COVID-19 VACCINE WILL ARRIVE IN FRESNO NEXT MONTH, SAYS COUNCILWOMAN »

VALLEY REPUBLICANS DEFEND CONTROVERSIAL CONFERENCE »

BIDEN REACHES OUT TO GOVERNORS AS TRUMP STYMIES TRANSITION »
Fresno County will receive a supply of COVID-19 vaccine by the end of the year, says Fresno City Councilmember Esmeralda Soria. She said city officials are in regular contact with Fresno County’s health officer, Dr. Rais Vohra, on the timing. “He just spoke to us and confirmed that we would be getting early vaccinations before the end of the year,” said Soria. “What we’re trying to do is just be prepared so that we have a deployment plan.”

This news comes on the heels of announcements from drug makers Pfizer and Moderna that human trials have shown their vaccines to be 95% effective. Pfizer said on Wednesday that it would be seeking emergency approval as early as this week to distribute their vaccine. U.S. officials expect only enough supply from Pfizer and Moderna to vaccinate about 20 million people through the end of the year. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will determine who is first in line for a vaccine in the U.S. Officials have previously said health workers, first responders and vulnerable populations would likely be inoculated first.

Limited Number of Vaccine Doses
Soria says local leaders are not expecting a large batch in December, so people should remain patient. “Obviously, they’re (COVID-19 vaccines) going to be limited. They’re going to be utilized for the most vulnerable,” said Soria. “I imagine probably the frontline workers (also) so that we, again, can control the pandemic here in our community.” An expert panel advising the CDC is also considering giving high priority to workers in essential industries, people with certain medical conditions and people age 65 and older. State officials are expected to follow CDC guidance as they distribute their vaccine supplies.

COVID-19 Testing Goals
Soria says it’s also important to increase the amount of testing being done in the city. She noted the state penalized Fresno County for not reaching testing goals in the most recent COVID-19 report. On Monday, data showed Fresno County had 13.9 new COVID-19 cases per day per 100k population. But, because the amount of testing being done is below the state’s goals, Fresno County’s rate was increased to 14.7 and listed as the ‘adjusted case rate for tier assignment.’ “The last thing we want is us to even go further back,” said Soria. “The goal is to make sure that these numbers get lower, that we do increased testing, and that’s going to help us because we have been behind.”
Two thousand local kids will be a little bit warmer this winter. Granville Homes and the Foundation for Central Schools have teamed up to provide new coats and school spirit wear for the district’s students, some of whom received their new apparel Wednesday during a drive-through event at Saroyan Elementary School.

Coats for Young Students, Spirit Wear for Older Ones
This is the 16th year that Granville Homes has supported the foundation’s Coats for Kids program. The homebuilder’s donation of $15,000 helped more than double the number of new coats distributed to children in preschool through third grade and spirit wear for students in fourth grade through high school. Darius Assemi, president and CEO of Granville Homes and publisher of GV Wire, apologized for not being able to attend this year’s Coats for Kids since he is still recovering from COVID-19.

“"We are proud of our 16-year partnership with the Foundation for Central Schools and their Coats for Kids program that provides some of the basic essentials to our underserved families here in Fresno!" he...
At least three Central Valley Republican lawmakers are at a Hawaiian legislative conference while California officials are discouraging out-of-state travel. State Sen. Andreas Borgeas (R-Fresno) and Assemblyman Frank Bigelow (R-O’Neals) say they are conducting business at the event, hosted by the Independent Voter Project. Assemblyman Heath Flora (R-Ripon) also confirmed his attendance at the conference, according to a Wednesday report in Politico.

The Politico report also said several Democratic lawmakers from California are presumed to be in attendance, but none have not responded to inquiries about their whereabouts. The trip has been maligned as excessive during the return of nearly the entire state to the most restrictive “purple” tier because of increased COVID-19 infections. The conference sponsor, Independent Voter Project, describes itself as a group “that seeks to re-engage nonpartisan voters and promote nonpartisan election reform through initiatives, litigation, and voter education.” IVP is best known for authoring California’s successful nonpartisan primary.

News of the legislators’ trips comes on the heels of Gov. Gavin Newsom attending a pricey dinner party at Napa’s French Laundry restaurant, sans mask. Newsom has apologized for going, but recently published photos may contradict his account of the event being outdoors.

Borgeas, Bigelow, Flora Defend Attendance

Nevertheless, Borgeas and Bigelow defended attending. “Yes, I am among the Central Valley Republicans attending the bipartisan annual conference discussing legislative proposals and policy ideas to re-open our economy. I was tested prior to arrival, and am diligently following COVID-19 and social distancing protocols,” Borgeas said via text through his legislative aide.

