



GWIRE

WEEKLY DIGEST
MARCH 15, 2019

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FRESNO RELIGIOUS LEADERS DENOUNCE NEW ZEALAND MOSQUE ATTACKS

March 13, 2019 | GV Wire

Fresno's religious community expressed sympathy and shock over the massacre of 49 Muslim parishioners attending prayer Friday in Christchurch, New Zealand. The interfaith community gathered at an Islamic community center for a news conference to show solidarity with the Muslim community in the wake of an international tragedy.

Shocked and Devastated

Thabet Anani, program director with My Deen, a Muslim community organization in Fresno, worried

"We stand together in times of good, and we stand together in times of pain. Today, we are here in a time of pain." — Reza Nekumanesh, ICCF

about the repercussions. "It felt like it could happen here at any moment. And, it did create worry and concern in my heart toward my community

as well," Anani said. Anani spoke while a dozen or so leaders representing a multitude of faiths stood behind him at My Deen in northeast Fresno. The hastily organized event was sponsored by the Council on American-Islamic Relations Sacramento Valley/Central California. Like many Muslim groups in the wake of the attacks in New Zealand, My Deen plans to increase security.

An Unwelcome Return Visit

Rabbi Rick Winer, spiritual leader at Temple Beth Israel in Fresno, wants to return spiritual support to his Muslim brothers and sisters. The Fresno religious community, including Muslim leaders, reached out to Winer last year after a massacre at a synagogue in Pittsburgh and alleged vandalism at Temple Beth Israel. "Unfortunately, it is time for us to be there for them. There are beautiful words in all of our religious traditions, but none of that is nearly as powerful as a hug," Winer said. "Several of us will be checking in with the local community in person because we know what it feels like. It feels good to have friends in times like this." He added that this is another unfortunate, but expected event. "I am not surprised, however, I am horrified. Our hearts go out to our friends

to the Muslim community," Winer said. Rev. Akiko Miyake-Stoner, with the United Japanese Christian Church in Clovis, noted how her parishioners felt the sting of racism in the past. "Our community has also known the pain of discrimination, and we stand in love and support and solidarity with all of you," she said.

Calling Out Complacency

Reza Nekumanesh of the Islamic Cultural Center of Fresno delivered perhaps the most impassioned plea. "We stand together in times of good, and we stand together in times of pain. Today, we are here in a time of pain," he said. He called out complacency. "They lived in a place where anti-immigrant rhetoric, where white supremacist rhetoric, where hateful rhetoric, racist rhetoric was the norm and OK'd ... When these things are allowed to persist, when they are allowed to exist, when they are allowed to shine in the public and we stand by and say or do nothing, this is the outcome," Nekumanesh said.

Work of the Devil

News of the slaughter in New Zealand shocked Pastor Jim Franklin of Cornerstone Church in Fresno, who was not at the news conference, but spoke with GV Wire beforehand. "This was unbelievable to see this attack on people of faith. There is never any excuse for this," Franklin said. "We got to renounce this in every way ... it's happening too much." Franklin said such actions are antithetical to the Christian faith. "I know this is not coming from God. I know this comes definitely from the enemy, the devil. And, that's from a spiritual standpoint — the darkness that has invaded so much of world. We have to repel that with the truth."



BLACK TEACHERS PROVIDE BIG BOOST TO AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS

Photo: Shutterstock

March 11, 2019 | Myles Barker

There has long been an academic achievement gap between white and black students. Historically, black students **have graduated from colleges and universities** at lower rates than their white peers. California, which is home to the fifth-largest black population in the country, is no exception. However, new research shows that having just one black teacher can make a **world of difference** and help black students thrive academically.

Black students randomly assigned to a black teacher are more likely to graduate from high school and more likely to enroll in college, according to **a study the National Bureau of Economic Research conducted**.

“Black teachers provide a crucial signal that leads black students to update their beliefs about the returns to effort and what educational outcomes are possible,” the study reported. The study also found that having a single black teacher can reduce black male students’ high school dropout rates by a third.

The California Challenges

The report comes at a time when California’s two public university systems are working to improve African American graduation rates and how quickly black students earn their degrees. In addition, Fresno area school districts are strengthening their efforts to attract African American teachers.

