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WEEKLY DIGEST
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GV Wire Photo/ Jahz Tello

FURRY ORPHANS FIND LOVE AND SAFETY AT UNIQUE RIVER SANCTUARY

December 18, 2018 | GV Wire

Along the banks of the Kings River, just outside of Reedley, is California's largest no-kill sanctuary and adoption center for abandoned cats.

Cat House on the Kings founder Lynea Lattanzio estimates that more than 38,000 animals have been rescued through the organization's efforts in its 26 years of operation.

The 12-acre property is home to about 700 adult cats (and a few tolerant dogs) at any given time. Most come from the streets of Fresno, Kings, and Tulare counties.

Living Out Their Lives

Lattanzio describes it as "a place where an animal can come out, if it's not adoptable, and live out its life." But, providing a compassionate home for hundreds of abandoned and neglected cats that would otherwise face daily danger from injury, hunger, and disease is just part of the Cat House mission.

Promoting Responsible Pet Parents

The larger goal is to reduce the size of the Valley's unwanted pet population. Every animal that comes through Cat House on the Kings is spayed or neutered. In addition, the facility provides these vital medical services to the public at low cost to encourage responsible pet ownership.

"We've probably spayed and neutered a couple hundred thousand (cats)," Lattanzio said. Cat House on the Kings is committed to expanding on that already impressive achievement.

At the same time, the organization and its cadre of dedicated volunteers will continue to provide a safe haven for its large family of furry orphans that call Cat House on the Kings their home.

