

UC OKS HIKE IN TUITION DESPITE PROTEST

Regents call increase critical to education quality. Students already feel stretched.

By JAWEED KALEEM

Confronting increasing costs and decreasing state and federal funding, the University of California regents on Wednesday approved a tuition hike lauded by UC leaders but fiercely opposed by students.

The board voted 13 to 3, with eight regents absent, to renew a controversial “tuition stability” program adopted five years ago that UC officials say provides long-term predictability for students and parents while bringing in much-needed cash flow in a time of campus-level deficits, a \$130-million cut in state money, hundreds of layoffs this year and uncertainties over Trump administration funding.

The plan caps inflation-based increases at 5% each year and then locks in that rate for the duration of studies for each new entering class. It will also cut the share of tuition revenue that goes toward financial aid by 5%.

“Tuition increases are never welcome, but moderate and predictable increases are necessary to sustain the quality of education that our students deserve,” said UC President James B. Milliken, who expressed his support during remarks at the board meeting on UCLA’s campus.

Chancellors, he said, “need the tools that we can give them to sustain the quality and the access of the University of California — and that includes, importantly, extending the Tuition Stability Plan.”

But inside and outside the Meyer and Renee Luskin Conference Center where the regents met, hundreds of students — speaking via oral and written public comments and at a rally that drew representatives from all nine undergraduate campuses — appeared nearly uniformly opposed.

“I think I speak on behalf of the student body when we [See Tuition, A8]



MYUNG J. CHUN Los Angeles Times

STUDENTS rally at UCLA. Inflation-based hikes were capped at 5% each year.

D.A. investigates claims of sexual abuse fraud

Hochman says probe will target anyone who helped run alleged scheme to cheat \$4-billion settlement

By REBECCA ELLIS

Los Angeles County’s district attorney has opened an investigation into claims of fraud within the largest sex abuse settlement in U.S. history.

Dist. Atty. Nathan Hochman said Wednesday his office has started a wide-ranging probe into claims that plaintiffs made up stories of abuse in order to sue the county, which agreed to the historic \$4-billion sex abuse settlement this spring.

The announcement follows Times investigations that found nine people who said they were paid small amounts of cash by recruiters to sue the county for sex abuse in juvenile halls. Four

of them said they fabricated the claims.

“They looked at this opportunity to compensate these true victims of sex abuse as an opportunity to personally profit and engage in some of the most greedy and heinous conduct,” Hochman said at a news conference Wednesday morning in the Hall of Justice downtown. “We are going to aggressively go after them.”

All nine plaintiffs had their cases filed by Downtown LA Law Group, a personal injury firm that represents roughly 2,700 people in the county settlement. The firm has denied wrongdoing. The Times could not reach the recruiters who made the alleged payments to plaintiffs for comment.

Hochman indicated his investigation, still in its early stages, showed this was just a small fraction of the “significant number of fraudsters involved in these settlement claims.”

Hochman emphasized the inquiry would focus on those higher up the chain — lawyers, recruiters and medical practitioners who may have submitted fraudulent forms — and not the plaintiffs.

Many of the people The Times spoke with who filed false claims were poor and in unstable housing. They said they desperately needed the cash promised by recruiters, which ranged from \$20 to \$200. All were flagged down outside county social services offices, where many [See Abuse, A6]

Fire victims say a parks official blocked mop-up

State ‘put plants over people’ after Jan. 1 blaze in Palisades, lawyers allege.

By JENNY JARVIE AND ALENE TCHEKMEDYIAN

Lawyers representing victims of the Palisades fire are seeking to depose Los Angeles firefighters to shed light on allegations that a California State Parks official restricted how the Los Angeles Fire Department handled an earlier blaze that reignited into the deadly firestorm that destroyed thousands of homes.

The Fire Department’s handling of the Jan. 1 Lachman fire has come under increasing scrutiny after a federal investigation concluded firefighters failed to put the small brush fire out and it came roaring back to life on Jan. 7, killing 12 people and destroying more than 6,800 structures.

Meanwhile, attorneys working on behalf of Palisades residents have been trying to focus attention on California State Parks’ role in the Palisades fire. In a complaint filed last month, they allege the state agency did not do enough to monitor the Lachman burn scar in Topanga State Park and ensure the area was safe after firefighters said the fire was contained.

Now, the plaintiffs’ lawyers are alleging a state parks official who arrived at the scene of the fire on Jan. 1 “directly interfered with LAFD’s mop up operations.”

Alexander “Trey” Robertson, one of the attorneys who filed the complaint against the state, told The Times that a fire official up on the Lachman burn scar Jan. 1 alleged that a California State Parks representative told them “they couldn’t bring a bulldozer in to cut a line around the fire and they could not do mop up with their hand tools, dig up around any native plant species.”