Nearly half of black students attending one of the 10 University of California campuses graduate in four years compared with close to 70 percent of white students, according to a study done by **The Campaign for College Opportunity**. At California State University’s 23 campuses, 9 percent of black students graduate in four years compared with 30 percent of white students.

All It Takes Is One

Jalen Wills, a recent Clovis High graduate, said he agrees with the report’s findings. “It is definitely important that a student gets at least one teacher of the same race because it is important that a student sees a person that has had similar...

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CAMPAIGN BEGINS TO RAISE FUNDS FOR FRESNO VETERANS MEMORIAL

March 13, 2019 | GV Wire

Fresno leaders are embarking on a public fundraising campaign to erect a memorial at City Hall for the 277 city residents who gave their lives in America’s wars. Fresno City Councilman Garry Bredefeld announced the plan Tuesday, and the council will vote Thursday on authorizing the memorial’s placement on city property. “I’ve spent more than half my life seeing every day the sacrifice veterans made on our behalf and on behalf of our nation,” said Bredefeld, a psychologist who treats veterans. “It is time for us to recognize the 277 Fresno veterans who gave their lives so we can live in freedom. ... With this memorial, we will honor the courage, service, and ultimate sacrifice, now and for generations to come.”

Total Cost Estimated at \$130,000

The monument is estimated to cost \$70,000. Another \$60,000 is needed to install and properly light it. Bredefeld, who is spearheading the project, said that he has talked to...

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Photo: City of Fresno

ARAMBULA PLEADS NOT GUILTY TO CHILD CRUELTY CHARGE

March 13, 2019 | David Taub

A not guilty plea was entered on behalf of Assemblyman Joaquin Arambula (D-Fresno) during an arraignment hearing that lasted less than 90 seconds Wednesday. Arambula did not appear in Fresno Superior Court to face a misdemeanor charge of cruelty to a child. The Fresno County District Attorney’s Office charged Arambula, a physician, for a Dec. 9 incident involving his 7-year-old daughter. He is accused of “inflicting unjustifiable physical pain or mental suffering.” After the hearing, Arambula’s attorneys spoke to the media.

“It’s disappointing,” attorney Michael Aed said. He said the district attorney’s office did not inform him about the filing decision until Tuesday morning. “We expect that the jury process will vindicate Dr. Arambula. This is not about politics. This about a human being, a father of three children, who has a reputation. He believes that he’s been mischaracterized by the public statements by law enforcement in this case. And, he...

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STATE

CENTRAL VALLEY RAISES ITS VOICE TO BOOST BUSINESS

March 12, 2019 | Randy Reed

The 2019 legislative session was just getting underway in Sacramento. The ink was barely dry on hundreds of proposed bills (many of them mere placeholders) drafted by Assembly members and senators to address the myriad issues facing those who live, work, and do business in the state of California.

In the Capitol building, dozens of company executives from Central California and Los Angeles crowded into meeting rooms to hear lawmakers, mostly Democrats, describe their top priorities for the year. The business leaders were not hesitant to share their priorities as well. Environmental regulation reforms, changes to prevailing wage rules, preventing the expansion of rent control, and more flexible zoning for housing are all on their wish list.

Business Wants Its Voice Heard

Legislators heard the executives out, though they sometimes pushed back against suggestions they start cutting taxes or significantly roll back longstanding regulations. But they were clearly listening. “I think it’s really important that we as legislators and policymakers understand the impacts of the measures that we pass on all of our community including, of course, our businesses,” said Assemblywoman

“We’re tired of just sort of beating our heads against the wall, industry by industry, company by company, city by city, region by region, and not getting the collective outcomes.”

— Tracy Hernandez, BizFed CEO

Laura Friedman following a morning question-and-answer session. This is exactly why the two Business Federation groups, BizFed for short, went to the Capitol. The organization, which was formed in Los Angeles over a decade ago, has now grown to include a Central Valley chapter. For this combined Legislative Day, more than 100 BizFed members from both regions descended on the Capitol to make the case for a more business-friendly California.

