NEW POLICE CHIEF SAYS NO HONEYMOON PERIOD. ‘VIOLENT CRIME IS NUMBER ONE.’ »
CA EXPANDS VACCINE ELIGIBILITY TO ALL 65 AND OLDER »
TRUMP IMPEACHED FOR 2ND TIME IN BIPARTISAN VOTE »
Paco Balderrama thought he would have a honeymoon period as Fresno’s new police chief. A recent surge in violent crime changed his mind. “Initially, I had a 30, 60, 90 day plan to kind of ease in and get to know everybody, not just the department members, but also the community. But that’s kind of out the window right now because there’s a lot of issues that need to be addressed immediately. And violent crime is number one,” Balderrama told the media after his swearing-in ceremony. In the first four days of January, Fresno police were investigating five homicides. Outgoing chief Andy Hall initiated a violence suppression operation over the weekend.

Balderrama was sworn in as the 22nd police chief in the city’s history and the first Latino chief. His twin brother Beto Balderrama, a captain with the Oklahoma City police department, performed the oath on top of City Hall’s fountain — the water was turned off. His wife, Kyla, pinned the chief badge on his uniform. Coming from Oklahoma City, a veteran of 20-plus years — most recently as the police department’s deputy chief — Balderrama said he’s received a “warm” welcome from the Fresno community. “I’m settled in and I’m ready to get to work,” Balderrama said, who is now living in north Fresno.

Several Meetings for New Chief
Balderrama said he’s been busy in meetings “for hours and hours and hours,” with his staff and with the community. “Community safety and community trust — those are everything that we’re trying to do, because if we accomplish those two things, we accomplish everything. So I’m going to hang my hat on those two things,” Balderrama said. He said listening is the best strategy. Balderrama said his goal is to stop crime before it happens. “If we are responding to a call after somebody has already been hurt, shot or killed, then that’s not good enough, you know?” Balderrama said. “We want to gather the information needed so we can respond and we can be more proactive.”

The new chief made it a point to let his officers know they are supported by him and hope that leads to a safer city.

Seeks Support from Council
Balderrama said being an effective chief requires support from elected leaders. “Having the mayor’s support, having the community support, having the city council’s support, I mean, it’s very important to me. That’s what you need in 2021 in a major city for a police chief has to have the support of those around them,” Balderrama said. Dyer, when introducing Balderrama...
California students who have been struggling academically because of distance learning during the pandemic could get a “do-over” year under legislation proposed by a San Diego Assemblywoman. Assembly Bill 104 would let parents and students decide whether the student should repeat a grade because of learning losses during the pandemic, and would allow juniors and seniors to have a fifth year in high school to earn the credits needed to obtain a high school diploma. The bill’s author, Assembly Member Lorena Gonzalez, D-San Diego, said the goal is to get students back on track after lengthy time out of the classroom and in virtual classes. "Students won't magically catch up academically when they are back in classrooms. We need tailored programs that take into account the educational and emotional toll this crisis has had on our children," she said in a news release Wednesday.

AB 104 also would allow students to replace letter grades with pass/no pass without loss of eligibility for college financial aid. The California State University would be required to accept changed transcripts. Fresno Unified Superintendent Bob Nelson could not be reached for comment Wednesday. Joshua...
January 13, 2021 | AP News

California is immediately allowing residents 65 and older to get scarce coronavirus vaccines. Gov. Gavin Newsom’s announcement Wednesday puts seniors in line before emergency workers, teachers, childcare providers and food and agriculture workers even as counties complain they already don’t have enough doses to go around.

“There is no higher priority than efficiently and equitably distributing these vaccines as quickly as possible to those who face the graver consequences,” Gov. Gavin Newsom said in a statement. “To those not yet eligible for vaccines, your turn is coming. We are doing everything we can to bring more vaccine into the state.”

While health care workers and those in nursing homes and other congregate living facilities can still be vaccinated, state officials are expanding to those 65 and up because they are at the greatest risk of being hospitalized and dying.

“With our hospitals crowded and ICUs full, we need to focus on vaccinating Californians who are at highest risk of becoming hospitalized to alleviate stress on our health care facilities,” said Dr. Tomás Aragón, director of the California Department of Public Health and the state’s Public Health Officer. “Prioritizing individuals age 65 and older will reduce hospitalizations and save lives.”

While health care workers and those in nursing homes and other congregate living facilities can still be vaccinated, state officials are expanding to those 65 and up because they are at the greatest risk of being hospitalized and dying.
PROPOSED CORPORATE TAX HIKE IN CALIFORNIA WOULD AID HOMELESS

January 14, 2021 | AP News

SAN FRANCISCO — A California coalition is proposing legislation to boost taxes on wealthy multinational corporations to raise more than $2 billion a year to house tens of thousands of homeless people, addressing what has become a worsening problem in the country’s most populous state.

