BRAND KEEPS HIS WORD. NOW HAVE YOUR SAY ON NEW POLICE CHIEF. »
CALIFORNIA VACCINE RULES ADVANCE OVER EMOTIONAL OPPOSITION »
BIDEN LAUNCHES 2020 BID WARNING ‘SOUL’ OF AMERICA AT STAKE »
Lee Brand faces the biggest decision of his first mayoral term with eyes wide open. Whoever succeeds Jerry Dyer as Fresno police chief, the mayor says, “somebody is going to be unhappy.” But if anybody complains they didn’t have a chance to weigh in on the choice, well, that’s on them. During his 2016 mayoral campaign, Brand promised to involve the community in selecting the next police chief. He’s made good on that promise in a big way.

“Nowadays, the police chief is a huge position in cities of our size and bigger,” Brand says. “Maybe more important, but at least equally important, as the city manager.” That’s why we are embarking on the largest, most comprehensive search this city has ever done.”

There’s another obvious why. The mayor’s position is on the 2020 ballot and failing to make good on his promise would irreparably harm Brand’s re-election bid.

Making Your Voice Heard

An online survey is up and will be available through May 31. The survey asks residents about the qualities they want in the next chief and the issues he or she should address. I took it the other day, and you should, too. You can fill it out using the links below or by going to the city’s website. Five community meetings — one each of the city’s policing districts — begin Tuesday, April 23, and wrap up May 9. Brand and city manager Wilma Quan will attend the meetings, which will be led by community leaders residing in the district. Additionally, residents can voice their opinions at City Council district meetings over the next six weeks. Brand assured me the surveys and meetings aren’t window dressing for his campaign pledge. “We will collate all of the data and citizen input, and give it to our search firm,” Brand says. “The goal is for them to base a national search on our community’s needs."

“Replacing Jerry Dyer isn’t going to be easy. We need to look far and wide. Deputy chiefs and captains in our department are welcome to apply, but it will be a national search.” The search firm is Torrance-based Teri Black & Company, LLC. The company’s motto? “Building stronger communities one placement at a time. No other firm works harder and smarter to get it right.” We’ll see if they live up to that claim. Brand’s political future, to some degree, depends on it.

Finalists Interviews

Brand says the finalists will face “two or three panel interviews” this summer. Those panelists have yet to be determined. Asked what part the Fresno Police...
ARMENIAN GENOCIDE
RECOGNIZED IN FRESNO, BUT NOT AT WHITE HOUSE

April 24, 2019 | Bill McEwen

Almost universally, Armenians are dedicated to ensuring that the genocide of 1.5 million Armenians by the Ottoman Turks from 1915 through 1918 is acknowledged and never forgotten. But, for many Americans, it’s not a case of forgetting. They are completely unaware of the 20th century’s first genocide.

According to a nationwide survey conducted by Zogby Analytics in late 2015, only 35% of Americans knew that it happened. (Click on the video above to learn about the impact of the genocide on the lives of Valley residents.)

Trump Stops Short of Recognizing Armenian Genocide

President Donald Trump certainly is aware of the genocide, but like every president after Ronald Reagan, he refuses to officially recognize it. On Wednesday, the Day of Remembrance for Armenians in America and around the world, Trump stopped short of saying “genocide.” Instead, he called it “one of the worst mass atrocities of the 20th century.” His words were reminiscent of the phrase President Barack Obama used to describe what happened. Why do U.S. presidents pull their punches? Answer: They don’t want to incur the wrath of NATO ally Turkey. Israel also refuses to recognize the Armenian genocide for geopolitical reasons.

Reagan Stood Tall for Armenians

Reagan, however, had no reservations about calling out evil. He thought it was important for the world to know the death, destruction, and anguish inflicted on the Armenian people. “Like the genocide of the Armenians before it, and the genocide of the Cambodians which followed it — and like too many other such persecutions of too many other peoples — the lessons of the Holocaust must never be forgotten,” Reagan said, purposefully choosing his words.

California is one of 49 U.S. states that recognizes the Armenian genocide. On Wednesday, Gov. Gavin Newsom said in a statement, “Today and every day, let us recommit ourselves to making certain that we never forget the Armenian Genocide, and that we always speak out against hatred and atrocities anywhere they occur.” ValleyPBS (Ch. 18) will broadcast...

