



FRESNO HEALTH CARE ADVOCATE AMONG STATE'S WOMEN OF THE YEAR

March 5, 2019 | GV Wire

Fresno non-profit leader Davena Witcher, who is working to build a health center for underserved residents of Mendota, was recognized Monday as a California Woman of the Year honoree in ceremonies at the state Capitol.

Each year, the state Legislature recognizes one woman in each district from across the state for

"Davena Witcher is an exceptional woman who has dedicated her time to transform and save babies' lives." — State Sen.
Andreas Borgeas

serving their regional communities with distinction. Witcher, the Fresno-based Executive Director of AMOR – Alliance for Medical

Outreach & Relief, was selected for the honor by state Sen. Andreas Borgeas.

Established Hospital in Afghanistan

Witcher joined AMOR in 2008 and played a key role in developing the organization's cornerstone project, a 100-bed hospital in Kabul, Afghanistan, offering maternal and child services in the war-torn country. She now leads the effort to establish a health and neighborhood resource center in Mendota, California, which will offer primary care, dental, youth and family services to the rural communities of western Fresno County.

"Here in the 8th Senate District, we are incredibly fortunate to be surrounded by amazing people who do impressive things for our community and for the world, Borgeas said. "Davena Witcher is an exceptional woman who has dedicated her time to transform and save babies' lives."

Witcher has a bachelor's degree in nursing with a background in neonatal and transplant services. Under her leadership, AMOR has brought together numerous community service organizations and health partners to bridge service gaps in the Mendota area, which is impacted by highly concentrated poverty. The project is slated to break ground in May.

Joins Other Leading Women Honored by Legislators Witcher joined other local honorees selected by area legislators, including:

- Misty Her, Instructional Superintendent for Fresno Unified, named by Assemblyman Joaquin Arambula. Her was born in a POW camp in Laos and was 5 years old when her family came to the United States. As an adult, she became a pioneer in education, becoming the first vice principal of Hmong descent in Fresno Unified and then the first Hmong female principal in the United States. Today, she leads Fresno Unified's improvement efforts in implementing curriculum, staff development, evaluations, and student assessments.
- Whitney Bunker, a foster child advocate who founded City Without Orphans, selected by Assemblyman Jim Patterson. The organization raises awareness and helps find loving homes for children in the foster care system.
- Barbara Jean Hill, Girl Scout leader and educator, named by Sen. Melissa Hurtado. Hill has worked in education and corrections and was co-founder of a women's domestic violence shelter in Coalinga in 2003. She has also been recognized by the Girls Scouts organization as Leader of the Year.
- Sandy Sills, CEO of the Dinuba Chamber of Commerce, selected by Assemblyman Devon Mathis. Sills is chair of Dinuba's Economic Development Commission and volunteers with several non-profit organizations in her community.

Californians with National Profiles Named Also Also among the 2019 California Woman of the Year class were two recipients who are also well-known on the national level. Dr. Christine Blasey Ford was named Woman of the Year by Palo Alto Assemblyman Marc Berman. Last year, Ford gave testimony in a high-

Marc Berman. Last year, Ford gave testimony in a high ly-watched U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee hearing that she had been sexually assaulted by then U.S. Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh. Ford is a...

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March 1, 2019 | Myles Barker

Fresno Unified parents are exasperated by having to take time off from work in the middle of the day to pick up their kindergarteners at school. And a majority of trustees want to see the district fix the problem. Trustee Carol Mills said she understands their frustration, and offered a simple solution to the problem: extend after-school program hours. "We need to start after-school programs when kindergarten is out," Mills said. "You can't go and pick up your child when kindergarten is out if you are a working parent."

