

ELECTION 2020

Proud citizens sense a creeping threat

Trump's racist attacks challenge the status of naturalized Americans: 'It does make us afraid.'

BY MATT PEARCE, MICHAEL FINNEGAN, TYRONE BEASON AND MELISSA GOMEZ

On the day Donald Trump was inaugurated president, Sonora Jha was walking past a group of white men at a work site in downtown Seattle when one told her, "Go home!"

Jha, shaken, didn't know whether to confront the men or let it go: This was her home. After emigrating from India, the author became a naturalized American citizen in 2016. An equal, or so she thought.

When President Trump's supporters chanted a new version of that threat against his critic U.S. Rep. Ilhan Omar, calling for Trump to "send her back" to Somalia, the familiar words jolted Jha and other naturalized citizens.

"It does make us afraid," said Jha, 51. "For immigrants who are naturalized citizens, there's a sense of shame when something like this happens in the country that you call home."

Trump has stoked racial animosity unlike any other president in recent history, challenging what it means to be a U.S. citizen by transforming the nation's immigration policies and accusing opponents of not belonging in America.

Trump first rose to political prominence by questioning the birthright citizenship of Barack Obama, falsely claiming the nation's first black president was born in Africa. During Trump's time in office, his administration has waged a wide-ranging battle to implicitly limit both legal and

House OKs deal to lift debt ceiling

The two-year plan also increases federal spending. The Senate is expected to approve the agreement. **NATION, A8**



SCOTT HAEPNER Associated Press

EXPERTS see little chance of the recent seismic activity in the Ridgecrest area triggering the San Andreas fault, shown here passing through the Carrizo Plain.

Quakes a peek into San Andreas' fury

Ridgecrest temblors deemed unlikely to trigger the Big One, but offer a taste of what to expect

BY RONG-GONG LIN II

Faults crisscross California, producing deadly earthquakes. But whenever the ground shakes, the first thought always turns to the mightiest and most dangerous fault: the San Andreas.

This is the 730-mile monster capable of producing the Big One, the fault famous enough to be the main character in a hit disaster movie.

Scientists knew almost immediately that two large quakes that hit near Ridgecrest earlier this month did not come from the San Andreas.

But ever since, they've been studying whether the

Fault lines

The chance a quake on the San Andreas fault could result from the Ridgecrest-area quakes is slim.



Sources: United States Geological Survey
RAHUL MUKHERJEE Los Angeles Times

quakes could cause more seismic activity from other faults — including the San Andreas nearly 100 miles away.

A new calculation conducted in recent weeks at the U.S. Geological Survey showed that there's an extremely remote chance the San Andreas could be triggered from the Ridgecrest quakes.

"It's slim. But it's the difference between slim and none," said USGS seismologist Susan Hough. "I don't think any earth scientists are going to lose sleep that this will cascade on to the San Andreas."

But the fault remains a source of constant anxiety, especially when ground

California and 4 automakers agree on fuel standards, spurning Trump

Deal involving Ford, Honda, Volkswagen and BMW rejects federal efforts to weaken regulations.

BY ANNA M. PHILLIPS AND TONY BARBOZA

WASHINGTON — Four major automakers have reached a deal with California air regulators to gradually increase fuel efficiency standards, rejecting Trump administration efforts to relax tailpipe pollution regulations.

The agreement between the California Air Resources Board and the automakers — Ford, Honda, Volkswagen and BMW — covers about 30% of new cars and SUVs sold in the United States. It presents a direct challenge to the Trump administration's plans, expected to be formally announced later this summer, to roll back tougher tailpipe pollution standards put in place under President Obama.

The fuel efficiency rules are key to reducing U.S. emissions of carbon dioxide and other gases that contribute to global warming.

Cars, trucks and other forms of transportation are the biggest source of U.S. emissions, accounting for about 30% of the total.

The deal is a voluntary one, under which the companies are committing to produce a fleet of cars nationwide that would meet California's higher standards, regardless of what the federal government does. The state would not have the legal authority to enforce that.

But the agreement marks a major strategic victory for California in its fight with the administration over tailpipe pollution and efforts to combat climate change because it splits the auto industry coalition that had begged for relief from fuel economy standards in the early days of the Trump administration.

California Air Resources Board Chairwoman Mary Nichols said the deal came together after more than a month of confidential negotiations in Sacramento.

