TRUMP PLAN DELIVERS MORE WATER FOR VALLEY FARMERS »
WALTERS: NEWSOM FUMBLES ON TRANSPORTATION »
TRAGEDIES DEEPEN JEWISH–MUSLIM BONDS TO FIGHT HATE CRIMES »
The Trump administration unveiled a new plan Tuesday to govern California’s water usage that would deliver more irrigation water for Valley farmers. But the proposal is ringing alarms from environmental groups that say it would have a negative impact on endangered species such as salmon and delta smelt. An analysis by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service, however, says the plan “will not jeopardize threatened or endangered species.” The plan includes spending $1.5 billion to support endangered fish such as the delta smelt.

The government would also monitor rivers for endangered fish, with commitments to reduce pumping when they are present. Basically, the plan would give water agencies more flexibility on how much water they can pump out of the state’s rivers. When it’s raining a lot, agencies can pump more. When it’s dry, they would pump less.

Environmental Groups Say Plan Won’t Work
Doug Obegi at the Natural Resources Defense Council says the monitoring programs won’t work because endangered fish species populations are too small. He predicted that environmentalists will challenge the Trump administration plan in court. "It looks like this administration is trying to shut us down again — permanently," said Obegi, senior attorney for the NRDC. John McManus, president of the Golden State Salmon Association, told The Sacramento Bee: "It looks like this administration is trying to shut us down again — permanently."

Where Does Newsom Stand?
It’s unclear how Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom’s administration will respond to the new rules. His office didn’t provide comment on Tuesday. The Democratic-controlled Legislature passed a law earlier this year seeking to block a lot of these changes. But Newsom vetoed Senate Bill 1 last month after intense lobbying from water agencies. Related Story:
Editorial: SB 1 Is the Same Bad Legislation in a New Dress
What Feinstein, Valley Dems Say
Five California lawmakers — all Democrats — released a joint statement Tuesday saying that the previous monitoring programs, or biological opinions, relied on old science. However, they stopped short of backing the Trump proposal, saying it needed to be scientifically vetted by the state. Said Sen. Dianne Feinstein and Reps. John Garamendi, Josh Harder, Jim Costa, and TJ Cox: “The Endangered Species Act requires periodic reviews to determine the best available science. The federal government’s science for Chinook salmon and Delta smelt was more than a decade old and needed to be updated, especially given climate change.

“We are examining the new biological opinions to ensure they incorporate the adaptive management and real-time monitoring needed to properly manage the Central Valley Project for the benefit of all Californians. The new biological opinions must also provide the scientific basis needed to finalize the voluntary settlement agreements between the State..."
HIGHWAY CITY’S NEW COMMUNITY CENTER PUTS RESOURCES UNDER ONE ROOF

October 22, 2019 | Nancy Price

Art exhibits, library books, parent education, health, and wellness — Fresno’s newest community resource center is offering all that, and much more, to a community and neighborhood long thirsting for easy access to such services. The Granville-Teague Community Resource Center, the first of its kind in the Highway City community, held its grand opening Tuesday afternoon at 4718 N. Polk Ave. to great fanfare.

And business is brisk, said Ana Robleto, a family advocate and intake specialist for Centro La Familia, which offers parent education, victim services, health and wellness, and Department of Justice-authorized DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) and immigration services. Up until now, Highway City residents have had to drive to downtown Fresno or Kerman for Centro La Familia services that are subsidized by Fresno County.

Robleto has watched over the past three months from her office as the Teague Library branch and Central Unified community resource office opened, attracting more community members, kids, and parents. “It’s so exciting to see the library open, and Central Unified, and get to know the Highway City community,” she said. Providing access to services under...
October 23, 2019 | Dan Walters, CalMatters

Gavin Newsom has a transportation problem — not personally, but politically. As governor, Newsom travels in an entourage with a personal driver and lots of security. However, he shares the road with millions of Californians who must cope with ever-increasing congestion, poorly maintained pavement and sky-high fuel prices. A couple of years ago, when Jerry Brown was still governor, he and legislators mustered the courage to raise gas taxes to fix some of the state’s worst roadway conditions. It was not popular. One state senator who voted for it was recalled for doing so, and the $5 billion a year package, Senate Bill 1, survived a repeal initiative thanks only to a very misleading ballot title and a massively financed campaign promising voters they would see improvements. Understandably, therefore, the business and labor groups that backed SB 1 and legislators who voted for it are very sensitive that funds be spent as promised, which is why there was such a sharp reaction when Newsom appeared to renegade.