‘Give Us a Seat at the Table’

Cynthia Pollard is among them. She’s a Central Valley BizFed member representing Bakersfield’s Aera Energy Corporation. “Our company works from the philosophical approach that regulations are important,” Pollard said. “But we want regulations that are reasonable that are not unnecessarily burdensome either for taxpayers residents or businesses. So give us a seat at the table and we can help you formulate regulations that accomplish your policy goals, but that makes sense for all of us.”

“We need to be careful anytime we talk about reforming CEQA that we’re not undermining its key environmental goals.”

— State Sen. Scott Wiener (D - San Francisco)

Central Valley BizFed began in 2017 and now includes more than 50 companies and business associations from Madera to Kern counties. It’s modeled after the Los Angeles group, which says it represents more than 400,000 businesses across the Southern California region. “It was fairly radical 11 years ago when we said, you know, we’re tired of just sort of beating our heads against the wall, industry by industry, company by company, city by city, region by region, and not getting the collective outcomes,” said BizFed founding CEO Tracy Hernandez.

Taking a Page from Labor’s Playbook

The solution, she said, was to borrow from the playbook of an interest group that has grown its influence into a powerful political force. “What we looked at and recognized was organized labor had their act together,” Hernandez said. “What they did was get all the existing labor groups into one federation. Speak as one voice. Be loud, be clear, be thorough and see it through. And we said let’s do that for businesses.” BizFed’s joint Legislative Day demonstrated that principle in action by attracting top legislators, including powerful...

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NEWSOM'S ORDER IS REPRIEVE FOR FRESNO'S WORST MASS KILLER

Photo: YouTube

March 13, 2019 | GV Wire and AP News

California Gov. Gavin Newsom signed placing a moratorium on executions in the state Wednesday.

Here are some notable inmates out of the 737 people on the nation's largest death row:

— **Marcus D. Wesson.** Now 70 years old, Fresno's worst mass murderer horrified the nation and the world when he ordered the deaths of nine of his children, born of incest with his daughters and nieces, or with his wife on March 12, 2004. The victims all were shot through the eye and found in a bedroom filled with antique coffins. A jury convicted the re-

ligious fanatic on nine counts of first-degree murder on June 17, 2005. He additionally was found guilty on 14 counts of forcible rape and the sexual molestation of his daughters and nieces. Wesson has been on death row 13 years, 7 months.

—**Scott Peterson.** After he reported his pregnant wife missing on Christmas Eve 2002, police pursued nearly 10,000 tips, and looked at parolees and convicted sex offenders as possible suspects. Ultimately Scott Peterson was arrested and convicted of the first-degree murder of Laci Peterson and the second-degree murder of their unborn son, Conner, in Modesto, California. Now 46, he's housed at San Quentin...