ARTIST SEES DISPARAGED IRAN IN A DIFFERED LIGHT

April 23, 2019 | Jamie Ouverson

A Fresno photographer says she was welcomed on a recent visit to Iran, despite the Trump administration’s campaign of economic sanctions against the country. Helen Gigliotti, a retired Fresno State biochemistry professor and administrator, spent two weeks in Iran last year. “We found a window in which things had settled down a bit in terms of the relationship between our countries,” she said. “The people were very genuine and friendly and welcoming. And they were particularly pleased when we declared that we were Americans.”

Gigliotti is a frequent international traveler. Her online portfolio includes images from dozens of trips to out-of-the-way places, including Sudan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Central Asia. “I particularly enjoy photographing the people, culture, wildlife, unique architecture, and the landscape of these distant lands,” her website biography says. Gigliotti’s photos are being showcased in an exhibition titled, “Iran: As I Saw It” at...
Objections to Loss of Parental Rights

Opponents of Pan’s bill, including members of parental rights and religious groups, doctors and alternative health-care practitioners, said the measure strips away parents’ rights and isn’t necessary to prevent outbreaks. “Now they’re going after us parents whose children have been injured by vaccines, and doctors as well,” said Christina Mecklenburg, who flew in from her Orange County home. “We can’t remain silent any more. Too many of our children are being injured.”

She said a vaccine last year left her now 2-year-old daughter, Hayden, cross-eyed with an ocular palsy that wouldn’t qualify for a medical exemption if Pan’s bill becomes law. Opponents who jammed the hearing room and nearby hallways criticized the bill and Pan in unusually personal and emotional terms, with several accusing him of “committing crimes against humanity.”

“Shame on you,” said another, while a third called the bill “evil” and urged him to “please, save your soul.”

Medical Professionals Voice Support

Dr. Sergio Flores, testifying in support of the bill on...
SACRAMENTO — California lawmakers advanced a proposal Wednesday to spur more housing near transportation and jobs and make it easier to turn single-family homes into four-plexes as the state grapples with a lack of affordable housing. The measure, a compromise between two Democratic senators, sets different requirements for small and large counties. Sens. Scott Wiener of San Francisco and Mike McGuire, who represents the coast from just north of San Francisco to the Oregon border, announced their plan at the start of Wednesday’s public hearing, giving advocates who came to testify little chance to digest the changes. “What works for downtown Los Angeles doesn’t work for a county of 600,000 or less,” McGuire said. “I’m also a believer that no community should see dramatic change, but every community should see some change. I do believe this bill is trying to strike that balance.” California has 3.5 million fewer homes than it needs, and prices are increasingly becoming out of reach for rents and potential homeowners. Lawmakers from both parties, developers and tenants alike are calling for changes, but there’s little agreement on what works best. Some tenant groups argued the proposal would fuel gentrification, while others...
WASHINGTON — Former Vice President Joe Biden formally joined the crowded Democratic presidential contest on Thursday, declaring the “soul of this nation” at stake if President Donald Trump wins re-election. In a video posted on Twitter, Biden focused on the 2017 deadly clash between white supremacists and counter protesters in Charlottesville, Virginia. Biden noted Trump’s comments that there were some “very fine people” on both sides of the violent encounter, which left one woman dead. “We are in the battle for the soul of this nation,” Biden said. “If we give Donald Trump eight years in the White House, he will forever and fundamentally alter the character of this nation — who we are. And I cannot stand by and watch that happen.”

The 76-year-old Biden becomes an instant front-runner alongside Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, who is leading many polls and has proved to be a successful fundraiser. Biden has legislative and international experience that is unmatched in the Democratic field, and he is among the best-known faces in U.S. politics. He quickly racked up endorsements on Thursday morning, becoming the first Democrat running for president with the backing of more than one U.S. senator. Still, Biden must compete in a field that now spans at least 20 Democrats and has been celebrated for its racial and gender diversity. As an older white man with occasionally centrist views, Biden has to prove he’s not out of step with his party. He’s yet to outline his positions on the issues defining the 2020 Democratic primary, most notably “Medicare for All,” the universal health care plan authored by Sanders that has been adopted by virtually the entire Democratic field. His critics in both major political parties were also quick to pounce.

Obama Took the Unusual Step of Weighing in on Thursday’s Announcement

“The old guard of the Democratic Party failed to stop Trump, and they can’t be counted on to lead the fight against his divide-and-conquer politics today,” the liberal group Justice Democrats tweeted. “The party needs new leadership with a bold vision capable of energizing voters in the Democratic base who stayed home in 2016.” Biden, a native of Scranton, Pennsylvania, is betting that his working class appeal and ties to Barack Obama’s presidency will help him win over such skeptics. Obama has declined to endorse Biden, however, and several former Obama aides are now working for other candidates.

