NUNES DROPS LOCAL LAWSUIT, FILES AGAINST FUSION GPS INSTEAD »
NEWSOM’S CALIFORNIA VACCINE BILL CHANGE SURPRISES BACKERS »
WALMART TO STOP SELLING CERTAIN GUN AMMUNITION »
The campaign of congressman Devin Nunes withdrew a lawsuit filed against four people it accused of conspiracy and interfering with campaign business because they challenged his ballot designation as a “farmer” in 2018. The attorney representing three of the four defendants expressed joy over the news. “A David and Goliath story, without David ever firing a shot,” attorney Brian Whelan of Fresno said in an email.

Nunes’ Lawsuit
On Aug. 1, the Nunes campaign filed suit against Whelan’s clients Paul Buxman, Hope Nisly, and Daniel O’Connell, along with Michael Seeley. They were accused of conspiracy and interfering with prospective economic and/or contractual relations. The defendants attempted to have Nunes’ “farmer” designation removed from the ballot. However, the Secretary of State’s office sided with Nunes.

As of Sept. 3, the campaign filed a motion with the Tulare County court requesting the suit be dismissed without prejudice. “With this failed Nunes lawsuit, the congressman had attempted to undermine rights to free speech, rights to petition the government, and the right to petition the courts,” Whelan said. “With the Nunes lawsuit, Mr. Nunes made a statement that these important rights were to be disregarded when applied to the very powerful.” “Through standing at the ready to fight back, Paul Buxman, Hope Nisly, and Daniel O’Connell told Mr. Nunes and others that these inviolate rights apply to all people in this great country, irrespective of political party, creed, color, walk-of-life, national origin, political power (or lack thereof), etc.”

Dismissal Motivations
The campaign’s attorney, Peter Kapetan, said the lawsuit was dismissed because they could not find Seeley to properly serve him. Also, Kapetan said Nunes’ other legal team based in Virginia filed a federal lawsuit there incorporating some of the same conspiracy themes from the Tulare County lawsuit. “Based on new evidence that the attorneys uncovered, they decided to file a federal RICO violations lawsuit,” Kapetan said. “It’s going to incorporate many of the facts and allegations that underlie the Tulare County lawsuit.”

BuzzFeed News reporter Zoe Tillman posted a link to the suit on Twitter, which lists Fusion GPS as a defendant. Kapetan said that the Tulare County defendants will not be named in the pending Virginia federal lawsuit. Nunes also has a separate lawsuit in a Virginia state court against Twitter, McClatchy (owner of The Fresno Bee), and some Twitter accounts that were critical of the congressman. A judge’s ruling on that case is pending.

Related Story: This Is the Farmer Devin Nunes’ Campaign Is Suing. He’s Praying for His ...
A Fresno County Superior Court judge has sided with a taxpayers advocate group's contention that a Fresno parks sales tax measure failed. Judge Kimberly Gaab issued the ruling Thursday, agreeing with the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association and against Fresno Building Healthy Communities.

Fresno voters backed Measure P in November 2018 with a 52% majority. It was understood then that the proposal needed two-thirds approval to go into effect. But a Supreme Court ruling gave hope to the parks tax advocates that 50% plus one vote was sufficient for adoption. Measure P would have raised the city's sales tax three-eighths of a cent exclusively for parks and related programs.

“We are delighted with the Fresno decision,” said Jon Coupal, president of HJTA. “Judge Gaab understood the issues and was not swayed by the judge in San Francisco.” Coupal referenced a similar case in the Bay Area.

**Two-Thirds vs. Simple Majority**

At issue was whether a sales tax that went for a specific purpose needed two-thirds or a simple majority to pass. Prior interpretations of Proposition 13 and Proposition 218 meant such taxes needed the supermajority. The rules are different depending on what method is used to place a proposal on the ballot — by a vote of a governing body or by voter petition. But, a 2017 Supreme Court case confused the issue, leading to challenges for tax measures on the 2018 ballot in California, like Measure P. In the 2017 Upland case, the court ruled there is a distinction involving the timing of the ballot measure if it is brought forth by voter petition. Fresno BHC, technically the defendant in the Measure P court case, argued that the...
SACRAMENTO — Medical groups and a lawmaker behind California legislation to crack down on vaccine exemptions said Wednesday they were surprised by Gov. Gavin Newsom’s last-minute call for changes to the bill, a move that inserted fresh uncertainty into one of the year’s most contentious issues. It was the second time the Democratic governor sought to change the measure aimed at doctors who sell fraudulent medical exemptions for students, a proposal vehemently opposed by anti-vaccine activists.

After expressing hesitancy with the bill and winning substantial changes to the measure in June, Newsom had committed to signing it. After it passed out of the Senate on Wednesday, advocates said they still expect him to sign it, even as opponents target Newsom and his wife, Jennifer Siebel Newsom, urging a veto. Leaders of Vaccinate California and the American Academy of Pediatrics, California, both sponsors of the bill, said Newsom’s office hadn’t communicated with them about the changes, which he announced in a tweet Tuesday and is likely to seek through a second piece of legislation.

