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WEEKLY DIGEST
NOVEMBER 22, 2019



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OR MONEY, HELP START THE
HEALING »**

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GV Wire/David Taub

LOCAL WHETHER IT'S GIVING BLOOD OR MONEY, HELP START THE HEALING

November 19, 2019 | Bill McEwen

In the face of tragedy, resilient cities pull together. Thus I ask every Fresno resident and business to do what they can to support the families of the victims in Sunday's mass shooting that killed four men and wounded six others. There are many

**"We are extremely grateful for the outpouring of support from our community and ask that folks keep coming out to continue to build our inventory."
— Ersilia Lacaze of the Central California Blood Center**

ways to help. One is giving blood. The mass shooting has created a shortage at the Central California Blood Center.

You can also use this link to locate the blood center branch or blood drive closest to you. You already are making a positive difference. "We've seen close to a 20% increase on donors coming out to our centers in the last two days," said Ersilia Lacaze, the blood center's director of marketing and community development. "That equates to several hundred units more than what we'd typically have. We are extremely grateful for the outpouring of support from our community and ask that folks keep coming out to continue to build our inventory."

GoFundMe Account Set Up

Fresno City Councilmembers Miguel Arias, Nelson Esparza, and Esmeralda Soria, along with Hmong community members, announced on Tuesday the creation of a victims' fund. Their goal initially was to raise \$130,000. That has been raised to \$500,000 based on the overwhelming needs.

"We want to make sure that the families' funeral bills and the medical bills of those in the hospital are covered," Arias said. The good news, Arias said, is that several Fresno businesses and individuals have made substantial pledges to get the ball roll-

ing. The Fresno Center, which was the lead organization in establishing the Hmong Resettlement Task Force, is overseeing the account. Those wishing to send checks can mail them to: The Fresno Center, 4879 E. Kings Canyon Road, Fresno 93727. Should you have questions, the number to call is 559 255-8395.

Donations can be made via the GoFundMe Fresno Mass Shooting Victims Fund online at this link.

Crime Stoppers Reward Fund

On Monday, Valley Crime Stoppers offered a \$5,000 cash reward leading to an arrest of one or both of the gunmen who turned a Sunday night football party into a massacre. The councilmembers want the reward to grow to at least \$50,000, and they're well on the way. All seven have committed \$5,000 from their district budgets, and Mayor Lee Brand is kicking in \$5,000, too. "We want to make sure that there's enough incentive to encourage tips that will lead to the apprehension of the perpetrators," Arias said.

Everyone Has a Role

Fresno Police Chief Andy Hall and his team have the big job of tracking down the shooters. When they are caught, Fresno County District Attorney Lisa Smitcamp and her office will take over.

Before, during and after, we're part of the mission, too. We must support our neighbors — the families of those who were killed and the injured survivors — and help them deal with the grief and the nightmares they'll endure. By helping them heal, we heal...

We must support our neighbors — the families of those who were killed and the injured survivors — and help them deal with the grief and the nightmares they'll endure. By helping them heal, we heal ourselves. We're all in this together.

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WILL NELSON RID FUSD OF THE INCOMPETENT AND THE INDIFFERENT?

Special to GV Wire

November 20, 2019 | Bill McEwen

Some of the photos accompanying this column make me wonder if Fresno Unified will ever get its act together. As you can see, the conditions in this special education storage room and teachers' office at Figarden Elementary School are appalling. Rat feces and urine are in the room. Weird stuff, possibly mold, is on the walls — likely the result of a leaking air-conditioning unit. And equipment, much of it outdated, is crammed and stacked in a manner that would give the fire marshal a heart attack.

Three traveling teachers — all orthopedic impairment specialists — work in this room. If you're thinking, thank goodness the students aren't in there, consider this: Rats have been having a picnic on some of the students' special chairs. The good news is, school custodians and teachers cleaned up the room Sat-

urday and removed the old equipment. They did so only after donning respirator masks. "But it still stinks in there," a teacher told me Wednesday afternoon. There's also good news from the other side of town. The district has cleaned up similar unsanitary conditions at a special-ed room at Sunnyside High School after being alerted by teachers at a board meeting.

