



SPECIAL REPORT: NEARLY HALF OF FRESNO UNIFIED STUDENTS BELOW GRADE LEVEL

December 16, 2019 | Nancy Price

Fresno Unified School District has released an eye-opening report that paints in stark numbers how poorly students are performing academically and the huge challenges they face in being ready for college and career. Only 12.1% of the dis-

The assessment delivered particularly grim news at several high schools. Less than 30% of the students tested at Bullard, Hoover, McLane, and Roosevelt started the year at or above grade level in math. In fact, at McLane, less than 4% of those tested were at or above grade level for math.

trict's students started the school year at grade level or above in mathematics, and 18.9% were at grade level or above in reading, in the i-Ready Diagnostic 1 assessment at the beginning of the 2019-20 school year. However, dis-

trict officials consider students who test one grade level below at the start of the year to be on grade level. About 32% of the students tested in reading and 39% of students tested in math fell into that category.

Some students lagged by as many as 10 grade levels. Of the 2,841 sophomores tested in reading, about 28 had the same reading abilities as kindergartners. And of the 2,328 sophomores tested in math, about 14 were at the kindergarten level. The assessment delivered particularly grim news at several high schools. Less than 30% of the students tested at Bullard, Hoover, McLane, and Roosevelt started the year at or above grade level in math. In fact, at McLane, less than 4% of those tested were at or above grade level for math. Fresno and Sunnyside highs did not participate in the assessment testing.

Far From Meeting College/Career Goal

District leaders, determined to take Fresno Unified from the bottom of state and national rankings,

are turning to a number of strategies. Making education a priority for the Fresno area is one, and that will mean getting buy-in and support from the entire community. The district also is adopting new tools to boost student achievement, including an assessment program that pinpoints gaps in each student's education and after-school literacy programs for African American elementary students — who have some of the district's widest achievement gaps in academic performance. An education advocate praises Fresno Unified for a new spirit of transparency about student performance and efforts to engage the community, but points to the need to rethink expectations for student success and making sure there is sufficient support available from teachers and counselors.

One trustee says remaking the district will take more than new literacy programs and assessment programs. Trustee Terry Slatic contends that until there is a culture of accountability, especially at the administrative level, and students learn grade-level curriculum before they are promoted, the district's struggles to meet its goal of graduating students prepared for

college or career will continue. And that goal has slipped further out of reach: The 2019 California State Dashboard showed that after three years of gains, the percentage of Fresno Unified

The 2019 California State Dashboard showed that after three years of gains, the percentage of Fresno Unified students prepared for college or career had dropped back to 38%. Over the past four years, it has never exceeded 50%.

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Superintendent: We Need Your Help

Fresno Unified, the state's third-largest school...



December 19, 2019 | David Taub

The House delegation representing the San Joaquin Valley voted along party lines on the two articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump. Democrats Jim Costa (Fresno), TJ Cox (Fresno), and Josh Harder (Turlock) voted in favor. House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (Bakersfield) and fellow Republicans Tom McClintock (Roseville) and Devin Nunes (Tulare) opposed the president's impeachment. View the roll call of Count 1 (abuse of power) and Count 2 (obstruction of Congress). Trump was impeached by the U.S. House of Representatives Wednesday night. He is only the third American chief executive to be formally charged under the Constitution's ultimate remedy for high crimes and misdemeanors.

Cox, Harder Explain Votes

Cox, in an email, said voters sent him to Washington for issues

like drug prices, water, and agriculture. "They also sent me to Washington to defend the Constitution, because that's what protects all of our rights and freedoms," Cox wrote. "Here are the facts: Our president abused his power and used your taxpayer money to advance his own personal interest, and when Congress fulfilled its duty to investigate, the president acted as if he were above the law, obstructing the investigation by withholding witnesses and subpoenaed documents.

"Both of those actions violate our sacred Constitution, which only identifies one remedy for Congress to hold the president accountable. In obeying that solemn duty to my constituents and the Constitution, it is my responsibility to cast votes in favor of both articles of impeachment, for abuse of power and for obstruction of Congress." Harder simply tweeted, "Today...