Supporters say Assembly Bill 71 would reinvent California’s approach to solving homelessness — providing for the first time an ongoing, sufficient state funding source to get people off the streets. Opponents say it would contribute to the perception that California is hostile to business. “Our state is facing an unprecedented homelessness crisis that’s on the verge of becoming a full-blown catastrophe due to the economic impacts of COVID-19,” Democratic Assemblywoman Luz Rivas of Los Angeles said Wednesday, noting that one in four Americans experiencing homelessness lives in California.

The state suffers from prohibitively high housing costs and wages that can’t keep up, resulting in an...
WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump was impeached by the U.S. House for a historic second time Wednesday, charged with “incitement of insurrection” over the deadly mob siege of the Capitol in a swift and stunning collapse of his final days in office. Newly elected Congressman David Valadao (R – Hanford) was among 10 GOP votes in the House voting in favor of impeachment. With the Capitol secured by armed National Guard troops inside and out, the House voted 232-197 to impeach Trump. The proceedings moved at lightning speed, with lawmakers voting just one week after violent pro-Trump loyalists stormed the U.S. Capitol, egged on by the president’s calls for them to “fight like hell” against the election results.

Republican David Valadao Votes to Impeach

"President Trump was, without question, a driving force in the catastrophic events that took place on January 6 by encouraging masses of rioters to incite violence on elected officials, staff members, and our representative democracy as a whole,” Valadao said in a statement issued after the vote. He chided Speaker Nancy Pelosi for what he described as a “rushed political stunt” and said hearings should have been held. Nonetheless, Valadao said, “[b]ased on the facts before me, I have to go with my gut and vote my conscience. I voted to impeach President Trump. His inciting rhetoric was un-American, abhorrent, and absolutely an impeachable offense. It’s time to put country over politics.”

The Capitol Insurrection Stunned Lawmakers

The Capitol insurrection stunned and angered lawmakers, who were sent scrambling for safety as the mob descended, and it revealed the fragility of the nation’s history of peaceful transfers of power. The riot also forced a reckoning among some Republicans, who have stood by Trump through out his presidency and largely allowed him to spread false attacks against the integrity of the 2020 election. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi invoked Abraham Lincoln and the Bible, imploring lawmakers to uphold their oath to defend the Constitution from all enemies, foreign “and domestic.” She said of Trump: “He must go, he is a clear and present danger to the nation that we all love.” Holed up at the White House...
Prosecutors have brought dozens of cases after the deadly attack at the U.S. Capitol, and more charges are expected in the coming days as investigators identify more members of the pro-Trump mob.

Investigators are collecting tips from the public, interviewing witnesses and going through photos, videos and social media accounts to collect evidence against the attackers who overran the Capitol to stop the certification of Democrat Joe Biden as the next president. And those who’ve been charged so far could lead investigators to others who joined in the violent siege on Capitol Hill. Some questions and answers about the investigation into the Capitol breach:

How Many People Have Been Charged?
The U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia has brought federal charges against about 20 people so far, while 40 others have been charged in D.C.’s...
BERLIN — German Chancellor Angela Merkel considers U.S. President Donald Trump’s eviction from Twitter by the company “problematic,” her spokesman said Monday. Twitter permanently suspended Trump from the microblogging platform on Friday, citing a “risk of further incitement of violence” in the wake of the storming of the U.S. Capitol by supporters of the outgoing president. Asked about Twitter’s decision, Merkel’s spokesman, Steffen Seibert, said the operators of social media platforms “bear great responsibility for political communication not being poisoned by hatred, by lies and by incitement to violence.”

Facebook on Thursday Suspended Trump’s Account Through Jan. 20
He said it’s right not to “stand back” when such content is posted, for example by flagging it. But Seibert also said that the freedom of opinion is a fundamental right of “elementary significance.” “This fundamental right can be intervened in, but according to the law and within the framework defined by legislators — not according to a decision by the management of social media platforms,” he told reporters in Berlin. “Seen from this angle, the chancellor considers it problematic that the accounts of the U.S. president have now been permanently blocked.” Facebook on Thursday suspended Trump’s account through Jan. 20, the day of President-elect Joe Biden’s inauguration, and possibly indefinitely. Merkel herself does not have a Twitter account, although Seibert does and many German government ministers do.
January 14, 2021 | AP News
FRANKFURT, Germany — German automaker Volkswagon said its global sales fell 15.2% during 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic but showed significant recovery toward the end of the year. The company more than tripled its sales of battery-only vehicles.

Global sales for all of Volkswagen’s brands amounted to 9.3 million vehicles. The fourth quarter showed a smaller decline of 5.7% and within that quarter the month of December was still further improved, showing a shortfall of only 3.2% from the same period the year before. Volkswagen said Wednesday that sales fell the most in Western Europe, by 21.6%, while China, the company’s largest single market, was down 9.1%.

Sales of battery-only cars jumped 214% to 231,600 from 73,700 across all the company’s brands. The company’s electric sales leaders included the Volkswagen ID.3 compact with 56,500, the Audi e-tron SUV with 47,300, and the high-end Porsche...