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AP/Steven Senne

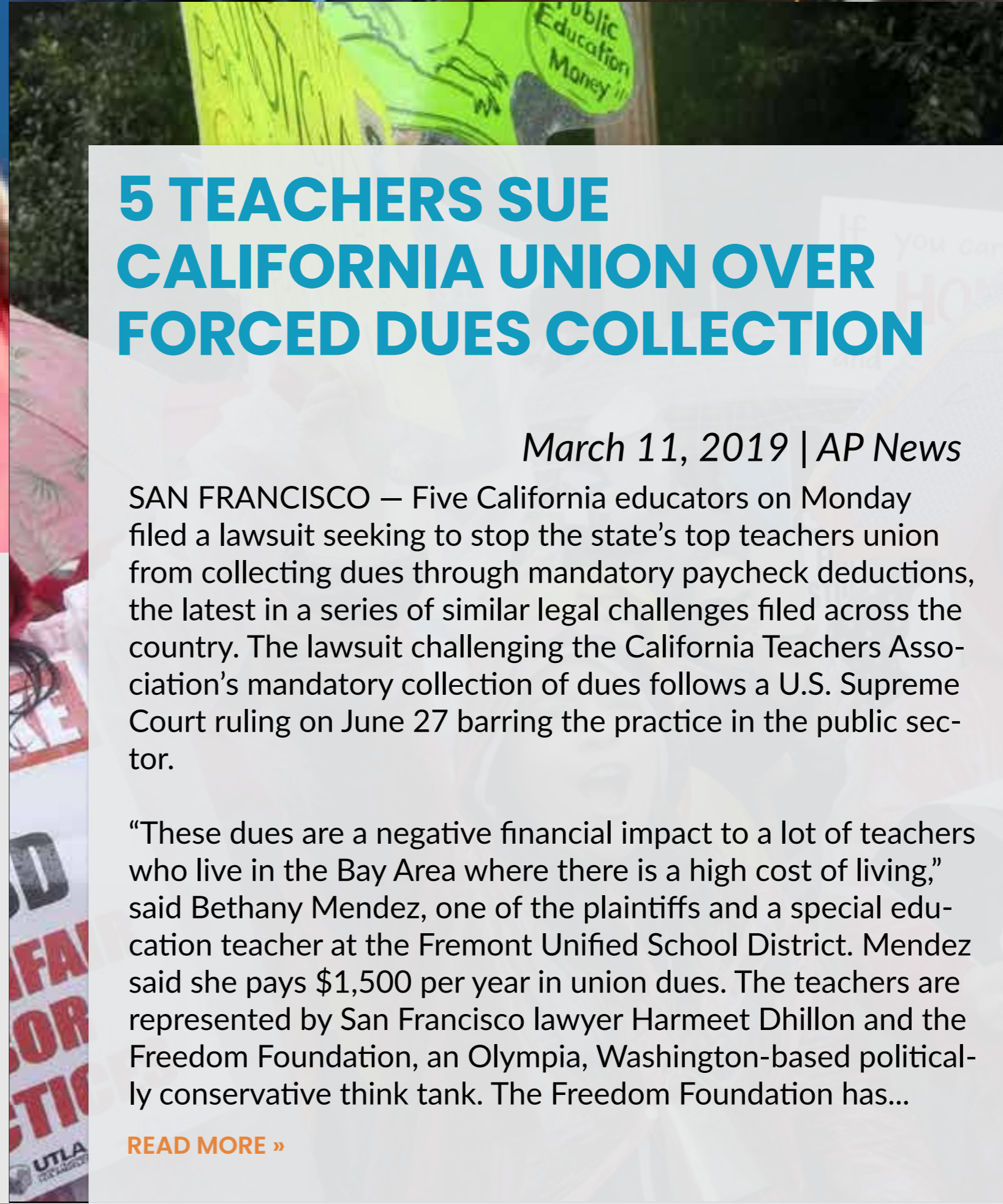
'HE'S SHADY': RINGLEADER IN COLLEGE SCANDAL IRRITATED OTHERS

March 14, 2019 | AP News

NEWPORT BEACH — For 25 years, William “Rick” Singer was in the business of helping high school students get into some of the country’s top colleges, gaining a reputation as a master salesman who got results, but also someone who came across as devious and way too slick, say some of those who knew him professionally.

High school guidance counselors in Sacramento, where Singer started his career as a college admissions consultant, used to trade “Rick stories” and warned each other, “He’s shady. Be careful,” according to one of them. Now, Singer, 58, is at the center of one of biggest college admissions scandals on record, accused of conspiring with wealthy parents to pay bribes to get their children into prestigious schools such as Yale, Stanford, Georgetown and UCLA. Some of those who encountered him professionally said they were not surprised to see Singer in the middle of the scheme. His popularity...

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5 TEACHERS SUE CALIFORNIA UNION OVER FORCED DUES COLLECTION

March 11, 2019 | AP News

SAN FRANCISCO — Five California educators on Monday filed a lawsuit seeking to stop the state’s top teachers union from collecting dues through mandatory paycheck deductions, the latest in a series of similar legal challenges filed across the country. The lawsuit challenging the California Teachers Association’s mandatory collection of dues follows a U.S. Supreme Court ruling on June 27 barring the practice in the public sector.

“These dues are a negative financial impact to a lot of teachers who live in the Bay Area where there is a high cost of living,” said Bethany Mendez, one of the plaintiffs and a special education teacher at the Fremont Unified School District. Mendez said she pays \$1,500 per year in union dues. The teachers are represented by San Francisco lawyer Harmeet Dhillon and the Freedom Foundation, an Olympia, Washington-based politically conservative think tank. The Freedom Foundation has...