ATTENTION, BARGAIN SHOPPERS! ALDI IS COMING TO NORTHWEST FRESNO

December 18, 2019 | GV Wire

A blighted vacant strip mall at the northwest corner of Shaw and West avenues will be anchored by the first Aldi supermarket in Fresno. Renovations are beginning on the building, which has been a magnet for crime and a landing spot for vagrants. The strip mall previously was anchored by a Chinese restaurant and an office supply store. "The building will be torn down, and they're constructing a new building just for Aldi," said Fresno City Councilman Mike Karbassi, who represents northwest Fresno. "They're actually going to construct two buildings. The other will house smaller retail shops."

7-Eleven Is Moving, Gas Station Coming In addition, Karbassi said that the 7-Eleven at the northeast corner of Shaw and West will move across the street to the Aldi location. A gas station will be built in the area of the new construction, as well. "This is a big plus for the neighborhood," Karbassi said. "The vacant building has attracted a lot of vagrants and created lots of problems." The Albrecht family of Germany...

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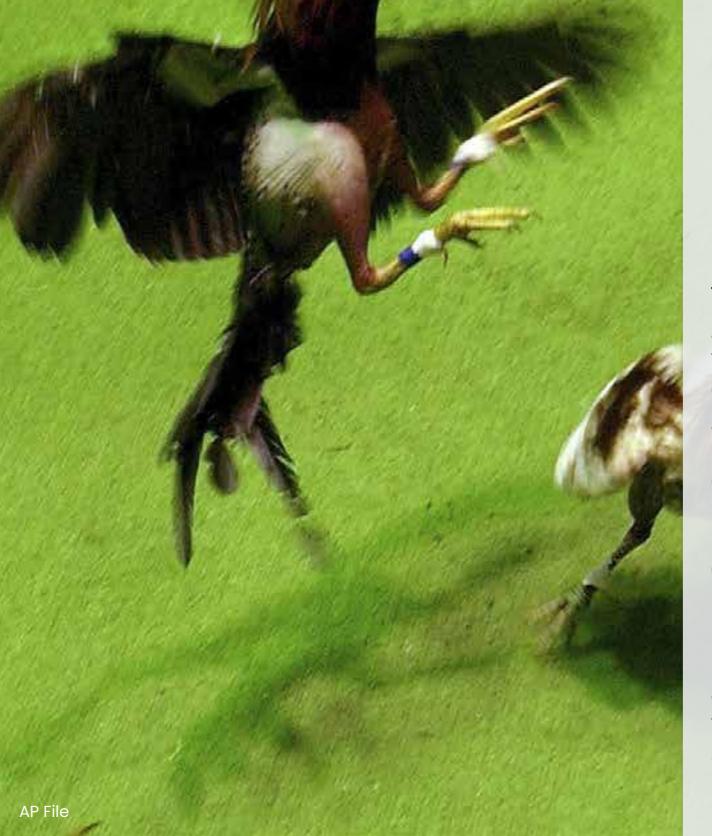


CERES MAN ARRESTED FOR RUNNING COCKFIGHTING BUSINESS December 16, 2019 | GV Wire Law enforcement officers arrested a Ceres man Monday morn-

ing for being involved in the illegal blood sport of cockfighting. The arrest of Joseph D. Sanford, 72, came after his federal grand jury indictment last Thursday. He will be arraigned at the federal courthouse in Fresno on Monday afternoon. Sanford is charged with conspiring to violate the Animal Welfare Act, illegal possession of roosters for the purpose of fighting, and unlawfully selling roosters for an animal fighting venture. The indictment seeks the forfeiture of thousands of game fowl at his business, Joe Sanford Gamefarm.

law enforcement officers searched the gamefarm and found a large cockfighting enterprise consisting of 2,956 game fowl, according to court documents. It is alleged that Sanford also fights his own roosters. The indictment further alleges that Sanford acquired and maintained medical equipment, such as...