Superintendent's Response

Not knowing that the room at Figarden had been recently sanitized, I showed the "before" pictures, which were taken Nov. 4, to Superintendent Bob Nelson on Wednesday morning. I wanted his reaction. I expected outrage, a vow to get to the bottom of the disgusting mess, and a promise to hold those in charge accountable. Instead, he responded in measured tones and with the frustration of a leader whose job is far less...

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THANKSGIVING STORM MAY BRING RAIN TO VALLEY

November 20, 2019 | GV Wire

Another storm system is heading toward the Valley, with forecasters predicting the possibility of showers just as the Thanksgiving holiday arrives.

[Weather.com](#) says [Fresno could see rain](#) starting next Wednesday and continuing through the weekend. High temperatures are expected to fall into the mid 50s with overnight lows down to 35 degrees.

Long range precipitation forecasts from the National Weather Service show the strongest possibility of rain beginning Thanksgiving Day. While the current storm system brought only a few sprinkles to the local area, Southern California dealt with intermittent downpours, lightning, hail, and snow in some places.

Still, a [winter storm warning](#) remains in effect through Thursday for elevations above Fresno, including Bass Lake, Shaver Lake...

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VALLEY BRED CALIFORNIA CHROME SLATED FOR SALE TO JAPAN

November 20, 2019 | GV Wire

California Chrome, the Valley bred racehorse that went on to become the [richest Kentucky Derby winner in history](#), appears headed to Japan. The thoroughbred's owners have announced an agreement to sell the 8-year old stallion to a Japanese stud farm, according to [Blood-Horse magazine](#). The sale is awaiting approval from the Japanese government.

Fan Favorite Was Two-Time Horse of the Year

California Chrome was foaled and raised, up to the age of two, at [Harris Farms in Coalinga](#). He became a local and national favorite as he progressed through his racing career, winning the 2014 Kentucky Derby and Preakness Stakes. However, he missed winning horse racing's fabled Triple Crown, finishing fourth at the Belmont Stakes. At the end of the 2014 season, California Chrome was named American Horse of the Year. He won the award again in 2016. California Chrome is owned by a syndicate, with a majority share held by Perry and Denise...

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STATE CALIFORNIA HALTS FRACKING PERMITS IN OIL PRODUCER CRACKDOWN

November 19, 2019 | AP News

SACRAMENTO — Gov. Gavin Newsom cracked down on oil producers Tuesday, halting approval of hundreds of fracking permits until independent scientists can review them and temporarily banning another drilling method that regulators believe is linked to one of the largest spills in state history. The state Division of Oil, Gas and Geothermal Resources announced it will not

“This transition cannot happen overnight; it must advance in a deliberate way to protect people, our environment and our economy.” — Gov. Gavin Newsom

approve new wells that use high-pressure steam to extract oil from underground. It’s the type of process Chevron uses at an oil field in the Central Valley that leaked more than 1.3 million gallons of oil and water this summer. That process is different from fracking, which uses water and other chemicals at high pressure to extract oil. California has 263 pending fracking permits but has not approved any of them since July. That’s when Newsom fired California’s top oil and gas regulator after learning the state had increased fracking permits by 35% since he took office in January, angering environmental groups. Newsom, a Democrat, called the crackdown necessary to strengthen the state’s oversight of oil and gas extraction “as we phase out our dependence on fossil fuels and focus on clean energy sources.”

“This transition cannot happen overnight; it must advance in a deliberate way to protect people, our environment and our economy,” Newsom said. California has been a leader on environmental issues, with Newsom’s Democratic predecessor, Jerry Brown, making climate change his signature effort. Brown was criticized for failing to ban fracking or oil drilling, arguing that the state needed to tackle demand before moving on to supply. The oil industry called Newsom’s changes “disappointing,” with the Western States Petroleum As-

sociation saying California’s environmental regulations already lead the world.

