



QIAN WEIZHONG VCG
AMID LABOR shortages across the U.S., business and political leaders have urged Washington to provide work authorization for migrants. Above, people enter Jacumba Hot Springs, Calif., from Mexico last month.

Bolts that keep flight’s door plug in place are missing on Alaska jet

By Salvador Hernandez

Four bolts meant to keep the door plug on a Boeing 737 Max 9 from shifting up, then blowing wide open during flight are missing, and investigators are trying to determine what role, if any, they played in the frightening midair episode over Portland, Ore., last week. Minutes after Alaska Airlines Flight 1282 departed Portland International Airport for Ontario on Friday, the plane’s left door plug, which fills in an additional emergency exit that Alaska was not using in its modified



National Transportation Safety Board
IT IS unclear whether the bolts were missing before Alaska Flight 1282 departed, NTSB officials said.

layout of the 737 Max 9, blew open at 16,000 feet. The National Transportation Safety Board is still investigating what caused the hole to burst open in the side of the plane, but during a Monday night news conference, officials said they had yet to find the four bolts meant to keep the door in place. It’s not clear whether that means the bolts were missing before the flight or if they somehow were broken off, said NTSB Chair Jennifer Homendy. The missing bolts are the same hardware that Alaska and United airlines [See Door plug, A8]



DAMIAN DOVARGANES Associated Press
A CHICKEN is tested for highly pathogenic avian influenza in 2006. A higher incidence of the disease is common during this time of year, experts say.

Disease slams poultry farms

Avian flu outbreak has closed operations in five counties, forcing millions of birds to be destroyed

By Salvador Hernandez

December should have been the most profitable month of the year for Liberty Ducks, a poultry farm in Sonoma County. Instead, the 31-year-old business was suddenly face to face with a possible shutdown. “There was never going to be a good time for this to hit, but during the holidays was especially hard,” said Jennifer Reichardt of Liberty Ducks. The farm, she said, has been “crippled” by the outbreak.

In December, the farm was one of nine locations in Sonoma County infected with highly pathogenic avian influenza, also known as bird flu. As a result, poultry farmers in the county have been forced to destroy more than 1 million birds while trying to quarantine their flocks to curb the outbreak. The outbreak has been ongoing since 2022, but its sudden surge in December has meant restaurants in the winery-rich region are seeing their supplies of poultry dwindle. Experts warn this may only be the beginning of a bird flu spike in

California. “Restaurants are looking for product,” said Bill Mattos, president of the California Poultry Federation. The lingering disease has yet to affect prices or supply across the state as a whole, Mattos said, given the poultry available from other counties and outside the state. But restaurants, stores and wholesalers who prefer to use local sources are seeing their supply dwindle. “Everyone is looking to see what they can do to prevent it even more,” Mattos said. [See Flu, A6]

Stanley cups prove ultimate thirst trap

TikTok-fueled craze has shoppers — and resellers — lapping up hard-to-find tumblers.

By Anthony De Leon

The craze has prompted long lines outside Target stores in the dead of night. Shouting matches have erupted. All this hubbub over Stanley cups. No, not the Stanley Cup awarded to the National Hockey League champion. We are talking about the insulated steel tumblers sold in various colors at Target

and Starbucks. On a recent Friday afternoon, Target shelves in L.A. County were devoid of cups. Surprisingly, there haven’t been reports of people resorting to violence to secure the coveted item, but at least one online video shows a man trying to make a quick getaway from a Target store with a tumbler under his arm, only to be tackled by what appear to be furious shoppers. It’s not clear how the frenzy started, but it seems to follow the pattern of merchandise mania such as the plastic Disney popcorn bucket in the shape of a [See Cups, A8]

Immigrants fuel U.S. workforce, census data say

Influx of labor is especially crucial to California’s economy as it loses residents.

By Don Lee

WASHINGTON — Even as busloads of migrants sent north by border-state officials have strained cities and stirred new political firestorms in Washington, fresh data are driving home the increasingly crucial role that immigrants will play for U.S. businesses and the economy at large, especially in California.

Net immigration to the U.S. hit a 22-year high of 1.14 million last year, newly released Census Bureau data show. California’s overall population, which lost 75,000 people between July 2022 and July 2023, would have fallen by more than 225,000 if not for international migration, according to calculations by Brookings demographer William Frey.

And that resurgence of immigration has not only given the U.S. a modest gain in total population but also done something far more vital for the economy: It has fueled the nation’s workforce in the last year.

Foreign-born people ages 16 and older account for about 18% of the U.S. working-age population, but they accounted for more than 60% of the country’s labor force growth last year, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

As the overall population ages, and as baby boomers retire, and as family birthrates remain relatively low, the size of the U.S. workforce is increasingly dependent on immigration. That’s espe-

JUDGES WARY OF CLAIM TRUMP IS IMMUNE

Appeals panel seems skeptical of arguments against prosecuting him in election case.

By Sarah D. Wire

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia appeared inclined during a hearing Tuesday to reject former President Trump’s claim that he is immune from prosecution on criminal charges that he plotted to overturn the results of the 2020 election. Trump’s attorneys have argued that presidents have immunity from being prosecuted for actions taken while in office, unless they are impeached and convicted. Trump was impeached twice by the House — the second time over the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol insurrection — but was not convicted by the Senate in either case. Justice Department special counsel Jack Smith, who is prosecuting Trump in connection with the former president’s actions after the 2020 election, has argued that a former president does not have absolute immunity and that criminal charges can be brought once a president leaves office, particularly over actions that don’t relate to their official duties. Trump was indicted on charges of conspiring to obstruct the official certification of Joe Biden’s election victory and of seeking to defraud Americans of their rightful votes. He is charged with four federal felonies, [See Trump, A7]

Times executive editor departing

Kevin Merida, the newsroom leader since June 2021, announces he is stepping down this week. **BUSINESS, A10**

Rams proved him wrong, gleefully

Bill Plaschke offers his mea culpa after telling the team to tank this season to secure a top draft pick. **SPORTS, B10**

Weather
Mostly sunny, cool.
L.A. Basin: 62/46. **B6**



ERIC GAY Associated Press

RECORD YEAR FOR HEAT

The Earth in 2023 saw temperatures that may have exceeded any period in the last 100,000 years, an EU climate expert says. **NATION, A6**



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