

# LAUSD considers banning phones

Board members say barring devices would reduce anxiety and bullying and boost student achievement.

By Howard Blume

Los Angeles school officials, fed up with kids distracted by social media and concerned about abuses such as cyberbullying, are poised to join a growing number of school systems across the country that are banning the use of cell-phones during the school day.

The hope is that a ban would lead to improved learning, less bullying, distraction and anxiety — and more meaningful communication with peers and adults.

Some parents, however, want their children to have cellphones for safety and communication, and school administrators say the ban could be difficult to enforce.

The proposal was spearheaded by Los Angeles Unified School District board member Nick Melvoin.

“It’s been something I’ve been thinking about for years as I’ve just walked around campuses and seen kids on their phones and in class with their AirPods in,” said Melvoin.

Co-sponsoring the resolution are board President Jackie Goldberg and board member Tanya Ortiz Franklin. A fourth vote is required to pass the measure in the seven-member body.

The resolution would not immediately put a ban into effect. It directs staff to “develop and present to the public” policies that would prohibit student use of cell-phones and social media “during the entire school day,” including lunch and breaks. Input would be solicited from “experts in the field, labor partners, staff, students and parents,” and details would come back to the school board for approval within 120 days.

Elements to be worked out include different approaches for various age groups and a range of technologies, such as smart-

[See Cellphones, A5]



**A CAL FIRE** helicopter drops water on the Lisa fire near Beaumont, one of more than 15 that ignited across California over the weekend.

# Budget talks go private as deadlines loom

State officials meet behind closed doors as they grapple with competing interests on spending plan, ballot measures

By Laurel Rosenhall, Taryn Luna, Mackenzie Mays and Anabel Sosa

SACRAMENTO — With hundreds of thousands of Californians losing homeowners insurance as companies pull out of an increasingly tinder-dry state, political leaders in Sacramento have spent the last two years trying to figure out how to solve the crisis.

Yet even though they’ve held a raft of public hearings and workshops on potential new laws and regulations, another plan is germinating behind closed doors. A select group of Democratic senators recently began discussing insurance issues privately on Zoom — with no public notice of their meetings, no public agenda and no opportunities for anyone other than invited guests and lobbyists to participate.

The arrangement is legal because the California Legislature exempted itself from the state’s open meetings law that other government agencies



**GOV. GAVIN** Newsom is negotiating with lawmakers and special interests as a June 30 deadline nears for a state budget.

must obey. And it’s not uncommon at the Capitol for politically sensitive disagreements to get resolved behind closed doors.

But the amount of backroom negotiations underway this month is especially intense due to two upcoming deadlines. The governor must sign a balanced state budget by June 30, and the deadline to put measures on the November ballot is June 27. This year’s secret budget conversations are intertwined with deal-making around the 2024 ballot.

“Every year there are pieces of legislation that ignite a firestorm among the public and result in huge amounts of activism in and around the Capitol,” said Jonathan Mehta Stein, executive director of California Common Cause.

“Equally important, or more important, decisions are being made

[See Budget, A7]

# POST FIRE IS STATE’S LARGEST OF 2024

Rapid spread of the blaze near Gorman dampens hopes for a subdued season.

By Grace Toohey Hayley Smith and Joseph Serna

Gusty winds, high temperatures and dry air continued to fuel a major wildfire in northern Los Angeles County on Monday that surpassed 15,000 acres burned to become the state’s largest blaze of the year.

The Post fire, burning mostly dry grasses and brush in the Gorman area south of the Tejon Pass, was just 8% contained Monday morning, said Los Angeles County Fire Department spokesperson Craig Little.

“It’s a safe bet that it’s going to grow to be larger at this point,” Little said. “It’s still a wind-driven fire.”

He said the fire had grown a couple of hundred acres since Sunday.

Wind gusts near the fire reached 60 to 65 mph Sunday night, and, although the winds were expected to weaken considerably Monday to about 40 mph, they were likely to increase again at night, said National Weather Service meteorologist Ariel Cohen. Temperatures in the area were forecast to reach the high 80s on Monday with low relative humidity, according to the Fire Department.

“Conditions have continued to support the rapid spread of the wildfire,” Cohen said. Red flag warnings — alerts for dangerous fire conditions — were in effect for the area through at least Tuesday evening, with relative humidity expected to drop into the single digits Tuesday, the weather service warned.

Such severe warnings had also been issued across large swaths of inland California, forecasting winds that carry “the potential for rapid fire spread” from the

[See Fires, A5]

# Brutal sex assaults raise alarm in Venice

## Deadly rampage fuels debate about mental health and homelessness

By Noah Goldberg

Mary Klein wanted to get in 3,000 more steps.

It was around 10:30 p.m., and the longtime Venice resident and sculptor — who had just finished up at work caring for an elderly couple — hadn’t reached her daily goal of 10,000.

She headed to the canals, parked along Strongs Drive and started to walk. But soon after, she said, she felt someone’s presence behind her. Then everything went black.

About an hour later, another woman was attacked a few hundred feet away.

Police say Anthony Francisco Jones, 29, committed both assaults. He was arrested in San Diego days later.

That night of violence — with its brutality and seeming lack of a motive — has shaken the community. Many had always felt the



**VENICE** resident Mary Klein suffered a brain injury in an April attack. Another woman was killed.

tourist destination with multimillion-dollar homes perched along the waterways was safe, even when walking alone at night.

But even though violent crime in Venice is down, the fact that police say the suspect is a transient man has heightened years of debate about the neighborhood’s problems with its unhoused population.

Court documents reviewed by The Times reveal the disturbing details of the night of April 6.

Surveillance video from a home in the 2700 block of Strongs Drive captured the assault on Klein. The video — which prosecutors described in a document requesting that Jones be held without bail — shows a man dragging Klein’s body to the gate of a house. He was wearing a light-colored jacket, Nike shoes and a polo shirt.

The man is then seen in the video sexually assaulting

[See Venice, A10]

## Wreck’s days are numbered

An Instagram-famous abandoned boat at Point Reyes is targeted for removal.

**CALIFORNIA, B1**

## From great pain will come change

Loss of Betts and Yamamoto will alter the Dodgers’ path toward postseason on number of fronts.

**SPORTS, B10**

## Fast-food chains start ‘value’ war

Amid customer complaints about prices, McDonald’s and its rivals offer special deals.

**BUSINESS, A6**

**Weather**  
Some sun.  
L.A. Basin: 80/61. **B6**

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