In contacting state officials to open talks, the automakers defied warnings from the White House, Nichols said. Ultimately, she said, the four automakers concluded they "were better off

[See Fuel, A9]

Rising prices along the West Coast

Housing costs have increased in Oregon and California as both state legislatures have considered new policies.

Median home price by city



Median monthly rent*



*One-bedroom rentals
Sources: Zillow, Apartment List. Graphics reporting by ZACH LEVITT
Los Angeles Times

Despite vaccine, Ebola is spreading

In Congo, war has complicated efforts to get dwindling number of doses to all those who need them.

BY EMILY BAUMGAERTNER

When Ebola broke out in the Democratic Republic of the Congo a year ago, the global stockpile of a long-anticipated vaccine was 300,000 doses.

At the time, that seemed like plenty. But as the virus spreads from the epicenter and threatens to explode across the region, the supply of Merck's newly developed vaccine — once expected to function as a silver bullet — is dwindling, and likely to burn out before the outbreak does.

Officials have gone head-to-head in a bitter clash over the next line of attack. This week the country's health minister stepped down

rather than bow to international pressure to also start using another vaccine that is much more experimental.

He had banned its use over doubts about its effectiveness. The president, Felix Tshisekedi, was widely expected to lift the ban by the end of this week. The manufacturer, Johnson & Johnson, says it has 1.5 million doses on hand and is ready to start sending them to the region.

Even if there were enough lifesaving vaccines to go around, the region's violent conflict has made it virtually impossible for health workers to deliver the shots to every relative and neighbor of each Ebola victim.

"There's a level of panic lurking just below the surface — or maybe it's above the surface now," said J. Stephen Morrison, senior vice president of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

"No one imagined the level of violence in Ituri and North Kivu" — two eastern

[See Ebola, A4]



AL SEIB Los Angeles Times

San Fernando Valley rampage kills 4; suspect is in custody

Gerry Zaragoza, 26, was arrested after an hours-long manhunt by the Los Angeles Police Department. Authorities say Zaragoza first gunned down his family in Canoga Park, killing his father and brother. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Weather
Mostly sunny, warm.
L.A. Basin: 89/67. **B6**



Seeing Golden State crisis, Oregon forges robust housing plans

As California idles measures, Oregon voters and lawmakers unite for nation's most ambitious response.

BY LIAM DILLON

PORTLAND, Ore. — When Oregon's political leaders debated solutions to a housing crisis that was forcing renters from their homes and sending prices through the roof, they had a central goal in mind: avoid the fate of their neighbor to the south.

"In Portland, we're just trying not to become San Francisco," said Tina Kotek, the speaker of Oregon's House of Representatives.

This year, Kotek and her colleagues advanced the most ambitious response to housing affordability challenges in the country. Lawmakers passed a first-in-the-nation cap on rent in-

creases and, in an effort to spur new homebuilding, became the only state to eliminate single-family-only zoning in many of its residential neighborhoods.

But in California, Gov. Gavin Newsom and lawmakers have struggled to pass strong renter protections and legislation that would significantly increase the state's housing supply.

A bid to cap rents in the state has been significantly narrowed — under the current version of the legislation, the policy would expire after just three years.

And a high-profile measure, Senate Bill 50, to increase residential development near transit stops and in single-family neighborhoods was shelved in the spring.

Those failures followed a major defeat for California tenant advocates at the polls in 2018 and were brought about in part by division among interest groups and a lack of involvement from

[See Oregon, A11]



Photographs by KRISTYNA WENTZ-GRAFF For The Times

ROD MERRICK, an architect who lives in Portland's Eastmoreland neighborhood, says Oregon should incentivize projects near commercial and transit corridors.

Oregon forges strong housing plans

[Oregon, from A1] Newsom and other key elected officials.

In Oregon, the opposite happened: Voters pushed legislators to act on housing, a larger and more diverse coalition of activists united behind the cause, and Gov. Kate Brown and legislative leaders came together to support a housing plan.

"Our crisis is so severe in this state, you have to do everything," said Kotek, who drove the effort. "It's that problematic out there for folks. We just came in and said, 'We're going to do it all.'"

Home to 4 million people, Oregon has a population one-tenth the size of California's. The state's median home value, according to real estate website Zillow, is \$345,800, roughly equivalent to that of homes in Stockton.

But parts of the state have seen a flood of job growth on par with that in California's priciest metropolitan areas. And even though developers in Portland are building homes at a much faster rate than in Los Angeles, San Francisco or San Diego, housing cost pressures have taken their toll. The issue came to a head during last year's election after a measure to expand rent control in Oregon stalled in the previous legislative session.