“Blanket mandates by the Governor aren’t working for families, schools, and businesses in California. That is why I am joining Central Valley Republican Assemblymembers Frank Bigelow and Heath Flora (R-Ripon), on working on legislative ideas on ways to return to normalcy,” Borgeas said via text through his legislative aide.
SACRAMENTO — One of the youngest mayors in the country, who garnered national attention for starting a privately funded program to give poor people $500 a month in guaranteed income, conceded that he has lost his bid for reelection in Stockton.

Four years after winning more than 70% of the vote, Mayor Michael Tubbs, 30, lost by more than 10 percentage points. He conceded the race to Kevin Lincoln on Tuesday after an update of counted ballots showed he trailed by nearly 12,000 votes, with fewer than 12,000 ballots left to count.

“I am honored to have served as your mayor, and I will continue to support the work needed to move our city forward,” Tubbs said in a news release. “I congratulate Kevin Lincoln and wish him the best as our new mayor.” It was a surprising defeat for Tubbs, the city’s first Black mayor, whose previous political campaigns were endorsed by the likes of Oprah Winfrey and Barack Obama. His compelling...

SACRAMENTO — Two top officials at the California Medical Association attended a birthday party alongside Gov. Gavin Newsom earlier this month as the state experienced an uptick in coronavirus cases.

Dustin Corcoran, the organization’s chief executive officer and Janus Norman, a senior vice president, were among a dozen people at the dinner at an upscale wine country restaurant, CMA spokesman Anthony York said Tuesday.

The California Medical Association represents 50,000 doctors in the nation’s most populous state and has recently tweeted messages including #Stay-Home and #WearAMask. None of the people at...

SACRAMENTO — California overestimated what it thought would be a jaw-dropping $54 billion budget deficit, creating a one-time $26 billion windfall for lawmakers to spend next year, the state’s nonpartisan legislative analyst said Wednesday.

The state’s spending plan was upended this year by the coronavirus pandemic, which forced the closure of many businesses and prompted millions of people to file for unemployment benefits.

Unsure of the virus’s economic impact, the state Legislature approved a 2020-21 spending plan that tapped its savings account and relied on a combination of tax increases, spending cuts and...
WILMINGTON, Del. — Joe Biden’s meeting Thursday with a group of Democratic and Republican governors is his latest attempt to fight through President Donald Trump’s unprecedented attempt to block the president-elect’s transition to power. Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris planned a virtual session in the afternoon with the National Governors Association’s leadership team, which includes five Republicans and four Democrats.

All the Democrats and a majority of the Republicans involved have acknowledged Biden as the winner of the White House election. One expected participant, Gov. Larry Hogan, R-Md., told The Associated Press recently that Trump’s wild and unsupported claims of widespread voter fraud were “dangerous” and “embarrassing.” The highest-ranking Republican on the NGA’s executive committee, Asa Hutchinson of Arkansas, said over the weekend that Biden would be the next president and he called on the Trump administration to give Biden access to the intelligence briefings he needs in order to be fully prepared to lead the country on Jan. 20, Inauguration Day. So far, the governors have not swayed the Republican president. Before Biden’s meeting, Trump came out with a new round of false claims of voter fraud in key states, even as courts continue to reject his challenges, and a small, but growing number of Republican officeholders publicly begin to accept Biden’s victory.

Beyond being a pillar of democracy, the peaceful transfer of power after an election is especially critical this year given the extraordinary governing challenges Biden will inherit in just nine weeks. The United States is struggling through the worst public health crisis in a century, state and local government are facing massive budget shortfalls, and millions of Americans remain out of work.

Biden Has Been Forced to Turn to Diverse Collection of Outside Allies to Ratchet up the Pressure on Trump to Concede

But more than two weeks after the Nov. 3 election, the Trump administration is refusing to let Biden receive detailed briefings on national security and pandemic planning that leaders in both parties say are vital to ensure Biden can govern effectively on Day One. With Trump dug in and Republicans on Capitol Hill largely unwilling to challenge him, Biden has been forced to turn to diverse collection of outside allies to ratchet up the pressure on Trump to concede.
 oleh hospitals are converting chapels, cafeterias, waiting rooms, hallways, even a parking garage into patient treatment areas. Staff members are desperately calling around to other medical centers in search of open beds. Fatigue and frustration are setting in among front-line workers.