One of the Top Five States for Oil Production

“Every barrel delayed or not produced in this state will only increase imports from more costly foreign sources that do not share our environmental safety standards,” group president Catherine Reheis-Boyd. California is one of the top five states for oil production, producing more than 161 million barrels last year. Fracking occurs in some of the state’s largest oil fields, mostly in the Central Valley. The steam method is less prevalent but accounted for 8 million barrels of the state’s oil production in 2018, according to the Department of Conservation. But regulators believe it is linked to the oil spill at a Chevron well that began in May.

Related Story: Chevron Fined \$2.7M for Kern County Oil Leaks

It was the largest oil spill in California since 1990, when a tanker unleashed more than 400,000 gallons of crude oil off the coast of Huntington Beach. But despite its size, the Chevron spill has had minimal effects on the environment. The oil spilled into a dry creek bed, and the company cleaned it up before rains could wash it into fresh water. It also did not significantly harm wildlife, with just a “handful of birds” needing to be euthanized, according to Jason Marshall, chief deputy director of the California Department of Conservation. A second well at the oil field about 35 miles west of Bakersfield has been leaking intermittently since 2003. State officials ordered Chevron to stop the leak in April, and the company...

“These oil leaks cannot be the cost of doing business. There needs to be a clear trajectory to eliminate them. Not reduce them in number, but fully eliminate them.” — California Natural Resources Secretary Wade Crowfoot

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When the state of California licenses professionals, it is telling Californians that they can depend on licensees to perform their services competently, that miscreants will be disciplined and that in serious cases their licenses will be lifted.

DIVIDED US HOUSE COMMITTEE BACKS POT DECRIMINALIZATION

AP File

November 20, 2019 | AP News

LOS ANGELES — A divided U.S. House committee approved a proposal Wednesday to decriminalize and tax marijuana at the federal level, a vote that was alternately described as a momentous turning point in national cannabis policy or a hollow political gesture. The House Judiciary Committee approved the proposal 24-10 after more than two hours of debate.

It would reverse a longstanding federal prohibition by removing marijuana from the Controlled Substances Act, while allowing states to set their own rules on pot. The vote “marks a turning point for federal cannabis policy and is truly a sign

that prohibition’s days are numbered,” Aaron Smith, executive director of the National Cannabis Industry Association, said in a statement. Cannabis Trade Federation CEO Neal Levine called the vote “a historic step forward for cannabis policy reform.”

The vote comes at a time when most Americans live in states where marijuana is legal in some form, and committee members from both parties agreed that national cannabis policy lagged woefully behind changes at the state level. That divide has created a host of problems — loans and other bank services, for example, are hard to get for many...

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DOCUMENTS REVEAL SEXUAL ABUSE AT CHOWCHILLA PRISON

November 19, 2019 | AP News

A state prison inmate incarcerated at the Central California Women’s Facility was awaiting her group therapy session on Aug. 23, 2017. She stepped backward in her cell toward the door, where Correctional Officer Israel Trevino waited with waist restraints. As he attached the chains, he reached down with both of his hands “to grope and fondle her buttocks,” according to an internal investigation that led to Trevino’s firing.

The inmate, whose name was redacted in reports, angrily asked what he was doing. “You have a big butt,” Trevino replied. This wasn’t the only time Trevino sexually abused an inmate in his custody, according to the investigation’s findings. The former correctional officer, who was responsible for escorting inmates from their cells to their appointments and to the shower, tried to pull up a woman’s shirt and put his hand down her pants on an unspecified date in 2017...

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LATEST FIRE-PREVENTION POWER OUTAGE ENDING IN CALIFORNIA

November 21, 2019 | AP News

SAN FRANCISCO — Pacific Gas & Electric expected to restore power Thursday to virtually all the 120,000 people it intentionally blacked out to avoid the risk of catastrophic wildfires. The nation’s largest utility cut the juice on Wednesday in 10 Northern and central California counties because of concerns that dry, windy weather could throw debris into power lines, causing them to spark and ignite tinder-dry brush. PG&E equipment has caused some of California’s most destructive wildfires in recent years.

