COUNTY STAYS IN ‘RED’ TIER FOR REOPENING ACCORDING TO FRESH STATE DATA »
EARLY POLLING PLACES IN CA QUIET NOW, BUT LINES EXPECTED AHEAD »
TRUMP PAINTS APOCALYPTIC PORTRAIT OF LIFE IN US UNDER BIDEN »
COUNTY STAYS IN ‘RED’ TIER
FOR REOPENING ACCORDING
TO FRESH STATE DATA

October 27, 2020 | Jim Jakobs

New data out Tuesday morning showed improvements in Fresno County COVID-19 metrics from last week, allowing the county to remain in the state’s red tier for reopening. This means restaurants, churches and other businesses can continue to offer limited indoor services. There have been concerns in recent weeks that Fresno County might slip back into the more restrictive purple tier. Fresno County currently has a 5.0% test positivity rate (down from 5.2% last week), and 6.7 cases per 100,000 residents (down from 7.3 last week). To stay in its current red tier, Fresno County numbers need to continue to have less than an 8% test positivity rate and reduce new cases per 100,000 residents to less than 7 over the next week.

The state’s new “health equity” positivity rate is at 6.8% (down from 7.9% last week). Fresno County needs to remain below 8% to in this measurement remain in the red tier. The purpose of this metric is to ensure California reopens its economy safely by reducing disease transmission in all communities. (This is a developing story and will be updated.)

Fresno County Case Counts
Number of Cases in Fresno County according to the county’s website:
- Total Cases: 30,858 (+268 Sunday and Monday)*
- Total Deaths: 436
- Currently Hospitalized: 88 (-12)**
- Recovered: 20,110 ***
- Test Results Received and Processed: 343,087

Fresno County Million Mask Giveaway
The Fresno County Board of Supervisors and Fresno County EDC, announced the launch of a free PPE distribution program for small businesses throughout the county at a news conference Tuesday morning. These supplies...

Madera County Fails to Make Red Tier
Despite optimism by Madera County officials last week after meeting the state’s criteria for the red tier, the county remained in the state’s purple tier Tuesday. Last Tuesday, Madera County’s adjusted case rate was reported to be 4.8 per 100,000, far below the state’s cut-off of 7 cases per 100,000. The county’s positivity rate stands at 3.4, well below the maximum allowable rate of 8 percent. Madera County had to meet the criteria for one more week before being able to move to the red tier. However, the new state data shows the county’s adjusted case rate at 8.7 cases per 100,000, with a positivity rate of 5.7%.

Despite optimism by Madera County officials last week after meeting the state’s criteria for the red tier, the county remained in the state’s purple tier Tuesday.
Fresno should form a new civilian oversight board to monitor the police department which would include full access to police investigation files, says a key recommendation from the city’s police reform commission.

The proposed Civilian Oversight Board would be made up of between 11 and 13 members and would have the ability to compel interviews and documents from the department as well, the draft report from the Fresno Commission on Police Reform recommends. The commission is scheduled to finalize the report’s 73 recommendations on Thursday, though members approved all of them in private voting that concluded Oct. 20, chairman Oliver Baines said.

List of 73 Recommendations
A list of the recommendations can be found here. The panel’s final meeting takes place Thursday night at 5 p.m. via Zoom and accessible on the city’s YouTube and Facebook pages. The report will then be forwarded to the Fresno City Council to decide next steps. “I’m pleased with the effort of the commission,” Baines said. This was an incredibly difficult task. This should not be viewed as the end of anything, but really the beginning.” The first six recommendations in...
October 27, 2020 | AP News

SACRAMENTO — Californians are voting in record numbers, with more than a third of the state’s 22.3 million ballots already returned to county election offices one week before Election Day. Yet at the Oak Park Community Center in Sacramento on Sunday, it was so slow that poll worker Tom Martinez had to get up and move every so often to keep the motion-detected lights from going out.

While counties nationwide are reporting hours-long wait times to vote early, voters in the nation’s most populous state are putting their ballots in the mail after a state law passed this year required county elections offices to send ballots to all active registered voters at least 29 days before Election Day. Most of the state’s in-person polling places — or vote centers — won’t open until Saturday. The state allowed counties to open fewer of them this year because the coronavirus pandemic has made traditional polling places unavailable, like schools and senior centers. Ventura County had 389 polling places in March but will have just 48 vote centers this weekend. Most Californians already vote by mail. Nearly 58% of ballots cast in the 2016 presidential election were by mail, which rose to 72% in March’s primary. Even if that 72% holds this November, that still leaves millions who could vote in person at vote centers that must maintain physical distancing and take time to clean equipment between each voter. “I guarantee you there is going to be lines around the block in many polling places and in many areas where voters haven’t been used to seeing lines,” said Paul Mitchell, vice president of Political Data Inc., a bipartisan voter data company based in California.

