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WEEKLY DIGEST
DECEMBER 14, 2018



ARAMBULA SAYS HE SPANKED HIS DAUGHTER NIGHT BEFORE ARREST

December 13, 2018 | AP News

Democratic Assemblyman Joaquin Arambula of Fresno said Wednesday that the child abuse allegation he faces stems from spanking his 7-year-old daughter. Arambula said he spanked his daughter Sunday night and it's a punishment tool he rarely uses, The Fresno Bee reported. He said he has no plans to resign.

Arambula faces a March 13 court date. "Everyone who knows us in the community and has seen us in the community knows that I'm a loving father," Arambula said while standing next to his wife, Elizabeth. "I care about my daughters deeply. And I'm just going through a process and trying the best I can to be a husband and father who's putting us back together again."

Arambula Is Former Emergency Room Doctor

Arambula is a former emergency room doctor who was elected in 2016 to represent parts of Fresno County. He has three daughters, ages 3, 6 and 7. He was arrested Monday after officials at Dailey Elementary Charter

"Everyone who knows us in the community and has seen us in the community knows that I'm a loving father." — Assemblyman Joaquin Arambula

School reported a child with an injury, Fresno Police Chief Jerry Dyer said.

Arambula said he believes his daughter went to school angry and told a teacher about what had happened. He

thanked the school, child protective services, and the police for doing their jobs.

Arambula was released shortly after his arrest and has not been formally charged. His daughters stayed with his parents for two nights until child protective services said they could go back home Wednesday, the newspaper reported.

"There's a process to be played out, and this process played out, and they determined that the kids should go back home," Arambula said. "I'm excited about that. But we have a job and a responsibility to continue to be good parents, and that's what I want to work on and

will strive to do." Authorities will check in on the Arambulas in 30 days and suggested the family seek therapy, he said.

Dyer's Department Intends to Prosecute the Case

Dyer said Wednesday that the victim had a "small injury," but didn't identify where it was. He also said that his department intends to see the case prosecuted.

Arambula's arrest was for a misdemeanor, not a felony, because the injury did not require medical attention, Dyer said, according to The Bee. Spanking a child is generally legal if it's in a fleshy area such as the buttocks but not if it's in a place likely to cause injury like the face, he said.

Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon hasn't commented on the arrest.

Information from: [The Fresno Bee](#)



'SWEET' HOLIDAY SOUNDS BREAK HEART OF MOM WITH EXCLUDED SON

Photo: Shutterstock

December 6, 2018 | Bill McEwen

School holiday concerts and plays are a source of great pride for parents. The singing, acting, and costumes often provide joyful lifetime memories. But the holiday program Wednesday night at **Figarden Elementary School** triggered anguish in Chrissy and Michael Kelly.

Special Needs Class Excluded

That's because the school excluded Parker Kelly, along with his special needs classmates, from taking part in the event — an inexcusable mistake by Fresno Unified School District.

When Chrissy picked up Parker, a first-grader, from school Wednesday afternoon, she heard the “sweetest sound” coming from the school cafeteria. Remembering a holiday performance mentioned in the school's newsletter, she asked in the office, “When is the Christmas program?”

The secretary said, “Tonight.”

Question: “Who's in it?”

Answer: “Kindergarten through fourth grade.”

Question: “Is Parker's class performing?”

A phone call and then the answer: “No.”

Understand: Parker Kelly has autism. He is part of what is called a Special Day Class.

Chrissy Kelly Shares Her Pain on Facebook

With Parker and 9-year-old Greyson, who also has autism and is home-schooled, in the back of the car, Chrissy faced the...

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NASREEN JOHNSON JUMPS INTO SUPERVISOR RACE

December 11, 2018 | David Taub

Nasreen Johnson is giving politics another chance. After finishing second in a four-person race for Fresno Unified school board last month, she plans to run for the vacant Fresno County supervisor seat. Johnson tells GV Wire she is pulling papers today (Dec. 11) to run for the seat vacated by Andreas Borgeas, who won election to the state Senate.

Fresno councilman Steve Brandau is officially in, with his candidacy certified by the elections office Monday (Dec. 10). Fresno businessman and **former Fresno State baseball star Steve Hosey** said Monday that he is entering the race. Meanwhile, former Central California Blood Center CEO Dean Eller says he is not running. “It appears that there will be a couple of very good candidates, and I will continue to serve our community in other ways,” Eller tells GV Wire. The election is March 5. If no candidate receives a simple majority, the top two candidates in the nonpartisan race will meet in a winner-takes-all runoff June 4. Johnson works as a marketing and...