Newsom Denied That Funds Were Being Diverted

Just before speaking to a global conference on climate change in New York, Newsom issued an executive order to the state transportation agency to “leverage the more than $5 billion in annual spending for construction, operations and maintenance to help reverse the trend of increased fuel consumption and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.” Newsom said he wanted to “reduce congestion through innovative strategies designed to encourage people to shift from cars to other modes of transportation” and wanted to “fund transportation options that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, such as transit, walking, biking and other active modes.”

Shortly thereafter, the Department of Transportation marked three long-standing highway projects for “deletion,” saying the funds would be “held in reserve for priority rail projects and other priorities aligned with (Newsom’s) executive order.”

Boom. Republican politicians, later joined by Democrats, raised a ruckus, saying that the diversions, while involving relatively small amounts of money, were breaking promises to voters.

Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon publicly reminded Newsom that “the voters of California recognized those promises and resoundingly defeated a proposal that would have been a roadblock on the way to fixing roads used by residents, businesses and visitors,” adding, “Now is not the time to go back on those promises, and the Legislature will stand by those safeguards.”

Finally, after the flap had percolated in the media for days, Newsom last week denied that funds were being diverted.

Not the First Time That the First-Term Governor Had Fumbled on Transportation Matters

“I’m confused. ... I think they’re conflating things. Some are doing it, respectfully, intentionally. SB 1 is locked in. That money is used for its intended purposes, period, full stop. One cannot legally redirect those dollars.” — Gov. Gavin Newsom
Now, 74 years later, his skeleton may have finally been found. The Inyo County sheriff’s office told The Associated Press it is investigating the possibility that a set of bleached bones discovered earlier this month in the rugged Sierra Nevada is Matsumura’s. If those suspicions prove correct, Matsumura will have the rare distinction of having been lost and found twice.

His fate is a footnote to one of the darkest chapters in U.S. history, when more than 110,000 Japanese Americans were deemed a security risk and herded into prison camps in remote locations. Matsumura, a 46-year-old gardener from...
NEW YORK — Muslim groups helped raise hundreds of thousands of dollars to help Pittsburgh’s Tree of Life synagogue recover after a gunman killed 11 people there, one year ago this week. The Jewish congregation mounted its own fundraiser for New Zealand’s Muslims after a white supremacist shooter killed 51 people at two mosques there in March. Such outreach between Jews and Muslims often draws widespread attention only in the immediate wake of tragedy. But as both faiths grapple with a rise in reported hate crimes and fears within their communities of being attacked for their beliefs, Jews and Muslims are forging bonds that rely on shared personal values to help combat anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.

For Sheryl Olitzky, 63, the “aha moment” that inspired her focus on Jewish-Muslim connections came almost a decade ago on a trip to Poland, when she asked a guide why she saw no locals in the head-covering garb of devout members of either faith. Olitzky, who was married at Tree of Life synagogue, recalled being stunned by the exclusionary response she heard and telling herself that “I could not change his story, but I could rewrite it by changing the future” and working to prevent further episodes of discrimination against Jews and Muslims.

Sisterhood Devotes Much of Its Attention to Education

“I said, ‘I believe ignorance is a primary driver of hate, and it’s time, if I want to make change that I get to know Muslim women.’” — Sheryl Olitzky

Olitzky, who was married at Tree of Life synagogue, recalled being stunned by the exclusionary response she heard and telling herself that “I could not change history, but I could rewrite it by changing the future” and working to prevent further episodes of discrimination against Jews and Muslims. When the grandmother of seven returned home to New Jersey, however, it took several months for her to realize that, despite living in an area with “a fairly substantial number of Muslims and Jews,” she had no Muslim friends.