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AP File Photo



Photo: Shutterstock

DEATHS FROM DRUGS AND SUICIDE SET U.S. RECORD

March 12, 2019 | New York Times

By Adeel Hassan

The number of deaths from alcohol, drugs, and suicide in 2017 hit the highest level since the collection of federal mortality data started in 1999, according to an analysis by two public health nonprofits, the Trust for America's Health and the Well Being Trust. To reach their conclusion, the two groups parsed the latest available data from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. These causes killed more than twice as many as they did in 1999.

Drugs, Booze, Suicide Claim 150,000 Americans

More than 150,000 Americans died from alcohol and drug-induced fatalities and suicide in 2017. Nearly a third — 47,173 — were suicides. “There are two crises

If you are having thoughts of suicide, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 (TALK) or go to [SpeakingOfSuicide.com/resources](https://www.speakingofsuicide.com/resources) for a list of additional resources.

unfolding in America right now,” said Dr. Benjamin Miller, chief policy officer for Well Being Trust and founding director of the Eugene S. Farley Jr. Health Policy Center in

Aurora, Colorado. “One is in health care, and one is in society.” Miller attributed the increasing disparities in health care and inequalities in income as crucial factors in the feelings of despair, loneliness and a lack of belonging that contributed to suicides among many Americans. The grim statistics are fueled by synthetic opioid deaths.

28,000 Deaths Tied to Opioids

Twenty years ago, less than 1,000 deaths a year were attributed to fentanyl and synthetic opioids. In 2017, more than 1,000 Americans died from synthetic opioid overdoses every two weeks, topping 28,000 for the year. Most of the increase was concentrated in the preceding five years, when such deaths rose tenfold and the opioid epidemic became the leading cause of death

for Americans under 55. West Virginia and New Mexico had the highest number of deaths, the analysis showed, with Mississippi and Texas the lowest. By region, the Northeast had the highest opioid death rates followed by the Midwest. The South's rate was nearly half that of the Northeast.

“The numbers are driven in no small way by pharmaceutical companies creating addicting drugs and clinicians inappropriately oversubscribing opioids,” said John Auerbach, president and chief executive of Trust for America's Health. Though doctors and drug companies have been taking steps to control opioid addictions, Auerbach said, patients who are addicted to prescription opioids often shift to synthetic ones, like fentanyl, which is 50 times more potent than heroin. Fentanyl has also snaked its way into other drugs like cocaine, Xanax and MDMA, widening the epidemic.

Gun Suicides Climb by 22%

Suicides by gun increased 22 percent over the last decade. Guns, which remain plentiful and accessible, were used in nearly half of the nation's 47,173 suicides in 2017, the analysis showed. Though most common with Caucasians, suicide by gun increased proportionally more among racial and ethnic minority groups, the study showed, especially among African-Americans and Latinos.

The rate among children and adolescents increased 16 percent. Suicides can be the result of trauma that goes unrecognized or unaddressed — the loss of a job, home or death of a loved one, Auerbach said. “Without the social cohesiveness and social support built within family,” he said, “people are experiencing trauma without what gave them resilience historically.” While state legislatures passed 69 gun control measures in 2018, the...

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BETO O'ROURKE WANTS TO BE YOUR FAVORITE GOP DEMOCRAT

March 14, 2019 | AP News

AUSTIN, Texas — Former Texas Democratic Rep. Beto O'Rourke jumped into the 2020 presidential race Thursday, shaking up the already packed field and pledging to win over voters from both major parties as he tries to translate his political celebrity into a formidable White House bid.

After months of ignoring states that vote early in the presidential nominating process, O'Rourke made his first-ever trip to Iowa — popping into a coffee shop in the town of Keokuk while many cable networks went live. He took questions about everything from his support of federal legalization of

marijuana to abortion rights to the possibility of a universal basic income — all while waving his arms and gesticulating. It was the kind of high-energy, off-the-cuff style that made him a sensation in Texas, but O'Rourke also was clear that he doesn't believe in strict immigration policies — drawing a policy distinction that could allow him to clash with President Donald Trump on the issue.

