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TOMAS OVALLE For The Times

"WE WANT a change," says Jorge Navarro, cutting Victor Salazar's hair at his shop in the San Joaquin Valley, where GOP Rep. David Valadao fell to a Democratic challenger by a margin that has left both parties stunned.

Democrats gear up for battles on immigration

Lawmakers want to increase oversight of agencies and rein in aggressive tactics.

BY ANDREA CASTILLO

WASHINGTON — As it became clear on election day that Republicans would lose the House of Representatives, House Homeland Security Committee Democrats posted a three-word message on social media to Markwayne Mullin, who leads the agency: "clear your calendar."

The next day, Mullin posted a three-word message of his own: "Deportations will continue."

After affordability and the Iran war, immigration was a defining issue in the midterm elections, and now that Democrats have won majorities in the House and Senate, they plan to increase agency oversight and attempt to rein in the Trump administration's aggressive immigration enforcement policies.

Come January, Democrats will control every House seat along the U.S.-Mexico border. But while they will have wider leeway to investigate alleged wrongdoings of the last two years, how much they can advance their immigration agenda will likely depend on how much Republicans will collaborate with them. Any advances would also require the approval of President Trump, who on Friday appointed Stephen Miller, the architect of many of his administration's most stringent immigration policies, as his new chief of staff.

Democrats have already started outlining their goals

[See **Congress,** A5]

Congress to focus on healthcare

New majority is expected to move quickly to boost Medicaid and lower ACA costs. **NATION, A4**

New leaders on climate agenda

Two Californians poised to head House environmental and energy committees. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

As kids strain to see, risks become clearer

Rise in myopia among children could turn into 'tidal wave' of eye disease and blindness.

BY CORINNE PURTILL

Neither she nor her husband needed glasses until middle age, so Cassia van der Hoof Holstein was a bit surprised to learn that her 8-year-old daughter, Viva, was struggling to see the board in class.

When Van der Hoof Holstein started reading about nearsightedness in children, that surprise turned into concern. Understanding of pediatric myopia had advanced dramatically since her own school years, when needing glasses seemed little more than an inconvenience.

Now modern life was straining the limits of human vision, at ever younger ages. More hours spent with screens close to our faces and fewer hours in natural light are changing the shape of our eyeballs, elongating the spheres from front to back.

As the years progress, the stretched eyeball weakens and falters: retinal tears, macular degeneration, cataracts and glaucoma. The sooner that process starts in a child's growing eye, the faster it progresses. Nearsighted kids such as Viva face a significantly higher lifetime risk of serious eye problems and potential blindness.

"Eyesight is so, so precious, and it's scary to think about that potentially being impacted," Van der Hoof Holstein said recently from her home in San Francisco.

Viva is hardly alone. Over the last few decades, the percentage of children diagnosed with myopia has moved steadily upward, while age at diagnosis appears to be moving down.

"The average age of myopia onset is certainly getting younger and younger," said Dr. Maria Liu, a professor of clinical optometry and vision science at UC Berkeley and founder of the university's Myopia Control Clinic. When the clinic started in 2013, diagnosis at age 6 or 7 was considered early onset myopia. Today, she said, the clinic frequently sees patients with myopia at age 3 or 4.

This is a global problem, not just an American one. In 1990, 24.3% of children and adolescents worldwide were myopic, according to a review of hundreds of scientific papers across 50 countries. The rate was 35.8% by

[See **Myopia,** A6]

Political tide takes a turn in California's heartland

BY IAN JAMES AND NICOLE NIXON

DELANO, Calif. — While cutting men's hair in his barbershop, Jorge Navarro has been hearing the same concerns over and over: The prices of gas, food and housing are going up. Immigration agents are lurking outside stores and schools. And President Trump and the Republicans are to blame.

Widespread dissatisfaction with the decisions being made in Washington, he said, helped Democrat Randy Villegas trounce Republican incumbent David Valadao to take his congressional seat in Tuesday's election.

"We want a change," Navarro said, speaking in Spanish. "We hope for a change."

Villegas won in a region of the San Joaquin Valley that has been dominated by Republicans for two decades. The majority Latino district stretches from western Fresno to Bakersfield, an agricultural area with dairy farms, grapevines and vast orchards of almonds, pistachios and oranges.

That Valadao lost to Villegas, a community college professor who ran on a populist message, was not a major surprise, given the gains Democrats made nationwide. But Villegas' margin of victory left both Republican and Democratic leaders and operatives stunned. The progressive challenger has maintained a lead of roughly 30 percentage points since election night. Although votes still are being counted, the Associated Press has declared Villegas the winner.