Thomas, Islas Back All-Day Kindergarten

Extending the district's after school-program hours is a great idea, Trustee Keshia Thomas said, but having kindergarteners stay in regular school longer has benefits as well. One of those benefits is helping the district close its achievement gap. "You will have longer-term benefits because they are getting the language they need all day," Thomas said. "Students will have significantly greater progress in language proficiency." Trustee Veva Islas said she is in favor of longer days for kindergarten students. However, she said the extra time they are in school

should be used for fun activities. "I think that at this age group, it might be a little taxing for them to have a longer day filled with academic curriculum," Islas said. "I want to extend it, but look at things like play and art for the extra time they are at school." Islas also suggested using the extra time for kindergartners to get some shut-eye. For Trustee Elizabeth Jonasson Rosas, having the best of both worlds by combining these approaches is the way to go. "In my opinion, a combination approach to make these opportunities available to more parents is beneficial," Jonasson Rosas said. "A lot of parents need that extra time for their students to be at school."

Start Programs Earlier

The district's elementary after-school programs start when students in grades 1 -6 get out. Although the kindergarteners get out at various times, it is always before their older peers. Mills said she endured the problem when her son was in kindergarten. It got so bad that she transferred him to another school that accommodated her needs. Board President Claudia Cazares said the situation wasn't ideal when her kids...

HURTADO'S BILL AIMS TO REDUCE SUICIDE IN CALI-FORNIA

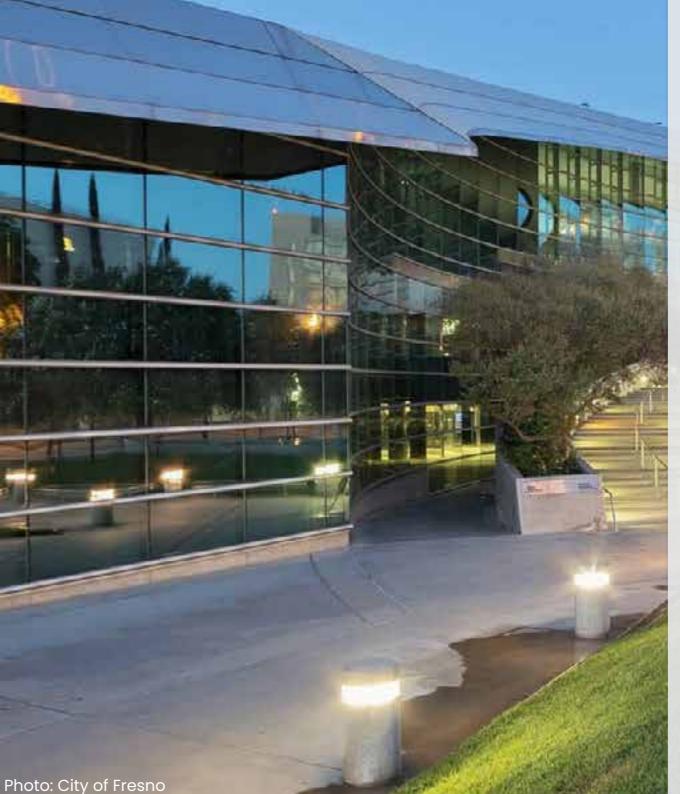
March 8, 2019 | Myles Barker

When Brandy Lidbeck was 10 years old, her mom killed herself. "It was incredibly devastating," said Lidbeck, the program coordinator for Survivors of Suicide Loss. For years, Lidbeck felt alone, ashamed and embarrassed. She constantly wondered if she bore any responsibility. "You are always questioning what if I did this or what if I never did that," Lidbeck said. "You are left in grief that a lot of people don't understand unless they've experienced it."

State Sen. Melissa Hurtado said she experienced firsthand the impact on families and communities while growing up in Sanger. That's why she's introduced Senate Bill 331 to require California counties to take more proactive steps to prevent suicides. "In a smaller town, when your neighbors are experiencing this kind of tragedy, it impacts the entire community," Hurtado said. "However, as we continue to discuss this issue on a broader scale, I realized that my experience isn't isolated." Suicide is the second leading cause of death among youth...

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NEXT! CANDIDATES LINE UP FOR NW FRESNO CITY COUNCIL SEAT

March 6, 2019 | David Taub

With Steve Brandau holding a commanding lead in the special election for Fresno County supervisor, attention now turns to his Fresno City Council seat. At least five candidates are planning to run in the subsequent special election to fulfill the remainder of Brandau's term. Brandau has a 5,731-vote lead over Nasreen Johnson. County election clerk Brandi Orth said approximately 5,800 absentee and provisional ballots still need to be counted.

