HEALTH OFFICIALS SCRAMBLE FOR ‘ULTRA COLD’ STORAGE NEEDED FOR COVID VACCINE »

CALIFORNIA NEARING ONE MILLION COVID-19 CASES »

BIDEN VOWS TO ‘GET RIGHT TO WORK’ DESPITE TRUMP RESISTANCE »
If Pfizer receives government approval for its promising COVID-19 vaccine, it will need to be transported and stored at a temperature of minus 94 degrees Fahrenheit, experts say, creating logistical challenges that local health officials are already working to address. Dr. Rais Vohra, Fresno County’s public health officer, says he’s aware of just one freezer in the local area capable of maintaining temperatures that low. It’s downstairs at the health department’s downtown office building. “We do have one cold storage machine here,” Vohra said, “and we will be acquiring more so that we can be ready to take on as much vaccine as the state of California allows us to have.”

Dry Ice Could be Used
If necessary, Vohra said dry ice could be used to keep the vaccine at its required ‘ultra cold’ storage temperature. According to the Materials Research Lab at UC Santa Barbara, dry ice freezes at minus 109 degrees. Complicating a local inoculation effort even more, the Pfizer vaccine would need to be administered in two shots given 21 days apart for maximum effectiveness.

The Need for Freeze
“Hopefully if everything goes well, in December, but certainly by early 2021 we’re going to really need to have cold storage ready to go to accommodate this vaccine,” says Vohra. He said local hospitals don’t have the necessary freezers to store the vaccine at the present time. “But they’re going to acquire it,” says Vohra. NBC News reports Pfizer’s vaccine will be formulated, finished and placed in cold storage in the pharmaceutical giant’s Kalamazoo, Michigan, facility, its largest such plant in the country. From there, the vaccines will be packed below dry ice inside thermal containers expressly designed by the company for this vaccine’s delivery. Each package can contain 1,000 to 5,000 doses. The company says it expects to be able to produce up to 1.3 billion doses globally in 2021. The packages will be shipped via air to major distribution hubs and then delivered by ground transport to dosing locations, which “may include hospitals, outpatient clinics, community vaccination locations and pharmacies,” Pfizer spokesperson Kim Bencker told NBC News in an email. The company said some vaccines will also be shipped from a separate distribution center in Pleasant Prairie, Wisconsin. Each package will be equipped with a GPS-tracked thermal sensor to monitor location and temperature, which the company says will “proactively” prevent “deviations” — such as accidents or theft.

UC Davis Participated in Vaccine Effort
UC Davis Health in Sacramento was one of 120 sites to take part in the trial for the Pfizer vaccine, which is being developed in collaboration...
The Warrior mascot of Fresno High School is under fire from critics who say that the cartoon of a Native American man in war paint is racist and must be removed. But the image also has its share of supporters who claim that the mascot is a beloved tradition that should not be cast aside. Is it just about a local high school’s mascot, or does the dispute also speak to the issues of racism and cultural insensitivity that have roiled the nation in 2020? Probably a little of both.

This local/global issue will be aired out starting at 5:30 p.m. Thursday, when Fresno Unified School District, which has been meeting with parents and students on the issue, has scheduled a town hall meeting. Two of the invited speakers are authors of opposing petitions on change.org: Jamie Nelson, who identifies as a member of the Yokut people whose lands once include the site of Fresno High, and Joshua Washburn, a Fresno High alumni.

As of Wednesday morning, Nelson’s petition had garnered more than 4,800 signatures while Washburn’s petition had more than 1,600. Another panel member is trustee Carol Mills, who was just re-elected to her fifth term on the board representing the Fresno High area. Mills did not respond to an interview request.

MINOR SPECULATION HAS GRIZZLIES MOVING TO CAL LEAGUE. WILL ATTENDANCE TAKE A HIT?

There will be Fresno Grizzlies baseball in 2021. If there is minor league baseball. The latter may be conditional on the course coronavirus pandemic and the minors return next season after being wiped out in 2020.

Nothing has been determined in about the structure Minor League Baseball and what type of team the Grizzlies will field.

Grizzlies president and partial owner Derek Franks says there is nothing to comment on as of yet, as he is still waiting to see what baseball’s final plan is. The growing speculation from publication Ballpark Digest and others is that the Grizzlies will move from the Triple-A Pacific Coast League to the California League. The Cal League will then shift from the High-A level...
November 12, 2020 | AP News

LOS ANGELES — A month ago, Antonio Gomez III was a healthy 46-year-old struggling like so many others to balance work and parenting during the coronavirus pandemic. This week, he's struggling to breathe after a three-week bout with the virus. Gomez said he let down his guard to see his parents and contracted one of the nearly 1 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 in California. For months, the virus has hammered the economy, disproportionately affected the poor and upended daily life — and now the state and the rest of the country are trying to curb another surge of infections.

