FURRY ORPHANS FIND LOVE AND SAFETY AT UNIQUE RIVER SANCTUARY

GOV. BROWN TALKS HEALTH CARE, 4 TERMS IN OFFICE

TRUMP SAYS HE’S EAGER TO SIGN SWEEPING CRIMINAL JUSTICE BILL
Along the banks of the Kings River, just outside of Reedley, is California’s largest no-kill sanctuary and adoption center for abandoned cats.

Cat House on the Kings founder Lynea Lattanzio estimates that more than 38,000 animals have been rescued through the organization’s efforts in its 26 years of operation.

The 12-acre property is home to about 700 adult cats (and a few tolerant dogs) at any given time. Most come from the streets of Fresno, Kings, and Tulare counties.

Living Out Their Lives
Lattanzio describes it as “a place where an animal can come out, if it’s not adoptable, and live out its life.” But, providing a compassionate home for hundreds of abandoned and neglected cats that would otherwise face daily danger from injury, hunger, and disease is just part of the Cat House mission.

Promoting Responsible Pet Parents
The larger goal is to reduce the size of the Valley’s unwanted pet population. Every animal that comes through Cat House on the Kings is spayed or neutered. In addition, the facility provides these vital medical services to the public at low cost to encourage responsible pet ownership.

“We’ve probably spayed and neutered a couple hundred thousand (cats),” Lattanzio said. Cat House on the Kings is committed to expanding on that already impressive achievement.

At the same time, the organization and its cadre of dedicated volunteers will continue to provide a safe haven for its large family of furry orphans that call Cat House on the Kings their home.

Visitors Can See for Themselves
Lattanzio encourages visitors to schedule an appointment to see for themselves what her organization has accomplished.

“People can come out here and bring the family, walk to the river and play with the cats,” she said. “It turns into an experience.”

Watch the 12 Days of Giving video by GV Wire's Jahz Tello to find out more about the services provided by Cat House on the Kings.

Click here to see all of our 12 Days of Giving stories.
IS BIGGEST 2018 FRESNO STATE FOOTBALL WIN YET TO COME?

December 19, 2018 | Bill McEwen

Here’s a message for doubters, dropouts and down-on-the-couch types diminishing the ranks of the once nationally recognized Red Wave. These, my friends, are the good old’ days. Jeff Tedford’s Bulldogs ended all debate about being Fresno State’s greatest football team by vanquishing Arizona State in the Las Vegas Bowl. The victory gave the Bulldogs the school record for victories in a season with 12 — a tally that included two wins over Pac-12 opponents led by former NFL head coaches and a nail-biting overtime victory at arch-nemesis Boise State.

Honor the Past But Invest in the Future

Finally — thanks to Marcus McMaryion, Jeff Allison, George Helmuth, Ronnie Rivers, Tank Kelly, KeeSean Johnson, and many more players — Fresno State fans can embrace the present and the future. For too long, Fresno State fans have been stuck in the past — often reliving the thrills of old or bemoaning the Mountain West Conference instead of investing in the here and now. Yes, it’s fun to remember the good times: Beating USC in the Freedom Bowl, the Carr brothers’ throwing 178 career touchdown passes, or destroying Oregon State — ranked No. 1 in the nation by Sports Illustrated — at home.

But our memories shouldn’t hold us captive. Or blind us to the possibilities ahead. Those imprisoned by the past should take note of Tedford. He pays tribute to the Fresno State coaches before him, especially Jim Sweeney and Pat Hill. He talks glowingly of the standout quarterbacks he developed in college, Aaron Rodgers among many. Tedford, however, doesn’t dwell on his previous success at Cal and only grudgingly talks about his time as a pretty good Fresno State quarterback...
GOV. BROWN TALKS HEALTH CARE, 4 TERMS IN OFFICE

December 19, 2018 | AP News

SACRAMENTO — California Gov. Jerry Brown predicted Tuesday that Republicans would face disastrous electoral consequences if a federal judge’s ruling to strike down the Affordable Care Act holds.

“It will build such a backlash that the Democrats will not only overtake the Senate, they’ll win the presidency and they’ll win enough momentum, particularly on the issue of health care, it will be replaced with something even better,” Brown said. The Democratic governor called last week’s decision by a Texas judge to strike down the entire law “a bump in the road.” But he also said California would not be able to afford its Medicaid expansion if the federal government stops picking up most of the tab, as outlined under the health law. California Attorney General Xavier Becerra is leading a coalition of states in defending the federal law signed by former President Barack Obama. The ruling does not immediately stop the law, and the U.S. Supreme Court has previously ruled to uphold it.