The next update is Friday. However, late mail-in ballots can still arrive by Friday and be counted. Johnson's path to a theoretical supervisor runoff is mathematically unlikely. Brandau would need to lose approximately 79% of those ballots yet to count, and garner under 50% of any late-added ballots. Two candidates are already on the campaign trail. They filed to run in 2020 when Brandau would be termed out. Phil Arballo is a financial planner and has set up infrastructure to run. He...

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CALIFORNIA: TRUMP PLAN TO TAKE BACK RAIL MONEY 'DISASTROUS'

March 4, 2019 | AP News

SACRAMENTO — Leaders of California's high-speed rail project told the Trump administration Monday its plans to withhold or claw back \$3.5 billion in federal money for the project was "legally indefensible" and "disastrous policy."

Terminating the money "would cause massive disruption, dislocation, and waste, damaging the region and endangering the future of high-speed rail in California and elsewhere in the nation," Brian Kelly, the chief executive for the project, wrote in a letter to Jamie Rennert of the Federal Railroad Administration.

Kelly's letter is in response to a February threat by the U.S. Department of Transportation to withhold a \$929 million grant for the project and possibly take back \$2.5

Gov. Gavin Newsom has said he still intends to build the full line, but Trump used his comments to decry the project as a "failure."

billion in federal money the state has already spent.
Congress and the Obama administration allocated the money almost a decade ago for California to

build a high-speed rail line between Los Angeles and San Francisco. A segment of the train in the Central Valley is now under construction, and the \$3.5 billion is a key piece of its budget.

The threat was an escalation in California's ongoing feud with the Trump administration. It came after Gov. Gavin Newsom suggested changes to the project in his State of the State address. He said the project as currently planned would cost too much and take too long, and said he wanted to focus first on building a longer line in the Central Valley.

Newsom has since said he still intends to build the full line, but Trump used his comments to decry the project as a "failure." Newsom said Trump's call to take back the money was retaliation for the state's lawsuit against the

president's declaration of a national emergency at the U.S.-Mexico border. California must meet certain construction and environmental review deadlines by 2022

as part of its agreement with the federal government. Kelly said the state is meeting its obligations and that the vision of the project has not changed. He said the threat to withhold the roughly \$1 billion the state hasn't

California must meet certain construction and environmental review deadlines by 2022 as part of its agreement with the federal government. Kelly said the state is meeting its obligations and that the vision of the project has not changed.

yet received was not legally defensible, and that efforts to take back what's already been spent "disastrous."



March 5, 2019 | GV Wire and AP News

Pope Francis on Tuesday appointed a new bishop to lead the Roman Catholic Diocese of Fresno, the Most Rev. Joseph V. Brennan, who is one of five auxiliary bishops in the LA archdiocese. Brennan has served 39 years in the Los Angeles area, most recently as the episcopal victor of the San Fernando pastoral region. The appointment was announced by Los Angeles Archbishop Jose H. Gomez at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels.

The son of a San Fernando Valley grocer and the ninth of 10 children, Brennan will be installed as the sixth bishop of Fresno on May 2, succeeding the Most Rev. Armando X. Ochoa.

"Over the years, I have come to know Bishop Brennan as a man of great faith, extraordinary talent, and love of his call to serve God's people with the heart of Christ," Ochoa said in a statement. The Fresno diocese has 1.2 million Catholics.

Brennan acknowledged to The Fresno Bee following a news conference Tuesday in Fresno that the Catholic Church is struggling to recover from its sexual-abuse scandal. Under Ochoa, the diocese declined to make public the names of priests accused of sexual misconduct. "I bring a spirit of joy to the table in the midst of crisis, in the midst of pain," Brennan said after the news conference. Ochoa turned 75 last...

