

It's official: Fires burn >4 million acres

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Body

Oct 05, 2020(CalMatters: <https://calmatters.org> Delivered by Newstex) ;;; Good morning, California. It's Monday, October 5. Yet another record setThe remains of a burned home in Berryessa Highlands on Sept. 21, 2020. Photo by Anne Wernikoff for CalMatters California surpassed a staggering milestone Sunday: More than 4 million acres have now burned[1] in a record-defying fire season still far from over. That's four Rhode Islands, three-and-a-half Grand Canyon National Parks, and a little more than one Connecticut.

It's also more than double the 1.98 million acres burned in 2018[2], California's previous modern-day record.Also unfathomable: the size of the monstrous August Complex fire, which at 970,563 acres and growing[3] dwarfs every other fire in recorded California history[4], none of which have passed the 500,000-acre mark. The massive conflagration gained steam Saturday amid gusty winds[5], forcing additional evacuations even as officials fear it could merge with the deadly Zogg Fire[6]. Meanwhile, firefighters over the weekend made progress on the Glass Fire, which has damaged[7] at least 17 wineries and destroyed nearly 300 homes, establishing it as the most destructive blaze to confront California's famed Wine Country[8]. More than 215 other wineries[9] and nearly 100,000 people[10] remain under mandatory evacuation or evacuation warnings.Northern California is expected to see cooler weather, higher humidity and rain later in the week[11] — which could help soothe fire-ravaged areas, tamp down flames and bring relief to residents choked by unhealthy air quality.But rain brings problems, too — namely, the ability to poison California's water supply with dangerous chemicals from burned buildings, trees and land, CalMatters' Rachel Becker reports[12]. About two-thirds of the state's water supply flows from forests susceptible to burning. _____The coronavirus bottom line:As of 9 p.m. Sunday night, California had823,729 confirmed coronavirus casesand16,120 deathsfrom the virus, according toaCalMatters tracker[13].Also:CalMatters regularly updates this pandemic timeline tracking thestate's daily actions[14]. And we'retracking the state's coronavirus hospitalizations by county[15].A dearth of bills. A bevy of executive orders. In four charts, how the pandemic reshaped California politics in 2020[16]. Advertisement<https://www.chcf.org/collection/modernizing-payment-californias-community-health-centers/> Other stories you should know 1. Unemployment department update Image via iStock Today, California's beleaguered[17] unemployment department is slated to resume accepting new claims after a two-week pause[18] intended to give it time to implement a new automatic identity-verification tool and reduce a backlog of nearly 1.6 million claims[19]. I asked the Employment Development Department on Sunday whether it was ready to launch the tool today, but didn't hear back. EDD appears to have cleared 146,513[20] claims[21] from Sept. 24-30, the last week for which data is available. Whether the new tool can handle what is sure to be a sizable influx of pent-up claims from the past two weeks remains to be seen. We'll likely hear more at an Assembly hearing on Wednesday[22]. The California state auditor was also slated to begin an emergency audit of the department[23] by the end of September. I asked the state auditor's office on Sunday whether the audit had begun, but didn't hear back. I'll let

you know when I do. 2. Incoming: mail-in ballots California mail-in-ballot. Image via iStock Don't forget to check your mailbox this week, because today, counties are required to begin sending out mail-in ballots for the November election. It's the first time in California history[24] that a mail-in ballot will be sent to every active registered voter — and this year there are more than 21 million[25], a record high. If you have questions about voting logistics, check out CalMatters' voter guide[26] or submit your question[27] to be answered. Of the 21.2 million active registered voters, 46.4% are Democratic, 24.2% Republican and 23.7% No Party Preference, according to a breakdown released Thursday by Secretary of State Alex Padilla[28]. This represents a comeback of sorts for the GOP, which fell behind No-Party-Preference voters in 2018[29] — although Republicans now make up a smaller share of the California electorate than they did in 2016[30], when they represented 26.8% of registered voters. Jessica Millan Patterson, chair of the California GOP, in a statement to me: 'As Gov. Gavin Newsom dreams of 2035, there are millions of unemployed Californians, thousands of closed businesses, an unemployment system with 1.6 million unprocessed claims, and people are fed up. That frustration is beginning to show up in our voter registration numbers.' Paul Mitchell, vice president of Political Data Inc., to me: 'Historically, voters register more increasingly partisan in presidential election cycles, and then more independent in off-years or gubernatorial cycles.'

