



# GWIRE

WEEKLY DIGEST  
MAY 3, 2019

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# LOCAL

## IT TAKES GUTS AND SNOWPLOWS TO CLEAR YOSEMITE'S TIOGA ROAD

May 1, 2019 | GV Wire

Most years, Tioga Road through Yosemite opens in May or early June after the winter snow has melted away. Thanks to this winter's heavy snowpack, the road's opening could be delayed until after the June 21 start of summer.

Right now, Caltrans road crews are clearing snow piled 5-to-7-feet deep and dealing with hidden boulders and fallen trees.

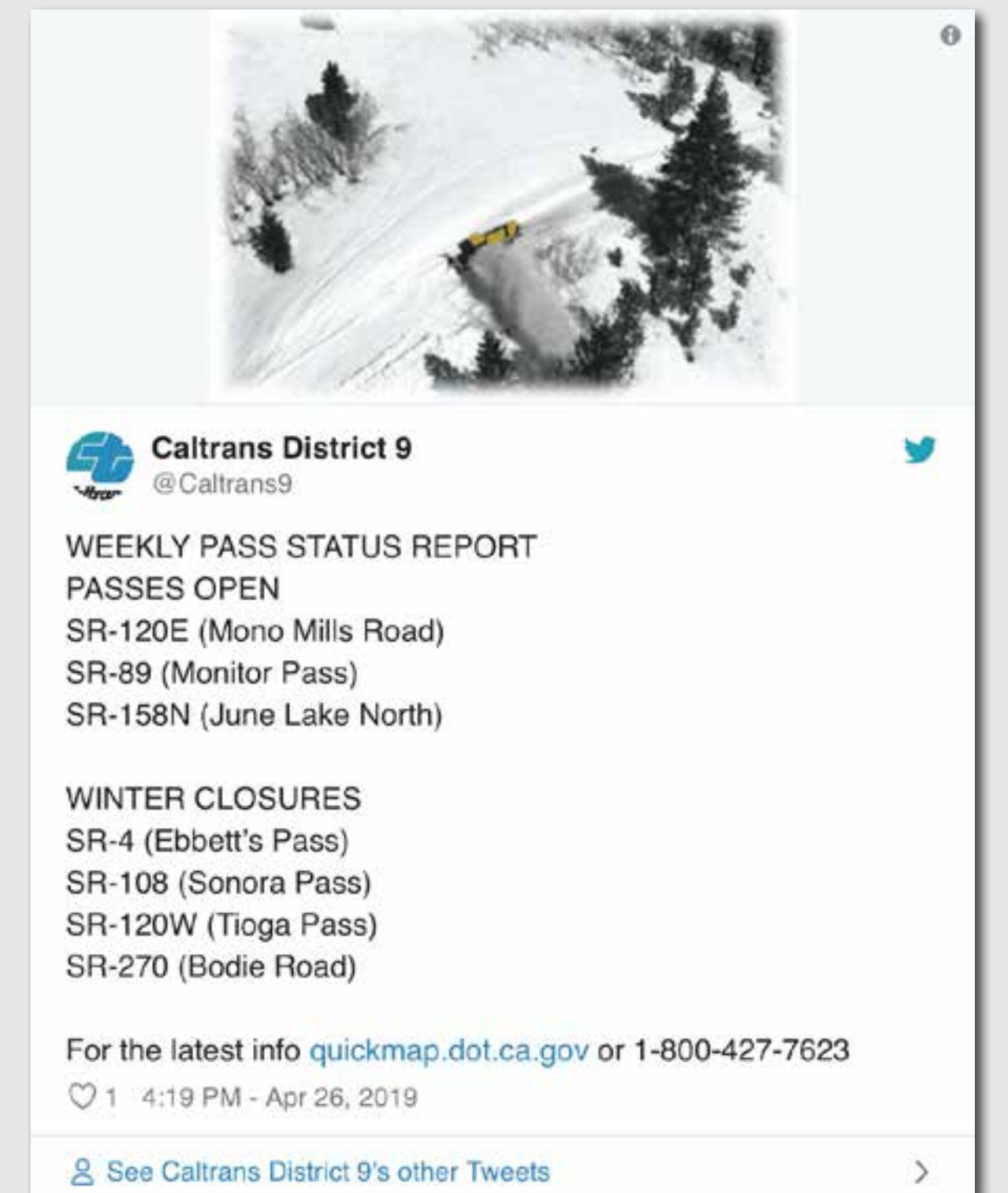
### Not for the Faint of Heart

The job requires skill and steady nerves. Snowplow operators face a gauntlet of challenges: the narrow road, potential avalanches, and sheer cliffs.

