OPINION

Public employee $100k club grows

It pays to live off the taxpayers, especially if you work for the Orange County Fire Authority. Last year, an OCFA fire captain raked in $245,350 in overtime, bringing their total compensation to over $508,000. While they were OCFA's largest earner, according to Transparent California, the average fire captain is doing just fine, receiving $301,791 in pay and benefits.

Transparent California, a nonprofit which regularly publishes public employee compensation data, documents that 44 OCFA employees received overtime pay in excess of $100,000 last year, up from just 15 in 2015. That's despite an overtime cap implemented in 2015. “Several employees who were already more than doubling their salary from overtime pay actually saw an increase after the cap took effect — which suggests that cap might need to be tightened a bit,” notes Robert Fellner, research director for the watchdog group.

Elsewhere in Orange County, it was the city of Anaheim which was found to have the five highest overtime payments of any Orange County city. Topping the list was a fire engineer, who received $204,458 in overtime, bringing their total compensation to $403,528. Whereas Transparent California observed a 5 percent increase in overtime pay last year across 148 cities with overtime payouts of at least $1 million, Anaheim was found to have a 19 percent increase in overtime, the 13th highest increase in the state. Buena Park also experienced an 18.5 percent growth in overtime, followed by Irvine at 17 percent, Costa Mesa at 17 percent and Fullerton at 14 percent.
In the county government, Transparent California also found that while in 2015 only Sheriff Sandra Hutchens received total compensation above $400,000, in 2016 there were 11 county workers who broke the $400,000 mark. Topping the list are five psychiatrists, receiving between $424,631.54 and $519,771.21 in pay and benefits, with overtime pay as much as $97,443.16.

Such excesses in government compensation, and indicators that they are only becoming more common, are a slap in the face to county taxpayers. County and city governments must learn to respect the taxpaying public, rein in excess overtime and use their finances to serve the public, not enrich government workers.

Tags: Editorials

Orange County Register Editorial Board

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Mart fire above Highland downgraded to 670 acres; now 40 percent contained

By Doug Saunders, The Sun

Wednesday, June 28, 2017

HIGHLAND >> The Mart fire in the foothills above Highland burned less than previously thought and is holding at 40 percent containment, fire officials reported Wednesday evening.

It has burned 670 acres, according to the U.S. Forest Service. Previously, officials had said the blaze scorched just over 900 acres but the number changed due to more accurate mapping.

More than 500 firefighters and other personnel from Cal Fire, the San Bernardino County Fire Department, the U.S. Forest Service and other surrounding agencies battled the blaze keeping it from burning homes. Throughout the day Wednesday, fire crews continued line construction and structure protection throughout the day.

The fast-moving blaze broke out Tuesday afternoon and quickly required officials to order the evacuation about 200 homes in the area east of Orchard Road, north of Highland Avenue and west of Church Street. Residents were allowed to return to their homes in the early-evening hours.

The cause of the fire is under investigation.


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WASHINGTON — With wildfire season raging in western states, Congress is embroiled in a battle over how best to fight the fires. Many Republicans want to help prevent and fight wildfires by giving the agencies that manage the federal forests more money and greater ability to thin out the forests. Most Democrats, as well as environmental groups, say the bill would lead to more logging without first considering potential damage to the forests.

At the moment Utah, California and Arizona are dealing with more than 20 fires. The Weather Channel reports that the largest, in southern Utah, has forced more than 1,500 people to evacuate. The fire has burned more than 84 square miles and is 10 percent contained.

California, Idaho, Alaska, Oregon and Washington have all endured multiple "megafires" — those that burn more than 100,000 acres — in the past decade, according to data from the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, which coordinates wildfire response around the country.

These massive fires also consume a huge part of the federal Forest Service budget. The agency has asked Congress for help in addressing the problem of wildfire funding.

That's why lawmakers are considering the “Resilient Federal Forests Act of 2017.” It would give the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management access to funds to fight fires from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which coordinates responses to disasters like hurricanes, if their budgets for fighting wildfires runs out.

Under the current system, the Forest Service often has to take money from the budgets of other programs to pay for wildfire costs, a practice known as "fire borrowing."

“(The bill) would reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires through active forest management, addressing both the symptoms and the underlying cause of catastrophic fires in our national forests.” Rep. Bruce Westerman, R-Ark., the bill’s sponsor said.

But making what looks like a simple government maneuver is getting complicated.

The bill cleared its first hurdle, the House Natural Resources committee, this week on a 23-12 party line vote. The full House is expected to vote next month.

The bill moved quickly through the House the last time it was introduced in 2015. It passed by a 262-167 vote, with only 19 Democrats voting yes. It was not considered in the Senate.
Westerner has spoken with Sen. Pat Roberts, R-Kansas, the Senate Agriculture Committee chairman, about introducing similar legislation. A spokesperson for Roberts did not immediately respond to request for comment.

But while the bill has drawn support from Minnesota Democrats Richard Nolan and Collin Peterson, none of the Democrats on the committee voted for the bill at its hearing Tuesday due to concern that the bill would allow logging without proper environmental review.

The bill would expedite the review process for certain forest management activities such as logging, controlled burns or salvaging wood.

It would also allow the Forest Service to waive environmental safeguards if it believes a project is unlikely to affect an endangered species. It also aims to prevent the review process from being tied up in court, by limiting the period of court injunctions and preventing payment for the plaintiffs’ legal expenses.

“The legislation would remove much-needed accountability by limiting the public’s ability to review federal agency actions, allowing the Forest Service to unilaterally waive the need for environmental review, while also potentially allowing up to 10,000-acre clearcuts without any public review,” Rep. Jared Huffman, D-Calif., who also voted against the bill, said in a statement.

Rep. Raúl Grijalva, the top Democrat on the committee said of the bill, “it’s another precedent being set, slowly but surely, undercutting those benchmark laws and beginning a deregulation process without actually saying so.”

Environmental groups blasted the bill.

In a statement, Susan Jane Brown of the Western Environmental Law Center called it a “wish list from the timber industry.”

Rebecca Turner, senior director of programs and policy for American Forests, a nonprofit conservation organization, said, “if it passes you’ll have increased cutting of the national forests without the true understanding of the environmental impacts.”

But, said Westerman’s office, the bill has support from 46 groups including conservation, sporting and timber organizations and the Forest Service.

Ryan Saylor, a Westerman spokesman, said these projects are necessary for preserving the health of the forests.

“We are literally loving our forests to death,” he said.

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A helicopter makes a water drop on a hillside after a wildfire broke out in the Brentwood area of Los Angeles, Sunday, May 28, 2017. Brian Melley - AP
Air pollution exposure may hasten death, even at levels deemed 'safe,' study says

At a time when the Trump administration is moving to delay and dismantle air quality regulations, a new study suggests that air pollution continues to cut Americans' lives short, even at levels well below the legal limits set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The nationwide study of more than 60 million senior citizens linked long-term exposure to two main smog pollutants — ozone and fine particulate matter — to an increased risk of premature death.

The analysis found no sign of a “safe” level of pollution, below which the risk of dying early tapered off.

Harvard University scientists who conducted the study calculated that reducing fine particle pollution by 1 microgram per cubic meter nationwide would save about 12,000 lives each year. Another 1,900 lives would be

saved annually by lowering ozone pollution by 1 part per billion, they found.

The study appears in Thursday’s edition of the New England Journal of Medicine.

Fine particulate matter is composed of tiny health-damaging specks of pollution that can lodge deep in the lungs and are linked to cardiovascular disease. Ozone, the lung-searing gas in warm-weather smog, triggers asthma and other respiratory illnesses. Both pollutants build up in the air largely as a result of emissions from vehicles, power plants and other major combustion sources.

For the analysis, researchers developed a new computer model that uses on-the-ground air-monitoring data and satellite-based measurements to estimate pollution levels across the continental U.S., breaking the country up into 1-square-kilometer zones. They paired that information with health data contained in Medicare claims records from 2000 to 2012 for all beneficiaries in the 48 contiguous states, a group that represents about 97% of the population ages 65 or older.

The high-resolution data allowed scientists to estimate the health effects of air pollution at levels far below the federal limits. For fine particulate matter, which has a legal limit of 12 micrograms per cubic meter or air, they found that seniors faced an increased risk of premature death when exposed to as little as 5 micrograms per cubic meter, the lowest amount they measured. For ozone, which has an EPA limit of 70 parts per billion, they detected increased mortality at levels as low as 30 ppb, also the smallest concentration they measured.

The researchers calculated that when the concentration of particulate matter rose by 10 micrograms per cubic meter, the chances that a senior citizen would die during the study period rose by 7.3%. And when the ozone concentration rose by 10 ppb, the chances of early death rose by 1.1%. In both cases, the researchers controlled for factors like smoking behavior, weight and income, which are also likely to affect a senior’s risk of premature death.

“

The air that we are breathing right now is harmful, it's toxic.

— Francesca Dominici, data scientist at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

The findings suggest that even though federal limits on the nation’s most widespread air pollutants are updated periodically based on scientific reviews required under the Clean Air Act, they are not strong enough to fully protect the public.

Critics may claim that stronger standards would offer diminishing returns, but the study results provide new evidence that they would actually increase health benefits, with fewer people getting sick and dying from dirty air, said Francesca Dominici, a data scientist at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and the study’s principal investigator.
“We are seeing that the air that we are breathing right now is harmful, it's toxic,” Dominici said.

An editorial that accompanies the study said the findings “stress the need for tighter regulation of air-pollutant levels” and stricter limits on fine particulate matter.

“Despite compelling data, the Trump administration is moving headlong in the opposite direction,” the editorial said, citing the president's recent steps to dismantle emissions-cutting rules, withdraw from the Paris climate accord and slash the EPA's budget. “The increased air pollution that would result from loosening current restrictions would have devastating effects on public health.”

The findings have important implications for California, where millions of people breathe the nation’s highest levels of ozone and fine particulate matter. Despite decades of improvement, the air in Southern California and the San Joaquin Valley remains far from meeting federal health standards.

The new study adds to a robust body of research going back to the early 1990s associating fine-particle pollution with shortened lives. But most of those studies were limited to populations in wealthier and well-monitored urban areas, the researchers said.

The enormous sample size — encompassing nearly all Americans over 65 — allowed scientists to examine air quality differences across all parts of the country, including small cities and rural areas, and among various ethnic and socioeconomic groups.