Conditions inside the nation’s hospitals are deteriorating by the day as the coronavirus rages across the U.S. at an unrelenting pace. “We are depressed, disheartened and tired to the bone,” said Alison Johnson, director of critical care at Johnson City Medical Center in Tennessee, adding that she drives to and from work some days in tears.

The number of people in the hospital with COVID-19 in the U.S. has doubled in the past month and set new records every day this week. As of Tuesday, more than 76,000 were hospitalized with the virus. Newly confirmed infections per day in the...
BERLIN — German police fired water cannons Wednesday at demonstrators protesting coronavirus restrictions in Berlin’s government district, after crowds ignored calls to wear masks and keep their distance from one another in line with pandemic regulations. As water shot from the cannons rained down on protesters outside the landmark Brandenburg Gate, police in riot gear moved through the crowd carrying away some participants. Some demonstrators threw fireworks, flares and other objects in response as police helicopters hovered overhead. Officers avoided shooting the cannons directly at protesters because there were children in the crowd, and they worked slowly and methodically to disperse the crowd, Berlin police spokesman Thilo Cablitz said. Some protesters popped open umbrellas and held their ground until they were eventually forced back.

Nine police officers were injured. The protest crowd thinned significantly by late afternoon as many demonstrators marched back to the city’s main train station, chanting and blowing whistles. One protester held a sign saying “Infection Protection Law=Dictatorship.” Another waved one reading “Truth, Freedom, Don’t Touch Our Constitution.” The protests came as German lawmakers debated a bill that would provide legal underpinning for the government to issue social distancing rules, require masks in public and to close stores and other venues to slow the spread of the virus. The bill easily passed both the lower and upper houses of Germany’s parliament and was being fast-tracked to the country’s president for his signature later Wednesday.

While such virus-prevention measures are supported by most people in Germany, a vocal minority has staged regular rallies around the country, arguing that the restrictions are unconstitutional. Health Minister Jens Spahn, defended the measures in parliament ahead of the vote, telling lawmakers that authorities “struggle every day in trying to strike the balance” between restrictions and safeguarding democratic freedoms. But he insisted that Germany had found the right path, noting that it has fared much better than many of its European neighbors. “Where would you rather be than in Germany,” he told lawmakers from the far-right Alternative for Germany party who criticized the lockdown measures. Overall, the country has reported about 833,000 coronavirus cases.

November 18, 2020 | AP News
GERMANY MARKS 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF LANDMARK NUREMBERG TRIALS

November 19, 2020 | AP News

BERLIN — Seventy-five years ago, the dock of Courtroom 600 of the Nuremberg Palace of Justice was packed with some of the most nefarious figures of the 20th Century: Hermann Goering, Rudolf Hess, Joachim von Ribbentrop and 18 other high-ranking Nazis.

They weren't yet known as war criminals — it was a charge that didn't exist until the Nuremberg trials began on Nov. 20, 1945, in what is now seen as the birthplace of a new era of international law.

The proceedings broke new ground in holding government leaders individually responsible for their aggression and slaughter of millions of innocents.

In addition to establishing the offense of war crimes, it also produced the charges of crimes against peace, waging a war of aggression, and crimes against humanity, whose legacies live on in the International Criminal Court of today. Nuremberg was the city where Adolf Hitler reviewed torchlight Nazi party rallies and promulgated the race laws of 1935...

TURKISH PARLIAMENT APPROVES PEACEKEEPERS FOR AZERBAIJAN

November 17, 2020 | AP News

ANKARA, Turkey — Turkey’s parliament on Tuesday granted President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s government permission to deploy peacekeepers to Azerbaijan to monitor a cease-fire deal between Azerbaijan and Armenia that aims to end the conflict in the region.

In a show of hands, legislators voted in favor of a one-year mandate allowing the government to send troops to Azerbaijan, where they would observe possible violations of the truce from a joint Turkish-Russian monitoring center. The cease-fire ended six weeks of intense fighting between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh region. Erdogan’s government would determine the...

POMPEO IS 1ST TOP US DIPLOMAT TO VISIT AN ISRAELI SETTLEMENT

November 19, 2020 | AP News

JERUSALEM — U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Thursday became the first top American diplomat to visit an Israeli settlement in the occupied West Bank as the State Department in a major policy shift announced that products from the settlements can be labeled “Made in Israel.”

The two moves reflected the Trump administration’s acceptance of Israeli settlements, which the Palestinians and most of the international community view as a violation of international law and a major obstacle to peace. Pompeo also announced that the U.S. would brand the international Palestinian-led boycott movement against Israel as “anti-Semitic” and bar any groups that participate in it from...