**Not for the Faint of Heart:** The job requires skill and steady nerves. Snowplow operators face a gauntlet of challenges: the narrow road, potential avalanches, and sheer cliffs.

When the snow is cleared on both sides of Tioga Pass (elevation 9,943 feet), the road repair crews will get to work.

*Watch the drone video here to see the challenges these crews face.*



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# COUNCIL UNANIMOUSLY RAISES A TOAST TO LIQUOR STORE CAP

GV Wire/David Taub

May 1, 2019 | David Taub

Tighter regulation is coming to Fresno's liquor stores. The Fresno City Council unanimously passed a resolution Wednesday to fix what supporters say is the oversaturation of off-sale alcohol dealers, especially in the central and south parts of the city. Championed by councilman Miguel Arias, the regulations would cap new licenses for liquor stores and require new businesses to purchase existing licenses in saturated areas.

Other proposals include limiting ads to 5% on store windows, increasing the distance between stores and schools from 600 feet to 1,000 feet, and participating in a city inspection program. Members of various youth groups fighting the spread of alcohol spoke in favor of the Responsible Neighborhood Market Act. A local trade group representing convenience store owners supported it, too. The council met in a special meeting at the request of Councilman Garry Bredefeld. He said he was unable to attend Thursday's regularly scheduled meeting.

## How to Enforce?

The biggest argument on the dais didn't involve free-market

ideals, but rather compelling businesses to abide by regulations. "We are not doing our job here with code enforcement," Bredefeld said. He wondered aloud about the effectiveness of new regulations if current ones aren't being enforced. Arias and resolution co-author Councilman Luis Chavez agreed.

"There was no priority for it. It's a priority now," Chavez said. While council members agreed that bumping up the city's code enforcement team is needed, council president Paul Caprioglio said it was a discussion better suited for budget time. Arias said he would like code enforcement placed under the jurisdiction of the city attorney, who is under the jurisdiction of the council.

## Business Group Supports

The local chapter of the American Petroleum and Convenience Store Association represents 300 businesses in the area. Some of its members attended the meeting in support. "Oversaturation is not going to help the community and the neighborhood," APCA president Andy Chhikara said. He also...

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## BIG SPECIAL ED DOLLARS COMING. CAN FUSD DELIVER BETTER RESULTS?

April 30, 2019 | Bill McEwen

As soon as he became superintendent in 2017, Bob Nelson publicly acknowledged serious, heart-breaking problems in Fresno Unified's often-criticized special education program. The criticism hasn't relented even as Nelson has become the social media face of the district's move to "inclusion" — that is, teaching special ed students, whenever possible, in general ed settings. **The question burning Nelson's ears:** When will you give special ed the financial support and clear-eyed attention it deserves?

## New Special Ed Budget Rolls Out Wednesday

The proposed 2019-20 special education budget includes \$10.2 million in ongoing new funding and \$1.4 million in one-time funds for portable classrooms. That doubles last year's \$5 million increase in new ongoing funding. Bottom line: The special ed budget this school year totaled \$138.3 million. Next year, it climbs to \$149.5 million. Moreover, this new money...

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## 2020 MAYORAL ELECTION NOW A RACE — JANZ FILES TO RUN

April 29, 2019 | David Taub

Andrew Janz ended speculation whether he is going to run for mayor of Fresno by filing his paperwork Friday afternoon. He becomes the second candidate in the 2020 mayoral race, joining incumbent Lee Brand. The primary is scheduled for March 3, 2020. Although the Fresno mayoral race is nonpartisan, Janz is a Democrat, and Brand is a Republican.

A prosecutor in the Fresno County District Attorney's office, Janz ran a high-profile campaign for Congress in 2018 against Devin Nunes. Although he did not win, Janz raised millions of dollars and earned a piece of the national spotlight. According to **Open Secrets**, he raised \$9 million, with \$22,000 cash on hand remaining. A recent **GV Wire poll on the mayoral race** shows Janz faring well, defeating Brand in a theoretical one-on-one contest. In a potential three-way race that includes Fresno Police Chief Jerry Dyer, the poll indicates that Dyer and Janz would make the November run-off. Brand took a shot at his...

