

# Pursuing a parcel rooted in flower power

Conservationists look to buy 2.4-acre plot in wild Laurel Canyon, a '60s hippie haven.

By LOUIS SAHAGÚN

Conservationists are hoping to purchase a spring-fed woodsy hollow in Laurel Canyon that was a hot spot for rockers in the patchouli-scented 1960s. The only catch is the seller said they needed to come up with the \$1-million payment within 60 days.

The countdown clock started ticking Feb. 21 when the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority and Citizens for Los Angeles Wildlife launched a fundraising campaign to acquire the prime piece of real estate in one of the oldest hillside communities in Los Angeles.

Today, the 2.4-acre parcel of oak forest, 100-foot-tall redwoods, crumbling stone stairways and mysterious man-made caverns splattered with fluorescent paint serves as a key wildlife passageway through the heart of the Hollywood Hills. Among the wildlife that frequent the area are coyotes, bobcats, deer and a male mountain lion.

"We're going to turn this place into a hangout for salamanders and frogs," said Paul Edelman, chief ecologist for the MRCA. As he spoke, Edelman lifted his arms as if to embrace the natural inhabitants of a sliver of Los Angeles rooted in flower power.

Back in the summer of 1968, Frank Zappa, his wife, Gail, and their daughter, [See **Parcel**, A9]



**TONY TUCCI**, co-founder of Citizens for Los Angeles Wildlife, stands in a concrete cave on a Laurel Canyon property that conservationists hope to buy. They have just weeks to come up with the \$1-million payment. **BRIAN VAN DER BRUG** Los Angeles Times

# Blizzard snaps 'snow drought' with up to 10 feet from flurries

By HANNAH FRY AND RONG-GONG LIN II

A monster blizzard that blasted California's Sierra Nevada with gusts of up to 190 mph and dumped more than 10 feet of snow over the weekend shattered the state's "snow drought" and significantly boosted vital snowpack levels.

The statewide snowpack by Monday had swelled to 104% of normal for the date, with a snow water equivalent of 24.4 inches. Snowpack was about 94% of its average for April 1, the date when it is typically at its deepest.

On Thursday — hours before the chilly winter storm was set to hit — the snowpack had measured only 80% of normal. It was an impressive turnaround compared with the beginning of the year when the snowpack was 32% of normal. [See **Blizzard**, A9]



**A VEHICLE** parked in a driveway is buried after more than 4 feet of snow had fallen at Mammoth Mountain during the weekend storm. **CODY MATHISON** Mammoth Mountain



**ALEXIA CARBONE** pushes her 5-year-old transgender child "A." on a swing at a park near her home. The child's parents are embroiled in a bitter custody dispute. **GINA FERAZZI** Los Angeles Times

# Trans child case fuels debate

A father claims he lost custody because of his views regarding gender. But it's much more complicated.

By KEVIN RECTOR AND BRITTNY MEJIA

Conservative social media influencer Chris Elston — who goes by the handle "Billboard Chris" and travels the country denouncing medical treatment for transgender youth — posted a video to his hundreds of thousands of followers in late 2023.

Elston was in Phoenix at

AmericaFest, a conservative conference hosted by the right-wing group Turning Point USA, wearing a sign across his chest that read: "Children cannot consent to puberty blockers."

The video showed him interviewing a Southern California father named Adam Vena, who claimed that his 5-year-old had been taken away from him by the state because he objected to the child being transgender.

"Adam spoke out against this, and the authorities consider that abuse. He now has a 5-year restraining order forbidding him from talking to" his child, Elston wrote atop the video posted on X.

"Pure evil," one commenter wrote. "Heartbreaking," wrote a second. "Madness," wrote a third.

Elon Musk, the billionaire owner of Tesla and X, [See **Transgender**, A6]

# Counting votes in state takes a while, but it's by design

Mail-in ballots must be verified as well as tabulated, which could delay results.

By JULIA WICK

Forget election night. Election season has been upon us for weeks, and it won't be over anytime soon.

California's prodigious adoption of vote-by-mail balloting has done more than fundamentally alter how we engage in the democratic process. The shift has also necessitated a cultural reconfiguration about election night results, and recast the timeline for learning outcomes in many races.

Definitive answers will likely only be clear in the most lopsided of contests by late Tuesday night. And conclusive results could take days or weeks to emerge in some of the tightest races.

But fear not, these comparatively slow vote counts are a feature of a working democratic system, not a bug.

"I think oftentimes what people don't understand about the California election process is that the Legisla-

ture, by intent, has allowed voters to have every opportunity to cast a ballot and to get their ballot in," said Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk Dean Logan, who serves as the county's chief election official.

There has been a decades-long push in the state to provide voters with more options and protections, making voting more accessible here than almost anywhere in the nation. But the flip side of that equation means more time-intensive work for election officials.

Think of it this way: When a Californian shows up at a vote center and casts a ballot in person, as was once commonplace, all the verification is done upfront at the vote center. When that ballot arrives for tabulation, no extra steps are needed.

Each vote-by-mail ballot, however, has to be verified and processed before it can be tabulated, which is significantly more time-consuming. Now imagine hundreds of thousands of these vote-by-mail ballots arriving at once on or just after election day.

That all-at-once crush of ballots creates what the California Voter Foundation's [See **Votes**, A12]

# TRUMP STAYS ON BALLOT, JUSTICES DECIDE

In Colorado case, the court says states lack authority to disqualify a former president.

By DAVID G. SAVAGE

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court ruled Monday that former President Trump may not be disqualified from appearing on state ballots despite allegations he "engaged in insurrection" after losing the 2020 election and thereby should be barred under the Constitution from holding office.

Reversing a ruling by Colorado judges, the high court said states do not have the authority to interpret the post-Civil War 14th Amendment or use it to remove a presidential candidate from the state ballot.

In an unsigned, unanimous decision, justices said they feared the presidential election would turn into a "patchwork" if "a single candidate would be declared ineligible in some states, but not others, based on the same conduct."

In December, the Colorado Supreme Court decided that Trump was disqualified from running for president because he violated Section 3 of the 14th Amendment. It says no person may "hold any office, civil or military" who took an oath to support the Constitution and then engaged in "insurrection or rebellion" against the United States.

Legal scholars and historians told the court in friend-of-the-court briefs that the Reconstruction Congress sought to prevent "insurrectionists" from gaining power and subverting American democracy.

The justices did not dispute that reading of history, but they appeared more concerned about allowing state judges to remove from the ballot a candidate who is the overwhelming choice of Republican voters.

"Because the Constitution makes Congress, rather than the states, responsible for enforcing Section 3 against federal officeholders and candidates, we reverse," the court said Monday in Trump vs. Anderson.

All nine justices said they [See **Ruling**, A7]

## Netanyahu rival and Harris meet

Vice president and Israeli official discuss Gaza aid, hostages and a cease-fire. **WORLD, A3**

## Antisemitism at schools alleged

Complaint claims bullying pervades Berkeley's public campuses. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

## An advocate the insurers loathe

Consumer Watchdog says it has saved California's policyholders billions. **BUSINESS, A8**

## Weather

Partly sunny. L.A. Basin: 65/48. **B6**

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