“I don’t think any of them, from the bullets I saw, are needed. I’m puzzled why the governor says he has broad support for them when I literally saw them for the first time in a tweet last night, and I’m one of the sponsors,” said Leah Russin, Vaccinate California’s executive director, who added Newsom’s office hadn’t responded to her request for a meeting. The California Medical Association, the third major sponsor, also likes the bill without Newsom’s last minute proposed amendments but hadn’t seen any details beyond his tweet.

Related Story: How Valley Lawmakers Voted on Vaccine Exemption Bill

Opportunities for additional changes are limited, as lawmakers must wrap business for the year by Sept...
CALIFORNIA BANS FUR TRAPPING FOR RECREATION, COMMERCE

SACRAMENTO — California on Wednesday became the first state to ban commercial fur trapping, ending the practice nearly 200 years after animals like beavers and otters introduced the American West to international trade.

Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom said Wednesday he had signed a bill into law making it illegal to trap animals for the purposes of recreation or to sell their fur. It is still legal to trap animals for other purposes, including pest control and public health. Before the gold rush put California on the map, it was fur traders who first flocked to then far-flung Mexican territory in search of the area’s plentiful population of beavers, minks and badgers. The so-called fur rush made fur trappers a recognizable symbol of the Old West. But in recent years, California licenses for fur trappers have declined considerably. In 2018, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife said it sold 133 licenses, leading to the harvest of 1,568 animals and the sale of 1,241 pelts.

A legislative analysis of the bill noted most furs are sold outside of California, with data suggesting there have been no fur sales in the state for the past three years. Meanwhile, the state has issued about 500 trapping licenses a year for pest control and other uses. People who trap animals for those...
NEW YORK — Walmart says it will discontinue the sale of handgun and short-barrel rifle ammunition and also publicly request that customers refrain from openly carrying firearms in stores even where state laws allow it. The announcement comes just days after a mass shooting claimed seven lives in Odessa, Texas and follows two other back-to-back shootings last month, one of them at a Walmart store.

The Bentonville, Arkansas-based discounter said Tuesday it will stop handgun ammunition as well as short-barrel rifle ammunition, such as the .223 caliber and 5.56 caliber used in military style weapons, after it runs out of its current inventory.

It will also discontinue handgun sales in Alaska.

Related Story: Texas Mass Shooting: Gunman Identified; Death Toll Rises to 8, Including

“We have a long heritage as a company of serving responsible hunters and sportsmen and women, and we’re going to continue doing so,” — Walmart’s CEO Doug McMillon

Walmart stopped selling handguns in the mid-1990s, with the exception of Alaska. The latest move marks its complete exit from that business and allows it to focus on hunting rifles and related ammunition only.

Reducing Its Market Share of Ammunition

Last month, a gunman entered a Walmart store in El Paso, Texas, killing 22 people with an AK-style firearm that Walmart already bans the sale of and marking the deadliest shooting in the company’s history. Texas became an open carry state in 2016, allowing people to openly carry firearms in public.

Related Story: How the El Paso Killer Echoed the Incendiary Words of Conservative Media Stars

Walmart’s moves will reduce its market share of ammunition from around 20% to a range of about 6% to 9%, according to Tuesday’s memo. About half of its more than 4,750 U.S. stores sell firearms. The nation’s largest retailer has been facing increasing pressure to change its gun policies by gun control activists, employees and politicians after the El Paso shooting and a second unrelated shooting in Dayton, Ohio that killed nine people. A few days before that, two Walmart workers were killed by another worker at a store in Southaven, Mississippi. In the aftermath of the El Paso shooting, Walmart ordered workers to remove video game signs and displays that depict violence from stores nationwide.

But that fell well short of demands for the retailer to stop selling firearms entirely. Critics have also wanted Walmart to stop supporting politicians backed by the National Rifle Association. At least one gun control activist group applauded Walmart’s moves. “Walmart deserves enormous credit for joining the strong and growing majority of Americans who know that we have...
WASHINGTON — The Pentagon will cut funding from military projects like schools, target ranges and maintenance facilities to pay for the construction of 175 miles of fencing along the U.S.-Mexico border, diverting a total $3.6 billion to President Donald Trump's long-promised barrier.

Projects in 23 states, 19 countries and three U.S. territories would be stalled or killed by the plan, though just $1.1 billion in cuts would strike the continental U.S., according to a list released Wednesday by the Pentagon. Almost $700 million would come from projects in U.S. territories, including Puerto Rico, with another $1.8 billion coming from projects on overseas bases. Trump’s move would take the biggest step yet in delivering on his promise to build a wall to block immigrants from entering the country illegally.

But it may come at the expense of projects that the Pentagon acknowledged may be difficult to fund anew. Capitol Hill Democrats, outraged over Trump’s use of an emergency order for the wall, promised they won’t approve money to revive them. A senior defense official told reporters the Pentagon is having conversations with members of Congress...