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Facebook/Andrew Janz





# STATE

## HIGH SPEED RAIL COST JUMPS TO \$20.4B FOR CENTRAL VALLEY SEGMENT

May 1, 2019 | AP News

SACRAMENTO — The state's reworked plan for high-speed rail now estimates a \$20.4 billion price tag to complete 171 miles of track from Merced to Bakersfield by 2028, nearly a decade later than the initial estimate for a much longer Los Angeles-to-San Francisco line.

Rail officials issued an update to the delay-plagued project Wednesday, offering the first formal look at changes suggested in February by Gov. Gavin Newsom (D). Officials had been focused on building a longer segment from the Central Valley to San Francisco, but had not come up with enough money to tunnel through the mountains beneath Pacheco Pass.

### Completing Full Line Still Ultimate Goal

Now the focus has shifted to first building the shorter Central Valley line from Bakersfield through Fresno and on to Merced. The updated plan stresses that completing the full line is still the ultimate goal. "This policy recommendation is not a Central Valley line instead of Silicon Valley to Central Valley line," it reads. "It is a Central Valley line first." The report does not offer a revised analysis of the timeline and cost for the entire project, slated last year to cost \$77 billion and be completed by 2033. It's been more than a decade since California voters approved nearly \$10 billion in bond funding for the project and its cost has steadily climbed since.

### Segment Won't Bring Enough Revenue to Cover Expenses

The update also reveals a train through the Central Valley won't generate enough money to cover the operations and maintenance costs. That's a problem for the state, which is bound by the ballot measure to operate

the rail system without a subsidy. Russ Fong, the project's outgoing chief financial officer, said the state will hire an outside train operator to avoid running afoul of the bond measure. Such a move is likely to prompt lawsuits. Assemblyman Jim Patterson (R-Fresno) said he's lost trust in commitments by rail officials.

"They're making it up as they go along, that's what I've concluded," he said. "How can we have confidence in what they are going to do in the next 10 years when they have failed to meet every single benchmark over the last 10 years?" Newsom addressed the project's longstanding problems earlier this year. "Right now, there simply isn't a path to get from Sacramento to San Diego, let alone from San Francisco to LA. I wish there were," he said. "However, we do have the capacity to complete a high-speed rail link between Merced and Bakersfield."

**"Right now, there simply isn't a path to get from Sacramento to San Diego, let alone from San Francisco to LA. I wish there were."**  
— Gov. Gavin Newsom

### Trump Threatened to Revoke Federal Money

Money for the project comes from the bond, the federal government and revenue from the state's Cap and Trade program that charges polluters to emit greenhouse gases. The Trump administration has threatened to revoke the \$3.5 billion in federal money because of the project's delays, but a final decision has not been made. Rail officials say they have enough money to complete the line if the state keeps that federal money and if roughly \$4 billion left in bond money is released.

Brian Kelly, the project's chief executive officer, said the report demonstrates a clear path forward. "This approach will help us ultimately connect a revitalized Central Valley to the Bay Area and Southern California," he said in a statement...

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# FORECAST CALLS FOR BUSY WILDFIRE SEASON FOR WEST COAST STATES

AP File Photo

May 1, 2019 | AP News

SPOKANE, Wash. — Most of the country can expect a normal wildfire season but residents along the West Coast should be ready for another busy season, the National Inter-agency Fire Center said Wednesday.

In the past two years, California has experienced its deadliest and largest wildfires. The Camp Fire destroyed nearly 18,000 structures and killed more than 80 people. It was the nation’s worst death toll from a wildfire in a century.

**Related Story: PG&E Compensation Plan for Wildfire Victims Still Unclear**

The Boise, Idaho-based fire center said a heavy crop of grasses and fine fuels has developed across California and should elevate fire potential as it dries through the summer. The terms “normal” or “above normal” refer to a formula that involves drought, precipitation and fuel conditions in each region, projected on a 10-year average, said Jennifer Smith of the fire center.

The Pacific Northwest has entered a period of moderate drought, which could mean an early fire season in the Cascade Range and the Okanogan region. The potential for significant wildfires is above normal west of the Cascade crest...

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AP File Photo

# POWAY SYNAGOGUE JUST GOT MONEY TO IMPROVE SECURITY

May 2, 2019 | AP News

POWAY — A gunman fired his semi-automatic rifle at Jewish worshippers after walking through a Southern California synagogue’s front entrance — a spot that religious leaders determined last year needed improved security.