"It was remarkable," said Christian Romo, chair of the Kern County Democratic Party. "I knew we would win but didn't expect this margin, and I didn't think that

[See **Heartland,** A5]



ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times

TRAIN TRACKS in San Clemente are threatened by rising sea levels, strong storms and beach erosion.

Surf, sand and a rail rescue plan in O.C.

Coastal panel OKs permit to replenish beach, fortify tracks in San Clemente.

BY GRACE TOOHEY

A major sand replenishment is headed to the San Clemente beach along the long-imperiled railway line, part of a large shoreline work package aimed at fortifying the vulnerable railroad while also protecting the area's shrinking beaches.

The California Coastal Commission last week approved an extensive permit that railway officials hope will help maintain the critical rail line, which has faced an onslaught of rising seas, harsh waves and strong storms over the last several years that have led to repeated closures — an issue only intensified this year by the historic El Niño.

A key element of the permit is the placement of almost 700,000 cubic yards of sand on sections of the area's shrinking — or completely gone — beaches, an investment Orange County officials say will be the single largest sand replenishment along this stretch of coast in more than 60 years.

"This is the first step to resolving a half-century of inaction by our community," Orange County Supervisor Katrina Foley, who sits on the Orange County Transportation Authority's board of directors, said at Thursday's Coastal Commission hearing.

She admitted that the county has, for too long, fo-

[See **Railway,** A6]

HOLLYWOOD IN CRISIS

Jersey rolls out red carpet

Garden State's film industry is booming, with aggressive tax credits drawing studio interest

By Meg James | REPORTING FROM WEST ORANGE, N.J.

America's film industry flickered to life in this state with a chip on its shoulder.

In 1888, inventor Thomas A. Edison began developing a motion picture camera at his West Orange laboratory. His crew built an odd-shaped soundstage — giving birth to moviemaking. But soon, New Jersey lost the action to flashier New York and, then, the industry famously moved west to sunny Los Angeles, where it prospered for a century.

But filmmakers are back in New Jersey, and production is booming again.

At a time when filming in Los Angeles has plunged to historic lows, New Jersey has soared, becoming one of the nation's hottest film destinations and squeezing into the limelight of its bigger neighbor across the Hudson River.

State leaders have rolled out the red carpet. They have adopted aggressive tax credits and awarded up to $387 million to Netflix to build a $1-billion studio complex at Ft. Monmouth, a former U.S. Army base near the Jersey Shore. More than 80 buildings have been bulldozed, and on a recent afternoon, towering yellow cranes dotted the loam as soundstages, mills and office space began to take shape.

Less than 10 years ago, total movie and TV production spending in New Jersey was a mere $67 million, according to the state's Economic Development Authority. By 2025, industry spending in the Garden State had reached $1.2 billion, as reported by production data firm ProdPro, behind only California, New York and Georgia.

Meanwhile, California's film spending declined 37% to $5.2 billion from 2021 to 2025.

Nearly three dozen major films and TV projects were produced in New Jersey in 2025, double the count of five years ago,

[See **New Jersey,** A8]

Punjabi drivers trade big rigs for food trucks

Federal crackdown drove Indians off the road. Now they are fired up.

BY NILESH CHRISTOPHER



IAN BATES For The Times

NIKHIL SINGH eats food from rest-stop eatery Royal Chaat inside his truck in Patterson, Calif.

There's been a surprise surge of Indian food spots along lonely stretches of California's highways — an unlikely outcome of President Trump's immigration policies.

More than 13,000 migrant drivers lost their licenses in the state this year as the White House ratcheted up restrictions on some immigrants. Many of those drivers were Indian and pivoted to set up food trucks.

After hauling produce for a decade, Karanveer Singh got an email in December saying his license wouldn't be valid after 60 days because of his immigration status. Three of his drivers got the same notice.

"The work I'd been doing for 10 years stopped dead," he said. "It was very bad."

He tapped his life savings to buy a used food truck, hire cooks and open Ghar Di Roti — which means homemade flatbread in Punjabi — at a gas station just off Highway 99 in Merced County. His

[See **Truckers,** A10]

Nvidia board to open spy case

CEO Jensen Huang admits to an affair amid reports that he was targeted by Chinese intelligence. **BUSINESS, A9**

Leadership redo at the L.A. Phil

Daniel Harding, the orchestra's new music director, looks at what's ahead amid big changes. **ENTERTAINMENT, E1**

Weather
Sunny and warm.
L.A. Basin: 87/61. **B6**

Opinion Voices **A13**

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STEPHANIE SCARBROUGH AP

MYLES GARRETT'S return proved a success.

Nacua, Garrett lead Rams to win

Receiver's 150 yards and edge rusher's three sacks pace the 20-13 victory over the Commanders. **SPORTS, D1**