

Harris quiet on crime ballot measure

Courting swing-state moderates, the vice president has yet to take a position on California’s Prop. 36.

BY NOAH BIERMAN AND ANABEL SOSA

Vice President Kamala Harris, a California voter and former attorney general, is declining to say how she will vote on one of the most consequential criminal justice ballot measures to come before state voters in years.

As she runs for president, Harris has emphasized her credentials as the former top law enforcement official for the country’s largest state, presenting herself as “tough” in advertisements and at the Democratic National Convention in August, going after smugglers and seeking justice for crime victims.

But her campaign declined to answer questions from The Times about how she will vote on Proposition 36, a prosecutor-led tough-on-crime ballot measure that splits her Democratic base but has broad support among California voters, according to polls. The measure would impose stiffer sentences and potentially longer jail and prison time for repeat fentanyl and theft offenses, reversing parts of a ballot measure voters approved a decade ago, when Harris was attorney general.

Harris also declined to weigh in on that measure — Proposition 47 — before voters approved it in 2014. And her presidential campaign declined to answer ques- [See Harris, A10]



MYUNG J. CHUN Los Angeles Times

SOME SOCIAL JUSTICE and housing groups say keeping neighborhoods low density would fortify L.A.’s longtime housing inequities.

L.A. plans to protect single-family areas despite need for housing

The city of Los Angeles is on the verge of redrafting blueprints for its neighborhoods to accommodate more than 250,000 new homes. But under a recommendation from the planning department, nearly three-quarters of the city will remain off-limits to further growth.

At stake is no less than a vision for Los Angeles’ future. Will L.A. continue to preserve communities dominated by single-family homes? Or will the city make a historic shift to allow for more affordable housing in areas that have long excluded it?

The department’s proposal leaves alone neighborhoods that allow only for the building of single-family homes — as well as accessory dwelling units in many

Social justice groups, bolstered by a city-funded report, criticize how officials propose to reach a goal of 250,000 new homes

BY LIAM DILLON

cases — a classification that represents 72% of the residential land in L.A. Instead, the department is pushing for the city to meet the 250,000-unit production goal through incentives for greater development in existing multifamily and commercial areas.

The city Planning Commission approved the proposal Thursday. Commissioners expressed interest in allowing affordable housing in single-family-home neighborhoods but concluded that the City Council should make the decision. The council must vote on a final plan in advance of a February state deadline.

Keeping single-family-home neighborhoods untouched maintains the low- [See Housing, A10]



OnScene.TV

A METRO driver is seen behind the wheel of a bus that was hijacked and pursued by police through downtown Los Angeles on Wednesday. One rider was killed.

Safety in spotlight after second Metro hijacking in 6 months

BY RACHEL URANGA AND COLLEEN SHALBY

Metro riders were already uneasy using the system during off hours or at certain locations.

Then an armed man hijacked a bus Wednesday morning in a violent takeover that left one passenger dead, and officials tried to reassure Angelenos — who have long been distrustful of

promises to improve a transit system that has failed to keep people safe.

“It’s getting scarier,” said Priscilla Russell, a 69-year-old retired juvenile detention officer who, like thousands of low-income residents, relies on the bus to get around.

“At nighttime it is very unsafe as a woman,” said her daughter Indiglo Russell, who works as a caregiver. “I have to be cautious and

make sure I’m looking around.” If someone is acting scary, Indiglo said, “I try not to look them in the eye and escalate.”

It was the second bus hijacking in six months and at least the fifth homicide on the system this year. In May, after 66-year-old security guard Mirna Soza was killed in an unprovoked attack on her way home from work, Mayor Karen Bass ordered a [See Metro, A7]

Videos capture armed pair in L.A. pot shop robberies

Young couple targeted four dispensaries over a six-week period, prosecutors allege.

BY MATTHEW ORMSETH

Gabriella Tovar and Jesus Mendoza did things any 20-somethings in love might do. They took selfies together, sneaked into each other’s workplaces to hang out, spent all night driving around the city.

It was the couple’s other activities, police say, that

landed them in a downtown Los Angeles courtroom in late August, shackled and dressed in blue jumpsuits, charged with 14 counts of kidnapping, robbery, fleeing police, committing assault with machine guns and shooting into an occupied building.

During a four-day preliminary hearing, Los Angeles Police Department detectives asserted that Tovar and Mendoza targeted four cannabis dispensaries for robberies — including one they allegedly held up on consecutive days — during a six-week-long string of heists

that ended June 11, 2023, when Mendoza crashed his BMW after a high-speed chase.

Authorities have characterized the two as partners in romance and in crime. At the end of the courtroom table where they sat chained to their chairs was a binder containing the LAPD’s investigative file. It was labeled “Romeo and Juliet.”

Testimony and video of the takeover-style heists offered a startling example of the violence that shadows California’s booming cannabis black market.

[See Robberies, A7]

UCLA blocked from ball field

A federal judge bars access to baseball stadium and practice area on VA land for now. CALIFORNIA, B1

Effects of strike by dockworkers

Labor action on the East and Gulf coasts would benefit L.A.-area ports but raise consumer prices. BUSINESS, A6

Printed with soy inks on partially recycled paper.



JEFFEREE WOO Tampa Bay Times
CHLOE GRAY looks out to sea in Oldsmar, Fla., before Helene’s arrival.

Helene’s winds batter Florida

Thousands lose power ahead of landfall as the storm is upgraded to Category 3. NATION, A5

Weather
Morning clouds.
L.A. Basin: 79/59. B6

For the latest news, go to **latimes.com**.



Don’t miss L.A.’s next big story.
Download the app for breaking news notifications.

