CRITIC OF ISRAEL’S TREATMENT OF PALESTINIANS SPEAKS IN FRESNO »

NEWSOM ROCKS THE GIG ECONOMY, SIGNS AB 5 LABOR BILL »

NANCY PELOSI UNVEILS AMBITIOUS PLAN TO LOWER DRUG PRICES »
America’s foreign policy in Israel is being guided by neoconservatives whose plan is to build up Israel while destabilizing nearby countries — and American tax dollars are helping to pay for it, author Alison Weir said Wednesday evening at Clovis Community College.

Weir, a longtime critic of Israel’s treatment of Palestinians, said the U.S. spends more than $10 million each day in support of Israel. Weir’s appearance at a packed auditorium at the northeast Fresno college campus was hosted by GV Wire as part of an ongoing speaker series. She came to Fresno in May as the keynote speaker at a Fresno Center for Nonviolence event.

Visit to Mideast Was a Life-Changer
Weir, a journalist and researcher, founded the research institute If Americans Knew after visiting Palestine and Israel 18 years ago and seeing what Palestinians are subjected to — and what’s often not reported by the U.S. media. Weir provided a historical context for how the state of Israel was created in land once ruled by the Ottoman Empire and then later by the British Empire, and how U.S. Supreme Court justices and other high-ranking American officials worked behind the scenes to ensure U.S. support for a Jewish state.

How Palestinians Became Refugees
Wednesday’s audience ranged from 18-year-old Clovis College student Reem Bali and her friend, Sabreen Qass, 17, to 91-year-old Munzer Affifi of Fresno, whose Palestinian family was forced from their home in Jaffa during the formation of the state of Israel after World War II. Affifi said his family lost property when they were forced from their homeland in what Weir refers to as “ethnic cleansing.” “They stole our house, and they didn’t reimburse,” he said. Asked if he had ever been back since, Affifi said, “I wouldn’t go back and give them a cent of my money.”

Bali said she and Qass came to hear Weir’s speech to stand up for their homeland of Palestine. She said she thinks many people are unaware of what is happening there, “the killings, the settlements.”
Fresno County loves Jose Ramirez, and the champ feels the same way. The WBO/WBC super lightweight world champion watched as a statue of his likeness was unveiled at the Fresno County Historical Museum inside the Big Fresno Fair on Tuesday morning. For a man who said he was speechless, Ramirez followed with many emotional words.

“When I was a kid, I wanted the belt, big houses, I wanted cars. The older I got, my only goal was to inspire. To motivate people,” Ramirez said, voice cracking. “To let them know that everything is possible. To work hard, stay in the right lane. This for me, honestly, it makes me feel like you guys are paying attention. It makes me feel like you guys are thankful for all the sacrifices I’ve done.”

He also talked about how the farmworkers in his Kings County hometown of Avenal inspired him to fight for water and adopt his “Immigrant and Proud” mantra. Fresno artist Debbie Stevenson spent a year’s worth of weekends creating the life-sized statue. It started with photos of Ramirez. Fair CEO John Alkire joked she shot him in the nude. Stevenson said this...

September 17, 2019 | David Taub

FRESNO CONSIDERS DOWNTOWN PROJECT. NEIGHBOR NOT SO SURE.

September 18, 2019 | David Taub

Developer Terance Frazier’s long-envisioned downtown Fresno entertainment and housing venture will be presented to the city’s planning commission for approval Wednesday (Sept. 18). The H Street Development is slated to include restaurants, bars, and other entertainment venues, such as a music stage and a bowling alley. The project will also feature 48 one- and two-bedroom apartments.

The property is located on the east side of H Street, between Inyo and Mono streets, across the street from Chukchansi Park. The project has at least one opponent. Clark Bros. sent the city a letter, concerned with parking, trash, and allegations of illegal drug use among other complaints. In the official protest letter, Clark Bros., a contracting company with a nearby location, attached pictures taken at the Frazier-organized Alley Wave event, held earlier this year in buildings he owns adjacent to the proposed location. The company’s president, Lawrence Clark, alleges the photos show illegal marijuana use and underage...

September 18, 2019 | David Taub

CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL GOES ALL IN WITH 128-BED MENTAL HEALTH UNIT

A new hospital is coming to the Central Valley dedicated to behavioral health services. Valley Children’s Healthcare announced Wednesday a partnership with Universal Health Services creating more beds for behavioral health services for both children and adults. VCH officials say the new facility will increase pediatrician behavioral health access by 49%.

“That is a profound, profound investment and additional capability to take care of our kids, and keep more kids home in the Valley and have better access to behavioral mental health services right here. Not in the Bay Area, (not in) Southern California,” Valley Children’s President and CEO Todd Suntrapak said.

