MAYOR SAYS NEWSOM SB 531 VETO IS ‘HUGE VICTORY’ FOR FRESNO »
GOV. NEWSOM SIGNS BILL PUSHING BACK PUBLIC SCHOOL START TIMES »
DEBATE TAKEAWAYS: WARREN ATTACKED, 70S CLUB AVOIDS AGE ISSUE »
Arguments made by Fresno Mayor Lee Brand and other local business leaders convinced Gov. Gavin Newsom to veto Senate Bill 531 on Saturday. SB 531, authored by state Sen. Steve Glazer (D-Orinda) would have stopped cities from offering sales-tax incentives as an economic development tool. "Current use of these tax agreements are limited but also an important local tool that captures additional economic activity, particularly in rural and inland California cities that continue to face significant economic challenges like high unemployment rates," said Newsom in his veto message. "Therefore, completely removing these tax options from local decision-makers is the wrong approach."

Brand: Team Effort Produces 'Huge Victory'

Early on in the legislative process, Brand said, it appeared that "Fresno, other Valley cities and cities in the San Bernardino-Riverside area would get steamrolled" by Glazer’s bill. "But when Glazer didn’t want to compromise, we went to work talking with the governor’s office and building a (coalition) of people opposed to the bill." Brand cited the work of his legislative analyst, John Ellis, and the city’s Capitol lobbyist for their efforts leading to Newsom’s veto. Eventually, other California cities, BizFed Central Valley and the Fresno Chamber of Commerce opposed SB 531. "Everybody worked together," Brand said. "We had to, it was almost like David and Goliath. This is a huge victory." Brand also praised Newsom for "keeping his commitment" to improve the Valley economy. "We’re finally getting Sacramento to pay attention to the Central Valley," he said. "The governor is a politician who follows through."

Newson Signs Bill to Increase Tax-Sharing Transparency

Despite the veto, Newsom said that revenue-sharing agreements between cities and new businesses should be accompanied by increased oversight and transparency. In line with that belief, the governor signed Assembly Bill 485, authored by Assemblyman Jose Medina (D-Riverside). That bill, Newsom said, "will increase transparency regarding the economic outcomes that result from these types of agreements. This will allow the state to better understand the nature of the agreements between local jurisdiction and businesses, as well as the challenges and obstacles to inclusive growth." Glazer’s bill would have prohibited future agreements, thus leaving in place contracts that Fresno has made with companies such as Amazon, Ulta, and The Gap.

Fresno Deals Projected to Generate $322.4 Million in New Tax Revenue

According to the city’s projections, its contracts with Amazon, Ulta, and The Gap will provide Fresno’s general fund with $99 million over 30 years. Fresno County and Fresno Unified School District are reaping additional tax dollars as well. Over their lifetime, these three contracts are projected to generate $322.4 million in new tax revenue for local...
City Hall may have been the safest place to be Wednesday morning. Dozens of police officers, from the prior chief down to the cadet, attended the swearing-in ceremony of new Chief Andy Hall. With his oath, Hall received the chief’s badge, and four stars on each side of his collar, signifying his spot as the 22nd leader of the Fresno Police Department.

Hall succeeds Jerry Dyer, who officially retired after 18 years as chief and 40 years in the department. Likewise, Hall is a 40-year veteran, making his way up the ladder as a cadet, officer, sergeant, lieutenant, captain, deputy chief, and now chief of the entire department. Most of the speeches included an element of humor. Mayor Lee Brand and Dyer zinged Hall; and Hall cracked jokes at his own expense. In his inaugural speech, Hall joked about getting the job, even though he didn’t apply.

“You want to be the chief after the chief,” he said, meaning it would be tough to follow Dyer. Brand and City Manager Wilma Quan selected Hall, after a nation-wide search did not produce a finalist to City Hall’s liking. Hall talked about his vision. “I believe in community voices,” Hall said, describing programs like youth mentoring and neighborhood watch. “I will always put this community first and I'm excited about the future of the Fresno Police Department as we set out on our next chapter.”

When introducing Hall, Dyer joked that Hall — who operated the traffic division — was the department’s first lieutenant and deputy chief to ride a police motorcycle, and would be the first chief to do so as well. Hall said it may not be a joke. “I still have a police motorcycle in my garage. It did get a little...
Students in middle school and high school can sleep in later beginning in 2022, thanks to legislation signed by Gov. Gavin Newsom on Sunday, Senate Bill 328, which was authored by state Sen. Anthony Portantino, bans public high schools from starting before 8:30 a.m. It additionally requires middle schools to start no earlier than 8 a.m. The new law did carve out an exemption for rural districts because of bus scheduling challenges. Also excluded: so-called “zero periods,” which are optional courses offered before the regular school day begins.

