

BUSINESS

Perspective: State Rep. Doug Dubitsky has been busy leading a fight in state court to have mandates that require students to wear masks declared unconstitutional. Fortunately, his opponent at the polls next month, Democrat Kate Donnelly, believes in science, Editorial Page Editor Paul Choiniere writes. **B3**

Find out what’s happening in the local business community **Page B2**



Bitter harvest

Some Napa winemakers won’t make a 2020 vintage

By SARAH PARVINI and MEGAN CALFAS
Los Angeles Times

CRAIG BECKER walked among the vines of Somerston Estate in St. Helena, Calif., and surveyed the rolling hills before him. Less than two months ago, lightning storms sparked fires that lit the ridges around him and tore through the trees, bushes and crops that covered this sprawling piece of land. The flames rendered the estate’s surviving vines unworkable, spoiled by the thick smoke that sat in the valley and seeped into grapes, turning their flavor to ash. Like several other vineyards here, Somerston has decided not to harvest any fruit from its 2020 vintage due to damage caused by smoke fumes. “All of them are tainted,” Becker



PHOTOS BY KENT NISHIMURA/LOS ANGELES TIMES
The vineyards at the Somerston Estate Winery & Vineyards in St. Helena, Calif. **Top**, the Viader Vineyards & Winery in Deer Park, Calif.

said as he chewed a grape, then spit it out. “I have it on my tongue right now.” California has been under near-constant siege by wildfires for nearly two months as flames of historic size, intensity and destruction have ignited throughout the state. Following large, consecutive wildfires in Napa — first the LNU Lightning Complex fire that burned more than 363,000 acres in August, and now the Glass fire that has chewed through more than 51,000 acres — some vintners say harvesting this year’s grapes isn’t worth the time or investment because they can’t be salvaged. “It’s terrible,” Becker said, hopping into his buggy and driving down a hill to inspect another batch of vines. “You can taste it on the finish.” **SEE NAPA PAGE B2**

Trump administration targets diversity hiring by contractors



By MATT O'BRIEN and ALEXANDRA OLSON
Associated Press
American companies promising to hire more Black employees in leadership roles and teach their workforce about racism are getting a message from President Donald Trump’s administration: Watch your step if you want to keep doing business with the federal government. Trump’s Labor Department is using a 55-year-old presidential order spurred by the Civil Rights Move-

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella
MARK LENNIHAN/AP PHOTO

ment to scrutinize companies like Microsoft and Wells Fargo over their public commitments to diversity. Government letters sent last week warned both companies against using “discriminatory practices” to meet their goals. Microsoft has brushed off the warnings, publicly disclosing the government inquiry and defending its plan to boost Black leadership. But advocates for corporate diversity initiatives worry that more cautious executives will halt or scale back efforts to make their workplaces more inclusive out of fear that a wrong step could jeopardize lucrative public contracts. The agency has

oversight over the hiring practices of thousands of federal contractors that employ roughly a quarter of all American workers. “For tech companies that don’t care about these issues, the pronouncements are a dog whistle that they can carry on discriminating the way they already have,” said Laszlo Bock, an executive who ran Google’s human resources division for more than a decade and now leads software startup Humu. Bock said those who do care, however, will see Trump’s actions as political “sound and fury” that will be hard to enforce. **SEE INDUSTRY PAGE B2**

FED’S POWELL: LACK OF STIMULUS IMPERILS RECOVERY

Washington — Strong financial support from the government and the Federal Reserve have spurred a solid recovery from the pandemic recession, but the rebound may falter without further aid, Fed Chair Jerome Powell warned. Powell said that government support — including expanded unemployment insurance payments, direct payments to most U.S. households and financial support for small businesses — has so far prevented a recessionary “downward spiral” in which job losses would reduce spending, forcing businesses to cut even more jobs. But the U.S. economy still faces threats, and without further support those downward trends could still emerge, the chairman said. “The expansion is still far from complete,” Powell said in a speech to the National Association for Business



DREW ANGERER/POOL VIA AP
Fed Chairman Jerome Powell
Economics. “Too little support would lead to a weak recovery, creating unnecessary hardship for households and businesses. Over time, household insolvencies and business bankruptcies would rise, harming the productive capacity of the economy, and holding back wage growth.” — Associated Press

U.S. trade deficit up to \$67.1B in August, a 14-year high

Washington — The U.S. trade deficit rose in August to the highest level in 14 years. The Commerce Department reported that the gap between the goods and services the United States sells and what it buys abroad climbed 5.9% in August to \$67.1 billion, highest since August 2006. Exports rose 2.2% to \$171.9 billion on a surge in shipments of soybeans, but imports rose more — up 3.2% to \$239 billion — led by purchases of crude oil, cars and auto parts. The U.S. deficit with the rest of the world in the trade of goods such as airplanes and appliances set a record \$83.9 billion in August. The United States ran a surplus of \$16.8 billion in the trade of services such as banking and education, lowest since January 2012. — Associated Press



TED S. WARREN/AP PHOTO
Cargo cranes are used to take containers off of a Yang Ming Marine Transport Corporation boat at the Port of Tacoma in Tacoma, Wash.