Gamecocks Sold to Undercover Officer Following the undercover purchase of a trio of fighting birds, **READ MORE »**





SANDERS, BLOOMBERG TEST DIFFERENT PATHS TO A CALIFORNIA WIN

December 11, 2019 | Bill McEwen

LOS ANGELES — One is spending millions of dollars flooding the airwaves from Los Angeles to Sacramento, highlighting his tenure as mayor of the nation's largest city and commitment to key Democratic causes. The other has hired 80 staff members to knock on doors, organize volunteers and promote his message of political revolution in at least seven languages.

No two Democratic presidential candidates are putting as many resources into the fight for California as Michael Bloomberg, the billionaire businessman and former New York mayor, and Bernie Sanders, the Vermont senator. Sanders is marshaling his passionate volunteers to win the biggest prize of the presidential primary season, while Bloomberg arrives with a virtually

"I would not underestimate the ability of somebody breaking out in Iowa or New Hampshire." — John Emerson, who headed Bill Clinton's 1992 California campaign unlimited checkbook after a late entry in the race. For now, they're deploying different strategies. Bloomberg is focused on television advertising, long viewed as the best way to reach voters in the state

that is home to 40 million people, while Sanders is focused on door-to-door campaigning on the ground. But they each have the resources and plans to do both, and earlier than most of their rivals.

As Bloomberg spokesman Jason Schechter put it: "California is extremely important to Mike." Bloomberg, who entered the race last month, is bypassing the first four voting states and anchoring his strategy to California and other Super Tuesday states, hoping a strong showing will carry him to the top of the field. Sanders, meanwhile, has a grassroots infrastructure in place from four years ago and is treating California as importantly as earlier contests like Iowa and New Hampshire. He's vowing to win the race. Bloomberg, though, will not be one of the seven candidates who will gather Thursday

in Los Angeles for the sixth and final debate of 2019. He is unable to qualify for the contests because he is not accepting campaign donations. Sanders will be

onstage alongside former Vice President Joe Biden, Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, South Bend, Indiana, Mayor Pete Buttigieg,

"I don't think Californians in general support someone trying to buy their way in." — former U.S. Sen. Barbara Boxer of California

Minnesota Sen. Amy Kloubchar, businessman Andrew Yang and billionaire philanthropist Tom Steyer. Steyer will be the only Californian on stage after Sen. Kamala Harris suspended her campaign, opening a scramble for her home-state donors and support.

Related Story: Bloomberg at UN: US President Must End Fossil Fuel Subsidies

Millions of Voters Will Not Cast Ballots Immediately California moved its primary up to March in 2020, from June in 2016, in an effort to have more sway over the nominating process. However, it's possible that no candidate emerges from California with a decisive win because of the maze of rules used to divvy up the state's haul of 495 delegates, far more than any other state. Still, the trajectory of the race in California, where roughly 14 million voters will be eligible to participate in the Democratic primary, largely mirrors what's happening nationally.

Polls from the Public Policy Institute of California and CNN in November and December, respectively, show Biden, Warren and Sanders ahead of the rest of the field. Buttigieg, who has reached front-runner status in Iowa and New Hampshire, remains in single digits. Although California sends out mail-in ballots for early voting on Feb. 3, the same day as the Iowa caucuses, millions of voters will not cast ballots immediately and may be heavily influenced by what happens in earlier...



December 11, 2019 | AP News

SAN FRANCISCO — A federal bankruptcy judge on Tuesday approved two Pacific Gas & Electric settlements totaling \$24.5 billion to help pay the losses suffered by homeowners, businesses and insurers in the aftermath of catastrophic Northern California wildfires that sent the nation's largest utility into a financial morass.

The decision by U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Dennis Montali at the end of a five-hour court hearing bolsters PG&E's chances of following its preferred path for getting out of bankruptcy by a make-or-break June 30 deadline. Montali also handed the utility another victory by rejecting attempts by a competing group to offer an alternative proposal to steer PG&E out of bankruptcy instead of the company's plan. Despite the strides made Tuesday, PG&E still faces huge obstacles.

The most significant is Gov. Gavin Newsom's recent conclusion that PG&E's plan to emerge from bankruptcy doesn't comply with state law, which the company must do to qualify for coverage in a wildfire fund approved by the California Legislature. The company's plan relies on coverage from the fund created last summer to insulate PG&E and other utilities from losses caused by future wildfires that could be ignited by their transmission lines. That specter looms large...