The Chabad of Poway synagogue applied for a federal grant to install gates and more secure doors to better protect that area. The \$150,000 was approved in September but only got awarded in late March. “Obviously we did not have a chance to start using the funds yet,” Rabbi Simcha Backman told The Associated Press.

Backman, who oversees security grants for the 207 Chabad institutions across California, declined to provide details on the planned security enhancements or to speculate whether they might have changed the outcome of Saturday’s attack...

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# BABY SEA LION RESCUED FROM BAY AREA HIGHWAY

April 24, 2019 | GV Wire

SAN FRANCISCO — A baby sea lion wandered onto a busy highway in South San Francisco Tuesday, stopping vehicles and alarming motorists before officials whisked it away.

**SFGATE reports** California Highway Patrol received the call around 8:30 a.m. Motorists had tried to shoo the sea lion to safer ground, with one man getting out of his car to herd the sea lion with a handkerchief.

Highway patrol succeeded in getting the animal into a patrol car, where video taken by KGO-TV shows the sea lion bobbing its head in the backseat.

The sea lion may have come from a nearby creek. It was taken to the Peninsula Humane Society and will be transported to the Marine Mammal Center in Sausalito, California. The sea lion will then move to a rehabilitation pool to recover...

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California Highway Patrol via AP





AP/Jacquelyn Martin

# PENTAGON CHIEF WONDER WHEN US-MEXICO BORDER MISSION TO END

May 2, 2019 | AP News

WASHINGTON — Acting Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan told Congress Wednesday that the military needs to return to its traditional missions, and he wants to know how much longer troops will be needed at the U.S.-Mexico border. In testimony to a House Appropriations subcommittee, Shanahan said he needs to determine how many more agents and other workers the

Department of Homeland Security must have to fulfill the border mission.

**“We’ve really been on this kind of a la carte approach where we’ve been asked to support DHS. We’re now in a position where we need to ask the question, how long will we be there?” — Acting Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan**

“We’ve really been on this kind of a la carte approach where we’ve been asked to support DHS,” he said, when asked how the deployment is affecting

military readiness. “We’re now in a position where we need to ask the question, how long will we be there?” He said active-duty troops “really need to get back to our primary missions.”

Shanahan’s comments come just days after the Pentagon said it would send 320 more active-duty troops to the border for tasks that put them in closer contact with migrants. Those duties include driving buses, serving food and providing medical and legal support. Members of Congress raised concerns about the border mission, saying it is costing a lot of money and there is no end in sight. Rep. Pete Visclosky, the subcommittee chairman, objected to the use of Defense Department money to pay for “the construction of an unauthorized wall” on the border.

**National Guard Troops Were Sent to the Border in April 2018**  
“We are here to appropriate funds needed for the military, not to make good on a campaign promise,” Visclosky, D-Ind., told Shanahan. The Pentagon submitted

a budget request that included more than \$7 billion in emergency money to help pay for President Donald Trump’s promised border wall. The department also has proposed shifting about \$1 billion in surplus personnel funds to a drug-fighting account in order to pay for the wall. The House Armed Services Committee sent a letter denying that request, but the committee lacks the legal authority to block the transfer. Lawmakers have threatened to enact legislation that would put more severe restrictions on the Defense Department’s ability to move money around in the budget.

National Guard troops were sent to the border in April 2018 to help provide security, surveillance and other support. In October, Trump ordered several thousand active-duty forces to the border to help construct wire barriers and support the Border Patrol.

Active-duty troops are limited in what they can do inside the United States. Federal law prohibits the use of those service members for law enforcement inside the country unless specifically authorized by Congress. As a result, Shanahan had to approve an amendment to the current policy on troops avoiding contact with migrants in order to fulfill the latest DHS request and allow them to serve meals and provide transportation.

The Pentagon said the troops were needed because Border Patrol stations are overwhelmed with migrants.

There are currently about 2,800 active-duty forces and about 2,000 National Guard operating in support of DHS at the border.

**“We are here to appropriate funds needed for the military, not to make good on a campaign promise.” — Rep. Pete Visclosky**





# POLL FINDS HUNGER FOR CHANGE TO US SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT

AP File Photo

May 2, 2019 | AP News

After more than two years of the Donald Trump presidency, Andrea Petrusky is ready for some fundamental changes in the way the United States government works. “Right now we’re being shown all of the loopholes, the president being able to do all the things that no president should,” said Petrusky, a 46-year-old elementary school teacher in a Seattle suburb.

