project, a second nonprofit that works closely with her government office and receives donations solicited by the governor, though she does not draw a salary from the organization.

Since its creation in 2020, the California Partners Project has received nearly \$5.1 million from so-called behested payments, a practice in which private donations are made to organizations at the urging of government officials. The system has raised alarms over the years about the influence large companies have [See Siebel Newsom, A7]

### U.S. hits Iran after cargo ship attack in strait

Trump blames Tehran for carrying out drone strike on vessel, calling it a "foolish violation" of the ceasefire. **NATION, A4**

### Request to freeze payout rejected

Attempt by L.A. County's district attorney to halt \$4-billion sex abuse settlement is denied by judge. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

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### Cleanup begins in Boyle Heights

Rotting meat and debris have piled up after days-long fire at cold storage facility. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

### Cisco to lay off 471 employees

Bay Area offices will see job cuts. **BUSINESS, A11**

### Weather

Clearing. L.A. Basin: 78/62. **B8**

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