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TOMAS OVALLE For The Times

EVIDENCE of potentially hazardous chemicals was found at this cannabis operation in Lower Lake, Calif.

LEGAL WEED, BROKEN PROMISES

A losing quest for clean cannabis

California regulators fail to keep up with hazardous chemicals or crack down on the growers using them

BY PAIGE ST. JOHN

LOWER LAKE, Calif. — Two years after The Times found that cannabis sold at California dispensaries contained alarming levels of pesticides, the safety of the state's legal weed remains a crapshoot, as government regulators fail to keep up with an ever-evolving slate of hazardous chemicals or crack down on the growers using them.

A new round of tests commissioned by The Times shows that even as many major cannabis brands have cleaned up their products, others are using pesticides off the state's radar.

Brands, including Stiiizy and West Coast Cure, that were contaminated two years ago came up largely clean in the latest testing — a change that industry leaders attribute to pressure from consumers outraged by The Times' 2024 reporting.

But three other brands, all from the same manufacturer, contained significant quantities of a pesticide, pymetrozine, that was widespread in the 2024 testing. And previously unseen chemicals hazardous to human health were detected in a quarter of the 49 inhalable products tested by The Times.

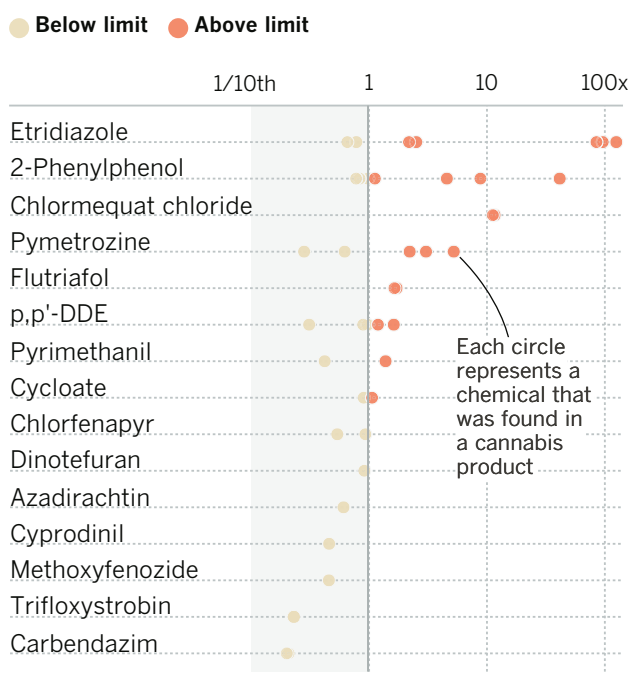
One product contained the soil fungicide etridiazole, a likely carcinogen not widely known to cannabis safety professionals, in amounts 125 times higher than what would trigger safety testing under federal tobacco standards.

About 17% of Americans smoke cannabis products, including nearly a quarter of people under age 29, according to an August Gallup poll. When cannabis is inhaled — whether by vape, bong or joint — chemical contaminants travel directly from the lungs into the bloodstream and to the brain and internal organs. Even low levels can cause harm over time, contributing to nerve damage, brain cell death, genetic deformities, organ failure and cancers.

Eight years after legalization was sold to voters as a way to protect cannabis consumers, the weed supply is policed by an under-resourced state [See **Weed,** A8]

Pesticides found in legal weed

In tests of 49 legal cannabis products, independent labs found 31 toxic chemicals, eight of those at levels exceeding either state limits for cannabis or federal safety-testing thresholds for tobacco.



Sixteen pesticides found at low or trace amounts not charted: bifenazate, bifenthrin, biphenyl, buprofezin, chlordane, diphenylamine, fenazaquin, fluopyram, formetanate HCl, metalaxyl, myclobutanil, oxamyl, permethrin, piperonyl butoxide, propargite and tebuconazole.

For pesticides for which California has set no limit, the U.S. safety testing threshold for tobacco residues is used.

SEAN GREENE Los Angeles Times

Election sets up new hurdles for resuming war

Trump may be limited on Iran by divisions in his party and a sudden push to oust Hegseth.

BY MICHAEL WILNER

WASHINGTON — Just days ago, a resumption of war with Iran appeared inevitable, regardless of the outcome of the midterm elections. U.S. diplomats urged their Arab counterparts to prepare for an intense period of fighting. Nonessential foreign service and intelligence personnel across the Middle East were ordered home, while senior officials at the Pentagon debated the strategic objectives renewed hostilities could realistically achieve, two U.S. officials told The Times.

Now, the sharpest electoral rebuke in half a century is forcing a reckoning for President Trump, who insisted the day after the vote that his war against Tehran was worth the political cost. Renewed strikes on Iran remain a distinct possibility, the officials said.