3. Gun violence on the uprise Image via iStock Gun violence and homicide rates are rising in California cities, a concerning trend that police chiefs and advocates partially attribute to the pandemic, which has driven up gun sales along with anxiety and depression rates[31] as the economy spirals downward. Oakland has already seen more homicides this year[32] than it did in each of the previous three years, and assaults with a firearm shot up 44% from the same time last year. In San Francisco[33], homicides jumped 30% and gunfire incidents 32%. In Los Angeles[34], homicides increased by nearly 14%. And in Sacramento, this past weekend alone saw several shootings including two drive-by[35] shootings[36] — including one that killed a 9-year-old girl[37] — a homicide[38], and a shooting at a halal market[39] in which the gunman shot three others before fatally shooting himself. Still, experts say it's too early to ascribe a single reason to the uptick, and warn against reading too much into short-term trends — especially given the fact that California's crime rate has dropped steadily in recent years, and fell to an all-time low in 2019[40].

4. Ethnic studies controversy continues California Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond at a press conference on Oct. 31, 2019. Photo by Anne Wernikoff for CalMatters Newsom may have recently vetoed[41] a bill that would have required California high school students to take an ethnic studies class in order to graduate, but the fight over the controversial curriculum is far from over. In a pointed critique of the governor's decision, state Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond unveiled a new series of ethnic-studies broadcasts Friday[42]. Thurmond[43]: 'Our students deserve better than to put their experiences on hold until there is the political appetite to embrace them.' In his veto message[44], Newsom said he supports ethnic studies — he recently signed a bill to make it a CSU graduation requirement[45] — but believes the high-school curriculum 'still needs revision.' The state in August released an updated draft[46], nearly a year after its initial version was excoriated[47] for being too politically correct, anti-Semitic and full of academic jargon. But the second draft hasn't proved any less contentious, with Jewish[48] and Sikh-American groups[49], among others, calling for more inclusion and representation. The state Board of Education will vote on the second draft in March 2021[50]. Meanwhile, Assemblymember Jose Medina, a Riverside Democrat, plans to reintroduce the ethnic studies bill[51] in December.

Advertisement [https://mattressrecyclingcouncil.org/programs/california/Upcoming events](https://mattressrecyclingcouncil.org/programs/california/Upcoming%20events) Oct. 6-14: CalMatters is hosting five 'Props to You' events[52] — virtual Q&A; As for you to ask all of your questions about the 12 propositions on California's November ballot. Register here.[53] Each event runs from 6-7pm. CalMatters commentary CalMatters columnist Dan Walters[54]: California's Prop. 16 is a new skirmish in an old battle over affirmative action. Helping economy and climate: Prioritizing good jobs that help solve environmental and climate issues can lead to a strong economic recovery, argues state Sen. Maria Elena Durazo, a Los Angeles Democrat[55]. Mega disasters call for mega response: Successfully reducing the risks of major floods and catastrophic wildfires will require many years of sustained commitment and coordination, write Joshua Viers of UC Merced and Julie Rentner of River Partners[56]. Single-family zoning harms people of color: Until we abandon racist housing policies, California will continue to fail to pass meaningful housing reform, argues Adam Briones of the Greenlining Institute[57]. Other things worth your time The heroic evacuation of a Santa Rosa senior home during the Glass Fire. // San Francisco Chronicle[58] California's Filipino American nurses are dying from COVID-19 at alarming rates. // Mercury News[59] Federal government tried to intimidate a California county into keeping poultry plant open after COVID deaths, health department director says. // CBS News[60] California waivers on theme park reopening rules amid pressure. // Fox40[61] How LAUSD's superintendent has used special emergency powers to make fast-track deals. // LAist[62] The civil war for Nevada City. // San Francisco Chronicle[63] Ben Shapiro: Why I'm leaving California. //