“It’s time to update what he’s allowed to do and not do. I think it’s time to toddler-proof the presidency,” Petrusky is not alone in yearning for big changes to the way the United

States government is structured. A new survey by the University of Chicago Harris School for Public Policy and [The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#) shows that 54% of Americans think the system needs major changes and 12% believe it should be completely replaced. While 61% of Democrats like Petrusky want big changes, 52% of Republicans do as well.

About 1 in 10 Democrats and Republicans say they want the system completely replaced, while that view is about twice as common among independents. The AP-NORC poll finds...

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AP/Daniel Ochoa de Olza

## DEMOCRATS USING VETERANS BILL TO TRY TO BLOCK BORDER WALL

May 1, 2019 | AP News

WASHINGTON — Democrats controlling the House are trying to use a popular veterans measure to block President Donald Trump from transferring \$3.6 billion from military base construction to build his long-sought wall along the U.S.-Mexico border. Tuesday’s move faces certain opposition from Trump and a potential veto threat.

Lawmakers often try to use essential spending bills to reverse presidential moves, but they are often unsuccessful. Republicans tried in futility on numerous occasions to advance conservative policy “riders” on topics such as the Affordable Care Act, financial regulations and the environment. Measure Funds Veteran Benefits and Base Upgrades The \$108 billion measure funding veterans benefits and improvements to military bases is perhaps the most popular funding bill to annually advance through Congress...

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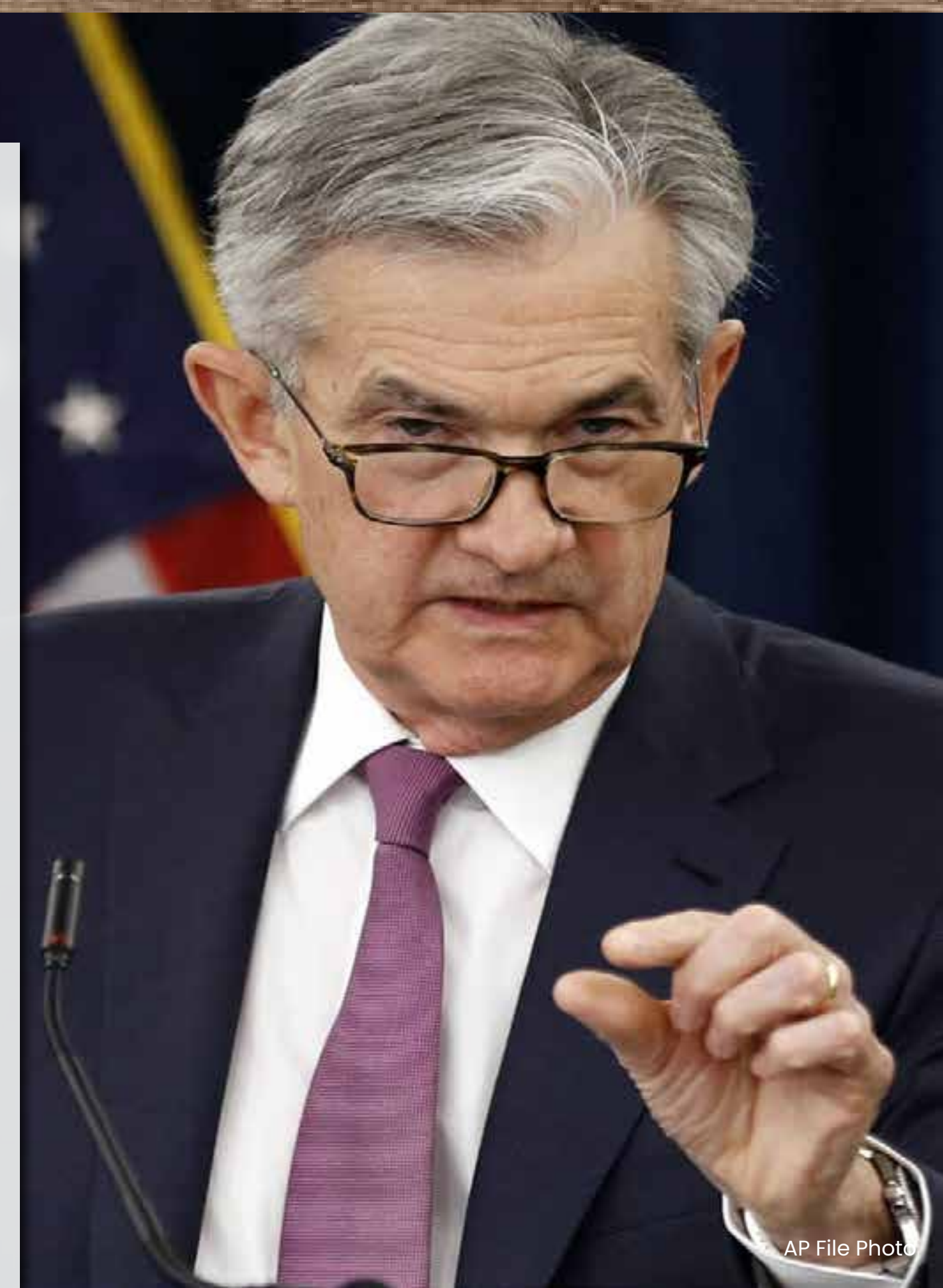
## FED SIGNALS NEITHER A RATE HIKE NOR A CUT IS LIKELY SOON