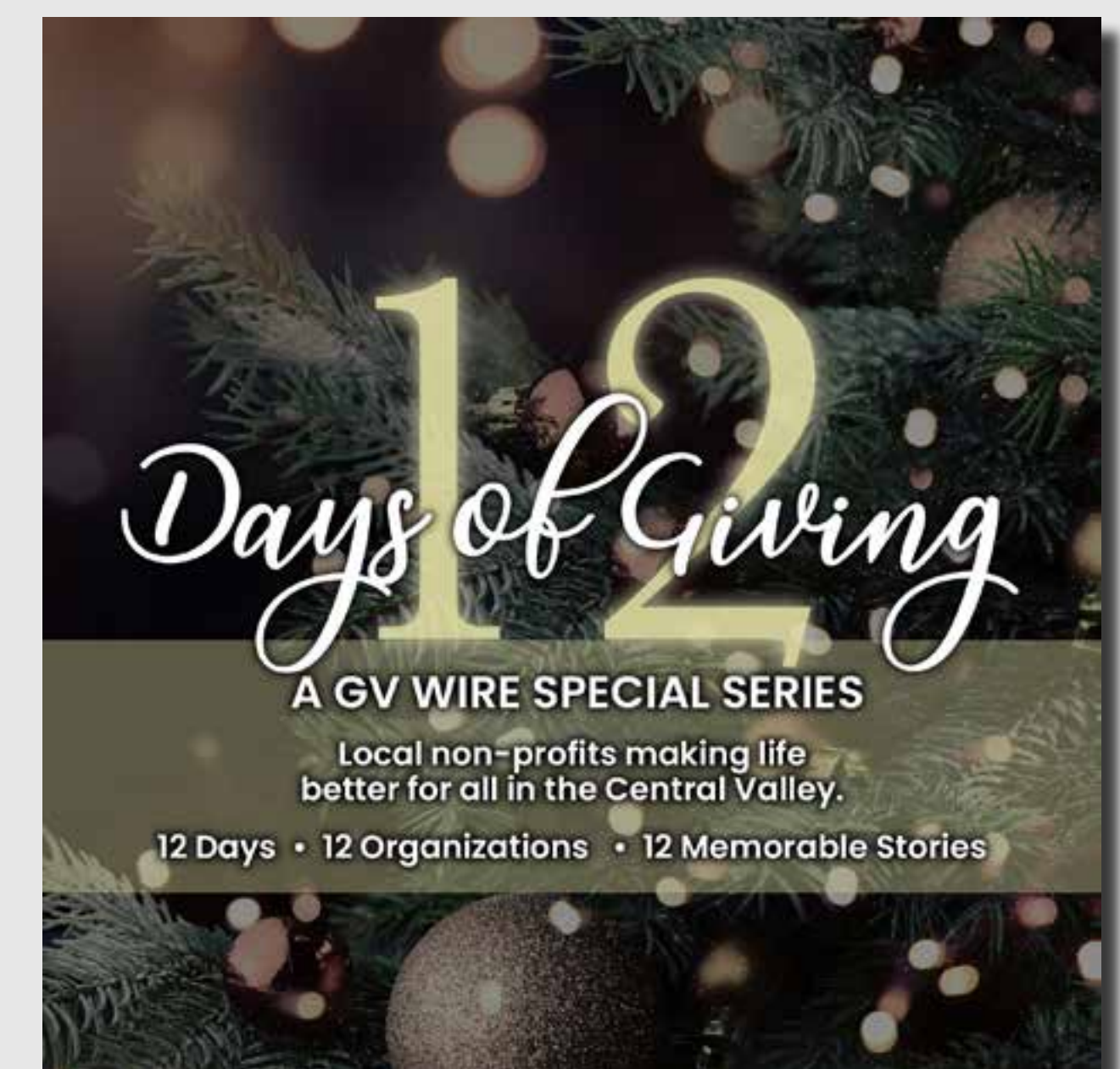
Visitors Can See for Themselves

Lattanzio encourages visitors to schedule an appointment to see for themselves what her organization has accomplished.

"People can come out here and bring the family, walk to the river and play with the cats," she said. "It turns into an experience."

Watch the 12 Days of Giving [video](#) by GV Wire's [Jahz Tello](#) to find out more about the services provided by Cat House on the Kings.

Click [here](#) to see all of our 12 Days of Giving stories.





December 19, 2018 | Bill McEwen

Here’s a message for doubters, dropouts and down-on-the-couch types diminishing the ranks of the once nationally recognized Red Wave. *These, my friends, are the good old’ days.*

Jeff Tedford’s Bulldogs ended all debate about being Fresno State’s greatest football team by **vanquishing Arizona State in the Las Vegas Bowl**. The victory gave the Bulldogs the school record for victories in a season with 12 — a tally that included two wins over Pac-12 opponents led by former NFL head coaches and a nail-biting overtime victory at arch-nemesis Boise State.

Honor the Past But Invest in the Future
Finally — thanks to Marcus McMaryion, Jeff Allison, George Helmuth, Ronnie Rivers, Tank Kelly, KeeSean Johnson, and many more players — Fresno State fans can embrace the pres-

ent and the future. For too long, Fresno State fans have been stuck in the past — often reliving the thrills of old or bemoaning the Mountain West Conference instead of investing in the here and now. Yes, it’s fun to remember the good times: Beating USC in the Freedom Bowl, the Carr brothers’ throwing 178 career touchdown passes, or destroying Oregon State — **ranked No. 1 in the nation by Sports Illustrated** — at home.

But our memories shouldn’t hold us captive. Or blind us to the possibilities ahead. Those imprisoned by the past should take note of Tedford. He pays tribute to the Fresno State coaches before him, especially Jim Sweeney and Pat Hill. He talks glowingly of the standout quarterbacks he developed in college, Aaron Rodgers among many. Tedford, however, doesn’t dwell on his previous success at Cal and only grudgingly talks about his time as a pretty good Fresno State quarterback...