The researchers found that men, blacks, Asians, Latinos and lower-income seniors all faced higher risks of premature death from fine particulate matter. Black seniors were three times as likely as seniors overall to die prematurely.

Under the Clean Air Act, the EPA must review national air quality standards for six major pollutants every five years and adjust them if necessary to reflect the latest science.

The 12-micrograms-per-cubic-meter standard for fine particulate matter was last updated in 2012. The federal standard for ozone was last strengthened in 2015 and is now being reexamined by the Trump administration.

This month, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt announced a one-year delay in implementing the federal ozone standard, citing “increased regulatory burdens, restrictions on infrastructure investment, and increased costs to businesses.” The decision allows California and other states with ozone levels above the current standard to postpone the adoption of emissions-cutting measures.

Pruitt, who in his previous job as attorney general of Oklahoma made a career of suing to block EPA regulations, is also moving to reshape the agency’s science advisory boards. These include the committee that makes recommendations on federal air quality standards.

Environmentalists and health advocates fear Pruitt will replace academic experts with representatives of regulated industries.
Prosecutors rest case for 3 of 4 Colonies defendants

Prosecutors rest case for 3 of 4 defendants

By Joe Nelson, The Sun

Wednesday, June 28, 2017

The prosecution rested its case Wednesday for three of the four defendants in the San Bernardino County Colonies trial after nearly seven months of testimony about whether county officials were bribed to approve a $102 million settlement with a developer in 2006.

The prosecution expects to complete its entire case Thursday.

Jurors assigned to hear the case of defendants Jeff Burum, a Rancho Cucamonga developer; former county Supervisor Paul Biane; and Mark Kirk, the former chief of staff for former county Supervisor Gary Ovitt, broke into applause after prosecutor Lewis Cope told them, “The people rest.”

One witness is left in the case of the fourth defendant, former Assistant Assessor Jim Erwin. Cope told Judge Michael A. Smith he expected that testimony to wrap up Thursday.

Erwin’s panel is called the green jury and wears green juror badges; jurors for the other three defendants are the red jury and wear red juror badges. Erwin had a separate jury because some of the evidence against him is not admissible against the other three defendants, prosecutors say.

Following the applause, Erwin’s attorney, Rajan Maline jokingly said, “Your honor, that’s not fair to the green jury,” resulting in more laughter in the courtroom.

Remaining for the marathon trial, which was originally forecast to end in early July: Defense motions to dismiss, which are set for late next week; defense witness testimony projected to start July 12 and finish by month’s end; and closing arguments scheduled for mid-August.

Prosecutors from the District Attorney’s and state Attorney General’s offices are jointly prosecuting the case.

They allege Kirk, Biane and former defendant Bill Postmus each took $100,000 bribes, which were reported as campaign contributions, from Rancho Cucamonga developer Burum to gain approval for the $102 million court settlement over flood control work at Colonies Partners’ 434-acre residential and commercial development in Upland.

The prosecution’s case has depended primarily on circumstantial evidence and the testimony of Postmus, a former county assessor, and his former assistant assessor Adam Aleman.

Both men struck plea bargains and agreed to cooperate in the criminal investigation to avoid harsher sentences. Postmus was elected assessor in 2006. He was chairman of the Board of Supervisors when it approved the Colonies settlement 3-2 in November of that year.
Aleman and Postmus were key witnesses for the prosecution, but defense attorneys attacked their credibility during trial, poking holes in their testimony including Aleman’s varying accounts of meetings he said he attended with Postmus and Burum in 2006, and encounters with private investigators outside his residence.

Postmus, whose affiliated PACs received a total of $100,000 from Colonies Partners in June 2007, insisted during his eight-plus days on the witness stand that he never considered the PAC contributions a bribe, that Burum never crossed the line into bribery, and he knew nothing of the PAC contributions until after the settlement.

All the defendants have denied any wrongdoing. They said the contributions, which were from Colonies Partners, where Burum is one of the managing members, were public donations to legal political action committees and were part of the Colonies’ attempts to mend fences after the contentious legal dispute, and were available online for public review.

Earlier Wednesday, jurors heard testimony about an April 2009 interview Kirk had with district attorney investigators in which he spontaneously insisted there was “no quid pro quo” as they began asking him about the Colonies contribution to a PAC he controlled.

They also heard about the phone traffic among the defendants, Postmus and Aleman spanning from September 2005 through September 2008, although those accounts did not include the content of the calls.

Deputy Attorney General Melissa Mandel asked Hollis “Bud” Randles, now the assistant chief investigator for the District Attorney’s Bureau of Investigation, if, during his and investigator Maury Weiss’ 2009 interview with Kirk, he said anything about a quid pro quo involving a $100,000 contribution from Rancho Cucamonga investor group Colonies Partners LP to a PAC that Kirk was involved with in May 2007.

Randles said he did not.

Kirk and his then boss, former county Supervisor Gary Ovitt, had volunteered to help district attorney investigators in their 2009 probe of corruption in the Assessor’s Office, agreeing to the interview with Randles and Weiss.

But when Randles and Weiss began questioning Kirk about his relationship with Burum, the Colonies settlement, and a $100,000 contribution by Colonies Partners to the Alliance for Ethical Government PAC in May 2007, Kirk said he was starting to feel uncomfortable, and that there was “no quid pro quo.”

Kirk’s attorney, Peter Scalisi, noted that Kirk went to the D.A.’s Office to talk about the Assessor’s Office investigation, not Colonies, and began feeling like a target during the interview.

Scalisi asked Randles if he was aware that Kirk was the driving force behind the county’s posting online the campaign finance reports and Form 700s, which lists reporting county officials’ sources of income, assets and gifts received in their official capacity. Randles said he was not.

Scalisi also asked Randles if he reviewed the trial transcript of former chief of the state Fair Political Practices Commission’s External Affairs and Education Division Lynda Cassady’s testimony in February. Randles said he did not.

Cassady testified that the FPPC never investigated any complaints pertaining to Colonies Partners PAC contributions, and that the controller of a PAC can act as a consultant and direct its treasurer to pay them a fee for the service, which both Kirk and Erwin did.

Scalisi also asked Randles if any violations regarding the PACs Kirk was involved with, which also included the West Valley Young Republicans PAC, were reported by the FPPC to the District Attorney’s Office. Randles said there were not.
Senior District Attorney Investigator Sean Fares testified about phone records showing that the defendants, Postmus and Aleman had been communicating during the years of the alleged Colonies conspiracy and the criminal investigation into the Assessor’s Office.

Defense attorneys argued that the phone records showed numerous calls were logged as one minute, meaning those could have been hang-ups or have gone unanswered. Burum’s attorney, Stephen Larson also noted that phone calls attributed to Burum were to a company that the developer owns and that the calls could have been from anyone using the phones there.

Furthermore, defense attorneys questioned why investigators did not request phone logs dating back further than Sept. 1, 2005, which could have shown that contact among the targeted individuals was a regular occurrence. The attorneys also pointed out that the information provided by the investigator did not indicate what the calls were about, which Fares agreed with.

Testimony resumes Thursday before Judge Michael A. Smith.

URL: http://www.sbsun.com/general-news/20170628/prosecutors-rest-case-for-3-of-4-colonies-defendants

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Neighbors say vacation rentals causing problems

By Stacy Moore, Hi-Desert Star | Posted: Wednesday, June 28, 2017 11:11 pm

YUCCA VALLEY — A group of people who say vacation home rentals are breaking up the peace of their neighborhoods asked the town government to do something to help them at Tuesday’s planning commission meeting.

The commission held its third and final public hearing on regulations for vacation rentals Tuesday.

The new rules require rental owners to get an annual permit from the town and to make sure someone greets renters on site to explain local rules and etiquette. It also sets quiet hours from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m.

The commission passed the ordinance unanimously and sent it on to the Town Council for another public hearing and final vote.

Before their vote, however, several Yucca Valley residents stood up to speak about their problems with vacation rentals.

One man said his neighborhood is becoming commercialized, and neither the town nor the Sheriff’s Department can get a handle on the effects.

“There’s a serious trespassing problem that I can’t seem to stop,” he told the commission.

About a month ago, he confronted a man leading a group of children as they trespassed on his property. “I said ‘Hi, where are you coming from?’ He said, ‘I came from my mother,’ and gave me the finger,” the speaker told the commission.

“I’m having a fairly unpleasant experience. If it was happening to you, I guarantee you, you would not be supporting this,” he told commissioners. “You would be against it if you were suffering like I am.”

A couple with a parcel in Western Hills said a vacation home rental there has brought trespassers onto their property along with the noise from all-night parties.

“The music went on till 2 or 3 in the morning. There was yelling, screaming,” the woman said. “They were having a good time, and that’s fine, and I can’t fault them, because they were told they could rent this out.”

She said outsiders might reply that they should put up a fence, but, “We who live in Western Hills did not move there to put up fences because we love the wildlife.”

“I really ask you to really look at this before you make a decision, because a lot of us do not want property around us to be commercial,” she said. “We did not move up here for this.”
Her husband agreed that noise and trespassing have become a problem. “We would like to be good neighbors,” he said.

“I understand that Airbnb is a good thing and it’s a good way to subsidize, like for someone who is an absentee owner, but it needs to be dealt with in a way that is beneficial to all parties.”

A woman living in lower Sky Harbor addressed the quiet hours of 8 p.m. to 8 a.m. “I find that unacceptable. I would like quiet time 24/7,” she said. “I would like to be able to sit on my patio at any time and have peace and quiet in a residential neighborhood.”

Instead, she said, “I can hear the bass (music) all the time and it goes right through me.”

She bought a house in a residential neighborhood, not a commercial zone, she told commissioners. “You’re changing the entire character of the neighborhood when you’re turning homes into vacation home rentals.”

Some of the commissioners said they felt for the speakers, and hoped the new ordinance would be a first step toward helping them.

“Right now it’s basically the Wild West out there because everybody realizes there’s no rules,” Commissioner Charles McHenry said. “I think we have a good ordinance in place that puts some restrictions in place.”

“Doing nothing now creates a huge problem for us later,” Vice Chairman Jeff Evans agreed. “Smart growth requires commissions and councils to be sensitive to the permanent members of the community and try to do everything we can to protect their privacy rights and property rights,” he said.

“Right now I think it’s important to get something moving. This is the beginning of a process that can easily be modified or adjusted.”

Chairman Steve Whitten called the ordinance the commission sent to the council a beginning, even if they’re not fully up to speed on the issues.

