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\$2,000 checks stall in Senate



Mitch McConnell
INSIDE
Biden slams Trump on pandemic / **B1**

McConnell blocks quick vote on more than tripling pandemic relief payouts

By **CATIE EDMONDSON**
NEW YORK TIMES

WASHINGTON — Sen. Mitch McConnell blocked an attempt by Democrats on Tuesday to hold an immediate vote on increasing stimulus checks to \$2,000 from \$600, leaving the fate of the measure unclear as President Donald Trump continued to demand the larger payouts and

more Republicans publicly endorsed the idea.

Instead, McConnell, R-Kentucky, the majority leader, provided vague assurances that the Senate would “begin the process” of discussing \$2,000 checks and two other issues that Trump has demanded lawmakers address: election security and removing legal protections for social media platforms.

McConnell would not say whether he planned separate votes on the three issues or if he would bring them for a vote on the Senate floor at all. But in a sign of how he might

approach them, the majority leader introduced new legislation Tuesday afternoon combining the \$2,000 checks, election security and social media provisions into one bill, which would most likely doom the effort.

The sudden talk of election security complicates matters, given that Trump continues to claim, without evidence, that voter fraud cost him reelection. Democrats would undoubtedly resist anything that could be seen as trying to undermine the outcome of the election.

McConnell, who has privately urged his conference members not

to object to the election results when Congress meets on Jan. 6 to ratify them, portrayed the president's request as “exploring further ways to protect the sanctity of American ballots.” The bill that McConnell is putting together would create a bipartisan commission to study election practices that “strengthened” and that “undermined the integrity of the election,” like the use of mail-in ballots and vote-by-mail procedures, which Trump has baselessly complained encouraged voter fraud.

TURN TO CHECKS » PAGE A8

SONOMA COUNTY » CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE

Vaccinations reach nursing home residents



Apple Valley Post-Acute Rehab resident Linda Moore, 73, gives a thumbs up to staff after receiving the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine on Tuesday from CVS pharmacist Crystal Pham in Sebastopol.

Seniors living in care facilities among most vulnerable to COVID-19

By **PHIL BARBER**
THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

Nearly 10 months into a pandemic that has killed more than 120 Sonoma County residents over the age of 75 and confined countless more seniors to lives of repetitive isolation, a path forward arrived this week as staff and residents at skilled nursing homes began to roll up their sleeves for long-awaited coronavirus vaccinations.

“For some people, it’s just a shot, and they go back to the rest of their day,” Paris Stephens, a nurse at Apple Valley Post-Acute Rehab in Sebastopol, said about 30 minutes after

receiving her initial dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine Tuesday afternoon. “But I immediately told my whole family, and everyone was cheering me on. Some people wanted their picture taken. To me, this was a moment in history.”

And a happy moment, which feels like a rarity during the coronavirus pandemic of 2020. To date, COVID-19 has killed more than 336,000 Americans, and at least 184 in Sonoma County, including two new deaths reported Tuesday night. About two-thirds of the fatalities in Sonoma County have been among people 75 and



Apple Valley Post-Acute Rehab frontline workers, from left, Veronica Bautista, Nimol Drake and Rudy Meza wait to get their COVID-19 vaccine on Tuesday in Sebastopol.

TURN TO VACCINES » PAGE A2

HEALTH

Stricter alcohol guidance scuttled

Wine, beer industries cheer feds' decision not to tell men to drink less

By **BILL SWINDELL**
THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

California's wine and beer industries won a victory Tuesday when the federal government reversed course and rejected proposed guidelines that urged men to limit themselves to one drink of alcohol a day, half the current recommended cap.

The Department of Agriculture and Department of Health and Human Services overruled a finding by a scientific panel earlier this year that alcohol beverages were an “unhealthy substance” and recommended that men limit themselves to one drink a day, the current standard in place for women. The recommendations are part of the U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans that are revised every five years.

In a statement, the departments found “there was not a preponderance of evidence” in the panel's finding to make the change to one drink per day for men. It provided the same reasoning to overturn another panel's proposal to reduce consumption of sugars added to drinks and foods.

Some industry analysts had warned the proposed guidelines would reduce consumption of wine and other alcoholic beverages in a marketplace where sales are essentially flat. The Wine Institute, the main wine trade association for California vintners, launched a campaign to defend existing guidelines on consumption of alcohol.

Joined by the Beer Institute and the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States, the Wine Institute argued that the totality of the science didn't support

INSIDE
Updated dietary guidelines don't address pandemic / **A8**

TURN TO ALCOHOL » PAGE A8

Some hospitals in state limiting care

By **JANIE HAR**
ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN FRANCISCO — California's top health official said hospitals in hard-hit Los Angeles County are turning to “crisis care” and bracing for the coronavirus surge to worsen in the new year, as he extended strict stay-home orders Tuesday in areas where intensive care units have few beds.

Dr. Mark Ghaly said that Southern California and the agricultural San Joaquin Valley still have what is considered no ICU capacity to

treat patients suffering from the coronavirus and that the state's restrictions would continue in those regions. Much of the state is under orders to stay home.

Ghaly implored the state's 40 million residents to do just that, and to continue social distancing and wearing masks if they must go out this holiday weekend. He said that while hospital and positivity rates appear to be stabilizing from a Thanksgiving-related surge, that isn't the case in the southern part of the state, including Los Angeles County.

“We have not heard yet that any hospital is at the point where they need to make a decision between two patients who both need a ventilator, and they only have one ventilator,” he said, but some overwhelmed hospitals don't have space to unload ambulances or get oxygen to patients who can't breathe.

“We certainly know that Southern California hospitals are in crisis, and some have begun to implement parts of crisis care,” he said.

Los Angeles County on Tues-



Administrative worker Leslie Castillo, right, hands a COVID-19 detection kit to a man Sunday at a testing site in Los Angeles, where cases of the disease have soared.

TURN TO HOSPITALS » PAGE A2

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OFFICERS TERMINATED: Two more police officers involved in killing of Breonna Taylor to be fired by Louisville department / **B1**

SANTA ROSA
High 55, Low 38
THE WEATHER, C8

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