

Special session looking beyond Trump

Meeting to brace for president-elect, some in the new Legislature raise economic issues.

By MACKENZIE MAYS

SACRAMENTO — California lawmakers met at the state Capitol on Monday to devise a plan to shield the state from President-elect Donald Trump’s conservative policies, including his vows to repeal environmental protections and initiate mass deportations.

The goal of the special legislative session called by Gov. Gavin Newsom is to establish a \$25-million fund for legal challenges to federal policies that the governor said could “harm the state,” including when it comes to civil rights, abortion access and immigration.

But with Trump’s upcoming return as president, the politics of leading the resistance are trickier as Democrats assess how they lost the White House and grapple with why support for Trump in California increased after the 2020 election despite his felony convictions, pattern of lies and role in the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol after his loss to President Biden.

Legislative leaders — under pressure to prove that the special session is more than just political theater, as alleged by some Republicans — tried to balance their concerns about a second Trump term with state issues important to constituents, such as the rising cost of living.

As the Legislature welcomed 35 new members — including a record number of women — Democrats, who maintain a supermajority, said the legal preparation was a necessary precaution.

During Trump’s first term as president, California filed more than 100 lawsuits against the federal government, winning protections for undocumented people who came to the U.S. as children and securing clean air rules.

“If Washington, D.C., refuses to tackle climate change in the coming four years, mark my word that California will continue to lead as we always have,” Senate President Pro Tem Mike McGuire (D-Healdsburg) said on the chamber’s floor Monday. “Because here in the Golden State, we fight to lift up every person, no matter your background, no matter your skin color, who you are, who you love and how you identify.”

As lawmakers introduced bills that tighten up abortion rights and further affirm California as the Trump antithesis, California leaders were more tempered in their messaging and put their focus on bipartisan pocketbook issues.

“Our constituents don’t feel that the state of California is working for them,” Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas (D-Hollister) said Monday, pointing to last month’s election, in which voters rejected progressive-backed measures and revoked criminal justice reform laws.

Rivas reduced the number of bills allowed to be introduced, and requested that all proposals focus on “affordability and prosper- [See Legislature, A9]



FORMER Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger swears in Nathan Hochman as L.A. County district attorney. At right is Hochman’s wife, Vivienne Vella. Hochman won on a promise of a “hard middle” approach to fighting crime.

ROBERT GAUTHIER Los Angeles Times

MAJOR SHIFTS AS D.A. TAKES OFFICE

Nathan Hochman is sworn in and quickly reverses many of his predecessor’s policies.

By JAMES QUEALLY

Flanked by one of the city’s most famous action heroes, Nathan Hochman began his term as Los Angeles County district attorney Tuesday by promising to restore justice and balance to a prosecutor’s office he believes lost its way over the last four years.

Hochman, 61, was sworn in by former California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger in front of hundreds of enthusiastic supporters as the “Terminator” star dramatically announced “the city of Los Angeles is now going to be back.”

Hochman — a former federal prosecutor — kicked off his administration by immediately wiping away many of the policies ex-Dist. Atty. George Gascón put in place on his inauguration day nearly four years ago.

The Gascón policies he instantly struck down included blanket bans that stopped prosecutors from seeking the death penalty and filing charges for low-level misdemeanors such as drug possession and trespassing. Hochman also eliminated restrictions on the use of sentencing enhancements that can add years to prison terms for gang and gun crimes and decreed that prosecutors can again join victims at parole hearings, a Gascón policy that had long outraged victims’ rights groups.

Much like Schwarzenegger, who has expressed concern about politics that hurt public safety and said he doesn’t “like either party right now,” Hochman ran as an independent and cen- [See Hochman, A12]

For Hunter Biden, pardon presents yet another opportunity for a reset

In his next act, the recovering addict wants to help ‘those who are still sick’

By Matt Hamilton and Stacy Perman



ERIC THAYER Associated Press

HUNTER BIDEN, who was convicted of gun and tax crimes, was granted expansive immunity by his father, President Biden.

Hunter Biden was in an increasingly perilous position.

After Donald Trump defeated Kamala Harris in the presidential election, it was clear that some of his most vociferous critics were poised to assume power and carry out the promise of retribution for Trump’s enemies.

Biden was also set to be sentenced to months, and potentially years, in prison after he was convicted of illegally purchasing a handgun and pleaded guilty to tax crimes.

Within his circle and the broader Biden family orbit, there were growing fears that his status as a political and legal target would only become more acute. A white paper penned by his lawyers and circulated over the long Thanksgiving weekend outlined the risks and the grave threats he faced.

But on Sunday night, the clouds lifted. In receiving the pardon that his father, President Biden, had repeatedly said he would never grant, the younger Biden was now free of all those criminal entanglements. With the stroke of a pen, the president had given his son expansive immunity for 11 years of conduct, for any and all federal offenses.

The pardon came at a deep price for his father, who was roundly criticized by Democrats and Republicans alike. [See Pardon, A6]

South Korea president briefly declares martial law

Scandal-tainted leader backs down in his fight with legislators amid street protests.

By MAX KIM

SEOUL — South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol declared emergency martial law late Tuesday before backing down, temporarily placing the military in control of all government and judicial functions in a power grab that came after months of political stalemate. The hours of crisis and chaos have thrown the future of his presidency into doubt.

As the military and police sought to contain protesters who had poured into the streets around the National Assembly, the president announced he would lift the or-



AHN YOUNG-JOON Associated Press

PROTESTERS GATHER in front of the National Assembly in Seoul to demand that President Yoon Suk-yeol resign. His approval ratings have sunk recently.

der as soon as he could convene his Cabinet, heeding a defiant vote from the opposition-led legislature. The Cabinet met before dawn Wednesday, according to South Korea’s Yonhap news agency, as protesters chanted for Yoon’s impeachment.

It remained unclear what immediately precipitated Yoon’s decree — the first time martial law has been declared in South Korea since 1980, when a military junta ruled the country.

In a televised address to the nation announcing his declaration of martial law, Yoon called the legislature a “den of criminals” engaged in “legislative tyranny” and “anti-state activities.”

“Honorable citizens, as president, I appeal to you with a feeling of spitting blood,” he said. [See South Korea, A4]

Arms smuggling in the Southland?

Ontario man is charged with sending military supplies to North Korea. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Dodgers welcome their newest star

Team flexes financial muscle with its signing of free-agent pitcher Blake Snell. **SPORTS, B10**

Biden targets low pay for disabled

President seeks to end rule allowing salaries less than minimum wage. **BUSINESS, A8**

Weather

Fog to sunshine. L.A. Basin: 65/47. **B6**

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