“What we’re doing with this ordinance is we’re beginning to crawl, because this ordinance is a living, breathing document that can be changed,” he said.

“Without an ordinance in place, the issues you have are going to get worse.”
VICTORVILLE — Doctor Prem Reddy, the CEO and president of Prime Healthcare Services, which includes Desert Valley Hospital, has been named one of the “50 Most Influential Physician Executives in Healthcare.”

This was the ninth time the chair of Prime Healthcare has been honored through Modern Healthcare magazine, considered the leader in health care business news, research and data.

A cardiologist, entrepreneur and philanthropist, Reddy was born into a family of leaders in rural India, where he learned the values and guiding principles that led to his medical and business accomplishments, according to Modern Healthcare.

“It is always an honor and enormously rewarding to be recognized for work that has been my life’s passion,” Reddy told the Daily Press. “I am grateful for the opportunity to create an organization dedicated to providing quality, compassionate care to communities throughout the nation.”

Reddy added that he's honored that Modern Healthcare recognizes the importance of Prime Healthcare’s role as leaders in saving distressed hospitals and transforming them into community assets, preserving quality care for all people in this country.

Modern Healthcare tallied more than 66,000 votes in compiling this year's list of high-profile physician executives. During the selection process, the judging criteria included the physician’s contributions and achievements, executive
responsibility, leadership professional achievement, innovation and community service.

The medical industry leaders were chosen based on how well they steered their organizations and the health care delivery system through dynamic and challenging times.

“We've grown to become one of the largest health systems in the nation while maintaining a high level of quality patient care that has been nationally recognized. Prime Healthcare has turned around 44 distressed and bankrupt hospitals and saved and created 45,000 jobs across the United States, preserving much needed health care in urban and rural communities across the United States,” Reddy said.

“Prime Healthcare's mission has evolved out of my commitment to quality care, combined with my responsibility as a citizen to give back to our communities.”

Through his charitable foundations, Reddy has donated over $800 million to fund not-for-profit hospitals, charitable missions and universities, including the creation of a new, non-profit medical school.

In 2014, Reddy donated $40 million through his Prime Healthcare Foundation toward the privately-funded, nonprofit California University of Science and Medicine's School of Medicine, which will be based in Colton, the Daily Press previously reported.

“It says a lot about who Dr. Reddy is and really where his passion is. Dr. Reddy is a man with great compassion who aims at preserving health care provided to communities that are underserved,” said Fred Hunter, teh CEO of DVH. “His innovation and vision has resulted in Desert Valley Hospital and Prime Healthcare not only leading the industry, but also setting a model that others wish to follow. I am privileged to be a part of such an innovative leader and I congratulate Dr. Reddy as he is recognized once again among the Top 50 Most Influential Physician Executives and Leaders. This does not come without hard work, passion, and dedication.”

Among numerous accolades, Prime Healthcare has been recognized as one of the “10 Top Health Systems” and one of the “15 Top Health Systems” in the nation three times. Since 2003, 38 Prime Healthcare hospitals have been recognized
among the “100 Top Hospitals” in the nation.

To see the full list of the “50 Most Influential Physician Executives in Healthcare,” visit www.modernhealthcare.com

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How Rancho Cucamonga is about to get a lot more artsy

By Liset Márquez, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin

Wednesday, June 28, 2017

RANCHO CUCAMONGA >> Rancho Cucamonga is hoping a new effort will create iconic art pieces and gathering places to attract outsiders to the city.

The City Council recently approved a requirement that new developments include a public art component.

The new ordinance isn’t just about art but “creative place-making,” which Rancho Cucamonga Associate Planner Jennifer Nakamura described as an intersection between art and development, creativity and design.

“We’re going to use art as one of the tools to really start creating these enhanced spaces,” she told the council at its June 21 meeting. “What we really want to ultimately do is to create this inviting, interesting public spaces — spaces that people actually want to be in and engage not only with each other, (but) with the community, and in some cases the art itself.”

The city isn’t just looking for an abstract art piece to be tucked away in a commercial development. Rather a developer could take a walkway, and build it up to make it more interesting, she said.

Or, Nakamura said in offering another example, it could be the side of a building adorned with a vibrant mural.

Another goal of the ordinance is to create iconic art pieces, Nakamura said while displaying an image of Cloud Gate, the bean-shaped sculpture in Chicago’s Millennium Park.

“They become pieces that people will talk about, things that represent our community, things that actually make people want to come to our community,” Nakamura said.

The pieces could be anything from functional art, such as a trellis which contains art components, to outdoor eating areas for industrial areas to artistic-but-functional bike racks, she said.

John Machado, a Rancho Cucamonga resident and art history professor at Chaffey College, commended the city for its forward-thinking support of the arts.

“Public art enlivens and distinguishes public space providing a visual interest and pride in our community,” said Machado, who attended the meeting on behalf of nonprofit the Arts Area.

How will this new ordinance work? It will be driven by new development.

The ordinance only applies to residential developments that propose four or more dwelling units or a density of four dwelling units per acre.
For commercial, office or industrial projects, it will apply to any new development or exterior remodel where the building valuation exceeds $1 million.

Once staff has determined the project qualifies for the ordinance, developers must follow a formula to determine the exact value of the art piece, Nakamura said.

A residential development will have to set aside $750 per unit. A development with a density of five units per acre, then, would result in $18,750 for an art project.

Under commercial developments, $1 per square foot is set aside for art. For example, a 50,000-square-foot project would mean $50,000 is set aside for art.

“The idea is that we want them to think of it as a piece of the development,” Nakamura said.

Rancho Cucamonga would prefer that the developer install the art on his property, but the ordinance also allows for artwork to be donated to the city, which would then be placed on public property.

Alternatively, the developer could choose to pay an in-lieu fee into the city’s Public Art Trust Fund that will be created as part of the ordinance.

The ordinance also creates a public art committee which will be comprised of one member each from the city’s Planning Commission, Parks and Recreation Commission, the Community Arts Foundation and two members of the public.

This committee would be solely responsible for managing the expenses of the City’s Public Art Trust Fund. Once the funds have been secured, Nakamua said the committee would make a recommendation of the selection and placement of the artwork on city property.

The ordinance was approved 4-0, with Councilwoman Lynne Kennedy absent. A second reading is scheduled for the July 19 meeting and the ordinance will go into Aug. 18.

Projects that have completed the review process would not be subject to this ordinance, according to a staff report.


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Train testing canceled for anticipated Metrolink service to San Bernardino Transit Center

By Staff report

Wednesday, June 28, 2017

SAN BERNARDINO >> Planned testing on the one-mile section of track from the Santa Fe Depot to the San Bernardino Transit Center was canceled Wednesday.

The postponement will not have any effect on the projected opening later this year, according to Metrolink spokesman Scott Johnson.

“The test just wasn’t necessary at this point in the process,” Johnson said. “Prior to actual passengers, there will be some testing taking place.”

The Downtown San Bernardino Passenger Rail Project is planned for completion later this summer, with testing coming after that.

“BNSF freight will continue to operate a local train on weekends, but we do not anticipate a Metrolink train on the extension until closer to the fall,” he said.

The testing had been planned for Wednesday 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Operators canceled it without alerting the group that then put out a news release announcing it, Johnson said.
Under intense scrutiny over her handling of Orange County’s jails, Sheriff Sandra Hutchens railed Wednesday against a scathing report on jail conditions released this week by the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California, saying the report was rife with inaccuracies and “purposely distorted” facts.

She also insisted that her announcement Tuesday that she will not seek reelection in 2018 — which came within hours of the ACLU report’s release and advocates’ calls for her to resign — had nothing to do with the report or those demands.

“I’m not going to call it an investigation,” Hutchens said about the ACLU’s 104-page report, which was the result of what the group described as a two-year investigation, “because it doesn’t rise to that level in my mind.”
Hutchens was appointed in 2008 after former Sheriff Michael S. Carona was indicted on federal public corruption charges. She was widely seen as a reformer of a troubled agency, and her first years were marked by widespread popularity.

That reputation has been tainted lately by an ongoing scandal involving the unconstitutional use of jailhouse informants, and a daring escape last year by three inmates at the county Central Men’s Jail that the deputies union blamed on staffing shortages, among other alleged missteps.

The ACLU report was the latest set of allegations to rock the county’s jail system. The report painted the jails as plagued by violence and unsanitary conditions, with deputies regularly assaulting inmates for no lawful reason and instigating fights among them. The report also alleged that people slept on floors in holding cells in the booking area and that the cells were smeared with human waste.

Hutchens disputed some of the points in the report at a news conference Wednesday and said her office was not contacted for the other side of the story. Of the 108 recommendations in the report, all but one — an independent civilian oversight body — have been implemented, she said.

She sought to minimize the ACLU report’s findings by pointing out that there were 350,000 bookings over the course of time considered by the ACLU, and that the surveys of former inmates represented only a tiny fraction of the people who cycle through. She also disputed allegations of overcrowding, saying that the jails have an 18% vacancy rate, with one facility at 42%.

The 48 jail deaths cited in the report were an even smaller fraction of the number of people booked, Hutchens said, and many people arrive with preexisting health conditions.

Contrary to the ACLU report, she contended, inmates are given adequate mental health care, and pregnant women and transgender people have access to special medical services.

Responding to a question about numerous inmates surveyed reporting similar experiences — such as being forced to eat meals in only two or three minutes — Hutchens said incredulously, “I’d be interested in why they did not come forward while they were in custody.”

She added, “That makes me suspect.”

The sheriff also denied rumors that she was stepping down because of health concerns. A breast cancer survivor, Hutchens said the disease has not returned.

“I don’t have an illness,” she said. “I’m fine.”

More time with family, she said, was among the reasons motivating her decision. Regarding her legacy, she hopes she “empowered the people who work for me” to make their own decisions.

adam.elmahrek@latimes.com
Alameda County supervisor meddled in church contract, panel says

By Matier & Ross  |  June 25, 2017  |  Updated: June 25, 2017 7:36am

Photo: Lea Suzuki, The Chronicle
Alameda County Supervisor Wilma Chan improperly intervened with the county Probation Department to help secure a contract for a megachurch in her district that ministers to teens at Juvenile Hall and whose pastor “has a lot of political clout,” according to a just-released civil grand jury report.

The story began in 2012 when the Probation Department entered into a $30,000 contract with Acts Full Gospel Church in East Oakland to act as spiritual counsel to the estimated 120 teens being housed at Juvenile Hall in San Leandro and the neighboring Camp Sweeney, a minimum-security facility for inmates ages 15 to 19.