May 1, 2019 | AP News

WASHINGTON — The Federal Reserve left its key interest rate unchanged Wednesday and signaled that it’s unlikely to either raise or cut rates in coming months amid signs of renewed economic health but unusually low inflation. The Fed left its benchmark rate — which influences many consumer and business loans — in a range of 2.25% to 2.5%. Its low-rate policy has helped boost stock prices and supported a steadily growing economy.

A statement from the Fed spotlighted its continuing failure so far to lift annual inflation to at least its 2% target rate. The Fed’s preferred 12-month inflation barometer is running at about 1.5%. In pointing to persistently low inflation, the statement might have raised expectations that the Fed’s next rate change, whenever it happens, could be a rate cut. The Fed cuts rates when it’s trying to stimulate inflation or growth. But at a news conference later, Chairman Jerome...

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AP File Photo





AP/Ariana Cubillos

# WORLD

## AS NEW PROTESTS LOOM, WAS VENEZUELA OPPOSITION OUTPLAYED?

May 1, 2019 | AP News

CARACAS, Venezuela — Wary Venezuelans braced for another day of upheaval Wednesday as both the opposition and Nicolás Maduro's loyalists vowed to take to the streets, hoping to tip the balance in an agonizing power struggle that appeared to grow even more desperate after a so far unsuccessful attempt to spark a military uprising.

Johanns Davila, 61, walked his dog through a street in Venezuela's capital littered with shotgun shells, tear gas canisters and a charred motorcycle where skirmishes between the opposition and state security broke out a

**"Failing to arrest Mr. Guaidó would be perceived as an important sign for weakness from Mr. Maduro. But arresting Mr. Guaidó risks a strong counter-reaction from the U.S."** — Giancarlo Morelli, with the British analysis group Economist Intelligence Unit

day before." This is a war zone," he said. Opposition leader Juan Guaidó stunned the nation Tuesday when he appeared on a video at dawn surrounded by a few dozen national guardsmen urging troops to abandon Maduro and join those clamoring for the socialist leader's ouster. But while the call to action spurred protests around the nation, only a small group of soldiers left their commands. By the end of the day, it was clear that a quick end to the protracted standoff was still out of sight. A defiant Maduro, who had been absent throughout the tense day, emerged on state television late Tuesday night surrounded by his closest advisers, blasting the plot as a U.S.-backed coup attempt and vowing to take action.

"This cannot go unpunished," he said. The bold and risky move by 35-year-old lawmaker Guaidó, who is recognized by the U.S. and over 50 nations as Venezuela's rightful president, is likely to force Maduro to make a decision on whether to let his adversary remain a free man.

"This cannot go unpunished," he said. The bold and risky move by 35-year-old lawmaker Guaidó, who is recognized by the U.S. and over 50 nations as Venezuela's rightful president, is likely to force Maduro to make a decision on whether to let his adversary remain a free man.

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**Demonstrations Could Be a Sign of What's to Come**  
Giancarlo Morelli, with the British analysis group Economist Intelligence Unit, said Maduro faces peril whatever path he takes. "Failing to arrest Mr. Guaidó would be perceived as an important sign for weakness from Mr. Maduro," Morelli said. "But arresting Mr. Guaidó risks a strong counter-reaction from the U.S.," which has been ratcheting up sanctions.