But the weather proved better than expected. Higher humidity, cloud cover and even some rain showers in the Sierra Nevada helped reduce the risk, said Scott Strenfel, PG&E’s principal meteorologist. “All of these factors kind of broke in all of our favor,” he said. That allowed PG&E to drastically reduce the number of customers it originally had planned to black out — about 375,000 — and even to begin restoring electricity...

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AP File



AP File

POLL: FACTS NOT MAJOR DRIVER OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

November 20, 2019 | AP News

WASHINGTON — At a time when many Americans say they're struggling to distinguish between fact and fiction, the country is broadly skeptical that facts underlie some of the basic mechanisms of democracy in the United States — from political campaigns to voting choices to the policy decisions made by elected officials.

A meager 9% of Americans believe that campaign messages are usually based on facts, according to a poll from [The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Opinion Research](#) and [USAFacts](#). Only 14% think policy decisions are often or always fact-based, or that Americans' voting decisions are rooted in facts. Reporting by journalists scores slightly better with the public, but not by much: the survey found that only about 2 in 10 Americans believe media reporting is often or always based on facts. Roughly half of Americans think reporting is sometimes based on fact, while about a third say journalists never rely on facts.

Coupled with a finding from the same survey that found many Americans have trouble verifying for themselves whether information is true, the poll paints a picture of a country deeply insecure about separating truth from falsehood. "Lately, it seems like there's been a war

A meager 9% of Americans believe that campaign messages are usually based on facts. Only 14% think policy decisions are often or always fact-based, or that Americans' voting decisions are rooted in facts.

versus facts and reality," said Skye Hamm-Oliver, a 44-year-old Democrat in Lewiston, Idaho. Will Barger, a 32-year-old police officer in rural Missouri, has become increasingly skeptical of the media and voters alike in the past few

years. A Republican and former regular viewer of Fox News who voted for President Trump in 2016, he's become disillusioned with the president and the conservative cable channel and now trusts only local media.

Overall, 53% of the Public Thinks Voters Sometimes Cast Ballots Based on Facts

He's even less trusting in government and policy decisions, keeping his faith mainly in law-enforcement agencies. And he's skeptical most voters are fact-driven. "It's more of a gut decision based on personal belief on a candidate," Barger said.

What matters to most, he said, is "if there's an R in front of the name or a D in front of the name." Overall, 53% of the public thinks voters sometimes cast ballots based on facts, while 32% say they rarely or never do.

Hamm-Oliver said voters in her home state of Idaho did so when they voted to approve a ballot measure last year that forced the state to accept the Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act, which had previously been rejected by the state's Republican-controlled legislature. "But I have friends who've gone to vote and said 'just because that's a fact, that isn't all there is,'" she said.

Joan McKee, a 65-year-old insurance broker who lives on the southern New Jersey shore and leans Democratic, said she thinks most decisions involving policy and elections rely only slightly more — at best — on fact than opinion. She says even the public policies of people she supports, including former President Barack Obama, were partly based on ideology over facts. "They may take the facts and spin them to do whatever they want," said McKee, arguing there are always choices in policy that are made based on core values. "I think it's pretty much always been like this." McKee's view is widespread, with 55% of Americans saying policy decisions are sometimes based on fact while 3 in 10 think they rarely are. Republicans are more skeptical...

"If government decision makers aren't looking at government data, then our whole process is flawed. You have to look at the data that you have." — former Microsoft chief executive and USAFacts founder Steve Ballmer