Over the next two years, the church’s contract rose to $90,000 annually.

The church sought another big increase for 2015. The Probation Department said it wanted more services than Acts Full Gospel offered and began looking elsewhere.

Enter Chan, the former state assemblywoman whose supervisorial district includes the church on 66th Avenue. According to a civil grand jury report released last week, Chan emailed then-Chief Probation Officer LaDonna Harris in June 2014, “requesting” that the department renew its contract with Acts Full Gospel for $100,000 — with the understanding that the contract would be put out to bid the next year.
Bishop Robert Jackson of Acts Full Gospel Church in East Oakland, left, has a major supporter in Alameda County Supervisor Wilma Chan, who helped secure a contract for the church.

That led to a series of telephone calls and emails in which Harris told Chan that Acts Full Gospel “was not providing all of the services the department needed.”

Also, she said, increasing the contract would require the county to open it up to other bidders immediately, not the next year.

“The supervisor apparently understood these concerns, but insisted that the contract be extended, and allegedly stated that the head of the local church ‘has a lot of political clout,’” the grand jury’s report said.

The report doesn’t name Chan, but the supervisor is cited in the correspondence.
Board of Supervisors in July 2014, then again in 2015 and last year.

The grand jury concluded in its report that Chan had “exceeded” her authority by getting involved in the contract process without securing the OK of her fellow supervisors.

Acts Full Gospel Bishop Robert Jackson — the church leader with “a lot of political clout” — says the grand jury’s report doesn’t tell “the whole story.” First off, Jackson said, the contract never covered the full costs. “We were paying about $125,000 for a full-time and two part-time ministers,” he said.

Jackson said he had no idea whether Chan tried to help, but if she did, “she deserves a medal.”

Chan did not respond to requests for comment. There’s little doubt, however, that she’s a fan of Acts Full Gospel — a separate section of the grand jury report shows that in 2014, she gave $20,000 to the church out of her supervisorial office account.

911 help: While most San Francisco supervisors are pushing to redirect budget money to pet causes like neighborhood safety and food pantries for the homeless, Mission District Supervisor Hillary Ronen also wants $160,000 set aside to pay for a fourth aide in her office.

The move has some inside City Hall rolling their eyes. While none of Ronen’s colleagues is publicly criticizing her, Supervisor Aaron Peskin’s reaction to an earlier proposal to give all board members an additional aide was, “Over my dead body.”

Ronen — who was chief of staff for former Supervisor David Campos — says she needs the help because the amount of work in her City Hall office is “absolutely insane.” She says her three aides are working up to 15-hour days to keep up with the avalanche of emails, calls and other public contacts.
Nine over the past decade — more than any other district.

“The Mission is in crisis in many ways, and it’s why so many of my constituents are angry,” Ronen said.

And the phones in her office are likely to keep ringing. On Monday, a temporary Navigation Center that she championed to provide shelter and services to homeless people will open at 26th Street and South Van Ness Avenue — over the objections of many neighbors, who no doubt will soon be calling.

San Francisco Chronicle columnists Phillip Matier and Andrew Ross appear Sundays, Mondays and Wednesdays. Matier can be seen on the KPIX TV morning and evening news. He can also be heard on KCBS radio Monday through Friday at 7:50 a.m. and 5:50 p.m. Got a tip? Call (415) 777-8815, or email matierandross@sfchronicle.com. Twitter: @matierandross
Alameda County had hoped to hire 1,400 people with criminal records — they’ve hired 6

Kalima Hanible, who was fired from his construction job last summer after his employer learned of his criminal background, is photographed in Oakland on Tuesday. (Kristopher Skinner/Bay Area News Group)

By MATTHIAS GAFNI | mgafni@bayareanewsgroup.com | Bay Area News Group
PUBLISHED: June 28, 2017 at 7:00 am | UPDATED: June 28, 2017 at 7:18 am
ALAMEDA COUNTY — A year ago, Alameda County had hoped to hire 1,400 formerly incarcerated people into its workforce to help the struggling population find jobs.

It’s hired six.

Prison reentry advocates and county officials disagree on how and why the bold concept has stalled. The county says it wants to help those with criminal histories find work, but as an employer it is coming up against unforeseen roadblocks. Service providers and formerly incarcerated proponents say the county has not made much of an effort.

On Wednesday, faith leaders, service providers, employers, criminal justice advocates and formerly incarcerated people and their families will rally at the Alameda County Board of Supervisors budget meeting from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. to voice their frustration with the lack of job production. It was June 28, 2016 when the supervisors unanimously approved the Re-Entry Hiring Initiative to provide 1,400 jobs for people who have been incarcerated with felony convictions, job coaching, court advocacy, and training for county managers who would supervise program participants.

“It’s astounding to us that one year has gone by,” said Danielle Mahones, a coordinator with Alameda Justice Reinvestment Coalition. “We haven’t seen the level of urgency and commitment we were hoping for.”

In Alameda County, where almost 1 in 4 residents have a criminal record, according to Mahones, there’s a tremendous need to keep this population employed.

“It felt like Alameda County as an employer was the best situated to take a lead on this,” she said of the county’s 9,600-strong workforce. “They are a good employer. Even in entry level positions, they have liveable wages.”

But that’s precisely the problem, said Kathy Mount, Alameda County’s interim director of human resources. The county has good jobs, but there is little turnover and openings often do not come in entry level positions. Adding to the complexity is the fact that county employment has rigid civil service requirements and most positions are labor-affiliated, which means unions must be on board, Mount said. Union representatives did not return a call for this story.

“When we were devising this program we came to the realization that it was impossible to fill 1,400 jobs through the county,” Mount said. “We have been working very diligently on this for the entire year. This is a Herculean task. This is a very difficult population to place.”

Mahones said she feels the county undervalues what that population can offer.
“There seems to be a disconnect between county staff,” she said. “There are plenty of folks in the population ready to work today … they are assuming they can’t do anything.”

Kalima Hanible, 32, of Oakland, was fired last summer from his construction job when they found out about his criminal background. The company didn’t have liability insurance to cover him, he said.

“They said they don’t hire felons,” said Hanible, who accumulated a rap sheet as a younger man. Hanible is now studying accounting at Laney College, carrying a 3.8 GPA which he hopes will eventually overshadow his criminal past.

“I think I’ll get a job because of my grade point average,” he said.

Many of his friends from North Oakland have drug-related rap sheets and have trouble finding work.

“They need jobs to support their families and they are willing to work,” he said.

Both sides have reached some agreements. The county no longer asks about criminal history until after a conditional job offer is extended. When their felony is revealed, the county investigates whether the crime would impact the person's ability to do that particular job, but they are not automatically disqualified.

The county is also working to find jobs for the population through its contractors and other public and private employers throughout the region, Mount said.

Tags: Jobs, Regional

**Matthias Gafni** Matthias Gafni is an award-winning investigative reporter for the Bay Area News Group. He has reported and edited for Bay Area newspapers since he graduated from UC Davis, covering courts, crime, environment, science, child abuse, education, county and city government, and corruption. A Bay Area native, he cherishes his Warriors, Giants and 49ers. Send tips to 925-952-5026 or mgafni@bayareanewsgroup.com.
Is it OK for marijuana businesses to advertise on their merchandise?

BY TARYN LUNA
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Call it the "Joe Camel" effect on marijuana.

A California Senate bill would ban state-licensed businesses from offering T-shirts, hats and other merchandise that advertise marijuana products.

The legislation, introduced by Sen. Ben Allen, builds on provisions under Proposition 64 aimed at cracking down on weed marketing that appeals to kids. It also brings marijuana laws in line with similar California rules that prohibit tobacco companies from selling or distributing apparel and merchandise with product names.
Senate Bill 162 brings up a recurring question in an era of legal weed consumption: Should we regulate pot as strictly as tobacco?

The answer likely varies based on your place on the stoner spectrum.

Nate Bradley, a lobbyist for the California Cannabis Industry Association, says the legislation treats marijuana like tobacco without acknowledging its medical benefits for people of all ages. Opponents say the bill unfairly targets and undercuts revenue opportunities for licensed businesses while allowing other retailers to sell clothes that encourage weed use.

“It’s one of those fear-based, emotion-based bills that is not fully baked,” Bradley said.

Allen cites studies that link branded merchandise to tobacco or alcohol use among teens. Given its new legal status, studies on marijuana are not as prevalent.

“It makes sense for us to extend that prohibition to cannabis, particularly as we’re getting off the ground here in this new era where cannabis is going to be legal,” Allen said. “I think we should err on the side of caution given everything we know.”

Allen pointed out that similar laws are on the books in Washington state and haven’t created major problems for licensees.

“This is not about restricting access,” Allen said. “We are trying to prevent abuse.”

Opponents have their work cut out for them. The bill hasn’t received a single “no” vote yet.

It breezed through three Senate committees before passing off the floor 40-0 late last month. The bill passed the Assembly Business and Professions Committee with a 12-0 vote earlier this week. Assembly Appropriations will likely take up the legislation next month.

WORTH REPEATING: “Recall Rendon!”

- Jon Fleischman, conservative California blogger, enjoying on Twitter that some liberals are angry that Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon killed the universal health care bill for the year

JOB OPENING: The five-member California Fair Political Practices Commission is down a member. Eric Casher, a lawyer appointed to the commission by former Attorney General Kamala Harris, took a job as the city attorney for Pinole and resigned his post on the board this week.

Casher’s original four-year term ended in January of this year, but he continued serving on the commission to give new Attorney General Xavier Becerra time to select his replacement. There’s still no word about who Becerra intends to name as Casher’s successor. The FPPC meets at 10 a.m. today at its headquarters on J street.

MUST-READ: Here’s a breakdown of the factors that led to the demise of California’s universal health care proposal.

VIDEO OF THE DAY: Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon has received death threats.

Taryn Luna: 916-326-5545, @TarynLuna
California lawmakers have tried for 50 years to fix the state's housing crisis. Here's why they've failed

By LIAM DILLON (HTTP://WWW.LATIMES.COM/LA-BIO-LIAM-DILLON-STAFF.HTML)
JUNE 29, 2017, 3 A.M.

After an hour of debate, Herb Perez had had enough.

Perez, a councilman in the Bay Area suburb of Foster City, was tired of planning for the construction of new homes to comply with a 50-year-old state law designed to help all Californians live affordably.