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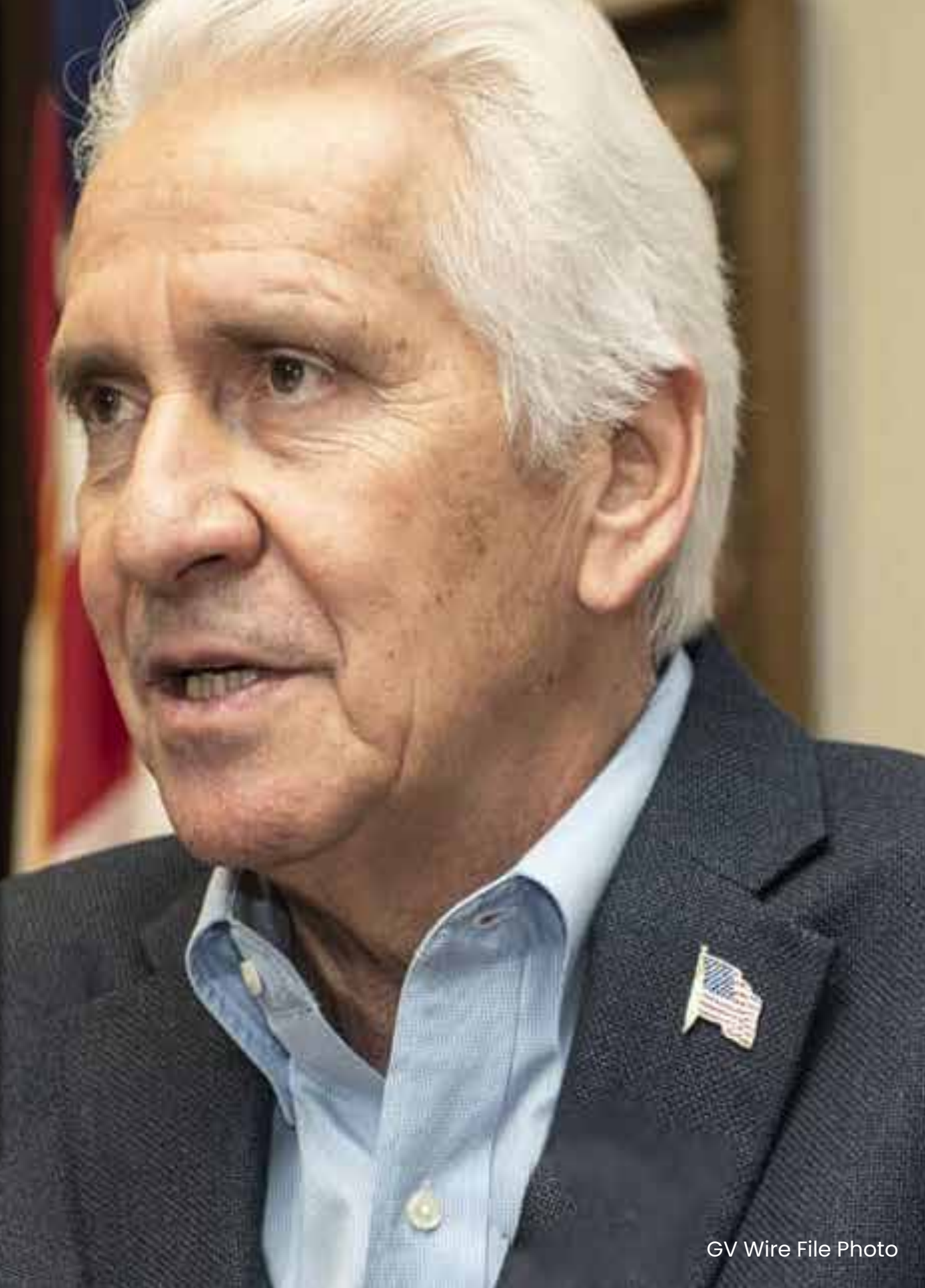
COSTA SAYS DEM TAKE-OVER OF CONGRESS GOOD FOR HIGH-SPEED RAIL

December 19, 2018 | David Taub

As Rep. Jim Costa prepares for the 116th Congress, he remains bullish on the future of high-speed rail in California. The Fresno Democrat has always supported the bullet train and **publicly taken on its critics**. The estimated \$77 billion dollar project is in the midst of construction in and around the Central Valley — and controversy up and down the state.

The work continues despite delays, cost overruns, and a blistering audit blasting the state’s management of the project. Nonetheless, Costa sees federal support for HSR growing as Democrats take the gavel in the House of Representatives next month. “I think there will be an opportunity to provide funding for high-speed rail corridors across the country. If that happened, California would benefit,” Costa said Tuesday of an impending infrastructure bill. Among other findings, **the state auditor’s report** released last month said the project faces billions in shortfalls, slower speeds than promised, and poor management of contracts. “There were some good points...

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CHAVEZ SAYS FRESNO GROWTH PLAN IS A DUD. WANTS FIXES IN 2019.

December 18, 2018 | Bill McEwen

Luis Chavez has seen enough of the 4-year-old Fresno General Plan to conclude that it’s not working nearly well enough. He sees residential housing **exploding in Clovis, Madera, and other surrounding cities**, and calculates the extra miles traveled daily by people who work in Fresno — and the vehicle emissions added to the Valley’s notoriously unhealthy air.

He wonders, too, why City Hall— with **Fresno’s unemployment rate** plunging and the country riding an economic boom — struggles to fund basic services such as public safety and parks, and why it seemingly takes eons to get a sidewalk repaired. Often a quiet voice and a bridge to compromise on the Fresno City Council, the southeast representative says that he will lead the charge in 2019 to amend the General Plan for the better — and to ensure that growth pays its way instead of straining city coffers. “This is going to be polarizing,” Chavez says. “It’s going to be controversial for some folks. There are going to be...