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Contributed Photo

HER HEART FOR READING INSPIRES STUDENTS

December 13, 2018 | GV Wire

Danay Ferguson founded Reading Heart when she was just 8 years old, making her the youngest registered entrepreneur in Fresno County history, according to the nonprofit's website. “It first started out with my love of reading,” Danay said, “and I wanted to share that with everybody else.”

The avid reader is now 11 and has seen Reading Heart grow into a literacy-boosting powerhouse. Danay regularly travels to schools across Fresno County to celebrate reading and distribute free books to students in a party-like atmosphere. The organization has collected over 700,000 books as part of its mission to share the joy of reading support educational achievement. Danay is supported by her father, Dwayne Ferguson, who loads the books into their traveling library trailer and coordinates Reading Heart's many events. The organization also relies on a network of community volunteers, both kids and adults, to support the program. The smiles on the faces...

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GV Wire Photo/Jahz Tello



GV Wire Photo/ Jahz Tello

NEWSOM WAFFLES ON VALLEY APPOINTMENTS TO UNIVERSITY BOARDS

December 7, 2018 | David Taub

Gov.-elect Gavin Newsom hedged on a campaign promise to appoint Valley members to the University of California and California State University boards. Newsom paid Fresno his first visit since winning election last month. He appeared at three events during the day. Newsom said he couldn't make a Valley appointment, even if he wanted to, "and I do want to," he noted, because there are no current openings.

"There are probably two dozen other groups that also feel like they are not represented — the Asian community, African-American community, and geographic parts of the state — the Inland Empire, the northern part of the state that feel underrepresentation. So the challenge for me is, when you get one appointment over a two-year period, you can't solve for all of that," he said. Three UC Board of Regents terms are set to expire during Newsom's term. The board has no Valley representatives since Fred Ruiz's term expired in 2106. The CSU board will have more spots over the next four years (since the CSU terms are shorter). Currently, Hugo Morales (Fresno) and John Nilon (Kern County) are from the Valley.

"My goal is for over the course of time to solve for those things. Unfortunately, with one appointment, maybe in the first two years — I think by definition disappoint somebody in that process. I'm going to do my best to try and balance it," Newsom continued. During a campaign stop to the very same Teamsters building in central Fresno in June, Newsom promised to appoint Valley members. See video of his promise below. Fresno State President Joseph Castro was one of approximately 60 business, labor, and agricultural leaders who

met with Newsom in a roundtable-style event. Castro asked Newsom to support growing CSU enrollment and on-campus infrastructure. He also asked Newsom to appoint a Valley member to one of the two public university governing boards. "I also asked him on the side to have more Valley folks on the CSU Board of Trustees and UC Regents," Castro told GV Wire. How did Newsom respond? "Positively on all those things," Castro said.

Newsom's Day

Newsom met with a broad range of Valley leaders in downtown Fresno at the Peerless Pump building for a noontime roundtable. Former Fresno mayor and current Central Valley Community Foundation CEO Ashley Swearingin arranged the meeting. Swearingin also serves as an ambassador on Newsom's transition team. Newsom heard economic reports from the Valley and members of the Bay Area Council. He also heard updates on the high-speed rail.

"I also asked him on the side to have more Valley folks on the CSU Board of Trustees and UC Regents."
— Fresno State President Joseph Castro

Next, he met with agriculture leaders, followed by a semi-public town hall at the Teamsters 431 Hall. There, an overflow crowd of more than 300 came to hear what Newsom. Even some of those who had returned RSVPs could not get in the building. Newsom spent approximately 90 minutes sharing his thoughts on the state, as well as taking questions. Topics: healthcare, prison reform, the economy, and high-speed rail.

Leaders Impressed

Assemblyman Adam Gray (D-Merced) helped arrange Newsom's visit. "The governor-elect has spent more time in the Central Valley than frankly any governor in recent history that I recall. It's a great opportunity to...

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AP Photo/Haven Daley

December 11, 2018 | AP News

SACRAMENTO — California’s increasingly deadly and destructive wildfires have become so unpredictable that government officials should consider banning home construction in vulnerable areas, the state’s top firefighter says.

Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Director Ken Pimlott will leave his job Friday after 30 years with the agency. In an interview with The Associated Press, he said government and citizens must act differently to protect lives and property from fires that now routinely threaten large populations. That may mean rethinking subdivisions in thickly forested mountainous areas or homes along Southern California

canyons lined with tinder-dry chaparral. Los Angeles County supervisors on Tuesday were considering whether to allow a 19,000-home development in fire-prone mountains amid heavy criticism of the location’s high fire danger.