Everyone knows, Perez told the crowd at a 2015 City Council meeting, that the law is a failure. It requires cities and counties to develop plans every eight years for new home building in their communities. After more than a year of work and spending nearly $50,000, Foster City had an 87-page housing plan that proposed hundreds of new homes, mapped where they would go and detailed the many ways the city could help make the
construction happen. But a crucial element was missing: Foster City was never going to approve all the building called for in the voluminous proposal, Perez said.

“What I’m seeing here is an elaborate shell game,” Perez said. “Because we’re kind of lying. It’s the only word I can come up with. We have no intention of actually building the units.”

“We're kind of lying”: Foster City city councilman says his city won't approve the homebuilding it's planning for

Perez’s prediction came true. Despite soaring demand for housing in the Bay Area, the city hasn’t approved any new development projects in more than five years.

Foster City’s experience is shared by governments across California: The law requires cities and counties to produce prodigious reports to plan for housing — but it doesn’t hold them accountable for any resulting home building.

The law, passed in 1967, is the state’s primary tool to encourage housing development and address a statewide shortage of homes that drives California’s affordability problems.

Now, a bill from Sen. Scott Wiener (D-San Francisco) would, for the first time, force cities and counties that have fallen behind on their housing goals to take steps to (http://www.latimes.com/politics/essential/la-pol-ca-essential-politics-updates-california-cities-will-have-to-make-it-1485196277-htmlstory.html) eliminate some of the hurdles they put in front of development (http://www.latimes.com/politics/essential/la-pol-ca-essential-politics-updates-california-cities-will-have-to-make-it-1485196277-htmlstory.html), such as multiple planning reviews for individual projects. Wiener’s legislation passed the state Senate this month (http://www.latimes.com/politics/essential/la-pol-ca-essential-politics-updates-california-senate-passes-package-of-1496339298-htmlstory.html) and is awaiting a vote in the Assembly as part of a package of bills aimed at addressing the state’s housing problems.
“The system is so broken,” Wiener said. “It gives the public a false sense that a step has been taken toward having more housing when in fact it’s just an illusion.”

One of the main criticisms of the law is that it hasn’t spurred enough new home building. Fewer than half of the 1.5 million new homes the law said developers would need to build over eight years leading up to 2014 — the law’s most recent reporting period — were built.

In addition, state officials don’t know if cities and counties have met their housing goals. Local governments are supposed to give the state information on home building each year, but many don’t. As a result, there is no reliable measure of how many houses are being built in California for low-, middle- and upper-income residents.

State lawmakers have known about the law’s weaknesses for decades but haven’t fixed them. They have added dozens of new planning requirements to the process but have not provided any incentive, such as a greater share of tax dollars, for local governments to meet their housing goals.

“The law has been completely ineffective at addressing the issue of housing affordability,” said Paavo Monkkonen, an associate professor of urban planning at UCLA. “If anything, it’s a waste of people’s time.”

**Prison beds and student dormitories count as low-income housing?**

California’s housing affordability troubles have contributed to the state’s poverty rate, which is the highest in the nation (https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2016/demo/p60-258.pdf). It also has burdened millions with high rents (http://www.hcd.ca.gov/policy-research/plans-reports/docs/California’s-Housing-Future-Full-Public-Draft.pdf) and, according to a recent study by the McKinsey Global Institute, created a more than $100-billion annual drag on the state economy (http://www.mckinsey.com/global-themes/urbanization/closing-californias-housing-gap) by lowering disposable incomes and limiting construction jobs.

Ben Metcalf, the state’s top housing official, has said the affordability problems are as bad as they’ve ever been in California’s history (http://www.latimes.com/politics/essential/la-pol-ca-essential-politics-updates-california-housing-affordability-1483490282-hmlstory.html). And the state is expected to add an additional 6.5 million people (http://www.dof.ca.gov/Forecasting/Demographics/Projections/documents/P_PressRelease.pdf) over the next two decades.
The primary driver of the affordability problem is a lack of home building. Developers in California need to roughly double the 100,000 homes they build each year to stabilize housing costs, according to the McKinsey study (http://www.mckinsey.com/global-themes/urbanization/closing-californias-housing-gap) and reports from the state Department of Housing and Community Development (http://www.hcd.ca.gov/policy-research/plans-reports/docs/California's-Housing-Future-Full-Public-Draft.pdf) and nonpartisan Legislative Analyst’s Office (http://www.lao.ca.gov/reports/2015/finance/housing-costs/housing-costs.aspx).

Home construction depends on complex factors including the cost of land, materials and labor, the availability of financing for developers and interest rates on mortgages for homeowners. But decisions made by California’s cities and counties are important, too, and many of those local governments have made it even more difficult to build new housing.

More than two-thirds of California’s coastal communities have adopted measures — such as caps on population or housing growth, or building height limits — aimed at limiting residential development, according to the Legislative Analyst’s Office (http://www.lao.ca.gov/reports/2015/finance/housing-costs/housing-costs.aspx). A UC Berkeley study of California’s local land-use regulations found that every growth-control policy a city puts in place raises housing costs by as much as 5% there (http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~raphael/QR%20Regulation%200110804.pdf).

The housing supply law, known formally as the “housing element,” is supposed to help knock down local barriers to development by requiring cities to plan for new housing that would accommodate children born in California and people expected to relocate to the state. Over an eight-year period, state officials send estimates of housing needed to meet projected population growth to 19 regional agencies, including the Southern California Assn. of Governments in the Los Angeles area.

These agencies outline how many new homes are needed across four income levels: very low, low, moderate and above-moderate. So, in theory, all cities and counties would receive their fair share of growth. Local
governments must show they’ve zoned enough land for the new housing—and
the state must sign off on those plans. But the state doesn’t hold cities
accountable for the goals they set, and the plans are often ignored.

Even so, city and county officials resent the law, arguing it unfairly takes
away their power over development in their communities. To avoid
complying, local governments have over the years asked state lawmakers
to, among other things, count prison beds and student dormitories as low-
income housing and allow cities that place foster children in their
communities to reduce the number of low-income homes they need to plan
for.

In one case, La Habra Heights, in Los Angeles County, asked that it be
exempted from the law because the city was too hilly for apartment
complexes.

‘People want to be with people who are like them’

At the base of the San Gabriel Mountains, the affluent bedroom
community of La Cañada Flintridge has few apartment or condominium
complexes—and many of the city’s 20,000 residents and public officials
want to keep it that way.

Four years ago, city leaders wrote a plan to make room for multifamily
housing in several sections of the city. But, to discourage developers, they
chose areas already occupied by single-family homes and, in one case, a
big-box retailer. As a result, developers would have needed to buy up the
homes one by one or, in the case of the retailer, purchase the commercial
real estate and force the store out. In devising the plan, city officials
 assured concerned residents that it would be prohibitively expensive for
developers.

"People like people of their own tribe. I think the attempt
to change it is ludicrous.
"

—Herand Der Sarkissian, a former La Cañada Flintridge planning commissioner

“Everybody on this dais and that’s here is on the same page,” Planning
Commission Chairman Rick Gunter told the audience at a November 2013
hearing on the housing plan. “We like living here. We like the way it is
now.”

Herand Der Sarkissian, a former La Cañada Flintridge planning
commissioner who approved the city’s housing plan, said in an interview it
didn’t make sense for the state to try to force low-income housing into La
Cañada Flintridge because the city’s high land costs made it fiscally
 irresponsible. He added that any state efforts to integrate housing of all
income levels into wealthy communities are doomed.
“People like people of their own tribe,” Der Sarkissian said. “I think the attempt to change it is ludicrous. Be it black, be it white. People want to be with people who are like them. To force people through legislation to change in that way is impractical.”

None of the multifamily housing called for in the La Cañada Flintridge housing plan has been built.

In Redondo Beach, officials told the state in 2014 they would work toward the city’s housing goal by supporting a proposed commercial and residential development with 180 apartments — nine of them reserved for very poor families — to replace a run-down strip mall and parking lot along the Pacific Coast Highway. The city zoned the land for that amount of housing.

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But in numerous hearings over the next two years, planning commissioners and council members argued the development was too big, and the city ultimately approved 115 apartments with none set aside for low-income residents. The developer has since sued Redondo Beach and the project remains in limbo (http://www.dailybreeze.com/government-and-politics/20170208/bring-on-the-lawyers-redondo-beach-rejects-deal-with-legado-for-115-units-on-pch).

La Cañada Flintridge and Redondo Beach did not report housing construction data to the state from 2006 to ‘14. Some new homes were built in both cities, according to permit information, but far fewer than were outlined in the cities’ plans over that period.

These and similar examples across California show that the housing law is a “complete farce,” Wiener said. His legislation would do away with some planning reviews that are often levied on projects in cities that haven’t kept pace with their housing goals.

“Many local communities basically run a scam where they spend all sorts of time — lots of public hearings, lots of public discussion — and then it’s over and you have this collection of paper sitting on a shelf,” Wiener said. “It doesn’t result in any additional housing.”

‘With this living situation, I can’t even think of having children right now’

Sandwiched between wealthier communities to the north and south and more industrial areas to the east, the coastal Los Angeles County city of Torrance has swaths of single-family neighborhoods and lots of land for
“At some point, a city should be allowed to say we’re full,” Bill Sutherland, then a Torrance city councilman, grumbled before voting for the city’s most recent housing plan in 2013. “I think we are actually at that point.”

Torrance’s growth has slowed. Less than half of 1,828 houses called for in the city’s previous housing plan were built, according to construction permit data.

The lack of home building has had consequences.

Nearly 40% of Torrance’s 147,000 residents now pay more than 30% of their incomes on housing, according to federal data. In 2014, Toyota Motor Corp. decided to relocate its North American headquarters — and 3,000 jobs — from Torrance to Plano, Texas, citing as one factor the Lone Star State’s lower cost of living (http://www.latimes.com/business/autos/la-fi-toyota-move-20140429-story.html).

High costs have left housing in Torrance out of reach for Azucena Gutierrez and other workers in the city.

Every weekday, Gutierrez goes into Torrance homes to teach prenatal and infant care to new and expectant parents. Gutierrez, 38, earns less than $15 an hour.

She lives in Los Angeles’ Boyle Heights neighborhood, crowding into a two-bedroom apartment with her husband, who is a substitute teacher, their 14-year-old son and 5-year-old daughter. Steep housing costs have forced Gutierrez’s older sister to move in with them too.

Gutierrez would like to live near her job and for her children to attend Torrance’s better rated schools. But the $1,600-a-month rent she saw advertised for a one-bedroom apartment in Torrance was more than the commercial and industrial business.
$1,500 she pays now for more room across town.