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GOV. BROWN TALKS HEALTH CARE, 4 TERMS IN OFFICE

December 19, 2018 | AP News

SACRAMENTO — California Gov. Jerry Brown predicted Tuesday that Republicans would face disastrous electoral consequences if a federal judge's ruling to strike down the Affordable Care Act holds.

"It will build such a backlash that the Democrats will not only overtake the Senate, they'll win the presidency and they'll win enough momentum, particularly on the issue of health care, it will be replaced with something even better," Brown said. The Democratic governor called

"It will build such a backlash that the Democrats will not only overtake the Senate, they'll win the presidency and they'll win enough momentum, particularly on the issue of health care, it will be replaced with something even better." — Gov. Jerry Brown

last week's decision by a Texas judge to strike down the entire law "a bump in the road." But he also said California would not be able to afford its Medicaid expansion if the federal government stops picking up most of the tab, as outlined under the health law. California Attorney

General Xavier Becerra is leading a coalition of states in defending the federal law signed by former President Barack Obama. The ruling does not immediately stop the law, and the U.S. Supreme Court has previously ruled to uphold it.

Preparing to Leave Office After Record Four Terms

Brown spoke about the health care law during an appearance at the Sacramento Press Club as he prepares to leave office on Jan. 7 after serving a record four terms. In a meandering question-and-answer session with reporters and Brown family biographer, Miriam Pawel, Brown reflected on his tenure, defended major infrastructure projects and talked about the difficulties of waging a presidential campaign.

Brown, 80, was elected in 1974 at age 36 and served for eight years, then elected again in 2011 for two more

terms. He also ran unsuccessfully for U.S. Senate in 1982, sought the presidency three times, headed the California Democratic Party, and served as mayor of Oakland and California attorney general.

Asked if it was a mistake to run for president three times, Brown responded with a simple "yes," then added, "one too many times." He declined to say which if any Californians he thinks could take on Trump in 2020 but said it's difficult to run a nationwide race from a home base of California. "You've got to be in the mix on the East Coast, that's still where the power is," he said.

Defending High-Speed Rail

Brown defended his plans to build a high-speed rail line between Los Angeles and San Francisco and to build two massive water tunnels to reorganize how water

is transported from Northern California to the drier south. Both projects are mired in environmental and other lawsuits and will not be completed before Brown leaves office.

The cost of high-speed rail is now estimated at \$77 billion and the state lacks the money to build a tunnel under the Pacheco Pass for a segment of the train from the Central Valley to San Francisco. Brown said Democrats in Congress should provide more money for the project if Washington passes an infrastructure spending bill as President Donald Trump has promised.

Brown plans to move to a ranch in Colusa County on old family property with his wife, Anne Gust Brown, when his tenure ends. In his characteristic style, Brown chafed when asked about his proudest accomplishment, saying he prefers to look ahead and keep...

"What am I proud of? That's something you can ask me on the ranch when I've been there a couple of years." — Gov. Jerry Brown

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IS DENHAM NEXT IN LINE FOR INTERIOR SECRETARY?

AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin

December 15, 2018 | David Taub

Congressman Jeff Denham (R-Turlock) is under consideration to be the next U.S. Secretary of the Interior, after the announcement that current jobholder Ryan Zinke is leaving at the end of the year.

Denham, who lost his re-election bid last month to Democrat Josh Harder, could replace Zinke, according to inside sources who asked not to be named because they are not cleared to speak on the issue. President Donald Trump tweeted this morning (Dec. 15) that Zinke would be leaving his post at the end of the year, and that his replacement would be announced at the end of the week. In his resig-

nation letter, obtained by The Associated Press, Zinke said “vicious and politically motivated attacks” against him had “created an unfortunate distraction” in fulfilling the agency’s mission. Zinke is leaving weeks before Democrats take control of the House, a shift in power that promises to sharpen the probes into his conduct.

His departure comes amid a staff shake-up as Trump heads into his third year in office facing increased legal exposure due to intensifying investigations into his campaign, business, foundation and administration. Zinke’s resignation letter, obtained from a Zinke aide on Saturday, cites what...

