



PEOPLE WADE in the Rio Grande along a razor-wire fence after crossing the U.S.-Mexico border in Eagle Pass, Texas, in September. ROBERT GAUTHIER Los Angeles Times

Border is a big worry, polls show

A majority now say illegal immigration is a ‘very serious’ problem and want a wall built.

BY FAITH E. PINHO

As President Biden and former President Trump head to the U.S.-Mexico border this week ahead of the Super Tuesday primaries, new polling finds that an increasing number of Americans view illegal immigration as a “very serious” problem, and a majority support building a border wall.

Republican candidates who want to frame the Biden administration as weak on immigration have repeatedly hammered it as a top issue on the 2024 campaign trail. Biden is intent on laying the blame for inaction at the border on his opponent, who helped sink the largest immigration package in Congress in years.

A Monmouth University poll released Monday shows that the competing messaging is sticking — with 8 in 10 Americans across partisan lines seeing illegal immigration as at least a somewhat serious problem. Sixty-one percent of all respondents say it’s a very serious problem, up from fewer than 50% in 2015 and 2019. Among Republicans, 91% see illegal immigration as a very serious issue, compared with 58% of independents and 41% of Democrats.

“This is not the first year that we see this, but this is a moment where this is gaining momentum,” said Guadalupe Correa-Cabrera, a professor of policy and government at George Mason University who studies immigration. “The elections of 2024 are driving this, and the images are supporting a narrative — the politics of fear.”

A Gallup poll, released Tuesday, reported that a rising share of Americans think immigration is the most important problem facing the country, surpassing the government, the economy, [See Polls, A9]

School shaken by false nude images

Beverly Hills campus learns that AI tools simplify deepfakes, a nasty form of bullying.

BY JON HEALEY

The new face of bullying in schools is real. It’s the body below the face that’s fake.

Last week, officials and parents at Beverly Vista Middle School in Beverly Hills were shocked by reports that fake images were circulating online that put real students’ faces on artificially generated nude bodies. According to the Beverly Hills Unified School District, the images were created and shared by other students at Beverly Vista, the district’s sole school for sixth to eighth grades. About 750 students are enrolled there, according to the latest count.

The district, which is investigating, joined a growing number of educational institutions around the world dealing with fake pictures, video and audio. In Westfield, N.J.; Seattle; Winnipeg; Almendralejo, Spain; and Rio de Janeiro, people using “deepfake” technology have seamlessly wed legitimate images of female students to artificial or fraudulent ones of nude bodies. And in Texas, someone allegedly did the same to a female teacher, grafting her head onto a woman in a pornographic video.

Beverly Hills Unified officials said they were prepared to impose the most severe disciplinary actions allowed by state law. “Any student found to be creating, disseminating, or in possession of AI-generated images of this nature will face disciplinary actions, including, but not limited to, a recommendation for expulsion,” they said in a statement mailed to parents last week.

[See Deepfakes, A9]

POWER Y GLORY: LATINO POLITICS IN LOS ANGELES

In the Valley, the rise and stumbles of a political machine

They united to elect officials who looked like them — and thus, a dynasty was born

GUSTAVO ARELLANO



The tall, deep-voiced Padilla wrote satellite software for Hughes Aircraft.

The two had known each other less than a year but hit it off immediately. They were the sons of Mexican immigrants who settled in Pacoima and attended Mary Immaculate Catholic Church.

Elementary school? Telfair. High school? San Fernando High, where white teachers and counselors told them they would never amount to anything.

Both left the northeast San Fernando Valley for col- [See Arellano, A12]

Alex Padilla was a 22-year-old managing his first election campaign when advisors issued a challenge: Make sure the kickoff party for your guy has at least 100 guests.

The candidate in the 1995 Assembly race: Tony Cárdenas, who had never run for office before. They seemed like a political odd couple. Cárdenas, 10 years Padilla’s senior, was a strapping real estate agent.



ANNE CUSACK Los Angeles Times

ALEX PADILLA, right, with Richard Alarcon, whose campaign for state Senate he managed, in 2002 in Mission Hills. Padilla is now a U.S. senator.



CHRISTIAN PETERSEN Getty Images

SECOND TO NONE

Shohei Ohtani, who slugged a homer in his first spring training game as a Dodger, batted in the No. 2 spot in between two fellow MVPs. **SPORTS, B10**

Biden pushes for security package

He urges congressional leaders to avoid shut-down, send aid to Israel and Ukraine. **NATION, A6**

Wendy Williams series scrutinized

Producers discuss ethical questions of documentary on ailing host. **CALENDAR, E1**

Weather
Partly sunny.
L.A. Basin: 69/54. **B6**



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Iger’s foe tries to set a better mousetrap

For the second time in a year, activist investor Nelson Peltz is battling CEO to shake up Disney

BY STACY PERMAN

This month, after Walt Disney Co. reported stronger-than-expected earnings, it appeared that the promise of Bob Iger’s return as chief executive might finally be on track to put the magic back into the kingdom.

After a year that saw the entertainment giant buffeted by Hollywood strikes, major layoffs and stock price stumbles, the earnings report (and several headline-making announcements) sent Disney’s shares soaring, achieving the stock’s best day on Wall Street in three years.

The strong showing also appeared to deflate activist

investor Nelson Peltz’s efforts to mount a boardroom shake-up at Disney’s annual shareholder meeting in April.

But Peltz, 81, who was once described as having “a piratical charm and a velvet glove,” refused to back down. Within days, the pugilistic investor was throwing shade on Iger and Disney’s board, and criticizing their plans to move the company forward, vowing to continue his proxy fight against Disney — his second in less than a year.

“These pronouncements, this reminds me of a politician making election day announcements versus State of the Union speeches. [See Peltz, A7]



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