Azucena Gutierrez, 38, leaves her home before sunrise in Boyle Heights and heads to her job in Torrance. Gutierrez lives with her husband, children and sister and pays $1,500 a month for her two-bedroom apartment. A one-bedroom in Torrance would cost her $1,600 per month. (Mark Boster / Los Angeles Times)

“I waste a lot of time in traffic,” Gutierrez said. “Time, I can’t get it back. I’m spending close to two hours driving every day. That’s 10 hours [a week] I could be spending with my family.”

Gutierrez’s colleagues share her struggles. Georgina Romero, 28, makes $13.50 an hour teaching toddlers and pays $600 a month to live with her boyfriend, mother, two younger siblings and her sister’s boyfriend in a three-bedroom house in Watts.

She moved there in March to help her mother with her housing costs. Before that, Romero paid $300 a month to live with her boyfriend in a 400-square-foot garage behind his parents’ house in Lawndale.

“I would love to have children,” Romero said. “But with this living situation, I can’t even think of having children right now. I don’t feel like I’m stable enough.”
Torrance Mayor Patrick Furey said he’s sympathetic to those who can’t afford to live in his city. But, he added, Torrance shouldn’t have to make changes to the character of its neighborhoods to accommodate new housing.

Instead of Torrance, he said, nearby cities should take on the needed growth.

“You won’t have the ZIP Code you want,” Furey said, “but it’s close enough.”

‘No intention of facing up to housing responsibilities’

The state’s housing law faced problems from the start.

In 1967, Gov. Ronald Reagan signed the law, which had a simple goal: Cities and counties would have to plan “for the housing needs of all economic segments of the community.” But just five months after the first plans were due in July 1969, state officials realized local governments were ignoring the law, with a report warning about “discouraging indications” that a number of communities had “no intention of facing up to housing responsibilities.”

Over the years, legislators passed numerous bills adding detailed rules to local government housing plans. But things only got worse.

Torrance workers struggle to find nearby housing

By 1993, the law’s increased paperwork requirements turned it into “an energy- and money-guzzling bureaucratic maze,” said Timothy Coyle, then-director of the Department of Housing and Community Development, at a legislative oversight hearing that year. He called the law “broken” because it did nothing to encourage cities to permit more homes.

Coyle said in a recent interview that the law “was destined to fail.”
Today, the state lacks basic information on the law’s effectiveness. More than a quarter of California’s 539 cities and counties failed to tell the state how many homes were built within their boundaries over the eight-year period leading up to 2014, according to a Times review of housing department data.

Wiener’s legislation would require all cities and counties to turn in home-building data and remove some of their ability to review and block new development if they fall behind their housing goals.

Gov. Jerry Brown has also said he’d also support tying state financial aid to whether local governments met their housing goals (http://www.ebudget.ca.gov/2017-18/pdf/BudgetSummary/HousingandLocalGovernment.pdf). Still, if the state plans to hold cities and counties accountable for meeting those targets, the targets themselves might require reevaluation.

Bay Area counties are on track to meet their overall home-building goals for the eight-year reporting period ending in 2023, the Legislative Analyst’s Office found recently (http://www.lao.ca.gov/LAOConTax/Article/Detail/226). But developers aren’t building nearly enough homes to affect affordability, the analyst’s office also said. The Bay Area has added half a million more jobs than houses since 2011, and other fast-growing parts of the country — around Austin, Texas; Portland, Ore.; and Raleigh, N.C. — are building homes at more than twice the rate of the Bay Area.

Perez, the Foster City councilman, believes the state is ignoring the housing law’s problems.

Developers have built more than 500 homes in Foster City since the council approved its housing plan in 2015, a number that already exceeds the new houses called for under the plan through 2023.

But all those new homes came from projects approved before 2012 that home builders are just now putting on the market. And the city has turned away other developers interested in building housing where the city’s plan said they could, Perez said.

Since early 2015, Foster City’s median home value has increased 13% to a record $1.5 million, more than seven times the national average.
Perez believes state politicians should hold cities accountable for approving new housing projects by providing money to local governments that do, and penalizing those that don’t. Otherwise, he said, cities will continue to act as he said Foster City did — signing off on plans to appease state regulators but blocking housing from being built.

“I think the most important part of this is that there’s complicity on the part of the state,” Perez said. “They created this fake thing that they know no one has any intention of doing, and then they say they’ve done something about housing.”

How many homes were built in your city?
Less than half the new homes called for in California’s most recent eight-year housing plan, which ended in 2014, were built, according to permit data from the construction industry. See how building stacked up compared to state targets, and whether cities and counties reported their homebuilding to state regulators.

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We are two months into “ransomware as a mainstream news topic,” and we have quickly moved toward scrutiny of a new wrinkle in that kind of cyberattack: when ransomware is used as a smoke screen for something else.

On Tuesday, an attack that looked an awful lot like the WannaCry ransomware hacking in May started in Ukraine and spread throughout the world. But security researchers are beginning to infer that the attack was really about causing damage to computers. The money? Eh, not a big deal.

In fact, it would have been awfully hard for most victims of the attack to pay a ransom, since the lone email address connected to it was shut down by a German email provider.

So why bother? That’s the question that intrigues security researchers. The most obvious answers are to cause trouble or send a political message. The attack that started in Ukraine appeared to have been timed to hit the day before a national holiday celebrating the country’s first constitution after breaking away from the
Soviet Union. It was not a leap for many to conclude the assault was launched by Russian hackers.

But there is another school of thinking: Certain information connected to the attack indicated it may have originated in Iran. Perhaps the attack was by Iranians trying hard to look like Russians while testing a new cyberattack before going after other targets — a sort of beta test for cyberwarfare.

Or was it in fact Russian hackers, or someone else, pretending to be Iranian?

One aspect of the attacks that does not appear to be terribly complicated is where the tools for these hacks have come from — the National Security Agency. The tools were among a collection of cyberweapons created by the N.S.A. and, unfortunately, stolen and posted online.

The N.S.A. has not acknowledged it had anything to do with these hacking tools. But plenty of people, including a few in Washington, are starting to ask what the agency plans to do to combat them.

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How a tiny L.A. cybersecurity firm pulled the plug on a global ransomware attack

Salim Neino had been waiting for something like WannaCry.

Fast, indiscriminate and disruptive, the computer infection locked up computers in British hospitals and was spreading across the world when Neino’s company Kryptos Logic stepped into the ring.

One of his researchers found a so-called kill switch in the WannaCry code and pounced. "We put it in a triangle choke!" joked Neino, a mixed-martial-arts fan.

Not bad for a 33-year-old Lawndale native and Cal State Long Beach grad, who co-founded Kryptos eight years ago with $120,000.

The mid-May episode thrust the small Los Angeles cybersecurity company onto a world stage. At the same time, it has opened a new era of broad-scale ransomware attacks — a fact driven home this week when a second
worm, exploiting the same methods as WannaCry, briefly seized computers worldwide again, this time hitting oil, electric and shipping operations.

Neino has been quick to capitalize on the business opportunities from his new prominence. But he has also tried to use this status as ransomware wrangler to push for policy changes — measures he says are needed to cope with this new landscape of cyber-mayhem.

Testifying before Congress between attacks, Neino spelled out his proposal for a cybersecurity “Richter scale” — a triage system to help the public prioritize threats — and warned lawmakers against underrating the peril.

With WannaCry, and Tuesday’s reprise of it, the world got off easy, he insisted: “They had the bomb, they didn’t have the GPS.”

Up until last month, Kryptos was just another little-known boutique cybersecurity company operating, as much as possible, “in stealth mode,” Neino said. It does no marketing, employs no sales force and its workers guard their anonymity. The reason is that revenge hackers commonly target cybersecurity companies.

Genial, earnest and still fit from his wrestling days, Neino is the son of a Jordanian immigrant father and a Mexican American mother from Montebello. His father came to L.A. as a young man with no English but talent enough to rise in the region’s aerospace industry.

Neino was raised speaking Arabic and Spanish, but he can’t remember either language now. Maybe code took over that brain space, he said. He got his start as a self-taught teenage programmer, landed his first computer job at age 15, and became — after a sister — the second person in his family to go to college.

The background, he said, is typical of Angelenos his age raised by aerospace workers to whom cyber-tinkering came naturally.

After a few years as an independent cybersecurity specialist, Neino co-founded Kryptos while still in his twenties with friends-and-family seed money, and has used its revenue to expand ever since.

At first, Kryptos struggled. Neino could show potential clients that they had been hacked, but he couldn’t convince them to care.

The problem is rife in cybersecurity, a vast but fuzzily defined industry sector worth perhaps hundreds of billions of dollars in the near future — if only its purveyors could explain what it’s for.

People who are good at cybersecurity tend to speak in jargon; people who aren’t good at cybersecurity can’t understand them. Meanwhile, the fire hose of botnets and malware gushing through the Internet these days leaves victims feeling helpless. Throngs of companies peddle a mishmash of remedies — gadgets, software and services, in various combinations.
Then, on a lark, Neino joined a team that competed at the 2011 Defcon 19 hacking contest in Las Vegas and won a coveted Black Badge, a tchotchke shaped like a skull, almost actual size, designed to hang around the neck. The boost to Kryptos’ reputation brought new clients and lucrative contracts.

Today, privately held Kryptos has about 25 employees — nearly all engineers spread out across the U.S. and Europe, nearly all male, many with self-taught hacking skills — and annual revenue in the tens of millions. Its young CEO has traded blue-collar Lawndale for an ocean-view home. The Black Badge is on display in his office.

The company gathers information about who is trying to hack its clients and why. Then it helps them decide how to fight back.

Day to day, its researchers spend their time reporting on malware to subscribers, and tracking the tens of thousands of new malware codes that surface daily on the Web.

In essence, they operate like zoologists in the field: They detect malicious sequences by the signals they emit, catalog them and try to lure them into simulated targets so they can be dissected.

This is what Marcus Hutchins, a Kryptos researcher based in the town of Ilfracombe on the Bristol Channel in Southwest England, would have been doing on the morning of May 12 if he hadn’t been on vacation. Neino was too — on his way to Italy for a long-planned vacation with his wife.

Neino had hired Hutchins last year after coming across his blog. An unemployed computer hobbyist and surfer, Hutchins impressed Neino with his skill and ethics. Despite his youth — Hutchins is 22 — Neino hired him to run one of his divisions.