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Fox News[64] The secret history of Kimberly Guilfoyle's departure from Fox. // The New Yorker[65]See you tomorrow.Tips, insight or feedback? Email Emily@calmatters.org [66].;Follow me on Twitter:@emily_hoeven[67]Subscribe to CalMatters newslettershere[68].Follow CalMatters onFacebook[69]andTwitter[70].CalMatters is now available in Spanish onTwitter[71],Facebook[72]andRSS[73]. [1]: <https://fire.ca.gov/daily-wildfire-report/> [2]: <https://www.fire.ca.gov/incidents/2018/> [3]: https://www.fire.ca.gov/media/11416/top20_acres.pdf [4]: https://www.fire.ca.gov/media/11416/top20_acres.pdf [5]: <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-10-04/california-fire-season-record-4-million-acres-burned> [6]: <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-10-02/biggest-california-fire-approaches-1-million-acres> [7]: <https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/Calistoga-avoids-disaster-as-winds-ease-Glass-15620370.php> [8]: <https://calmatters.org/newsletters/whatmatters/2020/09/future-of-california-wine-country/> [9]: <https://www.sfchronicle.com/wine/article/Glass-Fire-has-now-damaged-17-Napa-Valley-15619231.php> [10]: <https://calmatters.org/newsletters/whatmatters/2020/10/california-more-fire-danger-ahead/> [11]: <https://www.abc10.com/article/weather/rain-is-finally-in-the-forecast-for-northern-california-with-a-little-help-from-hurricane-marie/103-e2783683-76a4-4990-bc13-b62eaa87568e> [12]: <https://calmatters.org/?p=141882> [13]: <https://calmatters.org/health/coronavirus/2020/03/california-coronavirus-by-the-numbers-cases-testing-masks-hospital-beds/> [14]: <https://calmatters.org/health/coronavirus/2020/04/gavin-newsom-coronavirus-updates-timeline/> [15]: <https://calmatters.org/health/coronavirus/2020/04/california-coronavirus-covid-patient-hospitalization-data-icu/> [16]: <https://calmatters.org/politics/post-it/2020/10/pandemic-reshaped-california-politics-data/> [17]: <https://www.sacbee.com/news/politics-government/capitol-alert/article246088615.html> [18]: <https://calmatters.org/newsletters/whatmatters/2020/09/california-unemployment-benefits-edd-report/> [19]: <https://calmatters.org/newsletters/whatmatters/2020/09/california-unemployment-benefits-edd-report/> [20]: <https://edd.ca.gov/Newsroom/facts-and-stats/pdf/dashboard-ui-initial-100120.pdf> [21]: <https://edd.ca.gov/Newsroom/facts-and-stats/pdf/dashboard-ui-continued-100120.pdf> [22]: <https://abgt.assembly.ca.gov/sites/abgt.assembly.ca.gov/files/Sub.%204%20October%207%202020.pdf> [23]: <https://calmatters.org/newsletters/whatmatters/2020/09/california-unemployment-benefits-edd-report/> [24]: <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-10-04/california-ballots-mailed-voters-2020-presidential-election> [25]: <https://calmatters.org/newsletters/whatmatters/2020/09/california-fires-winds-pge-outage-psps/> [26]: <https://calmatters.org/election-2020-guide> [27]: <https://calmatters.org/election-2020-guide/#e2020-submit-form> [28]: <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/report-registration/60day-gen-2020> [29]: <https://calmatters.org/politics/election-2018/2018/06/g-o-p-now-at-number-3/> [30]: <https://elections.cdn.sos.ca.gov/ror/60day-gen-2020/historical-reg-stats.pdf> [31]: <https://calmatters.org/health/breakdown-mental-health/2020/09/mental-health-tsunami-california-suicides/> [32]: https://www.eastbaytimes.com/2020/10/02/pandemic-partly-blamed-for-return-of-steep-rise-in-oakland-killings/?utm_campaign=CHL%3A%20Daily%20Edition&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=96557292&_hse nc=p2ANqtz-8-fl2ok15UOQFeihhuNK3k-cX68ZG-ZWpF18DIR8UnWXusjkag5d9Yp33RXlRuYZM3wwE3K58jMnWXytcvDo3zZp5hw&utm_content=96557292&utm_source=hs_email [33]: <https://www.sfchronicle.com/crime/article/Troubling-trend-in-San-Francisco-32-jump-in-15585017.php> [34]: <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-09-15/moore-says-covid-driving-factor-in-increased-la-gun-violence> [35]: <https://www.sacbee.com/news/local/crime/article246214485.html> [36]: <https://www.sacbee.com/news/local/crime/article246204605.html> [37]: <https://www.sacbee.com/news/local/crime/article246204605.html> [38]: <https://www.sacbee.com/news/local/crime/article246214120.html> [39]: <https://www.sacbee.com/news/local/crime/article246206925.html> [40]: <https://calmatters.org/newsletters/whatmatters/2020/09/fires-set-record-books-ablaze/> [41]: <https://calmatters.org/newsletters/whatmatters/2020/10/reparations-study-police-reform-coming-to-ca/> [42]: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/nr/ne/yr20/yr20rel83.asp> [43]: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/nr/ne/yr20/yr20rel83.asp> [44]: <https://www.gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/AB-331.pdf> [45]: <https://calmatters.org/education/2020/08/csu-ethnic-studies-ab-1460/> [46]: <https://calmatters.org/newsletters/whatmatters/2020/08/california-schools-online-learning-plans-teachers-unions/> [47]: <https://calmatters.org/politics/inside-california-capitol/2019/08/california-education-officials-say-ethnic-studies-plan-falls-short-needs-work/> [48]: <https://calmatters.org/commentary/my-turn/2020/09/inclusion-of-jews-in-ethnic-studies-curriculum-is-essential/> [49]: <https://calmatters.org/commentary/my-turn/2020/10/meaningful-representation-of-sikh-americans-in-ethnic-studies-would-show-progress-for-inclusion/> [50]: <https://calmatters.org/newsletters/whatmatters/2020/08/california-schools>

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