Secretary of State Alex Padilla Doesn’t Think That Trend Will Last

Is the unprecedented return of mail-in ballots a sign that fewer people will vote in-person this year? Or are those voters people who would vote anyway and just a preview of the crush of people expected on Election Day? State officials hope it isn’t the latter. Some vote centers opened in a few counties on Saturday, offering a preview of what voting in person during a pandemic will look like. The NBA’s Sacramento Kings donated its cavernous arena as a vote center, allowing people to cast ballots with a view of the court beneath a Jumbotron. It has about 42 voting booths compared to polling places in recent years that had about six. But at lunchtime Monday, the center was mostly deserted. About 178 people voted there over the weekend. Secretary of State Alex Padilla, the...
SAN FRANCISCO CURBS VIRUS
 BUT ONCE-VIBRANT DOWNTOWN IS EMPTY

October 29, 2020 | AP News
SAN FRANCISCO — Before the pandemic, Señor Sisig food trucks were a common sight in downtown San Francisco, dishing out Filipino fusion tacos and burritos to long lines of workers who spilled out of office towers at lunch.

The trucks now are gone, forced into the suburbs because there's practically no one around to feed in the city's center. As the coronavirus pandemic transforms San Francisco's workplace, legions of tech workers have left, able to work remotely from anywhere. Families have fled for roomy suburban homes with backyards. The exodus has pushed rents in the prohibitively expensive city to their lowest in years.

The food trucks, like many other businesses, are wondering when things will bounce back. "Is it ever going to get back to normal, is it ever going to be as busy as it was — and will that be next year, or in 10 years?" said Evan Kidera, CEO of Señor Sisig. On Tuesday, more of San Francisco reopened for...

MERCED CLEANS UP HOMELESS CAMP AS LA CONSIDERS BAN ON CAMPING (AGAIN)

October 28, 2020 | AP News
Dumpsters, garbage trucks, and teams of people from the city of Merced were out Wednesday cleaning up a homeless encampment along the Union Pacific Railroad tracks near Childs Avenue and Highway 99. The city said they needed to take action after numerous public complaints about garbage and unsanitary conditions. The police department said people in the camp would be offered temporary shelter.

Meanwhile, according to the LA Times, the Los Angeles City Council was set for a Wednesday vote on revisions to the city's anti-camping law that would prohibit homeless camps anywhere in the city, but required occupants to be offered alternative shelter first. The council's hearing included hours of...

DEATH PENALTY ‘INFECTED BY RACISM’ NEWSOM TELLS COURT

October 26, 2020 | AP News
SACRAMENTO — California’s process for imposing the death penalty "is now, and always has been, infected by racism," Gov. Gavin Newsom declared Monday in a brief filed with the state Supreme Court. Newsom filed the brief in the case of Donte Lamont McDaniel, who was sentenced to death in 2009 for the murder of 33-year-old George Brooks and 52-year-old Annette Anderson.

In California, juries can impose the death penalty if they find that "aggravating factors" outweigh "mitigating factors." The decision to sentence someone to death must be unanimous. But juries don’t have to unanimously agree on each aggravating factor. McDaniel’s case is challenging that interpretation of...
WASHINGTON — The suburbs wouldn’t be the suburbs anymore, the economy would sink into its worst depression ever and police departments would cease to exist. Even America’s older adults would be left to figure out how to get by without heat, air conditioning or electricity. This is the apocalyptic version of American life that President Donald Trump argues would be the dire consequence of turning over the White House to Democrat Joe Biden.

“He’ll bury you in regulations, dismantle your police departments, dissolve our borders, confiscate your guns, terminate religious liberty, destroy your suburbs,” Trump said in one of many over-the-top pronouncements about Biden in the campaign’s final weeks. Trump typically makes his warning about the fate of suburbia as he showcases his own decision to end federal regulations that govern the placement of low-income housing in the suburbs. Campaign rhetoric can often become heated and hyperbolic as candidates scrap for every last advantage before the votes are counted. Experts say instilling fear in one’s opponent is usually the primary motivating factor behind such talk as candidates seek to give voters a reason to put a checkmark next to their name on the ballot.