Fortunately for Kryptos — and for unpatched Windows systems everywhere — Hutchins hadn’t gone far from home.

As computers in Britain hospitals locked up and companies in Europe started to report problems, Hutchins conferred with Neino, who was in a hotel in Munich, Germany, on his way to catch his plane to Venice, Italy. Hutchins began analyzing samples of the malware code, sharing information via Twitter with other cyber researchers.

WannaCry is a self-replicating worm that attacks a basic file-sharing protocol on older Windows operating systems. If successfully loaded, the ransomware spreads to any connected vulnerable terminal, locking files and demanding, in slightly broken English, $300 to $600 ransom to release them.

The worm exploits a vulnerability embedded in the very bones of the world’s most popular operating system. The code used in WannaCry, which can crack Windows systems, was stolen from the U.S. National Security Agency and shared on the Internet.
Like many in his industry, Neino knew that it was only a matter of time before ordinary bandits or terrorists put these military-grade spy tools to work. WannaCry, he realized, signaled that the moment had arrived.

From now on, he thought, vast sophisticated hacks, once limited to nation states, would be in reach of just about anyone.

Neino learned that Hutchins had found an unregistered domain to which WannaCry sent a signal prior to loading. Neither of them knew what it was for. But it was up for grabs.

Neino told Hutchins to “use best judgment” and headed to the airport.

By the time Neino got there, Hutchins had registered the domain, effectively throwing Kryptos’ servers into the path of the oncoming attack. To both men’s surprise, the domain functioned as a kill switch and stopped WannaCry from loading the ransom note in all subsequent infections.

With Kryptos controlling the domain, each new WannaCry infection produced a ping on its servers. So a stream of data was pouring in as the attack — now toothless — spread across the globe.

Neino couldn’t log into Kryptos to see for himself because he had no secure connection and his plane was leaving. He flew over the Alps, two worries gnawing at him.

One was for Hutchins’ safety. Because of blanket media coverage, Neino feared that Hutchins would be exposed and hackers would retaliate against him.

The other was for Kryptos’ servers. Because the company had essentially inserted itself into WannaCry’s protocol, Neino knew that law enforcement agencies might mistake the company for a source of the attack and seek to shut down its servers. That could inadvertently unleash the malware again.

Online again at last in his Venice hotel, he checked the dashboard, where tens of thousands of WannaCry’s pings were piling up.

He didn’t have time to marvel. Kryptos was under siege. Hutchins was being hounded. The story of the youthful hero who saved humanity from the world’s biggest ransomware attack proved irresistible to aggressive British tabloids.

At the same time, hackers were attacking Kryptos. As soon as word of the kill switch got out, a barrage of denial-of-service attacks were directed at the company's servers worldwide.

This “devilish flood” of malicious botnets and copycat hacks was the company’s reward for stopping the worm, Neino said. He called some of the attackers "bandwagon jumpers" and said they probably just wanted to be pesky. But others were clearly trying to "take down the switch," he said — a serious threat.

Already, just as Neino had feared, two of Kryptos' servers had been mistakenly shut down by authorities in France, a common cyber friendly-fire mishap.
His engineers pulled all-nighters. Neino spent his 10-day vacation hunched over his laptop in the hotel room, talking to security agencies, assuaging the media, managing his researchers and maintaining the kill switch. His wife made sure that he didn’t forget to eat.

Attacks on Kryptos have continued for weeks. One recent botnet aimed at the company appeared to be coming from thousands of Russian routers, Neino said.

To the outside world, WannaCry quickly seemed overblown. One British publication suggested that it be renamed “What-a-wimp.”

It’s design was shoddy. Neino readily admits that Hutchins’ got lucky with the kill switch — ransomware usually doesn’t have such a feature and it’s not clear why this one did. Microsoft had patched a key vulnerability before the attack and subsequently released further patches, and Neino said the worm failed to load on most of the old Windows XP systems considered most vulnerable anyway.

Moreover, very few people paid the bitcoin ransom, which has yet to be collected.

But at Kryptos, where the kill switch remains permanently under guard — “we own this baby now,” Neino said — the picture is different. Neino said he has counted new WannaCry infections in the tens of millions — infections that Hutchins’ quick action had rendered harmless.

Kryptos has a list of “every single person affected by WannaCry,” he said. Among the would-be victims were major U.S. hospitals whose leaders may still have no idea, he told Congress.

“The brakes were fully on. This was residual smoke from the tires,” Neino said.

Like WannaCry, Tuesday’s ransomware attack centered in Ukraine also seemed to quickly fizzle. It used the same stolen NSA forced-entry tool, locked computers and demanded bitcoin ransom, with similarly poor results.

But Neino said it spread even more quickly, infecting 2 million computers in the first hour. It also had the ability to steal credentials and gain access to even more machines.

Most different of all, it had no kill switch. Instead, the attack seemed to shut down by itself, Neino said, with domains that hosted its payload quickly going dark.

Using his data from WannaCry, Neino published a report late Tuesday arguing that this new worm had even greater destructive potential.

By his own “Richter scale” measure, WannaCry might have rated a 7 and the new attack 7.2, said Neino, speaking as one raised in an earthquake zone. The pattern, suggests “saber rattling, perhaps for a bigger event to come,” he said.
The day after the most recent attack, with theories swirling as to its purpose, Neino stressed a message that he’d given Congress after WannaCry:

Worry less about who did it, and more about the problems such attacks expose, he said.

“If you leave the door open ... would it really matter ... who has done it?” he asked. “They do it because they can.”

jill.leovy@latimes.com

ALSO

They predicted the 'WannaCry' ransomware cyberattack, so how come few listened?

Their code was used to hack Sony and create 'WannaCry.' Meet the 'Lazarus Group,' the armed robbers of the Internet

Hackers break into centralized password manager OneLogin

Q&A: Even homeowner associations are targets of hackers looking to profit off cybercrime

This article is related to: Cyber Crime, Theft, Britain
Early each morning, hundreds of low-income seniors line up at Serving Seniors’ Gary and Mary West Senior Wellness Center in downtown San Diego, waiting for a warm breakfast or lunch — a free or low-cost meal that will help them survive. Many here are regulars, with clear friendships and cliques, happy smiles and strong social networks. A quick look at the profile of poor California seniors shows too clearly that, sadly, these seniors are not alone in needing nutritional support.

In fact, 1.1 million of the state’s seniors are threatened by hunger, part of the more than 10 million American adults who may go hungry every day. With 1,000 California seniors turning 65 a day, we can’t keep our poor older residents waiting and must ensure that those in need of meal services receive them.

Guaranteeing our seniors access to proper nutrition should be a national priority, and increasing federal funding for the kinds of programs that offer both community center and home-delivered meals for seniors is the way to do it.

For more than 50 years, the Older Americans Act (OAA) has been the primary piece of federal legislation supporting social and nutrition services to low-income Americans age 60 and older. OAA programs are vital for seniors who are at significant risk of hunger, isolation and losing their ability to live independently. In 2014, the OAA helped serve 1.6 million seniors at group facilities and 835,000 more with home-delivered meals.

President Trump’s budget proposal released last month is cause for concern, considering it includes changes and reduced Medicaid funding to states starting in fiscal year 2020 through either per capita caps or block grants. These proposed reductions in funding will have a detrimental impact on low-income seniors. While the proposal calls for flat-level funding of programs for community center and home-delivered meals, the administration and Congress must recognize the increasing need for these programs as the aging population continues to grow. Medicaid pays for more than half of all of the long-term services and supports used by low-income seniors. It is critical that funding for these programs be maintained.

The importance of nutrition to overall health and well-being can’t be overstated. Food insecure seniors are 50 percent more likely to have diabetes, three times more likely to suffer from depression and 60 percent more likely to have congestive heart failure or a heart attack. And more than 92 percent of meal delivery recipients surveyed said it helps them to continue living in their own homes.

Congress is now in the process of determining what level of funding programs like Medicaid and OAA should receive. A first priority should be to do everything we can to ensure our seniors get enough to eat. These programs can be the difference between a senior aging in place at their home or being forced into an expensive nursing home, the one place where payment policies allow for the delivery of both clinical and non-clinical care — so these services can get paid for by federal programs.
The simple act of eating is something none of our seniors should ever be deprived of. Funding the OAA and other programs that are essential to their long-term support is a key way to help seniors. Let’s not keep them waiting anymore.

_Shelley Lyford is president and CEO of the Gary and Mary West Foundation. She can be contacted at Slyford@gmwf.org._


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LA County Library Expanding Hours at Majority of Locations

By City News Service

The Los Angeles County Library is expanding hours at 75 of its 87 community locations beginning July 1, officials announced Monday.

“We understand that libraries have evolved and are being used by our customers in different ways,” said Skye Patrick, County Library director. “We wanted to ensure that our doors were open and staff was available to provide service that is needed in our communities.”

Officials said the extra hours will not add to their operating costs, thanks to “the creation of more efficient staffing models.”

For more information on the extended hours, visit www.colapublib.org.

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5. PHOTOS Route 66: Remnants of the Mother Road in Photos

WEATHER FORECAST

Los Angeles, CA

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Commentary: How to prevent Russian hackers from attacking the 2018 election

By J. Alex Halderman, Justin Talbot-Zorn
Special to The Washington Post

JUNE 21, 2017, 12:20 PM

"They're coming after America," former FBI Director James B. Comey told the Senate intelligence committee this month. "They will be back."

In a highly politicized hearing, this bold statement drew strikingly little partisan disagreement. Senators on both sides of the aisle have seemingly reached consensus that foreign agents did try to tamper with the 2016 election and that they are extremely likely to do so again.

The question is: What do we do about it?

While the ongoing Russia investigation has, understandably, received massive attention, there's so far been scant public focus on the question of how we safeguard our electoral systems from outside interference in the future. Responding to the threat of election hacking isn't exclusively a matter of diplomatic intrigue or
international sanctions. It's fundamentally a matter of computer science: how we harden our election technology through cybersecurity standards.

This week, we're joining a group of more than 100 experts on election administration, computer science and national security in releasing a letter that lays out an actionable plan for safeguarding the vote. The experts include tea party Republicans and progressive Democrats, academic computer scientists and corporate security officials - all united in the view that our nation’s rough patchwork of voting security measures is wholly inadequate. One of us (Halderman) will testify Wednesday before the Senate Intelligence Committee on Russia’s attacks last year.