California residents should also train themselves to respond more quickly to warnings and make preparations to shelter in place if they can’t outrun the flames, Pimlott said. Communities in fire zones need to harden key buildings with fireproof construction similar to the way cities prepare for earthquakes, hurricanes or tornadoes, and should prepare commercial or public buildings to withstand fires with the...

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CALIFORNIA FIRST STATE TO MANDATE SOLAR POWER FOR NEW HOMES

December 6, 2018 | AP News

LOS ANGELES — California became the first state in the nation to require homes built in 2020 and later be solar powered, following a vote by the Building Standards Commission. The unanimous action on Wednesday finalizes a previous vote by the Energy Commission and fulfills a decade-old goal to make the state reliant on cleaner energy.

“These provisions really are historic and will be a beacon of light for the rest of the country,” said Kent Sasaki, a structural engineer and one of six building standards commissioners. “(It’s) the beginning of substantial improvement in how we produce energy and reduce the consumption of fossil fuels.” While nobody spoke Wednesday in opposition, the commission received about 300 letters opposing the mandate because of the added cost, the [Orange County Register reported](#). Energy officials estimated the provisions will add \$10,000 to the cost of building a single-family home...

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OMG! CALIFORNIA CONSIDERS FEES ON TEXT MESSAGING.

December 12, 2018 | AP News

SACRAMENTO — California regulators are considering a plan to charge a fee for text messaging on mobile phones to help support programs that make phone service accessible to the poor, according to a newspaper report Wednesday. The proposal is scheduled for a vote next month by the state Public Utilities Commission, the Mercury News reported.

They further reported: “The wireless industry, business groups and other critics argued that California can’t tax text messages unless federal regulators allow state regulators to treat text messaging as a telecommunications service. On Wednesday, the Federal Communications Commission in a 3-1 decision declared that wireless Short Message Service (SMS) and Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS) are “information services” similar to email under the Communications Act — and not a telecommunications service. The FCC’s Wednesday decision denied requests from mass-texting companies that have...”

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AP Photo/Evan Vuod

U.S. TRUMP SAYS MILITARY TO BUILD BORDER WALL IF DEMOCRATS REFUSE

December 11, 2018 | AP News

WASHINGTON — Arguing heatedly in public with Democratic leaders, President Donald Trump threatened repeatedly on Tuesday to shut down the government if Congress doesn't provide the money he says is needed to build a wall at the Mexican border. Trump's comments came as he opened a contentious meeting with Democratic Senate and House leaders Chuck Schumer and Nancy Pelosi, with the government looking at a possible partial shutdown on Dec. 21 when funding for some agencies will expire.

In his first encounter with the newly empowered Democrats after their midterm victories in the House, Trump heckled the leaders as they said legislation to keep the government open and provide additional border security

"If we don't get what we want, one way or the other, whether it's through you, through military, through anything you want to call, I will shut down the government. I will take the mantle. I will be the one to shut it down."

— President Donald Trump

ty could pass both houses of Congress. Previewing what is expected to be a tense relationship in the new year, the group squabbled on national TV in the Oval Office as Trump said major wall funding was vital. "If we don't get what we want, one way or the other, whether it's through you, through military,

through anything you want to call, I will shut down the government," Trump said. "I will take the mantle. I will be the one to shut it down."

Seeking Far More for Long-Stalled Wall

Barely a half hour passed before the Democrats had exited a private meeting with the president, issuing stern warnings. "This Trump shutdown, this temper tantrum that he seems to throw, will not get him his wall and will hurt a lot of people," said Schumer. Republican House Speaker Paul Ryan acknowledged Tuesday that the GOP-led House has yet to pass legislation that includes

the \$5 billion in border wall funds that Trump has been requesting. The reality is he likely lacks the votes from his Republicans who will lose their majority at the end of the month. Trump is seeking far more for his long-stalled border wall than the \$1.6 billion the Senate has agreed to for border security, including physical barriers and technology along the U.S. southern border. The public Oval Office meeting between Trump, Vice President Mike Pence and the Democrats began civilly, with Trump noting progress for criminal justice legislation in the Senate. But the session quickly unraveled as he mentioned his promised wall along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Trump Squabbles With the Democrats Over Funding

Said Trump with a smile:

"And then we have the easy one, the wall. That will be the easiest of all, what do you think Chuck?" Schumer shot back sternly: "It's called funding the government." Constantly interrupting, Trump squabbled with the Democrats over whether wall funding could be approved in the House or Senate without Democratic votes. When Pelosi said he did not have support in the House, Trump interjected: "Nancy, I do."

"This Trump shutdown, this temper tantrum that he seems to throw, will not get him his wall and will hurt a lot of people."

