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LENT BEGINS



Father Robert Bryant, right, with Bob Longstreth places ashes on the forehead of Sylvia Ybarra-Merrill in front of San Diego City Hall on Ash Wednesday. St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral offered ashes to go as a convenience for people who were unable to attend services. Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the Lenten season, a 40-day period leading up to Easter. **NELVIN C. CEPEDA / U-T**

Justices reject Trump's foreign aid bid

Administration ordered to release nearly \$2 billion

By Adam Liptak
THE NEW YORK TIMES

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Supreme Court on Wednesday rejected President Donald Trump's emergency request to freeze nearly \$2 billion in foreign aid in a closely divided decision indicating that the justices will subject his efforts to reshape the government to close scrutiny.

The court's brief order was unsigned, which is typical when the justices act on emergency applications. It said only that the trial judge, who had ordered the government to resume payments, "should clarify what obligations the government must fulfill."

But the ruling represented one of the court's first moves in response to the flurry of litigation filed in response to Trump's efforts to slash government spending and take complete control of the executive branch. The vote was 5-4, with Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Amy Coney Barrett joining the three liberal members to form a majority.

Although the language of the order was mild, tentative and not a little confusing, its bottom line was that a bare majority of the court ruled against Trump on one of his signature projects. The president's plans to remake U.S. government, the order indicated, will have to face a court more skeptical than its compo-

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San Diego OKs 5.5% water rate increase

Hike likely the first in series that could see prices soar 70%

By David Garrick
UNION-TRIBUNE

San Diego water customers are facing a 5.5% rate hike on May 1 that's expected to be the first of several large increases during the next few years that could cumulatively raise rates by 70%.

A divided City Council approved the 5.5% hike this week in a 6-3 vote, with council members blaming the increase on what they characterized as poor decisions by the San Diego County Water Authority.

City water officials said the

hike was unrelated to any costs or revenue changes inside San Diego's water system, describing it as a pure "pass-through" of rate increases the water authority approved last summer.

But additional proposed city rate hikes of 13.7% in January 2026, 14.5% in January 2027, 11.5% in January 2028 and 11% in January 2029 are being fueled roughly equally by rising expenses for the city's water system and projected future rate increases by the county water authority.

City officials say the causes within San Diego's system include higher costs for worker salaries, energy, water treatment chemicals and infrastructure projects such as upgrading pump stations and replacing old pipes.

Councilmember Vivian

Moreno, who cast one of the votes against the 5.5% rate hike, said it was inappropriate because many local residents are already struggling to pay rising bills and cope with inflated costs for food and gas.

"It's going to negatively impact residents' ability to make ends meet, particularly low-income families," Moreno said.

But Councilmember Stephen Whitburn, who serves as the council's representative on the water authority board, said the council must pass the increase on to city customers unless it wants to lay off workers or bail on needed infrastructure projects.

"The rate increase that was given to us by the water authority has put us between a rock and a hard place," Whitburn said before

approving the 5.5% hike. The increase will bring monthly bills for average single-family-home water customers to \$90.67 on May 1.

The four subsequent increases, which won't come before the council until September, would push typical monthly bills above \$145 in 2029.

Whitburn and Nick Serrano, an aide to Mayor Todd Gloria who serves as water authority board chair, stressed that they successfully lobbied to lower last summer's authority rate increase from a proposed 24% to 14%.

City ratepayers are facing a 5.5% rate increase, instead of the full 14%, because city rates went up 8.7% on Jan. 1 to cover what

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NELVIN C. CEPEDA / U-T FILE

SPORTS

Iconic voice of Del Mar racing retires

After 40 years, Trevor Denman, the dramatic public address voice for Del Mar horse races, has announced his retirement from the position. Denman, who traveled to the West Coast from Minnesota each season, has called more than 15,000 races at the track. **DI**

LOCAL

Poway council member faces recall effort

A former Poway City Council member and a local businessman announced that they are in the process of organizing a recall effort against embattled Councilmember Tony Blain, who was censured last month. **BI**

In once-busy border areas in Mexico, few migrants remain

Data shows that numbers fell before Trump took office

By Annie Correal
THE NEW YORK TIMES

CIUDAD JUÁREZ, Mexico — On the eve of President Donald Trump's deadline to impose tariffs on Mexico, one thing was hard to miss on the Mexican side of the border: The migrants are gone.

In what were once some of the busiest sections along the border — Ciudad Juárez, Tijuana, Matamoros — shelters that used to overflow now hold just a few families. The parks, hotels and vacant buildings that once teemed with people from all over the world stand empty. And on the border itself, where migrants once slept in camps within feet of the 30-foot wall, only dust-caked clothes and shoes, rolled-up toothpaste tubes and water bottles remain.

"All that is over," said the Rev. William Morton, a missionary at a Ciudad Juárez cathedral that serves migrants free meals. "Nobody can cross."

Last week, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security secretary, Kristi Noem, announced that Customs and Border Protection had apprehended only 200 people at the



The Rev. William Morton, right, a missionary at a cathedral that feeds migrants in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, on Feb. 28. "Nobody can cross," Morton said. **ALEJANDRO CEGARRA / NYT**

southern border the Saturday before — the lowest single-day number in more than 15 years.

Trump has credited his crackdown on illegal immigration for the plunging numbers, even as he has also announced he will send thousands more combat forces to the border to stop what he calls an invasion.

But according to analysts, Mexico's own moves to restrict migration in the last year — not just at the border but throughout the country — have yielded undeniable results. In February, the Trump administration said it would pause for a month the imposition of 25% tariffs

on Mexican exports, challenging the government to further reduce migration and the flow of fentanyl across the border.

That progress has put Mexico in a far stronger negotiating position than when Trump first threatened tariffs, during his first term.

"Mexico has new leverage compared to 2019," Ariel G. Ruiz Soto and Andrew Selee, analysts with the Migration Policy Institute, a nonpartisan think tank, wrote in a report. Mexico's cooperation, they said, has made it "indispensable" to the United

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DOJ probe focuses on claims of antisemitic bias at UC

Trump administration move spurred by last year's campus protests

By Devlin Barrett
THE NEW YORK TIMES

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration said Wednesday it would use a law typically meant to investigate racist practices within police departments to examine whether the University of California system had engaged in a pattern or practice of antisemitic discrimination.

The move by the Justice Department comes two days after other federal agencies announced a review of Columbia University's federal contracts to determine if such funding should be taken away over an alleged failure to protect Jewish students and faculty on its New York campus.

President Donald Trump has long railed against American colleges and universities for their policies toward on-campus protests against Israel's military actions in the Gaza Strip.

Some Jewish faculty and staff have complained that such protests, some of which featured antisemitic rhetoric, have made

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