“I asked President Obama not to endorse,” Biden told reporters as he arrived in Delaware Thursday. “Whoever wins this nomination should win it on their own merits.” While he hasn’t endorsed anyone in the crowded field, Obama took the unusual step of weighing in on Thursday’s announcement. “President Obama has long said that selecting Joe Biden as his running mate in 2008 was one of the best decisions he ever made,” Obama spokeswoman Katie Hill said. “He relied on the vice president’s knowledge, insight, and judgment throughout both campaigns and the entire presidency. The two forged a special bond over the last 10 years and remain close today.” Trump welcomed Biden to the campaign in a tweet calling him “Sleepy Joe.” “I only...
About two-thirds of Americans believe drug companies are to blame for the opioid crisis, although nearly as many hold drug users themselves responsible, a new poll finds. The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll showed many people also fault doctors who prescribed opioid pain pills and government officials who haven’t done enough to expand addiction treatment and arrest drug dealers. “All of the above,” said Anna Marie Davis, a casino security supervisor from Norwood, Pennsylvania. She said she has had to deal with overdoses at work and that her 27-year-old nephew, who used heroin and fentanyl, died of a drug overdose last year. “It’s pretty bad,” she said of the drug overdose problem. “I honestly don’t think they’re doing enough” to stop it, she added. The United States is in the midst of the deadliest drug overdose crisis in the nation’s history. More than 70,000 people died from drug overdoses in 2017. Nearly 48,000 involved some type of opioid, a category that includes heroin, fentanyl and prescription opioid painkillers. Experts say the...
NEW ZEALAND AND FRANCE TO CALL FOR AN END TO ONLINE TERROR

April 24, 2019 | AP News

WELLINGTON, New Zealand — New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said Wednesday that she and French President Emmanuel Macron will host a meeting in Paris next month seeking to eliminate acts of violent extremism and terrorism from being shown online. Ardern said she and Macron will ask world leaders and chief executives of technology companies to agree to a pledge called the “Christchurch Call,” named after the New Zealand city where dozens of people were killed in attacks on mosques last month.

Ardern didn’t release any details of the pledge, saying they were still being developed. She said she’d been talking with representatives from companies including Facebook, Twitter, Microsoft and Google along with world leaders and felt they could reach consensus by keeping the pledge tightly focused. “This isn’t about freedom of speech,” Ardern said. “It’s specifically focused on eradicating those extreme acts of terrorism online.”

In his op-ed, Zuckerberg didn’t directly address problems with livestreaming, although he did say it was impossible to remove all harmful content from the internet.

Related Story: Law Enforcement Faces Dilemma in Assessing Online Threats

Ardern said Macron had played a leadership role among the Group of Seven major economies in trying to eliminate online terrorism, and his role would complement her experience from the recent Christchurch attacks when they co-chair the May 15 meeting.

Facebook founder and chief executive Mark Zuckerberg called for governments and regulators to play a more active role from in policing the internet. “As part of this, we have a responsibility to keep people safe on our services,” Zuckerberg wrote. “That means deciding what counts as terrorist propaganda, hate speech and more. We continually review our policies with experts, but at our scale we’ll always make mistakes and decisions that people disagree with.”

Ardern said Macron had played a leadership role among the Group of Seven major economies in trying to eliminate online terrorism, and his role would complement her experience from the recent Christchurch attacks when they co-chair the May 15 meeting.
US GIVES EXEMPTIONS TO SANCTIONS ON IRAN REVOLUTIONARY GUARD

April 24, 2019 | AP News

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration on Wednesday granted important exemptions to new sanctions on Iran’s Revolutionary Guard, watering down the effects of the measures while also eliminating an aspect that would have complicated U.S. foreign policy efforts.

Foreign governments and businesses that have dealings with the Revolutionary Guard and its affiliates will not be subject to a ban on U.S. travel under waivers outlined by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in two notices published in the Federal Register. That weakens the effect of the measures and will frustrate members of Congress backing tough measures against Iran who are already concerned that the Trump administration won’t fully enforce sanctions on Iranian oil. But it lifts the threat that those who work with the U.S. in Iraq and Lebanon, where the Guard’s many subsidiaries are active, will face the full weight of American penalties.

The waivers leave intact sanctions that apply directly to Iran’s Revolutionary Guard and its proxies, which are the first agencies of a foreign government that have ever been designated a foreign terrorist organization by the United States. The designation, which took effect April 15, is part of a broader administration effort to increase pressure on...