**The Effect on Fresno Unified**

Fresno Unified Superintendent Bob Nelson said that while the district’s middle schools already start at 8 a.m. the high schools will have to change their start times. “We have to make sure we can get our kids to and from school from a transportation standpoint,” Nelson said. “We’re talking about what services we can provide for kids who might, in fact, come early to school. Like, do we have an opportunity to get them homework help?”

(Click here to see Nelson’s full remarks.)

**Bill Opposed by Teachers, School Districts**

Teachers and school districts opposed the law, arguing the decision on when to start school should be left to local officials. And, a spokesman for the California School Boards Association told EdSource that the later start times would increase the need for childcare for “already cash-strapped families.” Bill’s Author Predicts Better Grades, Healthier Children

But Portantino countered that “shifting to a later start time will improve academic performance and save lives because it helps our children be healthier.” He characterized opponents as putting “our children’s health and welfare ahead of institutional bureaucracy resistant to change.”

A legislative analysis of the bill noted that various studies about the impacts of school start times over the past 15 years have had “wide variation in conclusions.”

**NEWSOM SIGNS BILL PUSHING BACK PUBLIC SCHOOL START TIMES**

October 14, 2019 | AP News

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NEWSOM WANTS PG&E TO PAY POWERLESS CUSTOMERS $100 EACH

Gov. Gavin Newsom criticized PG&E for its performance during the largest planned power outage in California history to avoid wildfires and urged the utility to compensate affected customers with a bill credit or rebate worth $100 for residential customers or $250 for small businesses. Newsom said Monday that the shutoffs affected too many customers for too long, and it is clear PG&E implemented them “with astounding neglect and lack of preparation.”

PUC President: ‘Unacceptable Situation’

In addition, California’s top utility regulator blasted Pacific Gas and Electric for “failures in execution” that “created an unacceptable situation that should never be repeated.” The agency ordered a series of corrective actions, including a goal of restoring power within 12 hours, not the utility’s current 48-hour goal.

In a letter to PG&E CEO Bill Johnson, California Public Utilities Commission President Marybel Batjer wrote: “The scope, scale, complexity, and overall impact to people’s lives, businesses, and the economy of this action cannot be understated,” Johnson responded with a letter of his own Monday. “We know there are areas where we fell short of our commitment to serving our customers during this unprecedented...”

CONSERVATIONISTS SEEK PROTECTION OF CALIFORNIA JOSHUA TREES

LOS ANGELES — A conservation organization has petitioned for protection of the western Joshua tree under the California Endangered Species Act due to the effects of climate change and habitat destruction.

The Center for Biological Diversity filed the petition with the state Fish and Game Commission on Tuesday. The request comes amid rising concern about the future of the distinctive trees with spikey leaves that have come to symbolize the Mojave Desert and draw throngs to Joshua Tree National park.

The petition asks that the western Joshua tree be given “threatened” status under the act, meaning it is likely to become an endangered species in the foreseeable future in the absence of the special protection and management efforts...
A dozen Democratic presidential candidates participated in a spirited debate over health care, taxes, gun control and impeachment. Takeaways from the three-hour forum in Westerville, Ohio:

**Warren’s Rise Attracts Attacks**

Sen. Elizabeth Warren found Tuesday that her rise in the polls may come with a steep cost. She’s now a clear target for attacks, particularly from more moderate challengers, and her many plans are now being subjected to much sharper scrutiny. Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar and South Bend, Indiana, Mayor Pete Buttigieg slammed her for not acknowledging, as Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders has, that middle-class taxes would increase under the single-payer health plan she and Sanders favor. “At least Bernie’s being honest with this,” Klobuchar said. “I don’t think the American people are wrong when they say what they want is a choice,” Buttigieg told Warren. His plan maintains private insurance but would allow people to buy into Medicare. Candidates also pounced on Warren’s suggestion that only she and Sanders want to take on billionaires while the rest of the field wants to protect them. Former Texas Rep. Beto O’Rourke told Warren it didn’t seem as though she wanted to lift people up and she is “more focused on being punitive.” And they piled onto her signature proposal, a 2% wealth tax to raise the trillions of dollars needed for many of her ambitious proposals. Technology entrepreneur Andrew Yang noted that such a measure has failed in almost every European country where it’s been tried. Sen. Kamala Harris of California even went after Warren for not backing Harris’ call for Twitter to ban President Donald Trump.