During the announcement at Valley Children’s main hospital attended by hundreds of medical staff and local leaders, Suntrapak said. After the announcement at Valley Children’s main hospital attended by hundreds of medical staff and local leaders, Suntrapak and others cited the need for more services. According to The Treatment Advocacy Center recommendations, the goal is to have one behavioral inpatient bed for every 2,000 people...
CalMatters would allow them to form a union, because the National Labor Relations Board still considers gig workers to be independent contractors. “I will convene leaders from the Legislature, the labor movement, and the business community to support innovation and a more inclusive economy by stepping in where the federal government has fallen short,” Newsom wrote in his signing statement.

**Related Story:** Did California Just Kill the Gig Economy?

**Patterson Criticizes Signing**

Assemblyman Jim Patterson (R-Fresno) criticized Newsom signing the bill. “He just sentenced millions of Californians, stripping away from them, the opportunity to use their labor, to work in circumstances and situations that suit their time and their desires. It is, honestly, an attack on freedom,” Patterson said. He also is...

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**NEWSOM ROCKS THE GIG ECONOMY, SIGNS AB 5 LABOR BILL**

Septmber 18, 2019 | AP News

SACRAMENTO — Gov. Gavin Newsom on Wednesday signed sweeping labor legislation that aims to give wage and benefit protections to California rideshare drivers at companies like Uber and Lyft and to workers across other industries. The closely watched proposal could have national implications as lawmakers, businesses and unions confront the changing nature of work and the rise of the so-called gig economy. “California is now setting the global standard for worker protections for other states and countries to follow,” Democratic Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez, the author of Assembly Bill 5, said in a statement.

**Higher Standard for Independent Contractors**

The legislation makes it harder for companies to classify workers as independent contractors instead of employees, who are entitled to minimum wage and benefits like workers compensation. While it affects up to a million workers, according to Gonzalez, its effect on ridesharing and meal delivery companies has seized the spotlight. Uber, Lyft, and DoorDash are pushing Newsom to come up with a third option for gig companies and have threatened to spend $90 million on a 2020 ballot measure if they are not successful.

**Newsom Wants Gig Workers to Have Collective Bargaining**

Newsom, for his part, said he wants to keep negotiating with labor and business leaders to ensure that gig workers can collectively bargain. There’s been a dispute over whether giving them employee status in California would allow them to form a union, because the National Labor Relations Board still considers gig workers to be independent contractors. “I will convene leaders from the Legislature, the labor movement, and the business community to support innovation and a more inclusive economy by stepping in where the federal government has fallen short,” Newsom wrote in his signing statement.

**Uber Says It’s Prepared to Defend Its Model**

Uber general counsel Tony West has suggested Uber will not automatically start treating its drivers as employees come Jan. 1 and defend its current model if it faces legal challenges. Uber and Lyft have offered to give employees a base hourly wage, access to benefits and a right to bargain across the industry. “We’ve engaged in good faith with the Legislature, the Newsom administration and labor leaders for nearly a year on this issue, and we believe California is missing a real opportunity to lead the nation by improving the quality, security, and dignity of independent work,” Uber spokesman Davis White said in a statement.

**Related Story:** Will New California Labor Bill Affect WWE Wrestlers?

**Related Story:** Did California Just Kill the Gig Economy?

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UC President Janet Napolitano Announces Plans to Step Down

September 18, 2019 | AP News

SAN FRANCISCO — University of California President Janet Napolitano announced Wednesday she will step down in August 2020. Napolitano made the announcement at a meeting of the university’s Board of Regents in Los Angeles. "My time at UC has been deeply gratifying and rewarding. I have been honored and inspired every day to serve this institution alongside incredibly dedicated, passionate people," Napolitano said in a statement. "The decision was tough — and this moment, bittersweet — but the time is right." Her statement did not elaborate on reasons for her departure. A former U.S. secretary of homeland security and Democratic governor of Arizona, Napolitano became the first woman to lead the 10-campus University of California system in September 2013. Napolitano, 61, has battled a recurrence of breast cancer over the years. During her tenure as UC president, Napolitano has overseen an expansion of the university system, enrolling historic numbers of students, supporting the rights of immigrant students and reforming policies on sexual misconduct.

She also faced criticism after a state audit found problems with her office’s financial management and said that Napolitano had improperly interfered in the audit to tone down...
WASHINGTON — Putting her stamp on the health care issue that worries consumers the most, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on Thursday unveiled an ambitious plan to lower drug prices for seniors on Medicare and younger people with private insurance. Pelosi, D-Calif., would empower Medicare to negotiate prices for up to 250 of the costliest drugs, including insulin. Pharmaceutical companies that refuse to negotiate could face steep penalties.