Sisterhood Devotes Much of Its Attention to Education

“I said, ‘I believe ignorance is a primary driver of hate, and it’s time, if I want to make change that I get to know Muslim women.’” — Sheryl Olitzky

Olitzky was introduced to Atiya Aftab, a Muslim attorney and adjunct professor at Rutgers University, their partnership took off as the nonprofit Sisterhood of Salaam Shalom. What began as a meeting of six Muslim and six Jewish women at Aftab’s home now counts more than 170 chapters in 32 states and Canada, according to Olitzky. The Sisterhood devotes much of its attention to education and shared experiences that can deepen ties between its members, with its fourth annual trip this year taking dozens of Muslim and Jewish women and teenage girls to Germany and Poland. But a vow to fight hate crimes that target their respective communities is also woven into the group’s foundation, with a “rise and respond” primer for speaking out against anti-Semitism and Islamophobia released this year.

Other members of the two faiths have created formal alliances as well. The Muslim-Jewish Advisory Council was established by the American Jewish Committee and the Islamic Society of North America in the first days after President Donald Trump’s 2016 election — following a campaign where Trump repeatedly stoked public fears of Muslims.

MJAC is co-chaired by two business executives, one Jewish and one Muslim. The group opened regional affiliates after a 2017 spike in reported hate crimes that included the death of Heather Heyer, killed while demonstrating against a white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Hate Crimes Reported to the FBI Have Risen for Three Years Running

AJC held an event last week to show support for the majority-Muslim Syrian Kurds as they grapple with the fallout from Trump’s decision to withdraw troops from the country’s northeast and Turkey’s subsequent attacks on Kurdish-held territory.

Hate Crimes Reported to the FBI Have Risen for Three Years Running

AJC Director of U.S. Muslim-Jewish Relations Ari Gordon said that some themes common in episodes of...
WASHINGTON — Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg endured hours of prickly questioning from lawmakers Wednesday as he defended the company’s new globally ambitious project to create a digital currency while also dealing with widening scrutiny from U.S. regulators.

The immediate focus of the hearing by the House Financial Services Committee was the project for the currency, to be called Libra. Zuckerberg took pains to reassure lawmakers that he wouldn’t allow Facebook to move forward without explicit approval from all U.S. financial regulators. Still, a number of members of the House Financial Services committee were not convinced. Rep. Maxine Waters, the California Democrat who chairs the House Financial Services Committee, said that Facebook’s cryptocurrency project Libra “create many concerns” and argued that maybe Facebook should be broken up.

On the Republican side, Rep. Ann Wagner of Missouri asked Zuckerberg why several high-profile corporations have recently departed the Libra project. Zuckerberg, momentarily at a loss for words, noted that “it’s a risky enterprise.” While...

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October 24, 2019 | AP News

RENO, Nev. — It will take $5 billion and 15 years to get an overpopulation of wild horses under control on federal lands across the West, the acting head of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management said Wednesday, adding that several developments have made him more optimistic about his agency’s ability to get the job done.

William Perry Pendley said the agency adopted out more than 7,000 mustangs and burros captured last year — the most in 15 years and a 54% increase from the previous year. He said that helps clear space in government holding pens, so they can accelerate roundups while scientists develop new fertility-control drugs to eventually shrink the size of the herds from 88,000 to the 27,000 he says the range can sustain. He said a new coalition of animal welfare advocates and ranchers is helping promote solutions and Congress...

October 22, 2019 | AP News

WASHINGTON — When the grand vacation homes of Newport Beach were empty on a beautiful Memorial Day weekend, Molly Munger decided it was time for the U.S. to consider taxing wealth.