But a sudden bipartisan push to oust Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth over his handling of the conflict, coupled with a statement of brazen defiance from his own vice president, JD Vance, opposing the war, could constrain Trump's ability to resume the fight before Democrats take control of Congress next year.

A Republican lawmaker from Kentucky, Thomas Massie, plans to present impeachment articles against Hegseth this week over his role overseeing the war effort — a measure expected to gain enough support from Republicans to pass.

While maintaining public support for the Defense secretary, Trump has begun [See **Iran,** A7]

U.S. carries out strikes on Iran

President Trump says attack was "minor"; Qatar offers nuclear proposals. **WORLD, A4**

Raman's scrappy path to victory

How the challenger's campaign, launched at the deadline, toppled the incumbent mayor.

BY NOAH GOLDBERG

The first volunteers gathered in the back house of Nithya Raman's Silver Lake home with little besides a whiteboard counting down the number of days until the June 2 primary election.

Raman had jumped into the Los Angeles mayor's race the day before, right at the Feb. 7 filing deadline. Her campaign didn't have an office, a bank account, a campaign treasurer, or even a proper website.

It lacked, put simply, "the most basic things," said Ian Manheimer, Raman's campaign manager, who joined the team after a 10 p.m. call from Raman the night before the filing deadline. There would be a meeting the next day in Raman's backyard accessory dwelling unit to get things rolling.

"For anyone who suspected Nithya had designs on this for a long time, you could just come to the ADU and that would dispel those notions," Manheimer said.

Those unassuming beginnings in Raman's backyard, with her parents and her husband's parents taking turns cooking vegetarian Indian lunches for the small staff, evolved into a disciplined campaign that overcame initial struggles to unseat incumbent Mayor Karen Bass, a veteran politician who had racked up endorsements from most of L.A.'s traditional power brokers.

Raman did it on a hyper-abbreviated timeline by turning out and expanding her base of younger renters, pitching herself successfully to Latino voters, securing late but key endorsements from groups and officials that gave massive support [See **Raman,** A10]

Miller's rise stokes fears, and passion to fight

BY GRACE TOOHEY, SUHAUNA HUSSAIN AND KAREN GARCIA

President Trump's appointment of Stephen Miller — the architect of the administration's extreme crackdown on immigration — to White House chief of staff is sparking alarm among immigrant advocates and politicians across California.

But last week's sweeping Democratic victories are giving immigrant communities hope that control of Congress will provide them with more tools to fight Miller's policies.

Miller grew up in Santa Monica but has become a relentless critic of California, specifically its immigration policies, protections and, in many ways, identity. Southern California was the first city targeted by widespread immigration raids last year, upending the region in ways that continue to reverberate, particularly for immigrant communities.

Miller's promotion, announced Friday, is seen by many as an indication that the president has no intention of backing away from some of his most polarizing policies during his last two years in office, despite devas- [See **Reaction,** A7]

BOMBAST AWAY: Stephen Miller has promoted hard-line positions through abrasive rhetoric. **NATION, A6**

Why Bass' pivotal allies turned on her

Mayor's campaign touted her ability to build relationships, but several crumbled.

BY DAVID ZAHNISER AND NOAH GOLDBERG

It wasn't that long ago that campaign strategist Estevan Montemayor was an enthusiastic booster for Karen Bass.

During her first run for mayor in 2022, Montemayor was working with Communities United for Bass, a campaign committee that spent $6 million on television ads, text messages and other voter outreach efforts.

The 35-year-old political consultant took on another expensive outside campaign this year — this one to support Councilmember Nithya Raman and oppose Bass. Asked about the change in allegiances, he said he became disenchanted with the mayor over her handling of homelessness, the city budget and finally, the Palisades fire.

"That's when I came to realize on a personal level that she was not capable of serving in an executive role," Montemayor said.

Bass, a 22-year political veteran, spent much of her failed reelection campaign touting her ability to work with others. She locked down support from labor unions, business groups and immigration advocates. She frequently pointed out 14 members of the City Council lined up behind her and not for Raman, who won Tuesday's election and will be sworn in next month.

Yet some of Bass' political relationships disintegrated during her four-year term, at times in dramatic ways. Those key colleagues and supporters turned against her, then went on to help orchestrate her political demise.

Early on in Bass' term, Los Angeles County Super- [See **Bass,** A10]



In the spirit of giving

Need inspiration with the holiday season quickly approaching? Our annual Gift Guide has you covered. See *latimes.com/giftguide* and **SECTION T.**

Eisenkot tapped to build coalition

Israel's president gives Netanyahu's opponent the first opportunity to try to form a new government. **WORLD, A3**

Weather
Sunny and very warm. L.A. Basin: 88/62. **B8**

Newsom assumes risk on clemency

Governor's decision to grant mass commutations sends a clear message to the nation. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

No. 8 UCLA gets a statement win

Coach Bob Chesney extends his electric start, improving to 9-0, in a 34-20 victory over Minnesota. **SPORTS, D1**

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