

Summer becomes the peak COVID season

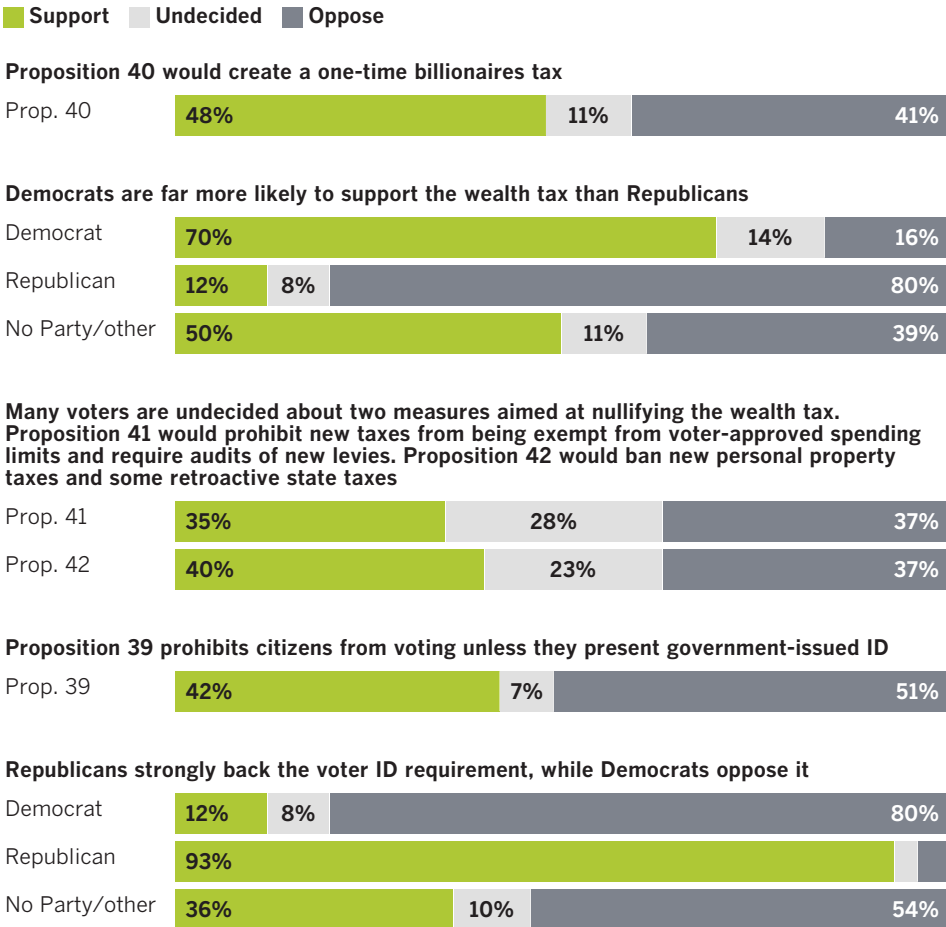
CDC says the virus is growing or likely growing in 43 states, including California.

By RONG-GONG LIN II

Six years after the COVID-19 pandemic upended the world, experts in California say the disease appears to be becoming more of a summer rather than a winter phenomenon. The shift was noted over the past couple of years and has become even clearer in 2026, prompting health officials to refocus their prevention efforts. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says COVID-19 is growing or likely growing in 43 states at the moment, including California. California is also one of only four states where COVID wastewater activity levels are considered moderate or high, according to the CDC. “Our summer peak was much higher in 2025 than it was in the winter,” Dr. Erica Pan, director of the California Department of Public Health and the state public health officer, said in a recent briefing. “Summer is really the bigger peak. So if you do have patients or loved ones who have not gotten the ‘25-’26 vaccines, it is still effective and highly recommended, given this surge we’re starting to see.” The pattern is also being seen nationally. COVID-related emergency department visits peaked last summer in late August, with COVID being responsible for 1.7% of visits. The winter peak was 1%. The trend was even more stark in California, peaking last summer at 2.1%, while there was not much of a winter peak at all, maxing out at around 0.2%. This trend puts COVID in relatively rare territory as far as respiratory diseases go. Typically, those ailments — think flu and respiratory syncytial virus — spike in the winter, and aren’t really seen outside of that season. In the early years of the pandemic, COVID spiked in both the summer and winter, with the winter waves being

Measuring support for key California propositions

Backing for the most controversial measures on the November ballot is splitting largely along party lines



The Berkeley IGS/Times poll findings are based on a survey of 4,207 California registered voters, 2,310 of whom are considered likely voters, online in English and Spanish from Aug. 3-9. The results are estimated to have a margin of error of about 2.5 percentage points in either direction in the likely voter sample, and larger numbers for subgroups.

HAILEY WANG Los Angeles Times

Rich Californians seek residency outside U.S.