Trump, for his part, took note of O'Rourke's energetic gesticulation, on display as several cable TV networks aired O'Rourke's comments. "Well, I think he's got a lot of hand..

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TRUMP: US GROUNDING BOEING 737 MAX 8, 9 AFTER ETHIOPIA CRASH

March 13, 2019 | AP News

WASHINGTON — The U.S. is issuing an emergency order Wednesday grounding all Boeing 737 Max 8 and Max 9 aircraft "effective immediately," in the wake of the crash of an Ethiopian Airliner that killed 157 people, President Donald Trump said. Many nations had already barred the Boeing 737 Max 8 from its airspace, but until Trump's announcement, the Federal Aviation Administration had said that it didn't have any data to show the jets are unsafe.

Trump cited "new information" that had come to light in the ongoing investigation into incident. He did not elaborate. "All of those planes are grounded, effective immediately," Trump said during a scheduled briefing on border security. Trump said any airplane currently in the air will go to its destination and then be grounded. He added all airlines and affected pilots had been notified. Trump said the safety of the...

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CASH FROM NY, FEDS TESTS 100K RAPE KITS, LEADS TO 1K ARRESTS

March 12, 2019 | AP News

NEW YORK — Languishing evidence in over 100,000 sexual assault cases around the country has been sent for DNA testing with money from a New York prosecutor and federal authorities, spurring over 1,000 arrests and hundreds of convictions in three years, officials said Tuesday. It's estimated that another 155,000 or more sex assault evidence kits still await testing, and thousands of results have yet to be linked to suspects. Many who have been identified can't be prosecuted because of legal time limits and other factors.

Still, "we have begun to rectify what has been a tragic failure of government and law enforcement at all levels — a decades-long, systematic denial of equal rights for women in the justice system," Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus R. Vance Jr. said in a statement while releasing results of his \$38 million investment in testing outside his own turf. Law enforcement and lawmakers have faced growing calls in...

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MOSQUE SHOOTINGS KILL 49. WHITE RACIST CLAIMS RESPONSIBILITY.

March 15, 2019 | AP News

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand — At least 49 people were killed in mass shootings at two mosques full of worshippers attending Friday prayers in an attack broadcast in horrifying, live video by an immigrant-hating white supremacist wielding at least two assault rifles and a shotgun. One man was arrested and charged with murder, and two other armed suspects were taken into custody while police tried to determine what role they played. “It is clear that this can now only be described as a terrorist attack,” Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said, noting that many of the victims could be migrants or refugees. She pronounced it “one of New

"It is clear that this can now only be described as a terrorist attack." – Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern

relatively loose gun laws but few gun homicides and is so peaceful police officers rarely carry firearms. New Zealand is also generally considered to be welcoming to migrants and refugees. The gunman behind at least one of the mosque shootings left a 74-page manifesto that he posted on social media under the name Brenton Tarrant, identifying himself as a 28-year-old Australian and white nationalist who was out to avenge attacks in Europe perpetrated by Muslims.

None Had Been on Any Watch List

Using what may have been a helmet camera, he livestreamed to the world in graphic detail his rampage at Christchurch's Al Noor Mosque, where at least 41 people were killed as he sprayed them with bullets over and over, sometimes firing at victims he had already cut down. Several more worshippers were killed in an attack on second mosque in the city a short time later. At least 48 people were wounded, some critically, authorities said. Police did not immediately say whether the same person was responsible for both shootings. They did not identify those taken into custody and

gave no details about them except to say that none had been on any watch list. While there was no reason to believe there were any more suspects, the prime minister said the national threat level was raised from low to high. Police warned Muslims against going to a mosque anywhere in New Zealand. And Air New Zealand canceled several flights in and out of Christchurch. Police said the investigation extended 240 miles to the south, where homes in Dunedin were evacuated around a “location of interest.” They gave no details.

World leaders condemned the attacks and offered condolences. Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan and other Islamic leaders pointed to the bloodshed and other such attacks as evidence of rising hostility toward Muslims. "I blame these increasing terror attacks on the current Islamophobia post-9/11 where Islam & 1.3 bn Muslims have collectively been blamed for any act of terror by a Muslim," Khan tweeted.