JOINT TASK FORCE ARRESTS
35 COUNTRY BOYS CRIPS
GANG MEMBERS

December 11, 2019 | GV Wire

A three-month investigation into the criminal activities of Bakersfield's Country Boys Crips street gang has resulted in 35 arrests. The arrests, along with the seizure of 15 firearms, illegal narcotics, and stolen items, were announced Tuesday by state Attorney General Xavier Becerra, Bakersfield Police Chief Kyle Martin, and Kern County District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer.

"Today's operation was the latest example of our strategic and surgical approach towards impacting gang violence," Bakersfield Police Chief Martin said in a news release. "By partnering with our local, state and federal law enforcement agencies we are able to better serve our community and carry out the true mission of law enforcement." Operation Deep South targeted criminal activities by the Country Boy Crips, which claims parts of south Bakersfield as its territory. According to the website unitedgangs.com, the "gang's traditional territory stretched from Cottonwood Road to...

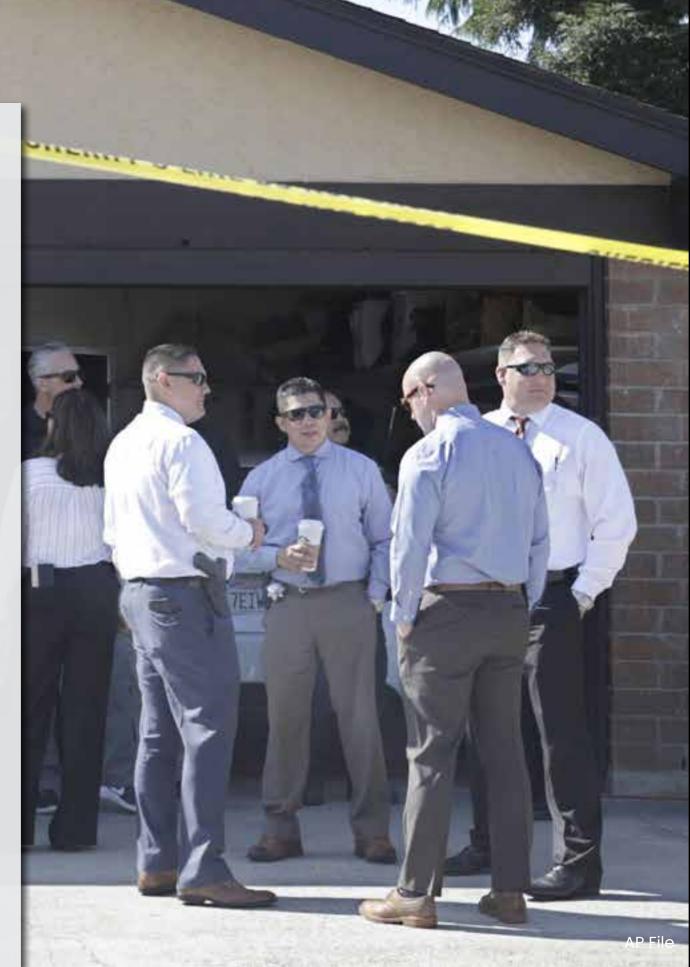
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BUYERS GET DEAL ON HOME OF SUSPECTED 'GOLDEN STATE KILLER'

December 18, 2019 | AP News

CITRUS HEIGHTS — The home of a man suspected of being the notorious "Golden State Killer" was sold last month to a couple who intend to live there. Joseph DeAngelo's 1,500-square-foot three-bedroom, two-bath ranch home in Citrus Heights was sold for \$320,000, a price near the bottom of the market for three-bedroom homes in that area, the Sacramento Bee reported Tuesday.

DeAngelo, a former police officer, is awaiting trial on charges that he broke into dozens of homes across California in the 1970s and 1980s, raping and often killing. Police said they linked DeAngelo to the killings through a DNA database. DeAngelo, 74, lived in the house for several decades and worked as a night mechanic in a Roseville supermarket distribution center. After his arrest, the house was treated as a crime scene by investigators searching for clues. The sales price is low but still within the general market price for a...