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David Royal/The Monterey County Herald via AP, File

REPORT RIPS EXPENSIVE DECISIONS IN CALIFORNIA WILDFIRE FIGHT

December 17, 2018 | AP News

LOS ANGELES — When a wildfire burned across Big Sur two years ago and threatened hundreds of homes scattered on the scenic hills, thousands of firefighters responded with overwhelming force, attacking flames from the air and ground. In the first week, the blaze destroyed 57 homes and killed a bulldozer operator, then moved into remote wilderness in the Los Padres National Forest. Yet for nearly three more months the attack barely let up.

The Soberanes Fire burned its way into the record books, costing \$262 million as the most expensive wildland firefight in U.S. history in what a new report calls an “extreme example of excessive, unaccountable, budget-busting suppression spending.” The report by Firefighters United for Safety, Ethics, and Ecology criticizes fire managers for not adapting their approach to the changing nature of the blaze. The non-profit group, which gets funding from the Leonard DiCaprio...

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ELON MUSK TO UNVEIL UNDERGROUND TUNNEL, TRANSPORT CARS

December 18, 2018 | AP News

LOS ANGELES — Tech entrepreneur Elon Musk is set to unveil an underground transportation tunnel on Tuesday that could move people faster than subways. Musk also plans to show off the autonomous cars that will carry people through the test tunnel, which runs about 2 miles under the streets of Hawthorne, California, Musk’s SpaceX headquarters. He’s also planning to unveil elevators he says will bring users’ own cars from street level to the tunnel.

Tuesday’s reveal comes almost two years to the day since Musk announced on Twitter that “traffic is driving me nuts” and he was “going to build a tunnel boring machine and just start digging.” “I am actually going to do this,” he added in response to initial skepticism. So began The Boring Company, tongue in cheek intentional. Since the announcement, Musk has revealed a handful of [photos](#) and [videos](#) of the tunnel’s progress. The tunnel, meant to be a “proof of concept,” is...

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Robyn Beck/Pool Photo via AP



AP Photo/Evan Vucci

TRUMP SAYS HE'S EAGER TO SIGN SWEEPING CRIMINAL JUSTICE BILL

December 19, 2018 | AP News

WASHINGTON — The Senate passed a sweeping criminal justice bill Tuesday that addresses concerns that the nation's war on drugs had led to the imprisonment of too many Americans for non-violent crimes without adequately preparing them for their return to society. Senate passage of **the bill** by a vote of 87-12 culminates years of negotiations and gives President Donald Trump a signature policy victory, with the outcome hailed by scores of conservative and liberal advocacy groups. The House is expected to pass the bill this week, sending it to the president's desk for his signature.

Boosts Prison Rehab Programs

The bill gives judges more discretion when sentencing some drug offenders and boosts prisoner rehabilitation efforts. It also reduces the life sentence for some drug offenders with three convictions, or "three strikes," to 25 years. Another provision would allow about 2,600 federal prisoners sentenced for crack cocaine offenses before August 2010 the opportunity to petition for a reduced penalty. "America is the greatest Country in the world and my job is to fight for ALL citizens, even those who have made mistakes," Trump tweeted moments after the vote.

"This will keep our communities safer, and provide hope and a second chance, to those who earn it. In addition to everything else, billions of dollars will be saved. I look forward to signing this into law!" Trump added. The vote also thrilled Democrats. Sen. Cory Booker, D-N.J., said the nation's prisons are full of Americans who are struggling with mental illness and addiction, and who are overwhelmingly poor. He said the nation's criminal justice system "feeds on certain communities and not on others," and said the bill represents a step toward

"healing" for those communities. "Let's make no mistake, this legislation, which is one small step, will affect thousands and thousands of lives," Booker said.

McConnell Caves to Trump's Wishes

When the bill appeared to have stalled in recent weeks, Sen. Charles Grassley, the Republican chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, pleaded with **Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell** to bring it up for a vote. With Trump's urging, McConnell eventually agreed, and voted for the bill as well. "The First Step Act takes lessons from history and from states — our laboratories of democracy — to reduce crime, save taxpayer dollars and strengthen faith and fairness in our criminal justice system," Grassley said.

Amendments by Southern Senators Rejected

The Senate turned back three amendments Tuesday from Republican senators Tom Cotton of Arkansas and John Kennedy of Louisiana, who said the bill endangered public safety. Supporters voiced concerns that passing any of the amendments would have sunk the bill. One amendment would have excluded more prisoners from participating in educational and training programs that allow them to earn credits. Those credits can then be used to gain an earlier release to a halfway house or home confinement to finish out their sentence.