PUBLICIST: ACTOR LUKE PERRY HAS DIED AT 52 AFTER SUFFERING STROKE

March 4, 2019 | AP News

LOS ANGELES — Luke Perry, who gained instant heart-throb status as wealthy rebel Dylan McKay on "Beverly Hills, 90210," died Monday after suffering a massive stroke, his publicist said. He was 52. Perry was surrounded by family and friends when he died, publicist Arnold Robinson said. The actor had been hospitalized since last Wednesday, after a 911 call summoned medical help to his home in the Sherman Oaks section of Los Angeles.

"The family appreciates the outpouring of support and prayers that have been extended to Luke from around the world, and respectfully request privacy in this time of great mourning," Robinson said in a statement. Those at Perry's bedside included his children, Jake and Sophie; fiancée Wendy Madison Bauer; former wife, Minnie Sharp, and mother Ann Bennett. Perry had played construction company owner Fred Andrews, father of main character Archie Andrews...

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CALIFORNIA SCHOOL DISTRICT INVESTIGATES NAZI SALUTE PHOTOS

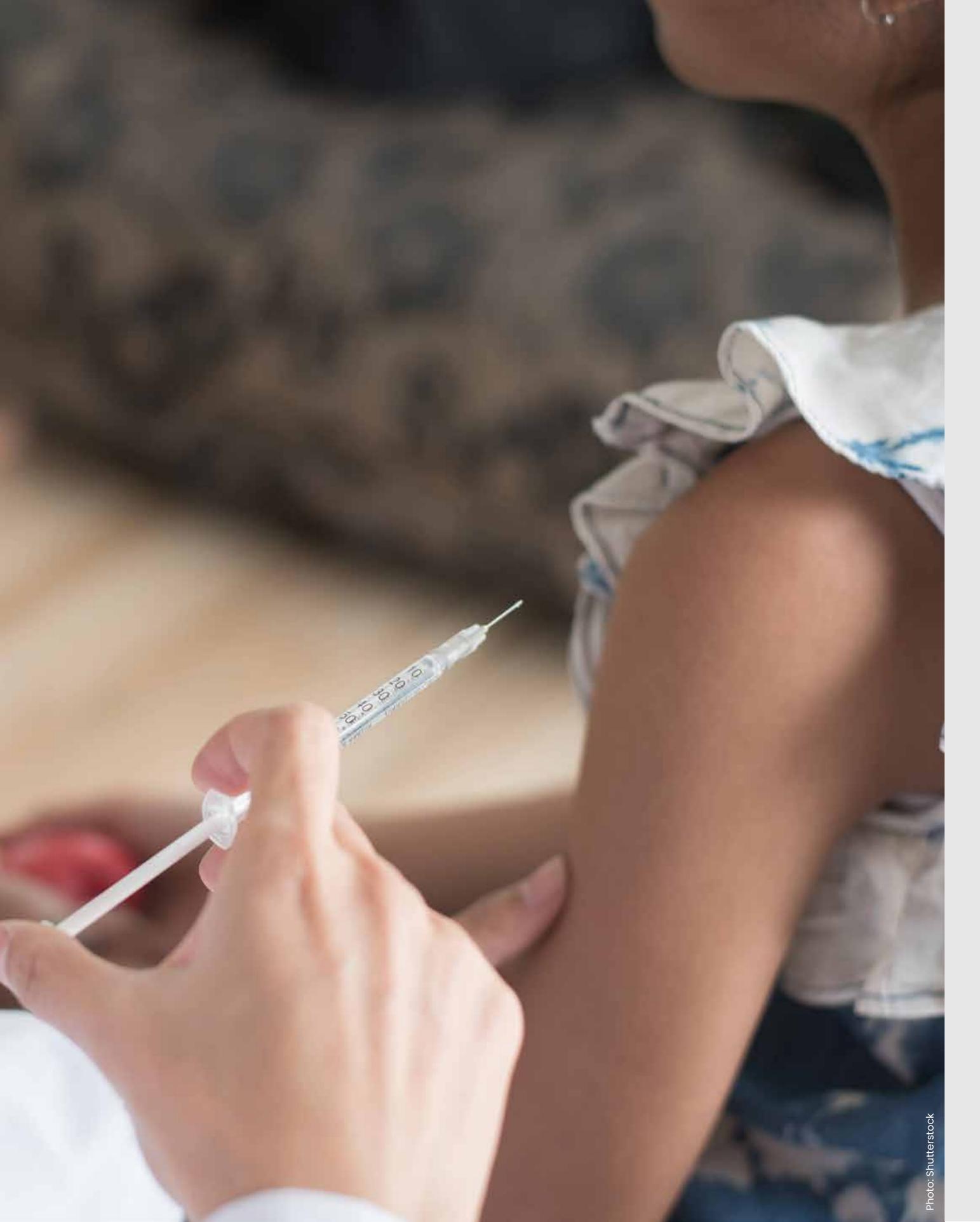
March 4, 2019 | AP News

COSTA MESA — A California school district is investigating social media photographs in which young people are seen giving Nazi salutes while standing around a table on which red cups form a swastika. The Newport-Mesa Unified School District was made aware Sunday of social media postings "involving some students who created inappropriate anti-Semitic symbols, and possible underage drinking," the district said Monday in a statement.

"While these actions did not occur on any school campus or school function, we condemn all acts of anti-Semitism and hate in all their forms," the district said. "We continue to gather information regarding the conduct of these students and work with law enforcement." School Board President Charlene Metoyer told The Orange County Register that several students were identified as attending Newport Harbor High School. "I'd like to see genuine remorse from the...

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BIG DATA SHOWS MEASLES VACCINE DOESN'T CAUSE AUTISM

March 6, 2019 | New York Times

At a time when measles outbreaks are mounting among clusters of unvaccinated children, notably in Washington state, New York and Texas, a new large study published this week found no association between the measles vaccine and autism — a reason often given by parents for rejecting inoculation. The new research confirms what has long been widely accepted in the scientific community, and it echoes findings of a 2002 study by members of the same team of scientists about the vaccine, known as MMR because it protects against measles, mumps, and rubella.