This shouldn't be news to lawmakers. In the past decade, cybersecurity experts have revealed devastating vulnerabilities in every U.S. voting machine they've studied. In 2014, the bipartisan Presidential Commission on Election Administration sounded the alarm about an "impending crisis" of insecure voting technology. In 2015, Lawrence Norden and Christopher Famighetti of the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University showed in a comprehensive study that the nation's voting machines are largely past their shelf-lives and deeply insecure. According to a survey of 274 election administrators across 28 states, a strong majority of election officials claim they need security upgrades to voting machines but simply lack the resources.

Ten years ago, Halderman was part of the first academic research team to conduct a comprehensive security analysis of a Direct Recording Electronic (DRE) voting machine. The study's findings were deeply troubling: It's possible to reprogram a machine to cause any candidate to win, without leaving a trace. The research team created malicious software - vote-stealing code - that could spread from machine to machine, much like a computer virus, and invisibly change the election outcome. Since then, cybersecurity experts have studied a wide range of U.S. voting machines - including both touch screens and optical scanners - and in every single case, they found severe vulnerabilities that would allow attackers to sabotage machines or alter votes.

This month's blockbuster reporting in the Intercept and Bloomberg News show that hostile nations have our computerized election infrastructure in their sights. And the threats aren't limited to the voting machines and tabulators: adversaries can also go after voter registration databases and electronic poll books to block voters, create long lines at polling places and instill distrust in the system.

So why hasn't Congress acted?

One simple answer is that lawmakers need a straightforward policy agenda to fix the system. The new statement from the 100 election security experts provides a concrete road map:

First, Congress should provide time-sensitive matching funds to states to upgrade voting technologies, and, in particular, replace paperless DRE voting machines with systems that include a good old-fashioned paper ballot — that is to say, a physical record of the vote that's out of reach from cyberattacks.

Second, Congress should call on states to conduct risk-limiting audits for every federal race, by inspecting enough of the paper ballots to tell whether the computer results are accurate. These audits are a common-sense
quality control, and they should be routine. Since they only require officials to check a small random sample of ballots, they quickly and affordably provide high assurance that the election outcome was correct. As Ron Rivest of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Philip Stark of the University of California have explained, states can gain high confidence regarding election outcomes by checking as few as 0.5 percent of the ballots in a given contest.

Finally, Congress should instruct federal agencies to partner with states to conduct serious and comprehensive threat assessment, and to identify and apply best practices in cybersecurity from across sectors to the design of voting equipment and the management of federal elections. This will raise the bar for attacks of all sorts.

There's evidence this agenda can fly even in the age of hyperpartisan gridlock.

While many Democrats have supported election security reforms since former Rep. Rush Holt, D-N.J., proposed related reforms a decade ago, prominent conservatives are now championing the cause. Recently, retired Army Intelligence Lt. Col. Tony Shaffer — a Fox News contributor and fearless President Barack Obama critic — joined former CIA director James Woolsey - a leading national defense advocate - to call for audits and federal cybersecurity standards. In a Fox News op-ed last month, the two made a conservative case for election security reform as a matter of national security, explaining why, among other factors, Congress' unfunded mandates under the Help America Vote Act of 2002 justify new security investments. Shaffer and Woolsey quote President Donald Trump himself from an interview the morning of the election: "There's something really nice about the old paper ballot system," the then-candidate states. "You don't worry about hacking."

Perhaps the strongest argument why the new federal election security agenda can succeed is cost. New analysis from the Brennan Center finds that the country can replace insecure paperless voting systems for somewhere between $130 million and $400 million. Implementing risk-limiting audits nationally for federal elections would cost less than $20 million a year. These amounts are a rounding error in the administration's $640 billion defense budget request, but the investment would be a guaranteed way to boost voter confidence and significantly strengthen an important element of our national security.

With many state and local officials keen to make necessary tech upgrades, Congress may need to only cover a fraction of the overall costs.

If lawmakers agree with Comey's assessment that foreign agents are "coming after America," it stands to reason that Congress should devote resources to addressing the threat. This is a small price tag for the defense of our democracy.

Washington Post

J. Alex Halderman is professor of computer science at the University of Michigan and director of Michigan's Center for Computer Security and Society. Justin Talbot-Zorn is a Truman National Security Fellow and an adviser to the National Election Defense Coalition who has served as legislative director to three members of Congress.
A tale of two daises: City lands $64 million to help with homelessness while county ponders destroying camps

Visibility, not data, drives dueling political agendas

By Scott Thomas Anderson

This article was published on 06.22.17

Visibility, not data, drives dueling political agendas

By Scott Thomas Anderson

Read 1 reader submitted comment

A day after receiving the grant, council members moved ahead with weaving it into the mayor’s broader vision of getting 2,000 homeless individuals into permanent housing within three years. It will start too late for the disoriented woman Councilwoman Ashby saw climb the fountain before the meeting. Ashby says she quickly called 911 and stayed close until a lone firefighter waded through the monument’s water and convinced the woman to let him carry her down. “Our firefighters had four similar calls to that before 3 p.m. in downtown,” Ashby said. “If we had had this program, today, we could have had something more to help her than just an ER visit.”

According to local point-in-time counts, approximately 13 percent of homeless adults in Sacramento County experience serious mental illness, down 14 percent in six years. Chronic homelessness afflicted 26 percent.

Families and youth made up the largest proportion of the biennial homeless survey in 2015, but visibility and opportunity drive policy more than data.

The goal of alleviating emergency room congestion played a role in area hospitals putting up matching funds. Emily Halcon, the city’s homeless services coordinator, told SN&R that Dignity Health, Sutter Whole Person Care was designed to be a county-led initiative. When supervisors walked away from the program, Steinberg said of the relationship between the two governments. “And I acknowledge my part in that, right. I’ve been kind of aggressive about all of this.” The mayor added, “But we (the city) just have mental health and substance abuse services.” Working with the county to create one seamless system is not some luxury.”

Mayor Darrell Steinberg said the federal money can be used for putting mental health clinicians on fire trucks, inside jails and emergency rooms, and assisting with delicate police calls. The grant will also fund $16 million annually—that stirred genuine optimism last week.

Sacramento County officials opted not to apply for that very grant because it called for matching funds. Sacramento County park rangers destroy a homeless camp on Steelhead Creek.

Rousted once again: As politicians fiddle, Sacramento County’s homeless population revealed to be much bigger than previously estimated.

Whole Person Care was designed to be a county-led initiative. When supervisors walked away from the money, Steinberg went in for it, while also securing the hospitals as partners. However, Steinberg stressed during the announcement that the city’s ambitious plans will work only with serious cooperation from the county.

“I know there have been some stumbles,” Steinberg said of the relationship between the two governments. “And I acknowledge my part in that, right. I’ve been kind of aggressive about all of this.” The mayor added, “But we (the city) just have mental health and substance abuse services.” Working with the county to create one seamless system is not some luxury.
The county Board of Supervisors met two days later to discuss homelessness issues, though the policy debate was about environmental damage and neighborhood blight from illegal camping. The county’s new budget allocates an additional $6.2 million in spending on shelter services. Given that investment, Supervisor Phil Serna said it was time to address the impacts of the hidden community through the parkway.

County officials and the federal Environmental Protection Agency have been receiving complaints about extensive creek and river pollution from the encampments, which SN&R documented in April. A series of isolated crime and accident reports are also fueling angry letters to the county.

On June 15, Serna suggested adding $3.8 million to the parks budget for ranger operations to destroy the camps.

Expressing support, Supervisor Don Notolli said the scope of blight from camping—both in the parkway and other pockets—had reached a turning point. “We’re running a risk,” Notolli said. “If we don’t get a handle on this, these types of activities are going to drive people out of our neighborhoods permanently.”

The supervisors ultimately delayed the vote until July.

Both Erlenbusch, executive director of the Sacramento Regional Coalition to End Homelessness, praised the supervisors’ investment in shelter services, but said destroying the camps would be counterproductive. New shelter space won’t balance out the region’s lack of low-income housing.

Erlenbusch said. Not even close.

The advocate thinks a more productive way to handle the environmental challenges around the parkway is to follow the example of Orange County leaders, who regularly bring portable showers, mobile bathrooms and huge trash bins down into their greenbelt.

“What do they think is going to happen when they’re not investing in affordable housing and the people living down there don’t have trash bins or bathrooms?” Erlenbusch observed.

“Providing those things would be a better strategy than continuing with this game of whack-a-mole. I think it’s the least they can do.”

Bob Erlenbusch, executive director of the Sacramento Regional Coalition to End Homelessness, praised the county to create one seamless system is not some luxury.“

The contrast between Sacramento County’s proposal to address pollution from homeless encampments by destroying them, and Orange County’s approach of directly and constructively addressing the actual (if symptomatic) problem… reminds me of how the favorite tactic of ‘broken-windows policing’ is stop-and-frisk, which does not actually fix any windows.

This summer, it's raining grant money for artists Page Burner 6.27.2017 3:53pm

Two music venues announce their end on Tuesday Page Burner 6.21.2017 11:32am

SCOREKEEPER: Sacramento residents don't care about the damn arena Page Burner 6.20.2017 6:11pm


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- jobs 6,721
- musician 35
- real estate for sale 585
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- rentals 3,679
- services 3,535

Stockton Classifieds
The Senate healthcare bill released last week would leave California short $115 billion for its Medi-Cal program between 2020 and 2027, according to a state analysis released Wednesday.

The Medi-Cal program, which is jointly funded by the state and federal government, grew dramatically under the Affordable Care Act to cover 13.5 million Californians, or 1 out of 3 state residents.

The Senate bill proposes effectively undoing the expansion of the program, which added 3.9 million Californians to the program over the last three years. It also would change the financing structure of the entire program, which largely serves low-income and disabled Californians, so the state would take on more of the costs.
Jennifer Kent, head of the state’s Department of Health Care Services, said that the cuts would force officials to consider reductions in benefits or who can stay in Medi-Cal.

“This bill takes a sledgehammer to the improvements we have made in our state’s healthcare delivery system,” she said.

Medi-Cal’s annual budget is $107 billion.

Under the bill, the state would face an extra $3 billion in costs in 2020, which would grow to $30 billion by 2027. That could be a quarter of the program’s total budget.

“The long-term impact of this bill cannot be understated: It is simply devastating,” Kent said.

A Congressional Budget Office analysis found that the bill would increase the number of uninsured Americans by 22 million.

GOP leaders this week delayed the vote on the Senate bill until after the July 4 holiday.

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