



CHRISTINA HOUSE Los Angeles Times
MANDY Wen, right, leads students in a clay activity at dual-language Hillcrest Elementary in Monterey Park.

Nearby drones already protect Trump

Existing port run by Secret Service could undercut claim White House needs one.

By COLLIN BINKLEY

WASHINGTON — President Trump's AI-fueled vision for a drone port he intends to install atop the new White House ballroom includes missile-bearing unmanned aerial vehicles and gun-toting troops, ostensibly to protect the 18-acre complex and the nation's capital.

A few hundred feet away, a drone port, run by the U.S. Secret Service and not the military, is already quietly operational. Equipped with cameras and sensors to scope out potential threats from a bird's-eye view, the small UAVs stand on alert in four gray weatherproof boxes until deployed at officers' commands.

The agency is using a model known as "drone as first responder," deploying speedy unarmed drones from outdoor stations to serve as flying cameras. That model has been adopted by hundreds of police agencies across the U.S., often powered by AI software to help dodge obstacles or track targets.

The existence of the surveillance drones on a Treasury Department building adjacent to the White House complex has not been previously reported, and could undercut Trump's legal claims that the ballroom construction is necessary "to protect the White House and surrounding region from aerial attacks." The need for the drone port underpinned Trump's na-

[See **Drones**, A7]

Head Start's bilingual lessons targeted

Trump plan to mandate English-only instruction would hinder L.A. County children, critics say

By Kate Sequeira and Ava Hu

Meiqian Kuang switches seamlessly between Mandarin and English as she teaches her transitional kindergarten students at Hillcrest Elementary in Monterey Park. Signs in English, Mandarin, Spanish and Vietnamese decorate the classroom, reflecting the most common languages students speak.

This dual-language class is also a federally funded Head Start program — long considered a gold standard in early childhood education — and must integrate learning with each child's cultural and linguistic upbringing.

But an overhaul of Head Start rules proposed by the Trump administration in August would fundamentally change that mission by mandating English-only classroom instruction. The proposed change would remove standards that require teachers or aides to speak the predominant home language of their students. Children's developmental screenings and assessments would not be required to be conducted in their home language. Materials for parents would no

longer have to be translated.

Books, toys and curriculum materials in foreign languages would be purged from classrooms under the changes. The proposal suggests that school staff members could use technology-based translation when they need to talk to families as communication avenues weaken.

The proposed changes for dual-language learners — which would hit Los Angeles County and California's diverse population hard — are part of the Trump administration's overhaul of Head Start. Plans also call for eliminating teacher-student staff ratios, defaulting caps to the licensing requirements of each state. It also seeks to remove current standards for developmental and health screenings and to reduce the role of parents in Head Start operations.

The Trump administration says these changes will bring more flexibility to providers to better respond to the needs of their communities. The English-only mandate would align Head Start with President

[See **Head Start**, A14]

No longer a rural health threat alone

John Taylor has spent years studying valley fever and the fungus that causes it across the Central Valley and the Southwest.

The sometimes-fatal disease is increasing, and the UC Berkeley professor has grim advice for people doing outdoor manual labor in those arid regions: Wear a full face mask hooked up to a HEPA-filtered air supply.

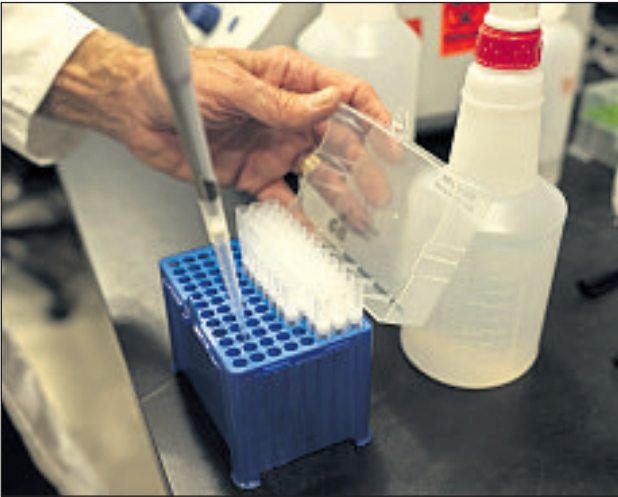
"Anything else, you are playing with a dangerous situation that could make you sick for the rest of your life," he said.

Some 40% of people infected with the fungus will come down with respiratory symptoms, and a small number develop serious lung problems. The disease can spread throughout the body and be fatal.

Rodent burrows, in particular, Taylor said, are something people should watch out for. His research is increasingly pointing to them as home for the deadly

Valley fever, linked to rodent burrows and dust, is found in urban areas, near drilling sites

By Susanne Rust



PAUL KURODA For The Times
SCIENTISTS cite higher risk of valley fever in Kern County residents who live near new oil and gas wells.