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AP FACT CHECK: NUNES ASSERTS A BIDEN CRIME THAT WASN'T

AP File

November 19, 2019 | AP News

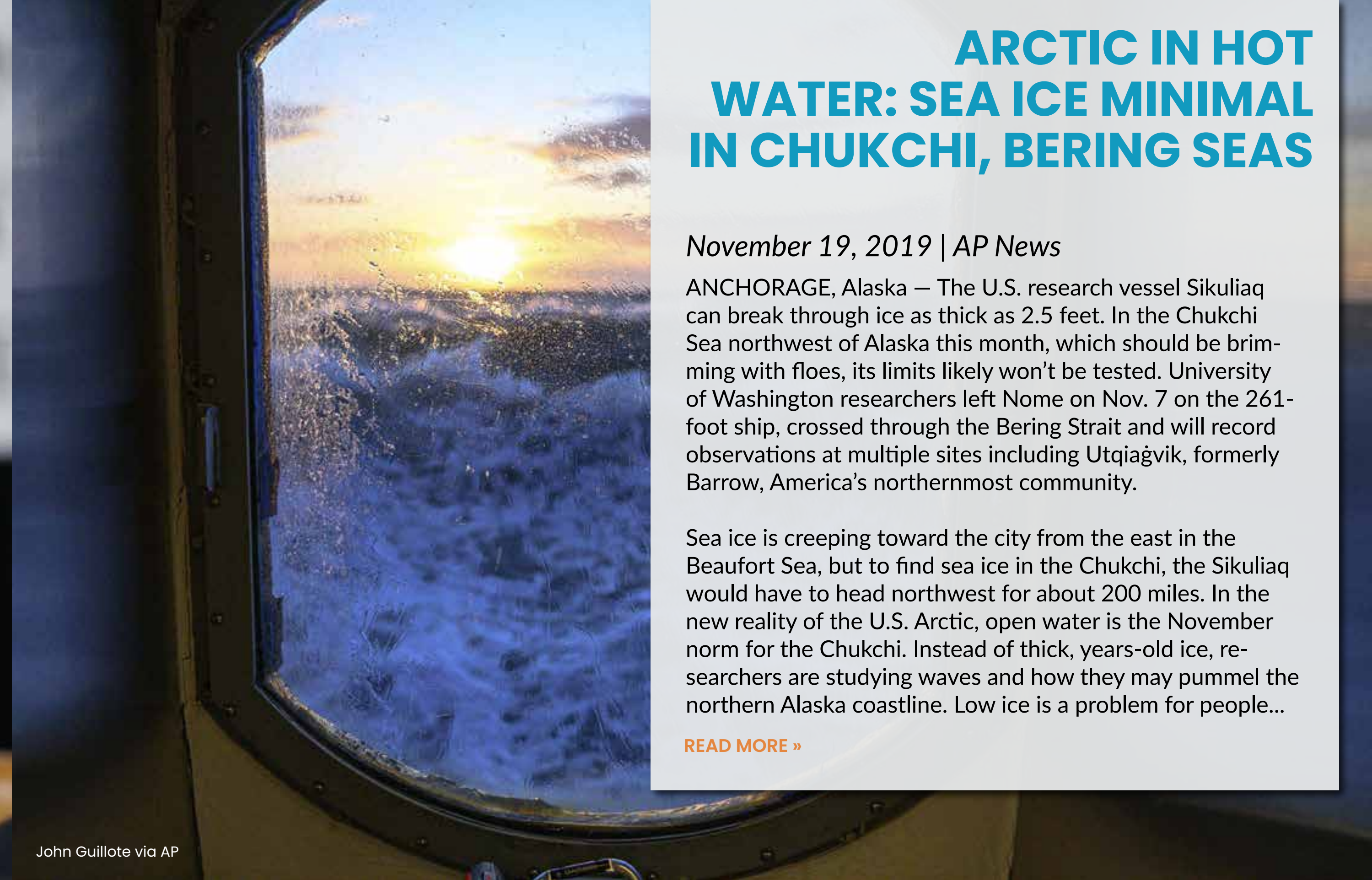
WASHINGTON — Congressional Republicans at impeachment hearings Tuesday tried to defend President Donald Trump by pushing a widely discredited claim that former Vice President Joe Biden pressed Ukraine's government to shut down a corruption investigation of Burisma, the energy company paying Biden's son Hunter. A look at some of the remarks in the second round of public hearings in the impeachment inquiry by the House Intelligence Committee:

REP. DEVIN NUNES, the top Republican on the committee, speaking of the news media: "You'd think they would

be interested in Joe Biden threatening to withhold U.S. loan guarantees unless the Ukrainians fired a prosecutor who was investigating Burisma. That would be a textbook example of bribery."