Resurgent Suspicion About Vaccines

But the findings come at a moment of resurging suspicion about vaccine safety, that has been promulgated at the far edges of the internet and on mainstream

In time, 6,517 children received a diagnosis of autism. These researchers found no greater proportional incidence of the diagnosis between the vaccinated and unvaccinated children. This conclusion echoes a finding in their 2002 study of 537,303 Danish children, published in The New England Journal of Medicine.

sites such as Amazon,
Facebook, and Pinterest.
Many of those companies have taken steps in recent weeks to remove anti-vaccine content, but Monday, the president of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Dr. Kyle E. Yasuda, wrote to the chief executives of Google,
Facebook, and Pinterest,

urging further action in "an urgent request to work together to combat the dangerous spread of vaccine misinformation online."

In emphatic language, the researchers, who followed 657,461 Danish children born between 1999 and 2010, stated in the Annals of Internal Medicine: "The study strongly supports that MMR vaccination does not increase the risk for autism, does not trigger autism in susceptible children, and is not associated with clustering of autism cases after vaccination." Denmark offers

a national vaccination program that is free and voluntary. At regular intervals, a team led by Dr. Anders Hviid, who is with the department of epidemiology research at Statens Serum Institut in Copenhagen, followed the children, 31,619 of whom remained unvaccinated. The researchers further broke out subgroups of children according to other inoculations, and whether they had siblings with autism.

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Measles More Common in US, Europe

Noting that measles outbreaks are becoming more commonplace in the United States as well as Europe, Hviid said: "U.S. researchers concluded that even a 5 percent reduction in vaccination coverage would triple measles cases, with significant health economic costs. A main reason that parents avoid or are concerned about childhood vaccinations has been the perceived link to autism." The results of his study, he said, offered both reassurance and reliable data that no such link exists.

In an editorial accompanying the study, Dr. Saad B. Omer, a public health researcher at Emory University, and Dr. Inci Yildirim at the Emory School of Medicine, pointed out that it has been nearly a decade since the small study that set off alarms about a possible link between the vaccine and autism has been refuted and retracted.