California will be the second state — behind Texas — to eclipse a million known cases. The grim milestone in a state of 40 million comes as the U.S. has surpassed 10 million infections. The timeline of COVID-19 in America often comes back to California. It had some of the earliest known cases among travelers from China, where the outbreak began. The Feb. 6 death of a San Jose woman is the first known coronavirus fatality in the U.S. That same month, California recorded the first U.S. case not related to travel and the first infection spread within the community. On March 19, Gov. Gavin Newsom issued the nation's first statewide stay-at-home order, shuttering businesses and schools to try to prevent hospital overcrowding. The spread slowed, but California faced the same challenges as other states: providing enough protective gear for health workers, doing enough testing and providing timely results, tracking infections and those potentially exposed. As the state tried to balance public health and the economy, cases rose as it relaxed business restrictions. Eleven counties this week had to reimpose limits. The virus has struck poor Californians and Latinos especially hard. Latinos make up 39% of the population but account for more than 60% of infections. In working-class neighborhoods near downtown Los Angeles, one in five people tested positive at community clinics during the pandemic's early days, said Jim Mangia, president and chief executive of St. John’s Well Child and Family Center. Many caught the virus in essential low-wage jobs or on public transit and brought it back to crowded homes.

The Clinic Is Conducting Follow-up Checks to Assess the Long-Term Impact of the Virus

“The tragedy of it all is that patients are getting infected at their work, they come to us and get tested, and they’re not being allowed to come back to work until they have a negative test,” Mangia said. “So, we have patients who have...
NEWSOM’S PARDONS OF FORMER FELONS INCLUDE SEVERAL CONVICTED LOCALLY

November 11, 2020 | AP News

SACRAMENTO — Gov. Gavin Newsom eased the sentences or criminal histories of nearly three dozen current or former felons on Tuesday, including 10 pardons intended to aid immigrants who face the possibility of deportation.

Included among those pardoned and facing deportation are two men convicted in Fresno, one in Tulare and a woman convicted in Madera. “Their deportations would be an unjust collateral consequence that would harm their families and communities,” Newsom’s office said in announcing the actions. One of the 10 is currently in a federal immigration detention facility. The 10 were among 22 pardons, 13 commutations and four medical reprieves, the last a category prompted by the coronavirus pandemic.

The state corrections secretary and a federal court-appointed official who controls the prison medical system recommended the medical risk clemency review. They are in addition to thousands of other earlier releases intended to free space within...

GILROY COUPLE FORCED MAN TO WORK EVERY DAY AT LIQUOR STORE, SAYS DA

November 10, 2020 | AP News

GILROY — A husband and wife have been charged with human trafficking for allegedly locking a man from India in a liquor store, where prosecutors said he worked 15-hour shifts seven days a week, slept in a storage room, bathed in a mop bucket and was never paid.

Amarjit and Balwinder Mann, both 66 and of Gilroy, are accused of threatening the alleged victim with deportation if he told the truth to law enforcement, Santa Clara County District Attorney’s office said in a statement Monday. An investigation estimated that the couple, who own M&M Liquors in Gilroy and a nearby market, stole more than $150,000 in wages from the victim and three other employees...

THESE CAMERAS WATCH FOR CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES. THEY ALSO OFFER AMAZING

November 9, 2020 | AP News

As the threat of wildfires has grown to a staggering level in California, so has its network of high-tech cameras watching the backcountry to spot the first outbreak of flames and help firefighters battle them until they are contained. As winter arrives, they are also offering some spectacular scenic views of snow-capped mountains and blue skies filled with puffy white clouds.

The size of the multi-state system almost doubled in the past four months, primarily in California, where more than 4.1 million acres have burned this year. The 610th ALERTWildfire camera was installed in California late last month, according to the program office at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography at the...
WILMINGTON, Del. — Vowing “to get right to work,” President-elect Joe Biden shrugged off President Donald Trump’s fierce refusal to accept the election outcome as “inconsequential,” even as Democrats elsewhere warned that the Republican president’s actions were dangerous. Raising unsupported claims of voter fraud, Trump has blocked the incoming president from receiving intelligence briefings and withheld federal funding intended to help facilitate the transfer of power. Trump’s resistance, backed by senior Republicans in Washington and across the country, could also prevent background investigations and security clearances for prospective staff and access to federal agencies to discuss transition planning.

As some Democrats and former Republican officials warned of serious consequences, Biden sought to lower the national temperature Tuesday as he addressed reporters from a makeshift transition headquarters near his home in downtown Wilmington. Biden described Trump’s position as little more than an “embarrassing” mark on the outgoing president’s legacy, while predicting that Republicans on Capitol Hill would eventually accept the reality of Biden’s victory. The Republican resistance, Biden said, “does not change the dynamic at all in what we’re able to do.” Additional intelligence briefings “would be useful,” Biden added, but “we don’t see anything slowing us down.” The measured comments come as Biden prepares to confront dueling national crises that actively threaten the health, safety and economic security of millions of Americans irrespective of the political debate. Coronavirus infections, hospitalizations and deaths are surging, the economy faces the prospect of long-term damage and the nation’s political and cultural divides may be worsening.

Biden is betting that his low-key approach and bipartisan outreach — a sharp reversal from the current president’s style — will help him govern effectively on Day One. But just a little over two months before Biden will be inaugurated, Trump and his allies seemed determined to make his transition as difficult as possible.