THE FACTS: The prosecutor wasn't investigating the company at the time. Moreover, the United States and Europe wanted Ukraine to do a broader, more aggressive investigation of corruption in the country, and Biden was among the international leaders who considered the prosecutor ineffective. Trump and his personal lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, have...

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John Guillote via AP

ARCTIC IN HOT WATER: SEA ICE MINIMAL IN CHUKCHI, BERING SEAS

November 19, 2019 | AP News

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — The U.S. research vessel Sikuliaq can break through ice as thick as 2.5 feet. In the Chukchi Sea northwest of Alaska this month, which should be brimming with floes, its limits likely won't be tested. University of Washington researchers left Nome on Nov. 7 on the 261-foot ship, crossed through the Bering Strait and will record observations at multiple sites including Utqiagvik, formerly Barrow, America's northernmost community.

Sea ice is creeping toward the city from the east in the Beaufort Sea, but to find sea ice in the Chukchi, the Sikuliaq would have to head northwest for about 200 miles. In the new reality of the U.S. Arctic, open water is the November norm for the Chukchi. Instead of thick, years-old ice, researchers are studying waves and how they may pummel the northern Alaska coastline. Low ice is a problem for people...

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JUDGE TEMPORARILY STOPS 1ST FEDERAL EXECUTIONS SINCE 2003

November 21, 2019 | AP News

WASHINGTON — A judge has temporarily halted the first federal executions in 16 years as a lawsuit on how the government intends to carry them out continues. U.S. District Judge Tanya S. Chutkan said in a Wednesday evening ruling that the public is not served by "short-circuiting" legitimate judicial process. "It is greatly served by attempting to ensure that the most serious punishment is imposed lawfully," she wrote.

Attorney General William Barr unexpectedly announced in July that the government would resume executions on Dec. 9, ending an informal moratorium on federal capital punishment as the issue receded from the public domain. The Justice Department didn't immediately return a call seeking comment on Thursday on whether it would appeal, and the attorney general was traveling. Some of the chosen convicts challenged the new procedures in court, arguing that the...

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AP/Oded Balilty

WORLD

ISRAEL'S NETANYAHU CHARGED IN CORRUPTION CASES

November 21, 2019 | AP News

JERUSALEM — Israel's attorney general on Thursday formally charged Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a series of corruption cases, throwing the country's paralyzed political system into further disarray and threatening his 10-year grip on power. Netanyahu an-

Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit issued an indictment Thursday charging Netanyahu with fraud, breach of trust and bribery.

grily accused prosecutors of staging "an attempted coup." Capping a three-year investigation, Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit charged Netanyahu with fraud, breach of trust

and accepting bribes in three different scandals. It is the first time a sitting Israeli prime minister has been charged with a crime.

An ashen-faced Netanyahu appeared on national TV, claiming he was the victim of a grand conspiracy by police and prosecutors. He defiantly claimed the indictment stemmed from "false accusations" and a systematically "tainted investigation," saying the country was witnessing an "attempted coup" against him. "Police and investigators are not above the law," he said. "The time has come to investigate the investigators." As the investigation gained steam in recent months, Netanyahu has repeatedly lashed out at the media, police and justice system, drawing accusations that he was undermining the country's democratic institutions.

Mandelblit earlier rejected accusations that his decision was politically motivated and said he had acted solely out of professional considerations. "A day in which the attorney general decides to serve an indictment against a seated prime minister for serious crimes of corrupt governance is a heavy and sad day, for the Israeli public and for me personally," he told reporters. According to the indictment, Netanyahu accepted hundreds of thousands of dollars of champagne and cigars from billionaire friends, offered to trade favors with a newspaper

publisher and used his influence to help a wealthy telecom magnate in exchange for favorable coverage on a popular news site.