Frustrated tenant activists and union leaders set their sights on Rod Monroe, a three-term Democratic state senator from eastern Portland and landlord who opposed the renter bill. They protested outside his home, hung banners advocating his ouster from highway overpasses and promoted former state Rep. Shemia Fagan to take his place.

Fagan, who on the campaign trail discussed visiting her homeless mother as a child, defeated him in the Democratic primary by more than 40 percentage points.

"This is a message election," Fagan told the Willamette Week newspaper on election night. "And the message is that Oregonians are ready to deal with the housing crisis."

Supply does not meet demand

Key Oregon and California metropolitan areas saw an increase in workers between 2013 and 2017, but housing stock in those areas did not experience similar growth.

	Portland		
	2013	2017	Increase
Workers	1.10 million	1.25 million	14.1%
Housing	935,376	992,546	6.1
	Sacramento		
Workers	926,477	1.04 million	12.1
Housing	878,895	901,954	2.6
	San Francisco		
Workers	2.23 million	2.47 million	11.1
Housing	1.76 million	1.81 million	3.0
	Los Angeles		
Workers	6.2 million	6.67 million	7.5
Housing	4.52 million	4.64 million	2.7

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Graphics reporting by ZACH LEVITT
Los Angeles Times

The November elections swept Fagan and other Democrats into power, giving the party supermajorities in both houses of the state Legislature.

Two days later, Kotek, a Portland Democrat who was also behind the earlier failed rent control effort, called the leader of the Oregon Rental Housing Assn., the state's largest landlord organization, and told him it was time to negotiate.

The resulting legislation would cap rents statewide at 7% annually plus inflation, and block landlords from evicting tenants without a reason. It passed in February with the landlord group opting not to oppose the bill, which included some exceptions for newly constructed buildings and small property owners.

"The tide had changed," said Jim Straub, the association's legislative director. "We knew we weren't going to be able to stop it."

Outside a small apartment complex in southwest Portland, Pamela Phan, the organizing director of Community Alliance of Tenants,

pointed at ripped screens and cardboard on windows and doors and said residents there had told her about infestations of rats, mice and cockroaches.

Tenants "complain and complain, but nothing gets done," Phan said. "And the rents keep going up and up."

Residents, many of whom are Somali, Latino or other immigrants from low-income families, prize the location for its proximity to a mosque and elementary school, she said.

Some have seen rent hikes as high as 25% in recent years, and a two-bedroom apartment that used to cost \$750 a month about a decade ago now runs \$1,300.

Those in neighboring apartment complexes, she said, face the same challenges, underscoring the need for renter protections.

But Phan said capping rents alone won't solve the state's housing problems. Her organization, along with others representing tenants and communities of color, backed the legislation allowing up to four houses on lots within neighborhoods

zoned for single-family homes across much of the state.

While her group wants to ensure that the policy rolls out with protections against displacing existing residents, she said single-family neighborhoods must open up to growth, citing the history of how those communities developed.

Racist deed covenants often barred people from selling homes to nonwhites, government-sponsored lending practices provided low-cost mortgages only to whites, and similar policies through the middle of the 20th century kept many nonwhites out of single-family neighborhoods.

"We know that single-family zoning is exclusive," Phan said. "Folks who have gained generational wealth from single-family homes in this country are by and large white people. That was by design."

Kotek's legislation allows fourplexes in single-family home neighborhoods in the Portland metro area and other larger cities in the state. Smaller cities will have to allow duplexes, and rural communities face no changes. Advancing it took maneuvering, especially after GOP senators left the state to avoid voting on environmental legislation less than two weeks before the June 30 deadline to pass bills.

Kotek secured some Republican support for the housing measure, which helped insulate it from the partisan rancor. And, she said, the power of her position pushed senators to take up the bill a second time on their final day in session after it failed by a single vote on the first try.

She also had the backing of Brown, a Democrat who in January urged lawmakers to act in her State of the State speech. The governor said she was able to dedicate more funding in the state budget to help build low-income housing and plan for development in smaller cities to help lessen concerns among lawmakers that there wasn't enough money to implement the ideas.



"IN PORTLAND, we're just trying not to become San Francisco," Oregon House Speaker Tina Kotek said of housing.



PAMELA PHAN, the organizing director of a tenants alliance, says rent caps alone will not solve the housing crisis.

