

BAN ON BUMP STOCKS MAY BE UPHELD

High court majority signals support for allowing prohibition on rapid-fire device.

By DAVID G. SAVAGE

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Wednesday leaned in favor of upholding a Trump-era regulation that would outlaw bump stocks that enable rifles to work like machine guns and allow a shooter to spray hundreds of bullets per minute.

The justices, both conservative and liberal, said Congress had intended to forbid rapid-fire rifles as especially dangerous. And that could include devices that convert a legal semiautomatic gun into one that “produces a torrent of bullets with one pull of the trigger,” said Justice Elena Kagan.

It is a rare instance of a gun regulation that is supported by prominent Republicans as well as Democrats, but it now faces a court whose conservative justices are often skeptical of agencies issuing new regulations reinterpreting old laws.

Several of them voiced that concern during Wednesday’s argument.

Justices Neil M. Gorsuch and Amy Coney Barrett said it would have been better if Congress had revised the law after the mass shooting [See **Bump stock**, A9]

A big legal shift on 2nd Amendment

Gun ruling leads to challenges of state bans on clubs, knives and other weapons. **CALIFORNIA, B1**



Photographs by LOREN ELLIOTT For The Times

BY MAKING room for the San Joaquin River to overflow, this flood plain project near Modesto helps to reduce the threat of flooding.

A natural way to manage water

Flood plains help California weather deluges and revive ecosystems

By Ian James

MODESTO — Throughout the Central Valley, California’s rivers have long been held within their banks by levees and berms, artificially disrupting the natural cycles of flooding and preventing streams from meandering across the landscape.

Natural flood plains — the lush, green lands along rivers that historically flooded, retained water and nourished life in the heart of the valley — were mostly drained and converted to farmland generations ago as the state’s waters were dammed and diverted.

Today, an effort to bring back some of those flood plains is flourishing at the 2,100-acre Dos Rios Ranch Preserve near Modesto, where workers years ago planted native trees on retired farm fields and removed berms to create space for water to spread out again.

This has allowed the San Joaquin and Tuolumne rivers, which converge in the preserve, to expand and flow into their historic flood plains when big surges of runoff come. By making room for the rivers to overflow, the restoration



AT THE Dos Rios Ranch Preserve, Julie Rentner’s group helps lead a restoration effort that planted trees and removed berms.

project has created an outlet for high flows that helps to reduce the risk of dangerous flooding in low-lying communities nearby.

“Flood plains are this really important feature of rivers,” said Julie Rentner, president of the nonprofit group River Partners, which has led the restoration effort along with the Tuolumne River Trust. “We can store more water, reduce flood risk and see wildlife species and habitats coming back to life.”

Over the last decade, the cottonwoods and willows that were planted have grown into a forest that teems with wildlife. And last year, when the rivers swelled with massive amounts of runoff from historic storms, the waters flowed among the trees and gradually soaked into the ground.

Rentner said the effort, which has been supported by federal, state and local agencies, shows how “engineering with nature” and embracing the natural dynamics of rivers bring an effective water solution, helping California weather deluges and droughts.

[See **Flood plains**, A9]

COLUMN ONE

He insists he’s no killer. Can a hippie mom help prove it?

Jofama Coleman, serving life for a murder in South L.A., was teaching himself law to clear his name. But he needed support outside.

By HARRIET RYAN

When the COVID shutdown began, Jessica Jacobs Dirschel, a mother of four in Topanga Canyon, was one of the many millions of people who staved off boredom by binging on Netflix.

Five hours into a documentary series about wrongful convictions, Dirschel hit pause and Googled the phone number of an attorney on the show who worked on exoneration cases.

When the lawyer answered, Dirschel said, “I want to help.”

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Jofama Coleman had served 14 years of a life sentence for murder when the pandemic lockdown came to the state prison in Corcoran, Calif. Almost every day behind bars, he had taken some step to try to prove his innocence, researching case law, drafting court filings and writing letter after letter asking innocence groups and appellate lawyers to review his case.

“The vast majority of people just don’t believe you,” he said. As the years went by, he said, “I gave up the idea that someone out there would

[See **Prisoners**, A6]

POWER Y GLORY: LATINO POLITICS IN LOS ANGELES

A time of transition in South L.A.



BRIAN VANDER BRUG Los Angeles Times

ASSEMBLY candidate Sade Elhawary, who is multiracial, says in a commercial, “I’m Black and Latina. More than anything, I’m an L.A. girl.”

Candidates try to bridge Black, Latino voices in an area where the majority has lacked representation

GUSTAVO ARELLANO

South Los Angeles, the historical heart of the Black community, has been majority Latino for the past quarter-century.

Yet its elected officials — from school district headquarters to City Hall to the Board of Supervisors to Sacramento to Capitol Hill — have nearly always been Black.

Latino candidates have tried and failed to win seats, while Black leaders have openly fretted about a

future when hard-fought political gains will disappear.

This tension was at the center of some of the most explosive exchanges in a secretly recorded conversation between four of L.A.’s most powerful political insiders — all Latinos — bemoaning the lack of Latino representation across the city, and especially in South L.A., sometimes in racially disparaging terms.

“You can’t throw a rock and not hit a Mexican,” then-Councilmember Gil Cedillo said of the area, before adding, “I could support one [Black council member there]. Maybe two.

[See **Arellano**, A5]

Primaries signal cause for concern

Biden and Trump easily win in Michigan, but the vote offers warnings for both in November.

PERSPECTIVES, A2

McConnell to quit as Senate leader

The Kentuckian will end a record run at the top of a chamber and a Republican Party shaken up by Trump.

NATION, A4

Impressive start for new Dodger

Pitcher Yamamoto still navigating cultural changes, but he excels in first spring training appearance.

SPORTS, B10

Weather

Cooler, cloudy early. L.A. Basin: 64/52. **B6**

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