“They basically put plants over people and wouldn’t let the firefighters attempt to fully mop up this fire.”

The Fire Department did not respond to questions about whether the state interfered with mop-up operations or otherwise influenced the decision to roll up hoses and leave the scene on Jan. 2. State officials

strongly deny they obstructed firefighting efforts.

“The notion that State Parks favors plants over people is ludicrous,” a spokesperson for California State Parks said in a statement. “State Parks never hinders an active firefighting response, and firefighting decisions are up to the responding agency. In this instance, the fire in question was deemed by LAFD to be [See Lachman fire, A7]

LAFD chief slams media

After two days in job, Moore shifts focus to what he says is effort to ‘smear’ firefighters.

By ALENE TCHEKMEDYIAN AND NOAH GOLDBERG

In the immediate aftermath of the Palisades fire, top Los Angeles Fire Department officials blamed a lack of resources and extraordinarily high winds for their failures in combating the flames.

Now, newly appointed Fire Chief Jaime Moore has shifted his focus toward what he called media efforts to “smear” firefighters, a stance that raises questions about who will hold the Fire Department accountable for its mistakes and whether fire victims will get answers about how the blaze started and if more could have been done to prevent it.

Moore’s comments Tuesday appeared to be in reference to a Times report that a battalion chief ordered firefighters to roll up their hoses and leave the burn area of the Jan. 1 Lachman fire, which days later reignited into the deadly Palisades fire, even though they had complained that the ground was still smoldering.

“Something that’s been very frustrating for me as fire chief, and through this [See Moore, A7]



ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times

GRAFFITI and trash mar the Koreatown memorial honoring Robert F. Kennedy.

Voices **STEVE LOPEZ** COLUMNIST

On RFK’s 100th birthday, memorial stands tarnished

May Sun stood on Wilshire Boulevard in Koreatown on Tuesday morning, looking through the fence at the memorial she and another artist designed to honor Robert F. Kennedy near the site of his 1968 assassination.

Graffiti smeared the monument. Scattered trash included a potato chip bag, a smashed beer bottle and a sneaker. Weeds poked up from neglected garden beds and dozens of orange sandbags sat on ledges

and columns, for no apparent reason.

In years past, people have left candles on Nov. 20, RFK’s birthday. This year marks his 100th, but a temporary fence, with graffiti sprayed on the “no trespassing” signs, now stands in the way of anyone who might be inclined to mark the day here.

The monument and adjacent Inspiration Park, unveiled in 2010 after years of planning, design and careful selection of the right words to honor Kennedy’s legacy, are a mess. [See Lopez, A8]

Comey case hits new legal hurdle

Justice Department acknowledges a possible lapse in how the case was presented to grand jury. **NATION, A4**

Political players told of FBI taps

Current and former Newsom officials are among dozens who had communications intercepted. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Is James’ future a reduced role?

LeBron James’ Lakers return shows he can fit in. Dylan Hernández wonders if it will continue. **SPORTS, B10**

Student housing grows at UCLA

A high-rise is planned for undergraduates who face limited options near Westwood area. **BUSINESS, A11**

Weather

Afternoon rain. L.A. Basin: 57/51. **B5**

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Trade deficit drops as tariffs take effect

By JOSH BOAK

The U.S. trade deficit fell by nearly 24% in August as President Trump’s sweeping global tariffs pushed imports lower.

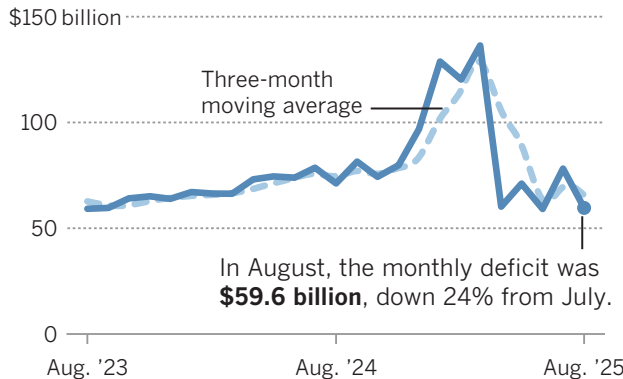
In a report delayed for more than seven weeks by the federal government shutdown, the U.S. Commerce Department said Wednesday that the gap between what the United States buys from other countries and what it sells

them fell to \$59.6 billion in August, from \$78.2 billion in July.

Imports of goods and services dropped 5% to \$340.4 billion in August from July when U.S. companies were stocking up on foreign products before Trump finalized taxes on products from almost every country. Those levies went into effect Aug. 7.

U.S. exports blipped up 0.1% in August to \$280.8 billion. [See Deficit, A13]

U.S. trade deficit eases in August



July 2025 values are revised estimates. U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

HAILEY WANG Los Angeles Times