As her family’s boat moved through the harbor a few years ago, Munger, whose father is a billionaire investor, saw that many of her neighbors’ houses were sitting dark and vacant. She knew why. The owners now controlled enough money to holiday at one of their several other luxury homes. It didn’t sit right, she said.

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LONDON — All 39 people found dead in a refrigerated container truck near an English port were Chinese citizens, British police confirmed Thursday as they investigated one of the country’s deadliest cases of people smuggling. The Essex Police force said 31 men and eight women were found dead in the truck early Wednesday at an industrial park in Grays, a town 25 miles east of London. A magistrate gave detectives another 24 hours to question the driver, a 25-year-old man from Northern Ireland who has been arrested on suspicion of attempted murder. He has not been charged, and police have not released his name.

Police in Northern Ireland searched three properties there as detectives sought to piece together how the truck’s cab, its container and the victims came together on such a deadly journey. Pippa Mills, deputy chief of Essex Police, said the process of conducting post-mortem examinations and identifying the victims would be “lengthy and complex.” “This is an incredibly sensitive and high-profile investigation, and we are working swiftly to gather as full a picture as possible as to how these people lost their lives,” she said. Police believe the truck and container took separate journeys before ending up at the industrial park. They say the container traveled by ferry from the Belgian port of Zeebrugge to Purfleet, England, where it arrived early Wednesday and was picked up by the truck driver and driven the few miles to Grays.

Groups of Migrants Have Repeatedly Landed on English Shores Using Small Boats
The truck cab, which is registered in Bulgaria to a company owned by an Irish woman, is believed to have traveled from Northern Ireland to Dublin, where it caught a ferry to Wales, then drove across Britain to pick up the container. The Chinese Foreign Ministry said Chinese Embassy employees in the U.K. were driving to the scene of the crime to aid the investigation and Belgian police were trying to track down information from Zeebrugge. Groups of migrants have repeatedly landed on English shores using small boats to make the risky Channel crossing, and migrants are sometimes found in the back of cars and trucks that disembark from the massive ferries that link France and England. But Wednesday’s macabre find in an industrial park was a reminder that criminal gangs are still profiting from large-scale trafficking.

The tragedy recalls the deaths of 58 Chinese migrants who suffocated in a truck in Dover, England, in 2000 after a perilous, months-long journey from China’s southern Fujian province. They were found stowed away with a cargo of tomatoes after a ferry ride from Zeebrugge, the same Belgian port that featured in the latest tragedy. In February 2004, 21 Chinese migrants — also from Fujian — who were working as cockle-pickers in Britain drowned when they were caught by treacherous tides in Morecambe Bay in northwest England. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson vowed in Parliament on Wednesday that people smugglers would be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. Britain, with its high demand for tourism, restaurant and agricultural workers, remains a very attractive destination for immigrants from all countries, even as the U.K. is rethinking its immigration rules as it prepares to leave the 28-nation European Union.

U.K. Authorities Have Warned That People Smugglers Are Turning to Dutch and Belgian Ports
Nando Sigona, a professor of migration studies at the University of Birmingham, said tougher migration controls born of populist anti-immigrant sentiment across...
WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Wednesday he will lift sanctions on Turkey after the NATO ally agreed to permanently stop fighting Kurdish forces in Syria and he defended his decision to withdraw American troops.

"We're getting out," Trump said at the White House, asserting that tens of thousands of Kurdish lives were saved as the result of his actions. "Let someone else fight over this long, blood-stained sand," he said. The president, who campaigned on a promise to cease American involvement in "endless wars," took a victory lap as he lopped the American presence inside Syria in less than a year from about 2,000 troops to a contingency force in southern Syria of 200 to 300. Lawmakers on both sides of aisle chastised the president for turning on the Syrian Kurds, whose fighters battled side by side with American troops to beat back the Islamic State group. They also questioned whether the move has opened up the region to a resurgence of IS.

"I am worried that a full withdrawal will create space for ISIS to regroup, grow and gain more strength," said Michael McCaul of Texas, the lead Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee. "We learned from President Obama's reckless retreat from Iraq that power vacuums are..."