

UCLA's Block heads to D.C. for hearing

Chancellor expected to face tough grilling from House panel on campus antisemitism.

By JAWEED KALEEM AND ANDREA CASTILLO

WASHINGTON — UCLA Chancellor Gene Block will testify before a Republican-led House committee Thursday, where he is expected to face aggressive questioning about antisemitism on his campus and how a pro-Palestinian encampment ended in violence.

His appearance comes as UCLA, among the nation's most prestigious public universities, has been roiled by months of tense protests over the Israel-Hamas war, including a violent mob attack three weeks ago on a pro-Palestinian encampment.

The testimony — which will take place just over two months before Block steps down as chancellor — will be the first time the head of a California university addresses the House Committee on Education and the Workforce. The group has grilled university presidents and K-12 school leaders on a national stage since the fall, contributing to the resignations of the presidents of [See Block, A6]



ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times

PRO-PALESTINIAN protesters faced off with police last week at UC Irvine. The UC system has stated it will not divest from Israel.

Universities grapple with calls for divestment

A key demand of student protesters poses logistical as well as ethical questions

By Jenny Jarvie

The University of California system has stated it will not divest from Israel. But one of its 26 regents told the activists he supported their goals.

He warned, however, that it would be a long and difficult process, even if they could win over his fellow board members: 18% of UC's \$175 billion in investments is indirectly tied to Israel, including \$3.3 billion invested in weapons manufacturers and \$12 billion in U.S. Treasury bonds.

"The obstacles of the current investments are that some of them are in a timed agreement. You can't just pull out," Regent Jose Hernandez told activists.

"Understand it's hard — not impossible — but it has to take time to divest," he said. [See Divest, A5]



IRFAN KHAN Los Angeles Times

SOME 1.2 MILLION U.S. deaths and ongoing COVID-19 cases have affected campaign issues including inflation, education, crime and the border. Here, nurses treat a COVID patient in a Victorville ER in 2022.

COVID-19 infects 2024 election

Ahead of a Biden-Trump rematch, voters show signs of trauma from the pandemic in political divisions, views on the economy and more

By JEFFREY FLEISHMAN

Much of the country has moved on from the COVID-19 pandemic, but Ruth and Mohammed Nasrullah keep a vigil from their Houston home, posting thousands of pictures and stories of those who have fallen: coaches, tax clerks, teachers and autoworkers.

"We spend our time immersed in death," Ruth said of the couple's COVID-19 Wall of Memories, which went online in January 2021, when graveyards were widening and fear

was spreading. The wall holds more than 21,000 photographs and histories of those who died.

"It gives us perspective," she said of the wall. "We've seen an arc of change in COVID response and grief."

Americans want to forget, Mohammed said — but people are still dying, and the fallout from the virus is playing into attitudes over the divisive state of the country and its politics.

The COVID-19 pandemic is seldom mentioned by the campaigns of President Biden and Donald Trump, even though its impact on voters and the

way we live, work, die and mourn has been profound. The pandemic accelerated mistrust in government and institutions, emptied downtowns of workers, sparked fights over masks and science, turned school board meetings into political blood sport, hardened the lines between red and blue states and ignited a mental health crisis.

The lingering trauma — 1.2 million people died in the U.S. and an estimated 17 million suffer from long COVID — echoes through issues [See COVID politics, A9]

Cop convicted in 1986 murder is denied parole

Stephanie Lazarus displayed 'criminal sophistication,' the board is told.

By RICHARD WINTON

Despite a campaign by justice reform advocates, the California Board of Parole Hearings has revoked plans to release former LAPD Det. Stephanie Lazarus from prison after hearing emotional testimony that said she "lied for decades" and used her police training to cover up the 1986 murder of her ex-boyfriend's wife.

The decision marks another chapter in a notorious murder case that rocked the Los Angeles Police Department. It overturns a Novem-

ber recommendation by a parole panel that the 64-year-old be set free after serving 15 years of her life sentence and a new hearing be held to examine evidence.

The governor's office in April asked the board to review the plan to parole Lazarus.

A tear ran down John Ruetten's cheek Monday as he recalled the "brutal murder" of his wife, Sherri Rasmussen, by a jealous Lazarus, who confessed to the crime last year at a parole panel.

"We're not here today, 38 years after Sherri's brutal murder, reliving the horror, because of an impulsive act. [It was] skillful deception and complete disregard for the suffering of others. The inmate used her police training to cover up the crime," [See Lazarus, A12]

No Trump testimony as defense rests

Jurors in hush money trial are dismissed until next week, when closing arguments are likely. **NATION, A4**

How L.A. became a hub for Asians

During AAPI month, we take a look at the history of ethnic enclaves in the county. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Weather

Turning sunny. L.A. Basin: 72/57. **B6**

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Court weighs gig worker law

California justices hear case of Prop. 22, which turned drivers into contractors. **BUSINESS, A8**

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