Brown said it was essential for her, Kotek and Oregon Senate President Peter Courtney, a Democrat from the state capital of Salem, to make housing a top priority — something she said Newsom and California's legislative leaders must do to pass similarly robust measures alongside colleagues of all viewpoints.

"The extent of Oregon's housing crisis was really felt across the political spectrum," said Brown, who plans to sign the bill curtailing single-family zoning. "From left to right. Everyone was ready to take action."

Unlike California, Oregon has a deep legacy of state involvement in housing issues through legislation passed in the 1970s that restricts growth to urban areas. That history, Brown said, also eased the path for the state to mandate changes to local zoning rules.

But there are other political differences between the states. In Oregon, last fall's election brought in legislators who promised to add more protections for renters. The same thing happened in New York, whose Legislature recently passed its own set of rent stabilization measures. But in California, a ballot initiative to expand rent control failed in the November election by nearly 20 percentage points, giving landlord groups more leverage to fight such efforts.

Oregon's bill to increase density in single-family-home-only neighborhoods had the backing of organizations representing renters and low-income residents.

California's version of that legislation, SB 50, which would have also allowed mid-rise apartments to be

built near transit, did not have many of those interest groups on board, with some fearing gentrification.

Newsom, Senate President Toni Atkins (D-San Diego) and Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon (D-Lakeview) have frequently discussed the need to address the state's housing problems, but none has publicly championed measures like those in Oregon.

Newsom's chief of staff apologized for telling tenant advocates that the governor had lobbied lawmakers to advance a renter protection measure when he hadn't.

The bill was shelved soon after. In May, a Senate fiscal committee chairman blocked SB 50 without a public vote, and Atkins did not intervene to move the bill forward.

The deepest opposition in California to SB 50 came from owners of single-family homes. The same is true of the zoning bill in Oregon.

Rod Merrick, 70, has lived in his home at the end of a cul-de-sac in Portland's Eastmoreland neighborhood for nearly four decades.

The community has a public golf course, a tree-lined boulevard that leads up to private liberal arts school Reed College and a botanical garden.

Merrick, an architect, has been frustrated that developers are buying older homes in the community and replacing them with larger, new single-family homes and duplexes.

He worries that the new legislation will accelerate that process by leading to the development of fourplexes that he believes will be less affordable than existing homes and out of scale with the community.

The legislation is "envisioned by urbanists and planners as salvation, and it's a really bad idea," he said.

Instead of pushing development into single-family neighborhoods, he said, lawmakers should add incentives to build in commercial and transportation corridors.

But to Kotek, those objections don't acknowledge the depth of the state's housing problems.

"You know the argument, 'I'm really supportive of this, but can't we just have people live next to transit? Can't we just put them in certain places?'" she said. "And I was like, 'No.' The goal is to have diversification throughout the neighborhoods so you're not having concentration based on income or based on any other factor."

Kotek regrets that she didn't think of the bill to increase density sooner. She believes it could have helped alleviate the housing shortage in the state, something she believes leaders in California should consider.

"California needs to get it done," Kotek said. "They're behind."

Fraud cited in student loan repayment plans

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Tens of thousands of federal student loan borrowers may be getting their monthly payments lowered by lying about their income and family size, yet the U.S. Education Department is doing little to catch them, according to a report Thursday by a federal watchdog agency.

Among the most extreme cases reported by the Government Accountability Office are two separate bor-

rowers who claimed to have 93 relatives in their households, along with 3,300 cases in which borrowers said they had no income even though federal data suggested they made \$100,000 a year or more. All were approved for lower loan payments.

Investigators were reviewing the Education Department's oversight of its popular income-driven repayment plans, which allow borrowers to pay lower monthly rates based on their incomes and family sizes. After 25 years of payments, all

remaining debt is wiped clean.

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos said her agency would conduct a comprehensive review of the repayment plans and would refer cases of fraud to the Justice Department for prosecution. She placed blame on previous administrations, saying the problems are proof that "many of the policy ideas previously pursued were poorly implemented."

"Misrepresenting income or family size is wrong, and we must have a system in

place to ensure that dishonest people do not get away with it," DeVos said. "We didn't create that problem, but rest assured we will fix it."

The watchdog agency says it identified 95,100 cases in which borrowers were approved as having no income even though it appears they were earning money. Investigators found that borrowers in a third of those cases may actually have been making \$45,000 a year or more, including some who topped \$100,000.