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AS VIRUS SURGES, NO CALL FOR NEW STATE SHUTDOWN

Economic burden called too damaging for second closure

BY RONG-GONG LIN II

SAN FRANCISCO

Despite an alarming spike in both coronavirus cases and hospitalizations, California health officials appear to have little appetite at least right now for a widespread retreat from reopening of the economy.

Over the past few weeks, California has seen itself go from coronavirus success story to cautionary tale as

COVID-19 cases hit new record daily highs and the number of people getting sick enough to require hospitalization spiked.

The increases came as the state permitted stay-at-home rules to be lifted by counties at an increasingly rapid pace and allowed a myriad of businesses as well as churches and other institutions to reopen.

California's first-in-the-nation stay-at-home order is widely credited with helping prevent the massive death tolls seen in places like New York and New Jersey. But now, some are wondering

SEE VIRUS • A7

CDC: 24 MILLION IN U.S. ARE POSSIBLY INFECTED

Agency's director believes figure is 10 times number of confirmed cases

BY LENA H. SUN & JOEL ACHENBACH

WASHINGTON

The number of people in the United States who have been infected with the coronavirus is likely to be 10 times as high as the 2.4 million confirmed cases, based on antibody tests, the head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Thursday.

CDC Director Robert Redfield's estimate, shared with reporters in a conference call, indicates that at least 24 million Americans have been infected so far.

The antibody tests examine a person's blood for indicators that the

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■ **A6** • County records 335 new cases, setting another single-day record.

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immune system has mounted a response to an infection. The serological surveys are being done around the country as epidemiologists try to measure the reach of the virus to date. Redfield said he believes 5 to 8 percent of the population has been infected so far. Significantly, that would mean 92

percent to 95 percent remain susceptible to a coronavirus infection. Experts say this is the critical data point showing that the pandemic remains in its early stages and people need to continue to try to limit the viral spread.

The CDC director's comments came as case counts continued to surge to record levels in many states, particularly in the South and West, during warm-weather months that many had hoped would provide a lull in the pandemic.

Gov. Gavin Newsom issued another warning to Californians about the growing spread as the state again reported increases in hospitalizations.

SEE CDC • A6



K.C. ALFRED U-T

KNEELING IN REMEMBRANCE

Cristen Mason, 17, (right) is among protesters kneeling to honor George Floyd on Thursday at Pomerado and Twin Peaks roads in Poway. One month ago, a Minneapolis police officer pressed his knee on Floyd's neck for at least eight minutes while he was in custody.

CHARTER FOUNDER GOT \$1M IN PAY ADVANCES

Audit shows former Inspire CEO agreed to pay it back, hasn't

BY KRISTEN TAKETA

The founder and former CEO of Inspire charter schools in California received more than \$1 million in payroll advances over the course of a year and a half, according to an audit report published Thursday.

Five Inspire schools across the state and the Inspire District Office organization gave Herbert "Nick" Nichols a total of \$1,055,834 in advances between November 2017 and May 2019, according to an audit conducted by the Eide Bailly accounting firm. Nichols has repaid \$195,911 of the total to date.

Inspire previously said Nichols was collecting a \$380,000 annual salary before he resigned as head of Inspire District Office in October. He resigned shortly after a state fiscal agency announced it would audit the Inspire charter school network for potential fraud.

According to board minutes for Inspire District Office — which Nichols founded and which charged Inspire schools millions in exchange for services — the payroll advances were approved after the fact, the audit said.

Cabrillo Point Academy, an Inspire school that is authorized and overseen by the Dehesa School District in San Diego County, advanced \$187,193 in payroll to Nichols, the audit said. But the school's board meeting minutes do not show any discussion or approval of the advance.

"We find these payroll

SEE AUDIT • A9

SWEETWATER HIT AGAIN AS SUPERINTENDENT PUT ON LEAVE

Move comes in wake of financial audit, 223 layoffs

BY KRISTEN TAKETA

Within three days Sweetwater Union High School District has been accused of potential financial fraud, laid off 223 employees and placed its superintendent on leave.

They were three more blows to a district that has

been rocked by budget cuts and, in past years, a pay-to-play corruption scandal in which employees of construction companies were charged for winning and dining district leaders in exchange for school building contracts.

"In some ways, you kinda wanna sit back and say, 'I told you so; why didn't you guys listen?'" said Maty Adato, a Sweetwater resident who has watchdogged the district's actions for years. "On the other hand,

we say, 'Oh my God, I can't believe it.' You don't want this for the kids of the district because it's not an easy time for them."

On Wednesday the school board voted 4-1 in a closed meeting to place Superintendent Karen Janney on paid leave after a state audit released Monday accused Janney and the district's former finance staff of violating their fiduciary duty.

The audit said Sweetwater staff had published inac-

curate financial information on several occasions and misrepresented the district's financial situation when asking the school board to approve employee raises and when presenting to a bond rating agency.

On Wednesday the board also voted to lay off 223 employees to help close an ongoing budget deficit that district staff had downplayed on several occasions, according to the audit.

"It's just kind of a weird set of situations," said Julie

Walker, president of the Sweetwater teachers union. "We shouldn't be surprised. This is Sweetwater. It's rarely easy in Sweetwater."

Amid all the turmoil in the district, it's the students who are the real victims, Adato said. There are roughly 39,000 students in the Sweetwater district, and most of them are low-income.

Board member Frank Tarantino was the only one to vote against placing Jan-
SEE SWEETWATER • A9



JOHN MOORE GETTY IMAGES

Members of a migrant caravan turn themselves in after crossing into San Diego from Tijuana in 2018. Many requested political asylum in the U.S.

JUSTICES: ASYLUM SEEKERS CAN'T CHALLENGE REMOVAL

Court's ruling backs quick deportation of rejected claimants

BY ADAM LIPTAK

WASHINGTON

The U.S. Supreme Court sided Thursday with the Trump administration's efforts to speed the deportation of asylum seekers, ruling that a law limiting the role of federal courts in reviewing those decisions was constitutional.

Last week, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of young immigrants known as "dreamers," allowing them to continue to use a program that shields them from deportation and allows them to work.

Thursday's decision, which barred immigrants whose asylum claims were rejected in bare-bones proceedings from filing petitions for habeas corpus, struck a strikingly different note.

Justice Samuel Alito, writing for the five more con-

servative justices in the 7-2 decision, said asylum claims threatened to overwhelm the immigration system.

Congress was entitled to respond to that crisis, he wrote, by enacting a law that limited the role federal courts may play in reviewing summary determinations of whether asylum seekers faced a credible fear of persecution were they returned to their home countries.

In dissent, Justice Sonia Sotomayor, joined by Justice Elena Kagan, said the majority had damaged the

rule of law.

"Today's decision handcuffs the judiciary's ability to perform its constitutional duty to safeguard individual liberty and dismantles a critical component of the separation of powers," Sotomayor wrote.

The majority was unduly focused on "the burdens of affording robust judicial review of asylum decisions," she wrote.

"But our constitutional protections should not hinge on the vicissitudes of
SEE COURT • A9



WEEKEND

A VOTE FOR AMERICA

Jon Stewart, back with a new political comedy, refuses to believe the nation is beyond repair. **E1**

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