From his Twitter account on Tuesday, Trump again raised unsupported claims of “massive ballot counting abuse” and predicted he would ultimately win the race he has already lost. His allies on Capitol Hill, led by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, have encouraged the president’s baseless accusations. Trump’s tweets were swiftly flagged...
Texas on Wednesday became the first state with more than 1 million confirmed COVID-19 cases, and California closed in on that mark as a surge of coronavirus infections engulfs the country.

In New York, Gov. Andrew Cuomo said all restaurants, bars and gyms statewide will have to close at 10 p.m. starting Friday, a major retreat in a corner of the U.S. that had seemingly brought the virus largely under control months ago. He also barred private gatherings of more than 10 people.

Texas, the second-most populous state, has recorded 1.02 million coronavirus cases and over 19,000 deaths since the outbreak began in early March, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University. California, the most populous state, has logged more than 995,000 cases.

The U.S. has recorded over 240,000 deaths and more than 10.3 million confirmed infections, with...
HONG KONG — Hong Kong’s pro-democracy lawmakers announced Wednesday they would resign en masse after four of them were ousted from the semiautonomous Chinese territory’s Legislature in a move one legislator said could sound the “death knell” for democracy there. The resignation of the 15 remaining pro-democracy lawmakers will ratchet up tensions over the future of Hong Kong, a former British colony that has long been a regional financial hub and bastion of Western-style civil liberties but over which China’s government has increasingly tightened its control. A new national security law imposed by Beijing this year has alarmed the international community. The mass departure will also leave Hong Kong’s Legislature with only pro-Beijing lawmakers, who already made up a majority but can now pass bills favored by Beijing without much opposition.

The lawmakers told a news conference they would submit their letters of resignation on Thursday. The announcement came hours after the Hong Kong government said it was disqualifying the four legislators — Alvin Yeung, Dennis Kwok, Kwok Ka-ki and Kenneth Leung. The oustings came after China’s National People’s Congress Standing Committee passed a resolution this week saying that any lawmaker who supports Hong Kong’s independence, refuses to acknowledge China’s sovereignty over the city, threatens national security, or asks external forces to interfere in the city’s affairs should be disqualified. “Today we will resign from our positions because our partners, our colleagues have been disqualified by the central government’s ruthless move,” Wu Chi-wai, the leader of the pro-democracy camp, told reporters. During the news conference, the lawmakers held hands and chanted, “Hong Kong add oil! Together we stand!” The phrase “add oil” is a direct translation of a Chinese expression of encouragement.

In recent months, Beijing has increasingly clamped down on Hong Kong, which it took back control of in 1997, despite promising at the time to leave the territory’s more open legal and economic systems intact for 50 years until 2047. Beijing imposed a national security law in June that some have labeled draconian after anti-government...
IN RUINS, SYRIA MARKS 50 YEARS OF ASSAD FAMILY RULE

November 12, 2020 | AP News

BEIRUT — On Nov. 13, 1970, a young air force officer from the coastal hills of Syria launched a bloodless coup. It was the latest in a succession of military takeovers since independence from France in 1946, and there was no reason to think it would be the last. Yet 50 years later, Hafez Assad’s family still rules Syria.

The country is in ruins from a decade of civil war that killed a half million people, displaced half the population and wiped out the economy. Entire regions are lost from government control. But Hafez’s son, Bashar Assad, has an unquestioned grip on what remains.

His rule, half of it spent in war, is different from his father’s in some ways — dependent on allies like Iran and Russia rather than projecting Arab nationalism, run with a crony kleptocracy rather than socialism. The tools are the same: repression, rejection of compromise and brutal bloodshed. Like the Castro family in Cuba and North Korea’s Kim dynasty, the Assads...

RUSSIAN PEACEKEEPERS GO TO NAGORNO-KARABAKH TO BOLSTER TRUCE

November 10, 2020 | AP News

MOSCOW — More than a dozen planes carrying Russian peacekeepers headed for Nagorno-Karabakh on Tuesday, hours after Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed to halt fighting over the separatist region and amid signs this cease-fire would hold where others hadn’t.

The truce came after significant advances by Azerbaijani forces that the Nagorno-Karabakh leader said made it impossible for their side to carry on — but angered many Armenians, who stormed government buildings overnight, demanding the Parliament invalidate the agreement. Dozens of protesters gathered again Tuesday morning in front of the parliament building in the Armenian capital of Yerevan...

AMATEURISH SCULPTURE RESTORATION WORK DRAWS LAUGHS, GAWKERS IN SPAIN

November 11, 2020 | AP News

MADRID — Restoration work on a sculpture in northern Spain has resurrected memories of a restored Christ fresco in another Spanish city eight years ago that drew ridicule as well as tourists. The latest incident concerns a relief sculpture on the exterior of an ornate office building in the city of Palencia. What was once the bust of a smiling woman now looks more like the head of a cartoon character.

The disfigurement was bought to light by a local artist who lives near the office building and was tipped off by a florist on his street. Antonio Capel posted before and after photographs on his Facebook page, triggering a flurry of social media reaction and...

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