Yet resources are being continually poured into studies such as this latest one, to underscore the inaccuracy of that original misfire. "In an ideal world," they wrote, "vaccine safety research would be conducted only to...

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March 5, 2019 | AP News

WASHINGTON — Democrats launched a sweeping new probe of President Donald Trump, an aggressive investigation that threatens to shadow the president through the 2020 election season with potentially damaging inquiries into his White House, campaign and family businesses.

House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler said Monday his panel was beginning the probe into possible obstruction of justice, corruption and abuse of power and is sending document requests to 81 people linked to the president and his associates. The broad investigation could be

setting the stage for an impeachment effort, although Democratic leaders have pledged to investigate all avenues and review special counsel Robert Mueller's upcoming report before trying any drastic action.

Trump denounced the probe Tuesday, tweeting that Nadler and other Democrats "have gone stone cold CRAZY. 81 letter sent to innocent people to harass them. They won't get ANYTHING done for our Country!" Nadler said the document requests, with responses to most due by March 18, are a way to "begin building the public record." "Over the last...

AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin

US JUST SLOSHED THROUGH THE WETTEST WINTER ON RECORD

March 7, 2019 | AP News

WASHINGTON — Federal meteorologists say this winter was America's wettest on record. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration says that from December to February, what it calls winter, the Lower 48 states got 9.01 inches of rain and snow, which is 2.22 inches more than the 20th century normal. It surpassed the 1997-1998 winter by 0.02 inches. Record or almost record rain and snow fell in the West, Tennessee Valley and parts of the Great Lakes. Last month was the second wettest February on record.

Despite some bone-chilling outbreaks, winter in the Lower 48 was 1.2 degrees warmer than the 20th century average. February was 1.8 degrees cooler than normal. University of Illinois climate scientist Donald Wuebbles says increasing precipitation is a sign of climate change. Records date back to 1895...

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AP NEWSBREAK: US PLANS TO LIFT PROTECTIONS FOR GRAY WOLVES

March 6, 2019 | AP News

BILLINGS, Mont. — U.S. wildlife officials plan to lift protections for gray wolves across the Lower 48 states, a move certain to re-ignite the legal battle over a predator that's rebounding in some regions and running into conflicts with farmers and ranchers, an official told The Associated Press. Acting Interior Secretary David Bernhardt was expected to announce the proposal during a Wednesday speech before a wildlife conference in Denver, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Spokesman Gavin Shire said in an interview with the AP.

The decision to lift protections is based on gray wolves successfully recovering from widespread extermination last century, Shire said. He said further details would be made public during a formal announcement planned in coming days. Long despised by farmers and ranchers, wolves were shot, trapped and poisoned out of existence in most of the U.S. by the mid-20th century. They received endangered species...

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GUIDELINES ASK AGENTS TO TARGET SPANISH SPEAKERS AT BORDER

March 7, 2019 | AP News

SAN DIEGO — Border agents have been told to explicitly target Spanish speakers and migrants from Latin America in carrying out a Trump administration program requiring asylum seekers wait in Mexico, according to memos obtained by The Associated Press that reveal some inner workings of a top government priority to address the burgeoning number of Central Americans arriving in the country. The Trump administration launched the program in late January in what marks a potentially seismic shift on how the U.S. handles the cases of immigrants seeking asylum and fleeing persecution in their homeland.

The program initially applied only to those who turned themselves in at official border crossings. But a memo

The program is being implemented as border arrests soared to a 12-year-high and more than half of those stopped arrived as families, many of them asylum seekers who generally turn themselves in instead of trying to elude capture.

from a division chief of the Border Patrol's San Diego sector says it expanded Friday to include people who cross the border illegally. The guidance includes instruction about various groups of immigrants who are not

to be sent back to Mexico and instead go through the traditional asylum process in the U.S. immigration court system. They include pregnant women, LGBT migrants and people suffering medical issues. Authorities said previously that Mexican asylum seekers are excluded, as are children traveling alone. U.S. officials must check if the asylum seeker has any felony convictions and notify Mexico at least 12 hours before they are returned. Those who cross illegally must have come as single adults, though the administration is in talks with the Mexican government to include families.