Gunman Spends More Than Two Minutes Spraying Worshippers Gunfire

New Zealand's prime minister said that immigrants and refugees "have chosen to make New Zealand their home, and it is their home. They are us." As for the suspects, Ardern said, they harbor "extremist views that have absolutely no place in New Zealand." Witness Len Peneha said he saw a man dressed in black and wearing a helmet with some kind of device on top enter the Al Noor mosque and then heard dozens of shots, followed by people running out in terror.

Penaha, who lives next door, said the gunman ran out of the mosque, dropped what appeared to be a semi-automatic weapon in his driveway and fled. He said he then went into the mosque to try to help the victims. "I saw dead people everywhere. There were three in the hallway, at the door leading into the mosque, and people inside the mosque," he said...

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CNN SPECIAL REPORT

SAUDI ARABIA KINGDOM OF SECRETS

TONIGHT
8^P ET/PT

THESE ARE AMERICA'S
FRIENDS? CNN'S ZAKARIA
DIGS INTO SAUDI ARABIA.

Photo: CNN

March 12, 2019 | GV Wire

"Saudi Arabia's story is intertwined with ours: The closest ally of this strange desert kingdom has been America, the world's most open democracy," says Fareed Zakaria, the CNN global affairs host and Washington Post columnist.

"Why?" Zakaria explores the many answers to that question in the one-hour special "Saudi Arabia: Kingdom of Secrets" that premiered this month on CNN. Along the way, Zakaria examines the history of Saudi Arabia's influence on the United States, the Kingdom's rise in the Middle East, and the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

What is the Crown Prince's Real Goal?

Zakaria reminds viewers that just two years ago, the ascension of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, amidst a flurry of publicity surrounding images of seeming reforms, was cautiously regarded as a signal of modernity that could change perceptions of the enigmatic desert kingdom after the dark legacy of 9/11.

The Crown Prince stripped the religious police of much of their power, arrested some clerics, and began an aggressive campaign against corruption. Support for Prince...

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WONDER WOMAN TO THE RESCUE: GAL GADOT TAKES ON NETANYAHU

March 11, 2019 | AP News

JERUSALEM — Wonder Woman star Gal Gadot has come to the rescue of a fellow Israeli celebrity in a spat with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Gadot, who typically shies away from politics, is rallying behind Rotem Sela, one of Israel's top models and TV hosts, who drew fire from Netanyahu for criticizing his fearmongering election campaign against the country's Arab minority.

Sela's rebuke of Netanyahu, and her call for equality for all Israeli citizens in an Instagram post, prompted the prime minister to take to social media himself and lecture her that "Israel is the nation-state of the Jewish people, and of it alone." Gadot responded late Sunday with her own supportive post for Sela to her more than 28 million followers on Instagram: "Love thy neighbor as yourself. This isn't an issue of right or left. Jew or Arab. Secular or religious. It's an issue of dialogue," Gadot wrote. "Rotem, my sister, you're an inspiration to us all." Netanyahu, who is in a tight race for re-election...

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Xu Yu/Xinhua via AP

CARDINAL PELL SENT TO PRISON FOR ABUSING 2 BOYS IN AUSTRALIA

March 13, 2019 | AP News


MELBOURNE, Australia — The most senior Catholic convicted of child sex abuse was sentenced Wednesday to six years in prison for molesting two choirboys in an Australian cathedral in a crime the judge said showed "staggering arrogance." Cardinal George Pell must serve a minimum of 3 years and 8 months before he is eligible for parole, according to the judge's order. The five convictions against Pell carried a maximum possible sentence of 10 years each.

"In my view, your conduct was permeated by staggering arrogance," Victoria state County Court Chief Judge Peter Kidd said in handing down the sentence. Pope Francis' former finance minister was convicted by a unanimous jury verdict in December of orally raping a 13-year-old choirboy and indecently dealing with the boy and the boy's 13-year-old friend in the late 1990s, months after Pell became archbishop of Melbourne. A court order had suppressed media reporting...

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AP File Photo

A background image showing a police car with "POLICE" written on its side and a police officer in a high-visibility vest holding a rifle. A red and white "POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS" tape is stretched across the foreground. The license plate of the car is "JF0628".

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