Additionally, drugmakers that hike prices beyond inflation would have to pay rebates to Medicare. The plan would limit copays for seniors covered by Medicare's “Part D” prescription drug program to $2,000. And Medicare-negotiated prices would be available to other buyers, such as employer health plans.

As a candidate, Trump backed Medicare negotiations. But after Trump was elected president, he seemed to revert to the traditional Republican position that price negotiations are best left to private players like insurance companies. With tens of billions of dollars in profits at stake, drugmakers are determined to block any major changes to payment policies. But the industry's powerful lobbying group, the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, has been taking fire from all sides, from liberal Democrats to pro-business Republicans. Trump once accused drug companies of "getting away with murder."

Pelosi’s Proposal Would:

- Authorize Medicare to negotiate prices for up to 250 drugs with the greatest total cost to the program and the U.S. health care system. That includes pharmacy drugs covered through the popular “Part D” prescription benefit, along with “Part B” medications dispensed in doctors’ offices, which covers many cancer drugs.
- Medicare would negotiate for as many drugs as possible, but no fewer than 25 annually. The maximum price would be determined using a blend of international prices, similar to a more limited proposal from the Trump administration. Insulin would be included.

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Movement in Congress comes at a time when criticism of the industry — from Trump and lawmakers of both parties — appears to be having an effect on prices. President Donald Trump appears eager to sign prescription drug legislation and lower costs, but most Republicans oppose the Medicare negotiations that are the centerpiece of Pelosi’s plan. The 2003 law that created Medicare’s prescription drug benefit barred the program from negotiating prices, a restriction Democrats have long opposed.

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- Medicare would negotiate for as many drugs as possible, but no fewer than 25 annually. The maximum price would be determined using a blend of international prices, similar to a more limited proposal from the Trump administration. Insulin would be included. Drug companies that balk at making a deal would face...
WASHINGTON — Most Americans are at least somewhat confident that the world will step up in its fight against global warming — but there are limits to their optimism. That’s according to a new poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research that also shows most think their own actions can make a difference.

About 7 in 10 Americans think it is at least moderately likely the world will take action in the next decade to reduce emissions of heat-trapping carbon dioxide and other gases, but only about 3 in 10 think that’s very likely to happen, according to the August poll. Two-thirds of those polled said they think pollution reduction would have at least some impact in preventing future warming, but only about a quarter think it would do a lot to keep climate change at bay. About 3 in 10 Americans overall think even if emissions are cut back significantly it will do little or nothing to stop climate change.

"I worry for my children and my grandchildren and for the future and what they have in store for them," said Vickie Jackson, of Aydlett, North Carolina. "I don't think it's going to get any better, unfortunately. It would take everybody to really...

A sharply divided Federal Reserve cut its key benchmark interest rate for a second time this year while saying Wednesday that it’s prepared to continue doing what it deems necessary to sustain the U.S. economic expansion. The Fed’s move will reduce its benchmark rate by an additional quarter-point to a range of 1.75% to 2%. The Fed’s key rate influences many consumer and business loans.

Two Officials Wanted Interest Rate to Stay Put

The action was approved on a 7-3 vote, with two officials wanting to keep rates unchanged and one arguing for a bigger half-point cut. It was the largest number of Fed dissents in three years. The economy appears durable in its 11th year of growth, with a still-solid job market and steady consumer spending. But the Fed is trying to combat threats including uncertainties caused by President Donald Trump’s trade war with China, slower global growth and a slump in American...
DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Any attack on Iran by the U.S. or Saudi Arabia will spark an “all-out war,” Tehran’s top diplomat warned Thursday, raising the stakes as Washington and Riyadh weigh a response to a drone-and-missile strike on the kingdom’s oil industry that shook global energy markets. The comments by Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif represented the starkest warning yet by Iran in a long summer of mysterious attacks and incidents following the collapse of Iran’s 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, more than a year after President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the U.S. from the accord. They appeared to be aimed directly at U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who while on a trip to the region earlier referred to Saturday’s attack in Saudi Arabia as an “act of war.”

Along with the sharp language, however, there also were signals from both sides of wanting to avoid a confrontation. In his comments, Zarif sought to expose current strains between the Americans and the Saudis under Trump, who long has criticized U.S. wars in the Middle East. Trump’s close relationship with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has been challenged by opponents following the killing of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi last year in the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul and the kingdom’s long, bloody war in Yemen. That country’s Houthi rebels claimed the oil field attack Saturday in Saudi Arabia, although the U.S. alleges Iran carried it out.