Another amendment would have required that victims be notified before a prisoner gets that earlier release. The third would have required the Federal Bureau of Prisons to track and report the re-arrest rate for each prisoner who gets early release. "While the bill has marginally improved from earlier versions, I'm disappointed my amendments to exclude child molesters from early...

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TRUMP'S SAFETY PANEL TO REVOKE SCHOOL DISCIPLINE RULES

AP Photo/Evan Vucci

December 19, 2018 | AP News

The Trump administration on Tuesday moved to roll back an Obama-era policy that was meant to curb racial disparities in school discipline but that critics say left schools afraid to take action against potentially dangerous students.

The recommendation was among dozens issued in a new report by Trump's federal school safety commission, which was formed in response to a Feb. 14 school shooting in Parkland, Florida, that killed 17 students and staff members, and sparked a national debate over gun control. The panel was asked to study a range of options to bolster security at

America's schools, from the regulation of guns to the regulation of violent video games. Yet rather than suggest a series of sweeping changes, the commission issued 100 smaller suggestions that largely avoid strong stances on topics like gun control and whether schools should arm teachers.

"Our conclusions in this report do not impose one-size-fits-all solutions for everyone, everywhere," said Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, who led the commission. "The primary responsibility for the physical security of schools and the safety of their students naturally rests with states and local...

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AP File Photo

FED RAISES INTEREST RATES. WHAT WILL IT DO IN 2019?

December 19, 2018 | AP News

WASHINGTON — The Federal Reserve has raised its key interest rate for the fourth time this year to reflect the U.S. economy's continued strength but signaling that it expects to slow hikes next year. The quarter-point hike, to a range of 2.25 percent to 2.5 percent, lifted the Fed's benchmark rate to its highest point since 2008. The increase will mean higher borrowing costs for many consumers and businesses.

The Fed's move came despite President Donald Trump's attacks in recent weeks on its rate hikes and on Chairman Jerome Powell personally. The president has complained that the rate increases are threatening the economy. At a news conference Wednesday, Powell said Trump's tweets and statements would have no bearing on the Fed's policymaking. The statement the Fed issued Wednesday after its latest policy meeting says "some" further gradual rate increases...

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US HOMELESS COUNT UP SLIGHTLY, BUT DECLINES IN KEY CITIES

December 17, 2018 | AP News

A federal report released Monday provides a possible glimmer of hope for the homeless crisis that has gripped many cities up and down the West Coast. The number of people living on the streets in Los Angeles and San Diego, two epicenters of the homelessness crisis, fell this year, suggesting possible success in those cities' efforts to combat the problem.

Cities in California, Oregon and Washington have driven an overall spike in the number of homeless people nationwide in recent years. This year's count continued that trend, showing 552,800 people without homes across the country, up by about 2,000 from 2017, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's point-in-time tally. It was the second consecutive increase after seven straight years of declines. The number of people living in the streets, encampments or other unsheltered places was more than 194,000...

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WORLD

BILLIONS IN US FOREIGN AID PLEDGED TO HALT MIGRATION TO AMERICA

December 18, 2018 | AP News

MEXICO CITY — The United States pledged \$5.8 billion in aid and investment Tuesday for strengthening government and economic development in Central America, and another \$4.8 billion in development aid for southern Mexico. The U.S. aid aims to promote better security conditions and job opportunities as part of a regional plan to allow Central Americans and Mexicans

“The United States is committing \$5.8 billion through public and private investment to promote institutional reforms and development in the Northern Triangle,” a term that refers to Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador. — State Department

to remain in their countries and not have to emigrate.

The plan was announced in a joint U.S.-Mexican statement released by the State Department and read aloud by Mexican Foreign Relations Secretary Marcelo Ebrard in the Mexican capital. “In sum, I think this is good news, very good news for Mexico,” Ebrard said.

Mexico’s President Praises Aid Package

Newly inaugurated President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador waxed poetic about the plan to provide jobs so people won’t have to emigrate. “I have a dream that I want to see become a reality ... that nobody will want to go work in the United States anymore,” Lopez Obrador said at a morning news conference before the announcement. The combination of public and private investment for the stay-at-home effort doesn’t require congressional approval, unlike Trump’s signature project to stem illegal immigration — a border wall.