**That 70’s Show**

The stage included three 70-something candidates who would be the oldest people ever elected to a first term as president — including 78-year-old Sanders, who had a heart attack this month. Moderators asked all three how they could do the job. None really addressed the question. Sanders invited the public to a major rally he’s planning in New York City next week and vowed to take the fight to corporate elites. Biden promised to release his medical records before the Iowa caucuses next year and said he was running because the country needs an elder statesman in the White House after Trump. Warren, whose campaign has highlighted her hours-long sessions posing for selfies with supporters, promised to “out-organize and outlast” any other candidate, including Trump. Then she pivoted to her campaign argument that Democrats need to put forth big ideas rather than return to the past, a dig at Biden.

**One Voice on Impeachment**

The opening question was a batting practice fastball for the Democratic candidates: Should Trump be impeached? They were instead steadfast agreement. All 12 of them. Largely with variations on the word “corrupt” to describe the Republican president. Warren was asked first if voters should decide whether Trump should stay in office. She responded, “There are decisions that are bigger than politics.” Biden, who followed Sanders, offered a rare admission: “I agree with Bernie.” The only hint of dissonance came from Rep. Tulsi Gabbard of Hawaii, who was one of the last Democratic House members to back an impeachment inquiry. She lamented that some Democrats had been calling for Trump’s impeachment since right after the 2016 election, undermining the party’s case against him. Klobuchar has faded into the...
AHEAD OF 2020, FB ENSNARED IN HEATED POLITICAL CLIMATE

Mark Zuckerberg defended meetings he's reportedly had with conservative leaders after #DeleteFacebook began trending on social media. Politico reported this week that the Facebook CEO held private meetings with, among others, Fox News' Tucker Carlson and conservative radio host Hugh Hewitt.

Conservatives have long accused Facebook of suppressing conservative political view and the company has tried to dispel that belief. Zuckerberg says he meets with many people "across the spectrum on lots of different issues."

October 15, 2019 | AP News

First All-Female Spacewalking Team Makes History

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — The world's first all-female spacewalking team made history high above Earth on Friday, replacing a broken part of the International Space Station's power grid. As NASA astronauts Christina Koch and Jessica Meir completed the job with wrenches, screwdrivers and power-grip tools, it marked the first time in a half-century of spacewalking that men weren't part of the action. They insisted they were just doing their job after years of training.

"We don't want to take too much credit because there have been many others — female spacewalkers — before us. This is just the first time that there have been two women outside at the same time. ... For us, this is really just us doing our job," America's first female spacewalker from 35 years ago, Kathy Sullivan, was delighted. She said it's good to finally have enough women in the astronaut corps and trained...

October 18, 2019 | AP News

Joe Biden’s Son Hunter Stepping Down From Chinese Board

NEW YORK — Facing intense scrutiny from President Donald Trump and his Republican allies, Hunter Biden says he will step down from the board of directors of a Chinese-backed private equity firm at the end of the month as part of a pledge not to work on behalf of any foreign-owned companies should his father win the presidency.

Biden, the 49-year-old son of Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden, revealed his plan Sunday in an internet post written by his attorney, George Mesires, who outlined a defense of the younger Biden’s work in Ukraine and China, which has emerged as one of Trump's chief lines of attack against Hunter’s father despite no proof of impropriety.