Border Arrests Soared in February to a 12-Year-High The program is being implemented as border arrests soared in February to a 12-year-high and more than half of those stopped arrived as families, many of them asylum seekers who generally turn themselves in instead of trying to elude capture. Guatemala and Honduras have replaced Mexico as the top countries, a remarkable shift from only a few years ago.

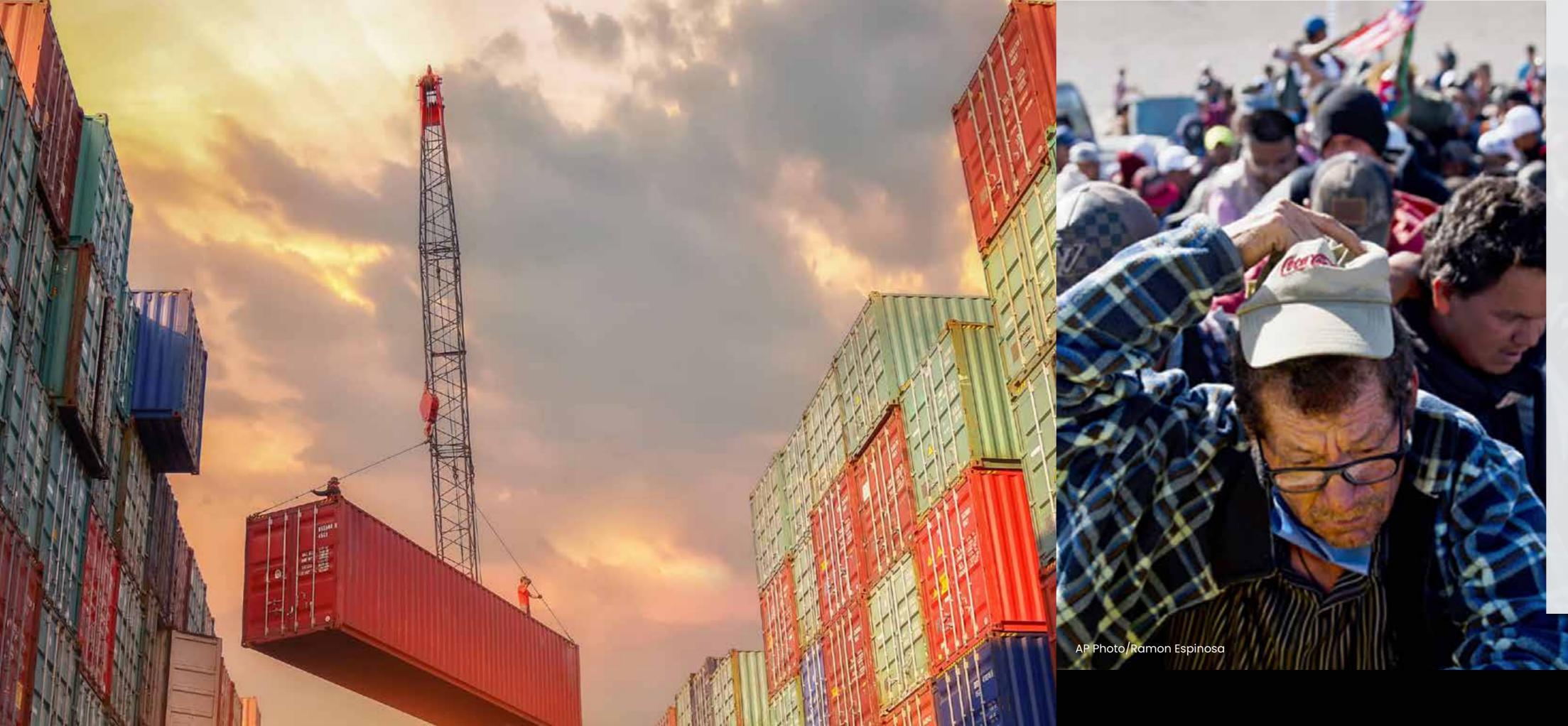
The instructions say Mexican officials insist that no more than 20 asylum seekers are returned each day from San Diego to Tijuana, Mexico, on Monday through Saturday, underscoring challenges that the U.S. faces in trying to quickly ramp up one of its top border enforcement priorities and most significant changes to the U.S. immigration system of Donald Trump's presidency. Authorities said Tuesday that more than 76,000 were stopped or apprehended at the Mexican border in February, more than double the same period last year. A memo on Tuesday to top Border Patrol officials in San Diego said the agency is under "pressures to utilize this program as much as we can." Asylum-seeking families are typically released from U.S. custody immediately and allowed to settle with family or friends while their cases wind through immigration courts, which often takes years. Critics say that amounts to "catch-and-release," which administration officials want to limit with the new Mexico program.