The Indictment Does Not Require Netanyahu to Resign

The indictment does not require the 70-year-old Netanyahu to resign, but it significantly weakens him at a time when Israel's political system appears to be limping toward a third election in under a year. Netanyahu's defiant response, along with calls from his rivals to resign, indicated a lengthy period of turmoil ahead. The political party of Netanyahu's chief rival, former military commander Benny Gantz, said the prime minister has "no public or moral mandate to make fateful decisions for the state of Israel." Mandelblit criticized the often-heated pressure campaigns by Netanyahu's supporters and foes to sway his decision, which came after months of deliberations. Both sides had staged demonstrations outside or near his home.

"This is not a matter of right or left. This is not a matter of politics," he said. "This is an obligation placed on us, the people of law enforcement and upon me personally as the one at its head." The most serious charges were connected to so-called "Case 4000," in which Netanyahu is accused of passing regulations that gave his friend, telecom magnate Shaul Elovitch, benefits worth over \$250 million to his company Bezeq.

In return, Bezeq's news site, Walla, published favorable articles about Netanyahu and his family. The relationship, it said, was "based on a mutual understanding that each of them...

Allegations against Netanyahu include suspicions he accepted hundreds of thousands of dollars of champagne and cigars from billionaire friends, offered to trade favors with a newspaper publisher and used his influence to help a wealthy telecom magnate in exchange for favorable coverage on a popular news site.

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AP/Andrew Harnik

US ANGERS PALESTINIANS WITH REVERSAL ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS

November 11, 2019 | AP News

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration on Monday softened the U.S. position on Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, reversing four decades of American policy and further undermining the effort to gain Palestinian statehood.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced that the U.S. is repudiating the 1978 State Department legal opinion that held that civilian settlements in the occupied territories are “inconsistent with international law.” Israeli leaders welcomed the decision while Palestinians and other nations warned that it undercut any chance of a broader peace deal.

Pompeo told reporters at the State Department that the Trump administration believes any legal questions about settlements should be resolved by Israeli courts and that declaring them a violation of international law distracts from larger efforts to negotiate a peace deal.

“Calling the establishment of civilian settlements inconsistent with international law has not advanced the cause of peace,” Pompeo said. “The hard truth is that there will never be a judicial resolution to the conflict, and arguments about who is right and who is wrong as a matter of international law will not bring peace.” The change reflects the administration’s...

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AP/Ebrahim Noroozi

IRAN BLOCKS NEARLY ALL INTERNET ACCESS

November 18, 2019 | The New York Times

Iran imposed an almost complete nationwide internet black-out on Sunday, making one of its most draconian attempts to cut off Iranians from each other and the rest of the world as widespread anti-government unrest roiled the streets of Tehran and other cities for a third day.

The death toll for the three days of protests rose to at least 12; hundreds were injured; and more than 1,000 people have been arrested, according to semiofficial news agencies like Fars News.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the supreme leader who has the last word on all state matters, called the demonstrators “thugs” and endorsed the government’s decision to raise prices it sets for rationed gasoline by 50 percent as of Friday and by 300 percent for gasoline that exceeds ration limits. Even after the price hike, gasoline in Iran is still cheaper than in...

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ACTIVISTS: IRAN CONSERVATIONISTS GET PRISON TIME AMID UNREST

November 21, 2019 | AP News

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Six conservationists working to save the critically endangered Asiatic cheetah have been sentenced to prison on internationally criticized espionage charges in Iran, activists said Thursday, even as protests and unrest continue in parts of the country amid a government-imposed internet shutdown.





The case against members of the nonprofit Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation show how spying charges and convictions can be levied against dual nationals and those with Western ties in Iran in closed-door trials before its Revolutionary Court. News of the cases comes after demonstrations against government-set gasoline prices rising turned violent in Iran, killing at least 106 people, according to Amnesty International. Iran disputes that figure without offering its own and has turned off the internet across the country, making it difficult to reach those where protests go on. A...

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Office of the Iranian Supreme Leader via AP



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