Pompeo Hoped Iran Would Choose Peace
“I think it is important for the Saudi government to understand what they’re trying to achieve. Do they want to fight Iran until the last American soldier? Is that their aim? They can be assured that this won’t be the case … because Iran will defend itself.”
— Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif

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IRAN ENVOY: ‘ALL-OUT WAR’ TO RESULT IF HIT FOR SAUDI ATTACK

September 19, 2019 | AP News

Pompeo Hoped Iran Would Choose Peace
“I think it is important for the Saudi government to understand what they’re trying to achieve. Do they want to fight Iran until the last American soldier? Is that their aim?” Zarif asked in a CNN interview. “They can be assured that this won’t be the case … because Iran will defend itself.” Asked by the broadcaster what would be the consequence of a U.S. or Saudi strike, Zarif bluntly said: “An all-out war.” “I’m making a very serious statement that we don’t want war. We don’t want to engage in a military confrontation,” he said. “We believe that a military confrontation based on deception is awful.”

Zarif added: “We’ll have a lot of casualties, but we won’t blink to defend our territory.” Pompeo, who was in the United Arab Emirates, dismissed Zarif’s remarks, saying: “I was here (doing) active diplomacy while the foreign minister of Iran is threatening all-out war to fight to the last American.” Pompeo said he hoped Iran would choose a path toward peace, but he remained doubtful. He described “an enormous consensus in the region” that Iran carried out the attack. “There are still those today who think, ‘Boy, if we just give Iran just a little bit more money they’ll become a peaceful nation,’” he said. “We can see that that does not work.” Pompeo met Abu Dhabi’s powerful crown prince, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. The UAE is a close ally of Saudi Arabia and joined the kingdom in its war with the Houthi rebels in Yemen. The 4-year-old war has killed tens of thousands of people and destroyed much of the country, with millions more driven from their homes and thrown into near starvation. On Wednesday, Pompeo met with the Saudi crown prince in Jiddah about the attack on the kingdom’s crucial oil processing facility and oil field, which cut its oil production in half...
CANADA’S TRUDEAU FACES FUROR OVER BROWNFACE PHOTO FROM 2001

September 19, 2019 | AP News

TORONTO — Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s campaign moved to contain a growing scandal Thursday after a yearbook photo surfaced of him in brownface at a 2001 “Arabian Nights” costume party and two other similar incidents came to light. With the election a month away, he apologized and begged Canadians to forgive him.

Time magazine published the photo on Wednesday, saying it was taken from the yearbook from the West Point Grey Academy, a private school in British Columbia where Trudeau worked as a teacher before entering politics. It shows the then-29-year-old Trudeau in a turban and robe with dark makeup on his hands, face and neck. Trudeau, who launched his re-election campaign a week ago, said he should have known better. “I’m pissed off at myself. I’m disappointed in myself,” he told reporters on his campaign plane. Trudeau is scheduled to take questions from the press later Thursday.

Trudeau is the latest in a string of politicians to get in trouble over racially offensive photos and actions from their younger days. Earlier this year, Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam faced intense pressure to resign after a racist picture surfaced from his 1984 medical school yearbook page. He denied being in the picture but admitted wearing blackface as a young man...

UK TOP COURT AIMS TO RULE NEXT WEEK ON PARLIAMENT SHUTDOWN

September 19, 2019 | AP News

LONDON — British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was accused by one of the country’s former leaders of obstructing Parliament by shutting down the legislature for five weeks, as a landmark Brexit case at the U.K. Supreme Court came to a head on Thursday. Meanwhile, the European Union and Britain announced new talks on an elusive divorce deal, even as they squabbled over whether or not the U.K. had brought any new ideas to the table.

The U.K.’s top court must decide whether Johnson broke the law by sending lawmakers home just weeks before the country is due to leave the EU on Oct. 31. At the end of a three-day hearing the court’s president, Brenda Hale, said the 11 judges would give their ruling early next week. Opponents of the government claim Johnson shut Parliament until Oct. 14 to prevent lawmakers scrutinizing his plan to take Britain out of the EU at the end of next month, with or without a divorce deal. They also accuse the prime minister of...

RIVALS JOCKEY OVER FORMING NEXT ISRAELI GOVERNMENT

September 19, 2019 | AP News

JERUSALEM — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu invited his political rival Benny Gantz to join a unity government with him and his religious allies on Thursday, an offer that was greeted coolly amid continued deadlock following this week’s election. The deadlock has already raised speculation about a possible third election in the coming months, just two days after an unprecedented repeat vote left the country’s two main political parties with no clear path to a coalition government.

While weeks of negotiations to form a coalition government lay ahead, conditions set by the parties could hobble the task within the allotted time, forcing another election. With nearly all votes counted Thursday, the centrist Blue and White party stood at 33 seats in Israel’s 120-seat parliament. Netanyahu’s conservative Likud stood at 31 seats. Neither party, however, can muster a majority coalition of 61 seats with...

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