— Senate Minority Leader
Chuck Schumer

Pelosi later said: "This has spiraled downwards." After Pelosi and Schumer noted Democratic success in the midterm elections, the president asked whether Republicans had won the Senate in the November election. "When the president brags he has won North Dakota and Indiana, he's in real trouble," retorted Schumer with a smile.



JUDGE GIVES EX-TRUMP LAWYER MICHAEL COHEN 3 YEARS IN PRISON

AP Photo/Craig Ruttle

December 12, 2018 | AP News

NEW YORK — Michael Cohen, who as President Donald Trump’s personal lawyer and fixer once vowed he would “take a bullet” for his boss, was sentenced Wednesday to three years in prison for an array of crimes that included arranging the payment of hush money to two women that he says was done at the direction of Trump.

The sentence was in line with what federal prosecutors asked for. Sentencing guidelines called for around four to five years behind bars, and prosecutors asked in court papers that Cohen be given only a slight break. He is ordered to sur-

render March 6. Cohen, standing alone at the defense table, shook his head slightly and closed his eyes briefly as the sentence was announced by the judge.

U.S. District Judge William H. Pauley III said Cohen deserved modest credit for his decision over the summer to admit guilt and cooperate in a federal investigation of efforts by Russians to influence the presidential election, but his assistance “does not wipe the slate clean.” “Somewhere along the way Mr. Cohen appears to have lost his moral compass,” the judge said. “As a lawyer, Mr. Cohen should have known...

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PRESIDENTIAL PROSPECT LAYS OUT “5 RIGHTS” AS TOUR HITS FRESNO

December 14, 2018 | David Taub

Billionaire Tom Steyer acts like a man planning to run for president in 2020. The Democratic political activist was in Fresno Thursday (Dec. 13). He met with local elected officials like incoming congressman TJ Cox (D-Fresno) and state Senator Melissa Hurtado (D-Sanger).

He also held a public roundtable/town hall in Fresno at the Falls Event Center. Steyer remains non-committal about throwing his hat in the ring but was more than happy to speak exclusively with GV Wire about one of his favorite topics as of late, the performance of the current occupant of the office. The New York Times reported that Steyer placed anonymous LinkedIn ads for staff directors in New Hampshire, Nevada, and South Carolina. Those just happen to be states where Steyer has held or is scheduled to hold town hall events. “I haven’t made a decision to run. But we have...

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EX-JUDGES TO ICE: END IMMIGRATION ARRESTS AT COURTHOUSES

December 12, 2018 | AP News

BOSTON — Dozens of retired state and federal judges called Wednesday on U.S. immigration officials to stop making arrests at courthouses of people suspected of being in the country illegally, saying immigrants should be free to visit halls of justice without fearing they will be detained. Nearly 70 former judges from 23 states — including federal judges and state supreme court justices — said in a [letter](#) sent to Acting U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Director Ronald Vitiello that courthouse arrests are disrupting the criminal justice system.

“I just can’t imagine that we are closing our courtrooms to people who have a right to be there. And you really are closing them if you instill fear in people so they cannot come near a courtroom,” said Fernande R.V. Duffly, who was born in Indonesia to Dutch and Chinese parents and served as an associate justice on Massachusetts’ highest court until...

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AP Photo/Andrew Harnik, File



Photo: ANERA

SELF-HELP FOR PALESTINIANS IS FOCUS FOR NON-PROFIT, DESPITE U.S. CUTS

December 8, 2018 | Myles Barker

Charity organizations throughout the U.S. are struggling to provide ongoing assistance to Palestinians living in the Middle East following cuts in funding ordered by the Trump Administration.

"We have funding to continue doing Palestinian community infrastructure development work over the next few months, but some of that funding has been cut so we won't be able to do as much for as long as we had hoped," said the leader of one such aid organization. Sean Carroll is president of Anera (American Near East Refugee Aid), which helps refugees and others hurt by conflicts in the Middle East by **providing humanitarian and development assistance**. Carroll visited Fresno recently to thank local donors for their contributions to the international non-profit agency.

Anera is based out of Washington, D.C. It works on the ground with partners in West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon and Syria. "We mobilize resources for immediate emergency relief and for sustainable, long-term health, education, and economic development," Carroll said.

Improved Literacy and Life Expectancy
Since its inception in 1968, the organization has distributed half a billion dollars in aid. The U.S. government provided the lion's share of the funds, Carroll said. That help, he said, has resulted in higher literacy and better child and maternal health. It has also increased life expectancy by nearly 20 years for those living in the Middle East.