Some Critics Said It Was No Surprise

In a statement, the Department of Homeland Security described the program as "another tool available in the law" to respond to the record numbers of Central American migrants arriving at the border in recent months. The agency said the program is being carried out in a "thoughtful and deliberate manner" that protects vulnerable migrants and is done in collaboration with the Mexican government. Two U.S. officials who were not authorized to discuss the internal guidance and spoke on condition of anonymity confirmed contents of the memos obtained by the AP. Explicitly targeting Spanish speakers and Latin Americans had not been previously...

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GV Wire Weekly Digest 15



REPORT: GOVERNMENT KEPT TABS ON JOURNALISTS, 'INSTIGATORS'

March 7, 2019 | AP News

BARCELONA, Spain — A global battle between the U.S. government and Chinese tech company Huawei over allegations that it is a cybersecurity risk overshadowed the opening Monday of the world's biggest mobile industry trade fair.

Huawei has an outsize presence at MWC Barcelona, from its displays in three separate show halls down to its red sponsorship logo adorning visitor pass lanyards. The focus at this year's meeting is new 5G networks due to roll out in the coming years. But the dispute over Huawei, the world's biggest maker of networking gear, is casting a pall.

The United States government dispatched a big delegation to press its case with telecom executives and government officials that they should not use Huawei as a supplier over national security concerns. U.S. President Donald Trump's administration says the Chinese government could use Huawei equipment to snoop on the world's internet traffic...

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AMERICASTRADE DEFICIT AMERICASTRADE DEFICIT MARKET MARKET

March 6, 2019 | New York Times

WASHINGTON — America's trade deficit with the rest of the world rose to its highest level in history last year as the United States imported more goods than ever, including a record amount from China, ballooning the deficit to \$891.3 billion and delivering a setback to President Donald Trump's goal of narrowing that gap.

The increase was driven by some factors outside Trump's control, like a global economic slowdown and the relative strength of the U.S. dollar, both of which weakened overseas demand for U.S. goods. But the widening gap was also exacerbated by Trump's \$1.5 trillion tax cut, which has been

largely financed by government borrowing, and the trade war he escalated last year. The trade deficit is the difference between how much a country sells to its trading partners and how much it buys. Trump has long boasted that his trade policies would reduce that gap, which he views as a measure of whether partners like China and the European Union are taking advantage of the United States, a diagnosis that few economists share.

Instead, in a year when Trump imposed tariffs on steel, aluminum, washing machines, solar panels and a variety of Chinese goods, the trade deficit grew by 12.5 percent from...

LHAN OMAR'S CRITICISM RAISES QUESTION: IS AIPAC TOO POWERFUL?

March 5, 2019 | New York Times

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis' summit on preventing sexual abuse was never going to meet the expectations placed on it by victims groups, the media and ordinary Catholics outraged over a scandal that has harmed so many and compromised the church's moral authority so much.

Indeed, no sweeping new law was announced to punish bishops who cover up abuse. No files were released or global reporting requirement endorsed requiring priestly rapists to be reported to police. In his final speech to the summit Sunday, Pope Francis even fell back on the hierarchy's frequent complaint of unfair press coverage. But something has changed.

By inviting the leaders of Catholic bishops conferences and religious orders from around the world to a four-day tutorial on preventing sex abuse, Francis has made clear that they all are responsible for protecting the children in their care and...

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