Poll results could push Bass to go negative in ads

Mayor will need to court undecided voters, says Raman is not the front-runner.

By NOAH GOLDBERG AND DAVID ZAHNISER

A stunning new poll showing Los Angeles City Councilmember Nithya Raman gaining a double-digit lead over incumbent Karen Bass in the mayor's race is increasing pressure on Bass and her allies to go sharply negative against her opponent and to seek support from conservative and undecided voters to narrow the gap.

The poll, conducted by the UC Berkeley Institute of Governmental Studies and co-sponsored by The Times, showed Bass trailing Raman by 11 percentage points — with 28% of likely voters saying they supported the mayor while 39% said they would vote for Raman. The remaining 33% were undecided, an unusually high number this close to the Nov. 3 election.

"The bottom line is this is a huge shot in the arm politically for Raman — and it's not a good day for the mayor," said Zev Yaroslavsky, a former L.A. City Council member who now runs the Los Angeles Initiative at the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs.

Dan Schnur, a former Republican political consultant, said the poll could have instant negative effects for the mayor's fundraising ability as potential supporters might now view Raman as the favorite in the race.

"The most immediate tangible result of a poll like this is that Bass' greatest advantage was her fundraising and it now becomes much more challenging to raise money," he said.

Bass, appearing Wednesday at a news conference in Hollywood, said she's seen multiple polls that show a

tight race. She said Raman is "absolutely not" the front-runner in the race.

The mayor said she is working to highlight the city's progress in making rent more affordable, pointing to newly released numbers that show that more than 10,000 units of housing with restricted rents have been built since she took office in December 2022.

[See **Campaign**, A6]

COST OF LIVING IS VOTERS' PRIMARY CONCERN

New poll also finds Californians mostly back Becerra in the race for governor.

By NICOLE NIXON

SACRAMENTO — As Californians prepare to elect a new governor in November, the concern they want to be his top priority is reducing the state's entrenched high cost of living, according to a poll by the UC Berkeley Institute of Governmental Studies and co-sponsored by the Los Angeles Times.

Not too far behind that is strong voter support for fighting the policies of the Trump administration. That may be among the many reasons 58% of likely voters surveyed support Democrat Xavier Becerra in the governor's race compared with the 33% who back Republican Steve Hilton, whom the president endorsed.

"These results suggest that Becerra is in a commanding position heading to November," said IGS codirector Eric Schickler. "With 2026 shaping up to be a strong Democratic year nationally, the headwinds facing Hilton in Democratic-leaning California are even stronger than usual."

The poll found that Becerra's lead over Hilton had increased slightly since an August IGS poll, and the Democrat holds a 25-percentage-point advantage.

Despite an effort to reach out to Democrats and independent voters and making California's high housing costs, top-in-the-nation gasoline prices and other increasing daily living expenses a central focus of his campaign, Hilton is struggling to gain ground in the race to replace Gov. Gavin Newsom, the poll found.

"The difficult thing is that Steve Hilton's a Republican in California," said Tim Rosales, a Republican strategist who previously advised GOP gubernatorial candidate John Cox in the 2018 race against Newsom. "On

[See **Poll**, A6]

Not even Jesus is safe from metal thieves

By HANNAH FRY

For the faithful entering Christ Our Savior Catholic Parish in Santa Ana, the statue of St. John the Baptist placing holy water on the head of Jesus represented a core tenet of Christianity.

But, police say, thieves who arrived at the church under the cover of darkness last month probably saw the artwork as representing something more worldly: quick cash.

Police say two men cut through a chain-link fence at the church property around 2 a.m. on Aug. 30 and took an



CHRISTINA HOUSE Los Angeles Times

A STATUE of Jesus was sawed off at the ankles and carted away from a church in Santa Ana last month.

electric saw to the statue. In surveillance video, the men are seen slicing the depiction of Jesus at the ankles and carting it away. Only the feet and the stone base of the \$50,000 installation were left behind.

St. John the Baptist remains. But many worry the church and other locations across the region that display bronze artwork will continue to be targeted.

"It feels like a violation," said Tustin Mayor Austin Lumbard, whose city has also been the setting for bronze thefts in recent months.

[See **Bronze**, A11]

Iran leader says Tehran won't bow to force

President Masoud Pezeshkian calls out Trump in a defiant wartime speech to the U.N. **WORLD, A2**

Jumping in to save rare frog

Long Beach biologists have helped raise and release 1,032 yellow-legged hoppers into the wild. **SCIENCE, A8**

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

Warehouse fire report falls short

LAFD investigators cite an "electrical event" but don't know exact cause. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Trump, Newsom to clash over AI

President doubles down on development while governor has changed his stance. **BUSINESS, A9**

Weather

Sunny.
L.A. Basin: 86/67. **B6**



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