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TRUMP IMPEACHED BY HOUSE ON TWO CHARGES

December 18, 2019 | AP News

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump was impeached by the U.S. House of Representatives Wednesday night, becoming only the third American chief executive to be formally charged under the Constitution's ultimate remedy for high crimes and misdemeanors. The historic vote split along party lines, much the way it has divided the nation, over the charges that the 45th president abused the power of his office by enlisting a foreign government to investigate a political rival ahead of the 2020 election. The House was also voting on a charge that he then obstructed Congress in its investigation.

January Senate Trial Expected

The articles of impeachment, the political equivalent of an indictment, now go to the Senate for trial. If Trump is acquitted by the Republican-led chamber, as expected, he would have to run for reelection carrying the enduring mark of impeachment on his purposely disruptive presidency.

Democrats led Wednesday night's voting, framed in what many said was their duty to protect the Constitution and uphold the nation's system of checks and bal-

"Today we are here to defend democracy for the people." — House Speaker Nancy Pelosi

ances. Republicans stood by their party's leader, who has frequently tested the bounds of civic norms. Trump called the whole

affair a "witch hunt," a "hoax" and a "sham," and sometimes all three. The trial is expected to begin in January in the Senate, where a vote of two-thirds is necessary for conviction. While Democrats had the majority in the House to impeach Trump, Republicans control the Senate and few if any are expected to diverge from plans to acquit the president ahead of early state election-year primary voting. Pelosi, once reluctant to lead Democrats into a partisan impeachment, now risks her majority and speakership to hold the president account-

able. "Today we are here to defend democracy for the people," Pelosi said opening debate. In a statement after the vote, Rep. TJ Cox (D – Fresno) said President Trump abused his power of office, "to advance his own personal interest, and when Congress fulfilled its duty to investigate, the president acted as if he were above the law, obstructing the investigation by withholding witnesses and subpoenaed documents."

Trump Reacts on Twitter, Schedules Rally

Trump, who began Wednesday tweeting his anger at the proceedings, scheduled an evening rally in Battle

Creek, Michigan. As the House debated the articles of impeachment throughout the day, Trump registered his anger with the process on Twitter, in all capital letters: "SUCH ATRO-