"Hunter makes the following commitment: Under a Biden Administration, Hunter will readily comply with any and all guidelines or standards a President Biden may issue to address purported conflicts of interest, or the appearance of..."
CEYLANPINAR, Turkey — The Kurdish-led administration in northern Syria accused Turkey on Friday of violating a U.S.-brokered cease-fire that went into effect overnight, as fighters from both sides clashed in and around a border town that has been one of the fiercest fronts in the Turkish invasion. The town of Ras al-Ayn was emerging as an immediate test for the five-day cease-fire agreed on by Washington and Ankara. Before the deal’s announcement, Turkish-backed forces had encircled the town and were battling fierce resistance from Kurdish fighters inside. The Syrian Kurds raised further uncertainty over a cease-fire deal that already was vague on key points and left significant questions unanswered. The self-rule administration said some provisions of the cease-fire deal "need further discussion with the United States." It did not specify which provisions, but the Kurds have not publicly committed to a central term of the deal — a pullout of their fighters from the border region. A spokesman for the Kurdish-led fighters said Friday they were not withdrawing from Ras al-Ayn because Turkish forces are still besieging and shelling it. Criticism of the cease-fire deal — which President Donald Trump called "a great day for civilization" — mounted. EU Council President Donald Tusk said it was "not a cease-fire, it is a demand for the capitulation of the Kurds" and called on Turkey to immediately halt its operation in northeast Syria. French President Emmanuel Macron called the Turkish operation "madness." Other activists reported a new exodus of civilians from the villages. Turkish shelling hit in and around Ras al-Ayn on Friday morning, raising columns of smoke, seen by an Associated Press journalist in Ceylanpinar on the Turkish side of the border, but none was seen after 10:30 a.m., and only sporadic gunfire was heard from inside the town. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights and the Rojava Information Center said fighting continued into the afternoon as Turkish-backed Syrian fighters clashed with Kurdish forces in villages on the outskirts of Ras al-Ayn. The Kurdish-led force said five of its fighters were killed and a number of civilians wounded in a Turkish airstrike on one of the villages. Other activists reported a new exodus of civilians from the villages. Gun battles and shelling continued around a hospital in the center of Ras al-Ayn, and those injured inside could not be evacuated, said Mustafa Bali, spokesman for the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces.

The Kurdish Red Crescent said it was unable to enter the town to evacuate the wounded because of fighting. Kurdish fighters said the fighting quieted around 4 p.m. In its statement, the Kurdish-led administration said Turkey "has not adhered with the cease-fire until now in some areas," particularly in Ras al-Ayn. It did not specify which provisions, but the Kurds have not publicly committed to a central term of the deal — a pullout of their fighters from the border region. A spokesman for the Kurdish-led fighters said Friday they were not withdrawing from Ras al-Ayn because Turkish forces are still besieging and shelling it. Criticism of the cease-fire deal — which President Donald Trump called "a great day for civilization" — mounted. EU Council President Donald Tusk said it was "not a cease-fire, it is a demand for the capitulation of the Kurds" and called on Turkey to immediately halt its operation in northeast Syria. French President Emmanuel Macron called the Turkish operation "madness." Other activists reported a new exodus of civilians from the villages. Turkish shelling hit in and around Ras al-Ayn on Friday morning, raising columns of smoke, seen by an Associated Press journalist in Ceylanpinar on the Turkish side of the border, but none was seen after 10:30 a.m., and only sporadic gunfire was heard from inside the town. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights and the Rojava Information Center said fighting continued into the afternoon as Turkish-backed Syrian fighters clashed with Kurdish forces in villages on the outskirts of Ras al-Ayn. The Kurdish-led force said five of its fighters were killed and a number of civilians wounded in a Turkish airstrike on one of the villages. Other activists reported a new exodus of civilians from the villages. Gun battles and shelling continued around a hospital in the center of Ras al-Ayn, and those injured inside could not be evacuated, said Mustafa Bali, spokesman for the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces.

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Pence Said the U.S. Was Already Coordinating With It on a Withdrawal

The cease-fire agreement — reached after hours of negotiations in Turkey’s capital between Erdogan and U.S. Vice President Mike Pence — requires the Kurdish fighters to vacate a swath of territory in Syria along the Turkish border. That arrangement would largely solidify the position Turkey has gained after days of fighting. The Turks and the Kurds appear to disagree on the...
BRUSSELS — The European Union and Britain were inching closer to a tentative Brexit divorce deal that leaders would seek to close at a summit meeting Thursday. Hopes were increasingly turning toward getting a broad political commitment, with the full legal details hammered out later. Negotiators were locked in EU headquarters with few details leaking out. Wild movements in the British pound on Wednesday underscored the uncertainty over what, if anything, might be decided.

Meetings between EU Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier and key EU legislators as well as with ambassadors of the member nations were rescheduled for the evening — an indication there was still momentum in the ongoing talks among technical teams from both sides. “It looks like things are moving,” said an EU official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because talks were still ongoing.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s spokesman, James Slack, echoed that, saying there is still “a chance of securing a good deal” at the summit, even though a number of issues remain. The thorniest among them is how goods and people will flow across the land border between EU member Ireland and Northern Ireland, which is part of the U.K. But...