Agencies that help secure ‘golden visas’ say many fear for the future of American politics

By Audrey McGlinchey

If all goes to plan, Jae Kim, Annie Akin and their 4-year-old son will soon be residents of Portugal. By then, the San Francisco family will have had their birth certificates notarized, had European officials record their fingerprints and transferred half a million Euros into an international investment fund. Kim and Akin are among a rising number of wealthy Californians using their capital to seek residency and citizenship outside the U.S. It’s often called citizenship by investment, or a golden visa, and refers to a process in which individuals who invest a hefty amount of money into a country, either through buying property or direct investment, can more easily become permanent residents or citizens. “Affluent families are starting to say, ‘Hey, this is actually really good to

have alongside all of my investments. Why don’t I diversify where I can live?’ ” said Basil Mohr-Elzeki, a managing partner at Henley & Partners, a residency and citizenship firm with an office in Beverly Hills. Although no agency tracks these cases nationwide, three firms that help secure these kinds of residences said interest in so-called golden visas has skyrocketed in the last five years. In that time, the number of Californians one firm has worked with grew from roughly three clients a year to more than a hundred. Firms say Californians now make up as many as 1 in 5 clients from around the globe seeking residency in another country, a statistic not entirely surprising since the state is home to a large number of the world’s wealthiest people. The biggest motivator? A fear of political

Voters split over wealth tax; ballot ID effort trailing

Poll shows party-line divide for billionaire proposition. November turnout will be pivotal.

By SEEMA MEHTA

California voters are sharply divided over a ballot measure to impose a one-time tax on billionaires to help fund healthcare programs, a proposal already triggering a fierce and expensive political fight as the November election approaches, according to a poll released Friday. More than half of likely voters oppose a separate measure that would require Californians to provide identification when voting and election officials to verify registered voters are U.S. citizens, the survey showed. The two controversial proposals are among the 14 ballot measures Californians will decide in the Nov. 3 election. Proposition 40, which would impose the tax on billionaires’ assets, has

reached the precipice of nationwide debates over economic inequality and liberal overreach. The Republican-led voter ID measure, Proposition 39, emerged amid President Trump’s baseless claims of widespread voter fraud. Among likely California voters, 48% support Proposition 40, compared with 41% who oppose the proposed wealth tax and 11% who are undecided, according to a new poll by UC Berkeley’s Institute of Governmental Studies that is co-sponsored by The Times. Proposition 40’s failure to crack 50% support among voters at this point in the electoral cycle is a potential red flag, said IGS poll director Mark DiCamillo. Traditionally, Californians who are undecided on ballot measures tend to vote against them, he said. “It’s got an early lead, but it’s not a very large lead, and it’s not a majority,” he said. “Usually, for ballot propositions, you want the yes side to be above 50%, and that’s

[See Proposition 40, A8]



DAVE THURBER Design Pics Editorial/Universal Images Group

PARAQUAT has been linked to thyroid problems and birth defects. It is also considered harmful to wildlife.

State to phase out a toxic pesticide

California moves to ban paraquat, which is already prohibited in over 60 countries.

By HAYLEY SMITH

California will begin phasing out paraquat, a powerful weedkiller associated with birth defects, thyroid issues and other serious health problems. The California Department of Pesticide Regulation said this week all manufacturers of pesticide products containing the active ingredient have voluntarily agreed to withdraw the product from the market. Paraquat is banned in more than 60 countries due to its toxicity but is still al-

lowed in the U.S., and no state uses more of it than California. “For years, communities have fought to end the use of paraquat, a weedkiller associated with negative impacts to human health and wildlife,” said California Secretary for Environmental Protection Yana Garcia in a statement. “California will keep moving toward pest management practices that protect health and our ecosystems.” Millions of pounds of paraquat pesticide are sprayed annually on almonds, grapes, cotton and other crops, primarily in the San Joaquin Valley. It is California’s first major pesticide phaseout since 2019, when regulators announced the state was ending

[See Paraquat, A7]



MARCELO PEREZ DEL CARPIO For The Times

A VOLUNTEER cuts through the rubble of a housing complex felled in Venezuela.

A land of unimaginable loss

Years after devastating floods, earthquake survivors face more grief in Venezuela.

By MERY MOGOLLÓN AND PATRICK J. McDONNELL

LA GUAIRA, Venezuela — His mother, father and two sisters were among those entombed somewhere in the wreckage. He pitched a tent not far from the ruins

of their former home. “I’m not leaving here until they find the bodies,” vowed José Luis Villegas, 37. Accompanying him was his wife, who held out hope for two missing brothers. “My mind is blank,” said Marianne Ramírez, 29. “I feel too much pain. How does one reconstruct a life lost?” An ineffable sense of grief and uncertainty dominates the coastal state of La Guaira, the hardest-hit zone in the June 24 twin earthquakes — registering magni-

tudes of 7.2 and 7.5 — that pummeled Venezuela, leaving more than 6,300 dead. More than six weeks later, at least 1,300 remain missing, though there is no exact count. Now, as international attention has shifted to Monday’s 7.4 magnitude temblor in neighboring Colombia, La Guaira presents an apocalyptic sense of bleakness: Flies drone above ubiquitous piles of rubble reeking of decomposition in the un-

[See La Guaira, A4]

2-year closure at Kennedy Center

The board votes to shut the facility for renovations and to add President Trump’s name. **NATION, A5**

Below landfills, toxic fires grow

Rapid decomposition of waste creates blazes that raise health risks for the communities nearby. **CLIMATE, A9**

L.A. makes deal on cost of Games

City Council’s accord aims to ensure reimbursement for services during ’28 Olympics. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

2 unions call on Ellison to settle

DGA, IATSE urge a different resolution to antitrust case facing Paramount-Warner deal. **BUSINESS, A10**

Weather Clouds, then sun.

L.A. Basin: 83/67. **B6**

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