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Trump Has Criticized Biden for Saying He’d Follow the Scientists

“This election is a choice between a TRUMP RECOVERY or a BIDEN DEPRESSION,” the president tweeted, echoing what he tells supporters at rallies. “It’s a choice between a TRUMP BOOM or a BIDEN LOCKDOWN. It’s a choice between our plan to Kill the virus – or Biden’s plan to kill the American Dream!” Trump has criticized Biden for saying he’d follow the scientists, and the president claims the Democrat would shut the country down. In fact, Biden hasn’t said whether he’d endorse large-scale shutdowns of the nation’s economy, if things get drastically worse, like much of the country did in March. “If you vote for Biden, it means no kids in school, no graduations, no weddings, no Thanksgiving, no Christmas and no Fourth of July together,” Trump said at a rally Wednesday in Goodyear, Arizona. “Other than that, you have a wonderful life.” Kathleen Hall...
WASHINGTON — Gary Kauffman says he does not scare easily. So when men waving President Donald Trump flags drive by his house in downtown Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, he stands on his front steps and waves a banner for Democrats Joe Biden and Kamala Harris.

"Sometimes I yell at them. They yell back at me," says Kauffman, 54. Still, Kauffman is keeping a closer eye on who they are and what they’re carrying as Election Day approaches. Tension has been rising in his town, known best as hallowed ground of the Civil War’s bloodiest battle. Recently, it’s become a hot spot of angry confrontations between Trump supporters and liberal protesters.

Kauffman has seen some of the Trump supporters carrying weapons. "If there’s guns, I’m a bit more cautious," he said on Monday. Americans Not Accustomed to Worrying About Election Violence...

NEW YORK — A panel of health experts wants U.S. adults to start getting colon cancer screenings at age 45, five years younger than it previously recommended. While overall, colon cancer rates have been declining, the draft guidelines issued Tuesday by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force reflect a growing concern about rising rates in people under the age of 50.

"We’ve seen more data showing that younger people are getting colon cancer at higher rates," said Dr. Alex Krist, a family doctor at Virginia Commonwealth University and a member of the task force. "Basically a 45-year-old today has the same risk of getting colon cancer as a 50-year-old from years..."
A new wave of lockdowns and business closings swept across France, Germany and other places in Europe on Wednesday as surging coronavirus infections there and in the U.S. wipe out months of progress against the scourge on two continents. The resurgence and the resulting clampdown sent a shudder through Wall Street. The S&P 500 fell 3.5%, its biggest drop since June, and the Dow Jones Industrial Average lost 943 points, or 3.4%. French President Emmanuel Macron declared a new nationwide lockdown starting Friday, saying the country has been “overpowered by a second wave.” Many doctors had urged the move, given that 58% of the nation’s intensive care units are now taken up by COVID-19 patients. In Germany, Chancellor Angela Merkel announced a four-week shutdown of bars, restaurants and theaters. “We must act, and now, to avoid an acute national health emergency,” she said. Countries such as Switzerland, Italy, Bulgaria and Greece have closed or otherwise clamped down again on nightspots and imposed other restrictions such as curfews and mandatory mask-wearing. Madrid and other parts of Spain banned all but essential travel in and out of their regions. “We are deep in the second wave,” European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said. “I think that this year’s Christmas will be a different Christmas.” In the U.S., where practically every state is seeing a rise in cases, Democratic Gov. Tony Evers of hard-hit Wisconsin has been reduced to pleading with people to stay home, after an order he issued in the spring was overturned by the courts. Illinois’ governor banned indoor dining and drinking in Chicago this week. Other states are likewise considering reimposing restrictions. The virus has killed more than 250,000 people in Europe and over 227,000 in the U.S., according to the count kept by Johns Hopkins University. The long-feared surge is blamed in part on growing disregard for social distancing and mask-wearing, as well as the onset of cold weather, which is forcing people indoors, where the virus can spread more easily.
SATELLITE PHOTOS SHOW CONSTRUCTION AT IRAN NUCLEAR SITE

Dubai, United Arab Emirates — Iran has begun construction at its Natanz nuclear facility, satellite images released Wednesday show, just as the U.N. nuclear agency acknowledged Tehran is building an underground advanced centrifuge assembly plant after its last one exploded in a reported sabotage attack last summer.

The construction comes as the U.S. nears Election Day in a campaign pitting President Donald Trump, whose maximum pressure campaign against Iran has led Tehran to abandon all limits on its atomic program, and Joe Biden, who has expressed a willingness to return to the accord. The outcome of the vote likely will decide which approach America takes. Heightened tensions between Iran and the U.S. nearly ignited a war at the start of the year.

Since August, Iran has built a new or regraded road to the south of Natanz toward what analysts believe is a former firing range for security forces at the enrichment facility, images from San Francisco-based...