With both sides looking to secure a grip on power, Wednesday's demonstrations could be a sign of what's to come. "We need to keep up the pressure," Guaidó said in a video released to his followers on social media. "We will be in the streets."

The upheaval marked the most serious threat yet to Maduro's contested rule. Tuesday's turmoil began with Guaidó's video, shot near the Carlota air base. In a surprise, Leopoldo Lopez, Guaidó's political mentor and the nation's most-prominent opposition activist, stood alongside him. He had been detained in 2014 for leading a previous round of anti-government unrest, and Lopez said he had been released from house arrest by security forces following an order from Guaidó. As the two opposition leaders coordinated actions from a highway overpass, troops loyal to Maduro fired tear gas from inside the adjacent air base.

**Maduro's Military Commanders Went on State Television to Proclaim Their Loyalty**

Amid the mayhem, several armored utility vehicles careened over a berm and drove at full speed into the crowd. Two demonstrators, lying on the ground with...

**U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo claimed Maduro had an airplane "on the tarmac" Tuesday morning and was ready to flee but was dissuaded by "Russians." Maduro ridiculed that idea in his TV speech, adding: "Mr. Pompeo, what lack of seriousness."**





## WIKILEAKS' ASSANGE GETS 50 WEEKS IN PRISON FOR JUMPING BAIL

April 24, 2019 | AP News

LONDON — A British judge sentenced WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange on Wednesday to 50 weeks in prison for skipping bail seven years ago and holing up in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London.

Judge Deborah Taylor appeared unimpressed by Assange's written apology and his lawyer's argument that he sought refuge in the embassy because of overwhelming fear of being taken from Sweden, where he faced sexual misconduct allegations, to the U.S. to face separate charges related to his WikiLeaks activity. "It is essential to the rule of law that nobody is above or beyond the reach of the law," Taylor said.

"Orders of the court are to be obeyed." The judge said it was hard to imagine a more serious version of the offense as she gave the 47-year-old hacker a sentence close to the maximum of a year in custody. She pointed out that he had not surrendered "willingly" and was only facing the court because the government of Ecuador withdrew its protection last month.

The Australian secret-spiller had lived in the South American country's London embassy since June 2012 to avoid extradition to Sweden, where he was wanted for questioning over rape and sexual assault allegations made by two women...

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AP/Rahmat Gul

## AFGHAN LEADER HOLDS COUNCIL TO SET AGENDA FOR TALIBAN TALKS

April 29, 2019 | AP News

KABUL, Afghanistan — Afghanistan's president opened a grand council on Monday of more than 3,200 Afghans seeking to agree on a common approach to peace talks with the Taliban, but the gathering may further aggravate divisions within the U.S.-backed government. President Ashraf Ghani hopes to showcase unity at the four-day meeting — known as Loya Jirga — that brings together politicians, tribal elders, many prominent figures and others.

But Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, his partner in a unity government brokered by the United States after a bitterly disputed election in 2014, heads a list of no-shows. Former President Hamid Karzai, who also is not attending, told The Associated Press on Monday that holding the council at this time risks "delaying and causing an impediment to the peace process." He also voiced concern that by sidelining his chief executive, Ghani could trigger suspicion that personal ambitions may have partly driven him to hold the Loya Jirga...

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## ENIGMATIC BELUGA WHALE OFF NORWAY SO TAME PEOPLE CAN PET IT

April 30, 2019 | AP News

COPENHAGEN, Denmark — A beluga whale found in Arctic Norway wearing a harness that suggests links to a military facility in Russia is so tame that residents can pet the mammal on its nose. The white whale **found** frolicking in the frigid harbor of Tufjord, a hamlet near Norway's northernmost point, has become "a huge attraction" for locals, one resident said Tuesday. The whale is so comfortable with people that it swims to the dock and retrieves plastic rings thrown into the sea.


"The whale is so tame that when you call it, it comes to you," said Linn Saether, adding the whale also reacts to yells and when humans splash their hands in the water. She said when she throws out a plastic ring, the Beluga whale brings it back to her as she sits on the dock. "It is a fantastic experience, but we also see it as a tragedy. We can see that it has been trained to bring back stuff that is thrown at sea," Saether...

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Joergen Ree Wiig/Norwegian Directorate of Fisheries Sea Surveillance Unit via AP





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