Preparing to Leave Office After Record Four Terms

Brown spoke about the health care law during an appearance at the Sacramento Press Club as he prepares to leave office on Jan. 7 after serving a record four terms. In a meandering question-and-answer session with reporters and Brown family biographer, Miriam Pawel, Brown reflected on his tenure, defended major infrastructure projects and talked about the difficulties of waging a presidential campaign.

Brown, 80, was elected in 1974 at age 36 and served for eight years, then elected again in 2011 for two more terms. He also ran unsuccessfully for U.S. Senate in 1982, sought the presidency three times, headed the California Democratic Party, and served as mayor of Oakland and California attorney general.

As he was asked if it was a mistake to run for president three times, Brown responded with a simple “yes,” then added, “one too many times.” He declined to say which if any Californians he thinks could take on Trump in 2020 but said it’s difficult to run a nationwide race from a home base of California. “You’ve got to be in the mix on the East Coast, that’s still where the power is,” he said.

Defending High-Speed Rail

Brown defended his plans to build a high-speed rail line between Los Angeles and San Francisco and to build two massive water tunnels to reorganize how water is transported from Northern California to the drier south. Both projects are mired in environmental and other lawsuits and will not be completed before Brown leaves office.

The cost of high-speed rail is now estimated at $77 billion and the state lacks the money to build a tunnel under the Pacheco Pass for a segment of the train from the Central Valley to San Francisco. Brown said Democrats in Congress should provide more money for the project and that Washington must pass an infrastructure spending bill as President Donald Trump has promised.

Brown plans to move to a ranch in Colusa County on old family property with his wife, Anne Gust Brown, when his tenure ends. In his characteristic style, Brown chafed when asked about his proudest accomplishment, saying he prefers to look ahead and keep...
IS DENHAM NEXT IN LINE FOR INTERIOR SECRETARY?

Congressman Jeff Denham (R-Turlock) is under consideration to be the next U.S. Secretary of the Interior, after the announcement that current jobholder Ryan Zinke is leaving at the end of the year.

Denham, who lost his re-election bid last month to Democrat Josh Harder, could replace Zinke, according to inside sources who asked not to be named because they are not cleared to speak on the issue. President Donald Trump tweeted this morning (Dec. 15) that Zinke would be leaving his post at the end of the year, and that his replacement would be announced at the end of the week. In his resignation letter, obtained by The Associated Press, Zinke said "vicious and politically motivated attacks" against him had "created an unfortunate distraction" in fulfilling the agency's mission. Zinke is leaving weeks before Democrats take control of the House, a shift in power that promises to sharpen the probes into his conduct.

His departure comes amid a staff shake-up as Trump heads into his third year in office facing increased legal exposure due to intensifying investigations into his campaign, business, foundation and administration. Zinke's resignation letter, obtained from a Zinke aide on Saturday, cites what...
WASHINGTON — The Senate passed a sweeping criminal justice bill Tuesday that addresses concerns that the nation’s war on drugs had led to the imprisonment of too many Americans for non-violent crimes without adequately preparing them for their return to society.

Senate passage of the bill by a vote of 87-12 culminates years of negotiations and gives President Donald Trump a signature policy victory, with the outcome hailed by scores of conservative and liberal advocacy groups. The House is expected to pass the bill this week, sending it to the president’s desk for his signature.

Boosts Prison Rehab Programs

The bill gives judges more discretion when sentencing some drug offenders and boosts prisoner rehabilitation efforts. It also reduces the life sentence for some drug offenders with three convictions, or “three strikes,” to 25 years. Another provision would allow about 2,600 federal prisoners sentenced for crack cocaine offenses before August 2010 the opportunity to petition for a reduced penalty.

“America is the greatest Country in the world and my job is to fight for ALL citizens, even those who have made mistakes.”
— President Donald Trump

“This will keep our communities safer, and provide hope and a second chance, to those who earn it. In addition to everything else, billions of dollars will be saved. I look forward to signing this into law!” Trump added. The vote also thrilled Democrats. Sen. Cory Booker, D-N.J., said the nation’s prisons are full of Americans who are struggling with mental illness and addiction, and who are overwhelmingly poor. He said the nation’s criminal justice system “feeds on certain communities and not on others,” and said the bill represents a step toward “healing” for those communities. “Let’s make no mistake, this legislation, which is one small step, will affect thousands and thousands of lives,” Booker said.

McConnell Caves to Trump’s Wishes

When the bill appeared to have stalled in recent weeks, Sen. Charles Grassley, the Republican chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, pleaded with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell to bring it up for a vote. With Trump’s urging, McConnell eventually agreed, and voted for the bill as well. “The First Step Act takes lessons from history and from states — our laboratories of democracy — to reduce crime, save taxpayer dollars and strengthen faith and fairness in our criminal justice system,” Grassley said.