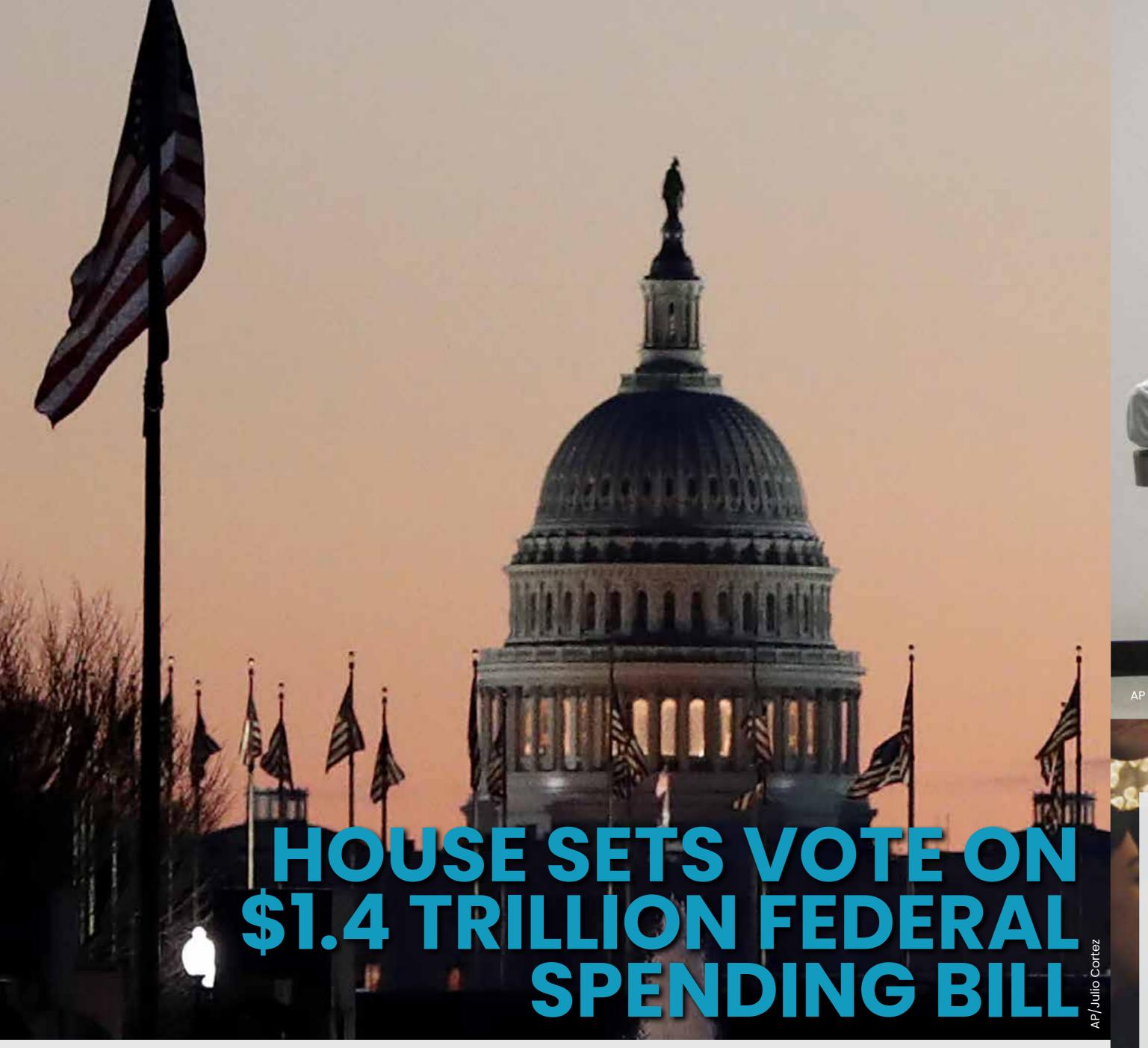
"SUCH ATROCIOUS LIES
BY THE RADICAL LEFT, DO
NOTHING DEMOCRATS. THIS
IS AN ASSAULT ON AMERICA, AND AN ASSAULT ON
THE REPUBLICAN PARTY!!!!"

— President Donald Trump
via Twitter

CIOUS LIES BY THE RADICAL LEFT, DO NOTHING DEMOCRATS. THIS IS AN ASSAULT ON AMERICA, AND AN ASSAULT ON THE REPUBLICAN PARTY!!!!" he wrote. What Pelosi called a sad and solemn moment for the country, coming in the first year that Democrats swept control of the House, unfolded in a caustic daylong session that showcased the nation's divisions — not only along party lines, but also by region, race and culture.

Related Story: White House Slams Congressman TJ Cox. He Responds.

The House impeachment resolution laid out in stark terms the two articles of impeachment against Trump stemming from his July phone call when he asked the Ukraine president for a "favor" — to announce it was investigating Democrats ahead of the 2020 election. He also pushed Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy...



IN REVERSAL, HALLMARK WILL REINSTATE SAME-SEX MARRIAGE ADS

December 16, 2019 | AP News

NEW YORK — The Hallmark Channel, reversing what it called a "wrong decision," said Sunday it will reinstate commercials featuring same-sex couples that it had pulled following a complaint from a conservative group. The earlier decision by Crown Media, Hallmark's parent company, to pull several ads for the wedding planning site Zola featuring two brides kissing at the altar had launched a storm of protest. Celebrities like Ellen DeGeneres and William Shatner criticized the move and the hashtag #BoycottHallmarkChannel was trending on Twitter at one point.

"The Crown Media team has been agonizing over this decision as we've seen the hurt it has unintentionally caused," said a statement issued Sunday evening by Hallmark Cards CEO Mike Perry. "Said simply, they believe this was the wrong decision. ... We are truly sorry for the hurt and disappointment this has caused." Zola, the wedding planning...