September 5, 2019 | AP News

WASHINGTON — U.S. services expanded at a stronger pace in August, driven by an uptick in business activity and new orders. The Institute for Supply Management, an association of purchasing managers, said Thursday that its non-manufacturing index rose to 56.4 from 53.7 in July after two months of cooler growth. Readings above 50 signal growth, and the US services sector has been expanding for 115 months.

Services make up the bulk of US economic activity, so the results are a reassuring signal of continued economic strength. While services companies surveyed express their concern over tariffs and geopolitical uncertainty, they appear so far to have avoided the challenges faced by the manufacturing sector. The ISM manufacturing index released Tuesday reported the sector shrinking for the first time in three years. Paul Ashworth, chief economist at Capital Economics said...

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YOUTUBE TO PAY $170M FINE AFTER VIOLATING KIDS’ PRIVACY LAW

WASHINGTON — Google’s video site YouTube has been fined $170 million to settle allegations it collected children’s personal data without their parents’ consent. The Federal Trade Commission fined Google $136 million. The company will pay an additional $34 million to New York state to resolve similar allegations.

The fine is the largest the agency has leveled against Google, although it is tiny compared with the $5 billion fine the FTC imposed against Facebook this year for privacy violations. The FTC has been investigating YouTube for the way it handles the data of kids under 13. Young children are protected by a federal law that requires parental consent before companies can collect and share their personal information. YouTube has said its service is intended for ages 13 and older, although younger kids commonly watch videos on the site and many popular YouTube channels feature cartoons...

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WASHINGTON — The Trump administration official tasked with developing a plan to bring peace between Israel and the Palestinians is leaving the White House. Jason Greenblatt, Trump's special representative for international negotiations, will depart the administration in the coming weeks, the White House said Thursday. The former Trump Organization lawyer had been leading the effort to devise the oft-delayed peace plan. His departure casts further doubt on the proposal’s future. The White House says the peace plan is complete but will not be released until at least after this month’s Israeli elections. The plan already is facing rejection by Palestinian officials, who object to strengthening ties between the U.S. and Israel.

In a tweet, President Donald Trump thanked Greenblatt for his service and said that Greenblatt’s “dedication to Israel and to seeking peace between Israel and the Palestinians won’t be forgotten.” He said Greenblatt is pursuing work in the private sector. Greenblatt worked in concert with White House senior adviser Jared Kushner, the president’s son-in-law, on the plan. Kushner praised Greenblatt and said “work has helped develop the relationships between Israel and its neighbors as he is trusted and respected by all of the leaders throughout the region.”

The Team’s Only Visible Accomplishment
Greenblatt advocated for decisions to relocate the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem and recognize Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights — moves that drew skepticism from Palestinians and Arab nations. Apart from alienating the Palestinian leadership and securing the tacit support from some Gulf Arab states, the team’s only visible accomplishment has been the release of an ambitious $50 billion economic proposal for the West Bank, Gaza and Palestinian communities in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon. That plan was rolled out in a workshop in Bahrain this year that was boycotted by the Palestinian Authority. Despite the plan’s lofty goals, no money for the projects it envisions has been secured.

Greenblatt had stepped up his public engagement before the announcement of the economic plan, but it was perhaps most notable for criticizing Palestinian leaders on Twitter for their rejection of the proposal and the as-yet unseen political portion of the peace plan.

The Peace Effort Initially Operated Largely in Isolation From the Rest of the U.S.
In contrast to Democratic and Republican predecessors, the White House has stopped promoting a two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinians and avoided condemning Israeli settlement expansion on occupied lands. The Jerusalem move, followed by cuts of hundreds of millions of dollars in aid, prompted the Palestinians to sever most ties with the U.S. Nabil Abu Rdeneh, spokesman for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, said the Palestinians will “shed no tears” over Greenblatt’s departure. “He ruined the credibility of the United States and destroyed the peace process,” Abu Rdeneh said. The White House peace effort initially operated largely in isolation from the rest of the U.S. foreign policy apparatus. But as Greenblatt’s departure has approached, the White House has begun integrating it with the State Department’s Iran team. Greenblatt’s role is expected to be assumed by Kushner aide Avi Berkowitz and Brian Hook, the State...
LONDON — British Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s bad week got even worse Thursday when younger brother Jo walked away from his government post over their differing stances on Brexit. It was clearly a difficult decision for Jo Johnson, who had returned to government as an education minister when his big brother replaced Theresa May as prime minister in July.

Jo Johnson had quit May’s government last year and argued that Britain should have another vote over its decision to leave the European Union. His pro-European credentials stood at odds with those of his brother’s, who became prime minister on a pledge to leave the EU by the Oct. 31 Brexit deadline come what may. Jo Johnson — who, like his brother, has prominent blond hair — also said he will step down from Parliament rather than compete at the next election. He said he was “torn between family loyalty and the national interest” and came to the conclusion that it was time for someone else to fill his shoes in Parliament and in the government.

The illustrious Johnson family is deeply divided over the wisdom of leaving the EU. Boris Johnson played a key cheer-leading role in the 2016 Brexit referendum, helping...