"We know that we have made an impact," Carroll said. However, because of U.S. aid cuts, Anera will have to find other sources of funding. Earlier this year, President Trump ordered **cuts of more than \$200 million in aid** for

Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza and a **\$25 million reduction in aid** for East Jerusalem hospitals.

Greenhouse Gardens Enhance Food Security
Carroll said Anera will continue seeking support to help bridge the gap. "We have a lot of sources," he said. "I think we can get people to step up to meet the gap, but it is a tough time right now." Skylar Lawrence said it is people like Granville Homes' president Darius Assemi that help Anera continue doing its work. (Assemi is the publisher of GV Wire.) "Darius and his family have been generous donors to Anera for over 10 years," said Lawrence, the director of donor development for Anera. "They primarily support our emergency response and agriculture work in Gaza."

Most recently, Assemi has supported Anera's Gaza Home Gardens and Food Security Enhancement Program. Lawrence said the programs help marginalized and food-insecure families in Gaza establish greenhouse gardens. "It gives them a way to put healthy food on the dinner table and earn extra income for urgent household needs," she said.

Expanding Footprint to Aid Refugees
Lebanon is also suffering, specifically in the Beqaa Valley near the Syrian border, Carroll said. Anera's work in Lebanon has been largely focused on the country's garbage crisis, due to an influx of new residents. Incompetence and corruption on the part of the government are partly to blame, as well, Carroll said. "Municipalities have literally been struggling with how to take care of garbage." To help, Anera has started solid waste management projects, which have not only abated the problem but also helped create a sense of camaraderie among the community, Carroll said...

"Darius and his family have been generous donors to Anera for over 10 years. They primarily support our emergency response and agriculture work in Gaza."
— Skylar Lawrence

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SENATE REBUKES SAUDI ARABIA OVER KHASHOGGI, YEMEN WAR

December 13, 2018 | AP News

WASHINGTON — Senators voted Thursday to recommend that the U.S. end its assistance to Saudi Arabia for the war in Yemen and put the blame for the death of journalist Jamal Khashoggi squarely on Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, in a direct challenge to both the longtime Middle East ally and President Donald Trump's handling of the relationship.

The succession of bipartisan votes came two months after the Saudi journalist's slaying at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul and after Trump persistently equivocated over who was responsible. U.S. intelligence officials concluded that bin

Salman must have at least known of the plot, but Trump has repeatedly praised the kingdom. Senators made clear where they put the blame. The resolution, passed by unanimous agreement, says the Senate believes the crown prince is "responsible for the murder" and calls for the Saudi Arabian government to "ensure appropriate accountability."

Senators voted 56-41 to recommend that the U.S. stop supporting the war in Yemen, a direct affront to the administration's war powers abilities. The floor action brought an unusual show of bipartisan resolve in the Senate over U.S. foreign policy, even amid an uncertain outcome as the...

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AP Photo/Mosa'ab Elshamy

NEARLY 85 PERCENT OF UN NATIONS BACK MIGRATION DEAL; NOT US

December 10, 2018 | AP News

MARRAKECH, Morocco — Defying fierce opposition from the United States and a few other nations, nearly 85 percent of the countries at the U.N. agreed Monday on a sweeping yet non-binding accord to ensure safe, orderly and humane migration. The debate over the Global Compact for Migration, the first of its kind, has proven to be a pivotal test of the U.N.-led effort to crack down on the often dangerous and illegal movements across borders that have turned people smuggling into a booming worldwide industry.

"Unregulated migration bears a terrible human cost: a cost in lives lost on perilous journeys across deserts, oceans and rivers; and a cost in lives ruined at the hands of smugglers, unscrupulous employers and other predators," U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told a migration conference in Marrakech, Morocco. "More than 60,000 migrants have died on the move since the year 2000," he said. "This is a source of collective shame." Migration affects hundreds of millions...

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PALESTINIANS OFFER NEW DETAILS OF ISRAEL'S BOTCHED GAZA RAID

December 13, 2018 | AP News

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip — The small town of Abassan in the Gaza Strip is a tough place to infiltrate — everyone knows everyone else and outsiders passing through quickly attract attention. So when strangers drove through town, suspicious Hamas security men stopped the van and questioned those inside. The answers didn't add up.

With their covers about to be blown, the Israeli undercover forces inside the vehicle opened fire, setting off a fierce battle that left eight people dead and triggered a brief but intense round of cross-border fighting. A month after the exchange, the raid remains clouded in mystery. The Israeli army has kept mum, while Hamas officials have declined to comment publicly as they investigate the incident. With each side protective of its secrets, and possibly keen to spread disinformation, the full story may never be known. But based on interviews with Hamas officials, a picture is emerging of a...

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