The U.S. State Department issued a simultaneous statement saying “The United States is committing \$5.8 billion through public and private investment to promote institutional reforms and development in the Northern Triangle,” a term that refers to Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador. Lopez Obrador’s administration has said it is also interested in agricultural, forestry and

tourism projects in southern Mexico, and the U.S. said it will contribute to those efforts.

Breakdown of \$4.8 Billion for Mexico

The U.S. Overseas Private Investment Corporation “is prepared to invest and mobilize \$2 billion in additional funds for projects in southern Mexico that are viable and attract private sector investment,” according to the statement. “This amount is in addition to the \$2.8 billion in projects for Mexico through OPIC’s current investment pipeline.” Ebrard said “The commitments established here signify more than doubling foreign investment in southern Mexico starting in 2019.”

Southern states like Chiapas and Oaxaca are home to many of Mexico’s poorest communities. Lopez Obrador, who took office Dec. 1, has sought to make development in that region a priority, including plans for a “Mayan train” stretching from touristy parts of the Yucatan Peninsula down to Chiapas.

Will Mexico Provide Anything in Return?

It was unclear if Mexico would give anything in return. A planned announcement about Mexico’s migration policy was postponed until Wednesday. The United States has reportedly wanted Mexico to allow migrants seeking asylum in the United States to remain in Mexico while their applications are processed. Ebrard had previously suggested that about \$25 billion in U.S. investment would be an appropriate figure for what Mexicans and Central Americans have dubbed “The Alliance for Prosperity” in the region.

“I have a dream that I want to see become a reality ... that nobody will want to go work in the United States anymore.” — Mexico President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador



TRUMP DOESN'T WANT YOU TO SEE THIS DOCUMENTARY ON SAUDI ARABIA

AP Photo/Evan Vucci

December 18, 2018 | AP News

President Donald Trump called Saudi Arabia a “spectacular ally” in November while fending off political heat from the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi. The president additionally cited a \$450 billion arms and economic development agreement between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia as a reason to maintain close ties with the Kingdom.

But Trump didn’t say a word about Saudi Arabia’s suppression of human rights, its worldwide funding of terrorism, its secret police, or its embrace of the extremist Wahhabi religion. Neither did he mention that the U.S. deal with the Saudis is actually much smaller than \$450 billion. If you are

not familiar with life in oil-rich Saudi Arabia or the fanatical views of its ruling monarchy, check out the Frontline documentary “Saudi Arabia Uncovered,” which first aired March 28, 2016, on PBS.

Saudi Arabia Uncovered is available on Netflix. Or you can view it at this ValleyPBS link.

The documentary reveals in graphic detail the murderous underbelly of the country.

VATICAN COMMITTEE: CHURCH CREDIBILITY AT RISK OVER SEX ABUSE

December 17, 2018 | AP News

VATICAN CITY — Organizers of an upcoming Vatican summit on sex abuse prevention are warning that the credibility of the Catholic Church is in jeopardy over the abuse scandal and are urging participants to meet with victims personally before coming to Rome. In a letter sent Tuesday to the presidents of bishops’ conferences worldwide, organizers said the church must develop a “comprehensive and communal response” to the crisis, and that the first step is “acknowledging the truth of what has happened.”

Pope Francis invited the church leaders to the Feb. 21-24 summit to respond to what has become the gravest threat to his papacy, as the abuse and cover-up scandal erupted in the U.S., Chile and elsewhere this year. In revealing the first details of the meeting, the Vatican said the summit would focus on three main areas: responsibility, accountability and transparency. That suggests that church leaders will confront not only the crime of priests who rape and molest minors, but...

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AP Photo/Gregorio Borgia

SAUDI ARABIA REJECTS US SENATE ‘INTERFERENCE’ IN KINGDOM

December 18, 2018 | AP News

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia — Saudi Arabia issued an unusually strong rebuke of the U.S. Senate on Monday, rejecting a bipartisan resolution that put the blame for the killing of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi squarely on the Saudi crown prince and describing it as interference in the kingdom’s affairs. It’s the latest sign of how the relationship between the royal court and Congress has deteriorated, more than two months after Khashoggi was killed and dismembered by Saudi agents inside the kingdom’s consulate in Istanbul. The assassins have been linked to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

U.S. Senators last Thursday passed the measure that blamed the prince for Khashoggi’s killing and called on Riyadh to “ensure appropriate accountability.” Senators also passed a separate measure calling for the end of U.S. aid to the Saudi-led war in Yemen. In a lengthy statement early Monday, Saudi...

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