REPORT: 5TH STRAIGHT YEAR WITH UNDER 30 EXECUTIONS IN US

December 10, 2019 | AP News

WASHINGTON — Fewer than 30 people were executed in the United States and under 50 new death sentences were imposed for the fifth straight year, part of a continuing decline in capital punishment that saw only a few states carry out executions, a new report issued Tuesday said. But even as death row populations were dropping in most of the 29 states that still have the death penalty, the Trump administration tried to restart executions on the federal level and a more conservative Supreme Court appeared less willing to grant death-row inmates last-minute reprieves.

"The death penalty is disappearing from whole regions of the country and eroding in others, but the death penalty is persisting among outlier jurisdictions," said Robert Dunham, executive director of the Death Penalty Information Center, which produced the look at the death penalty in 2019. Twenty of the 22 executions in 2019 took place in five...

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December 17, 2019 | AP News

WASHINGTON — The Democratic-controlled House is voting Tuesday on a \$1.4 trillion government-wide spending package with an unusually large load of unrelated provisions on the must-do legislation.

Related Story: Impeachment Trial: Trump Wants Drama, but GOP Wants It Over

The package, some 2,313 pages long, was unveiled Monday as lawmakers prepared to wrap up reams of unfinished work against a backdrop of Wednesday's vote on impeaching Pres-

ident Donald Trump. The spending legislation would forestall a government shutdown this weekend and give Trump steady funding for his U.S.-Mexico border fence. The yearend package is anchored by a \$1.4 trillion spending measure that caps a difficult, months-long battle over spending priori-

The mammoth measure made public Monday takes a split-the-differences approach that's a product of divided power in Washington, offering lawmakers of all stripes plenty to vote for — and against. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi...

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RABBI ROSOVE: TWO-STATE SOLUTION ONLY ROAD TO PEACE FOR ISRAEL, PALESTINE

December 17, 2019 | Nancy Price

The two-state solution is the only way to guarantee a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but it will take strong leaders who are willing to compromise, a Southern California rabbi said Dec. 9 at Clovis Community College. But Rabbi John Rosove said the idea of compromise is abhorrent to many Israelis,

"The opposite of compromise is not pride or integrity or idealism. The opposite of compromise is fanaticism and death."

— Rabbi John Rosove,

fanaticism and death."

— Rabbi John Rosove,
quoting Israeli peace activist Amos Oz

Palestinians, other Arabs, and Americans who seem determined not to give an inch about issues such as Israeli-occupied land in the West Bank or Israel's very right to exist. Without compromise, Rosove said,

he holds out little hope of seeing an end to the conflict embroiling the region for generations. Rosove described himself as "pro-Israel and anti-occupation" — which he said puts him at odds with many Israelis and Jewish Americans who advocate for the so-called "one-state solution." Under some one-state scenarios, Palestinians would be denied full citizenship in Israel.

"The one-state solution is a guarantor to more war, to the destruction of Zionism and the Jewish state," he told GV Wire prior to his presentation. Rosove's appearance at the northeast Fresno college campus, which drew an audience of more than 100 people, was hosted by GV Wire as part of an ongoing lecture series.

Earlier Speaker Sparked Protest

Rosove, who is rabbi emeritus of Temple Israel of Hollywood, a leader in the Reform Zionist community and author of the forthcoming book, "Why Israel (and its Future) Matters," acknowledged that his invitation to speak at the college was largely in response to a controversial presentation in September by author/journalist Alison Weir. Her criticisms of Israel and U.S. support for the Jewish state, and her support of Palestinians, had sparked calls for her lecture to be canceled. Weir's dis-

cussion of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was "truncated ... and inaccurate" and reflected her pro-Palestinian, anti-Israel viewpoint, Rosove said.