Amendments by Southern Senators Rejected

The Senate turned back three amendments Tuesday from Republican senators Tom Cotton of Arkansas and John Kennedy of Louisiana, who said the bill endangered public safety. Supporters voiced concerns that passing any of the amendments would have sunk the bill. One amendment would have excluded more prisoners from participating in educational and training programs that allow them to earn credits. Those credits can then be used to gain an earlier release to a halfway house or home confinement to finish out their sentence.

Another amendment would have required that victims be notified before a prisoner gets that earlier release. The third would have required the Federal Bureau of Prisons to track and report the re-arrest rate for each prisoner who gets early release. “Let’s make no mistake, this legislation, which is one small step, will affect thousands and thousands of lives.” — Sen. Cory Booker, D-N.J.

“Let’s make no mistake, this legislation, which is one small step, will affect thousands and thousands of lives.”
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The Trump administration on Tuesday moved to roll back an Obama-era policy that was meant to curb racial disparities in school discipline but that critics say left schools afraid to take action against potentially dangerous students.

The recommendation was among dozens issued in a new report by Trump’s federal school safety commission, which was formed in response to a Feb. 14 school shooting in Parkland, Florida, that killed 17 students and staff members, and sparked a national debate over gun control. The panel was asked to study a range of options to bolster security at America’s schools, from the regulation of guns to the regulation of violent video games. Yet rather than suggest a series of sweeping changes, the commission issued 100 smaller suggestions that largely avoid strong stances on topics like gun control and whether schools should arm teachers.

“Our conclusions in this report do not impose one-size-fits-all solutions for everyone, everywhere,” said Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, who led the commission. “The primary responsibility for the physical security of schools and the safety of their students naturally rests with states and local...
MEXICO CITY — The United States pledged $5.8 billion in aid and investment Tuesday for strengthening government and economic development in Central America, and another $4.8 billion in development aid for southern Mexico. The U.S. aid aims to promote better security conditions and job opportunities as part of a regional plan to allow Central Americans and Mexicans to remain in their countries and not have to emigrate.

The plan was announced in a joint U.S.-Mexican statement released by the State Department and read aloud by Mexican Foreign Relations Secretary Marcelo Ebrard in the Mexican capital. “In sum, I think this is good news, very good news for Mexico,” Ebrard said.

Mexico’s President Praises Aid Package

Newly inaugurated President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador waxed poetic about the plan to provide jobs so people won’t have to emigrate. “I have a dream that I want to see become a reality ... that nobody will want to go work in the United States anymore,” Lopez Obrador said at a morning news conference before the announcement. The combination of public and private investment for the stay-at-home effort doesn’t require congressional approval, unlike Trump’s signature project to stem illegal immigration — a border wall.

The U.S. State Department issued a simultaneous statement saying “The United States is committing $5.8 billion through public and private investment to promote institutional reforms and development in the Northern Triangle,” a term that refers to Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador.” — State Department

Mexico’s President Praises Aid Package

A planned announcement about Mexico’s migration policy was postponed until Wednesday. The United States has reportedly wanted Mexico to allow migrants seeking asylum in the United States to remain in Mexico while their applications are processed.

Will Mexico Provide Anything in Return?

It was unclear if Mexico would give anything in return. A planned announcement about Mexico’s migration policy was postponed until Wednesday. The United States has reportedly wanted Mexico to allow migrants seeking asylum in the United States to remain in Mexico while their applications are processed. Ebrard had previously suggested that about $25 billion in U.S. investment would be an appropriate figure for what Mexicans and Central Americans have dubbed “The Alliance for Prosperity” in the region.
President Donald Trump called Saudi Arabia a "spectacular ally" in November while fending off political heat from the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi. The president additionally cited a $450 billion arms and economic development agreement between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia as a reason to maintain close ties with the Kingdom. But Trump didn’t say a word about Saudi Arabia’s suppression of human rights, its worldwide funding of terrorism, its secret police, or its embrace of the extremist Wahhabi religion. Neither did he mention that the U.S. deal with the Saudis is actually much smaller than $450 billion. If you are not familiar with life in oil-rich Saudi Arabia or the fanatic views of its ruling monarchy, check out the Frontline documentary “Saudi Arabia Uncovered,” which first aired March 28, 2016, on PBS. Saudi Arabia Uncovered is available on Netflix. Or you can view it at this ValleyPBS link.

The documentary reveals in graphic detail the murderous underbelly of the country.

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