Related Story: Critic of Israel's Treatment of Palestinians Speaks in Fresno

Israel History Fraught With Violence

At Monday's lecture, Rosove outlined the history of Zionism, the creation of Israel, the many failed attempts to negotiate peace between Israel, its Arab neighbors, and the Palestinians, the occupation of the West Bank, isolation of the Gaza Strip, and the continuing murders of Israeli civilians by suicide bombers, rockets, bus bombs, and other weaponry. Rosove explained that some on the far right believe that the nation is entitled not only to the land claimed when the state of Israel was declared in 1948, but also to Jewish lands from Biblical times. He quoted from Amos Oz, an Israeli author and peace activist who died a year ago: "There are

many people who loathe the very idea of compromise, viewing any concession as weakness, as pitiful surrender. Whereas I think that in the lives of families, neighbors

"Everyone has a legitimate narrative. But the way things are need not be the way they continue." — A tour group member quoted by Rabbi Rosove

and nations, choosing to compromise is in fact choosing life. The opposite of compromise is not pride or integrity or idealism.

The opposite of compromise is fanaticism and death." Rosove has been active with J Street, a Washington, D.C.-based advocacy organization that supports the two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He noted that J Street's advocacy helped win passage of House Resolution 326 that expresses support for the two-state solution. He related how he would...



PUERTO RICO COCK-FIGHTERS GO TO RING IN FEDERAL BAN DEFIANCE

December 19, 2019 | AP News

TOA BAJA, Puerto Rico — Felipe Espinal walked into his cockfighting establishment Wednesday night in the northern town of Toa Baja and held up a white pen in triumph as he recorded the moment with his cellphone.

Related Story: Cockfighting Will Live On in Puerto Rico, Officials Say

The crowd hushed as he cried out: "This is the pen that said we can keep fighting gamecocks!" Hours earlier, Puerto Rico Gov. Wanda Vázquez signed a bill authorizing cockfighting in defiance of a federal ban that goes into effect Friday. She was surrounded by Espinal and other cockfighters who cheered the decision, some even crying, relieved, if only temporarily, that the island's 400-year-old tradition was still alive. "We can now live in peace," said Tony Rojas, who takes cares of 100 gamecocks for a living. "I'm 65 years old. Who's going to hire me? Nobody wants me even for cleaning...

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ATATTOO AT A TIME, AFGHAN WOMAN TAKES ON SOCIETY'S TABOOS

December 16, 2019 | AP News

KABUL, Afghanistan — A female tattoo artist, a rarity in ultra-conservative Afghanistan, is taking a big risk with every customer she takes on. It's been 18 months since Suraya Shaheedi started her mobile tattoo shop in the capital, Kabul. She's received death threats for taking on the taboo of the ink-on-skin drawings she does — as well as being a single woman willing to work with men.

"I have struggled a lot, even been threatened with death, because people in Afghanistan think doing tattoos is haram," she said, using the Arabic word meaning prohibited by religion. "Whether my customers are men or women

doesn't matter to me. I do tattoos for both," says Shaheedi, a 26-year-old, divorced single mother.

In a black curtained room, surrounded by his friends, a young customer shrieks in pain as the needle pierces and inks his skin. "I can't leave the profession I love," Shaheedi adds.

She easily gets customers, whether men or women, as social attitudes toward tattoos loosen up and more ink parlors open. It's the kind of small, but important change that Shaheedi feels a return of Taliban rule could threaten. After decades of war, Afghans want peace. A big concern for many like Shaheedi is that U.S.-led peace talks with the Taliban...

A TALE OF 2 MIGRATIONS: BEFORE AND AFTER NEW TRUMP POLICIES

December 13, 2019 | AP News

SANTA ANA, El Salvador — María Teresa Carballo was worried. She hadn't heard from her daughter-in-law since the young woman and her two young children left with a smuggler for the U.S. border a week earlier. The silence was unexpected: Seventeen other members of Carballo's family had undertaken the same journey between last December and May, and all had made it safely after paying the smuggler \$3,000 per person.

This October day was the first inkling that something had changed, and the family's perfect streak had ended. "For the ones I'd sent it was easy," the 59-year-old Salvadoran woman said of the relatives who migrated to the U.S. earlier in the year. All had turned themselves over to U.S. authorities, requested asylum and been released into the U.S. to await their cases. But by October things had changed dramatically. It began in May, when President Donald Trump threatened...

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