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Feds deploy election watchers to L.A.

The late surge adds to turmoil over voting as Justice Department presses its case.

By Sonja Sharp

The Justice Department sent a last-minute surge of election monitors into Los Angeles on Tuesday morning, amid an ongoing legal tug-of-war over California's 20,000 contested ballots.

In a series of rulings late Monday night and early Tuesday, the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals cleared the Trump administration to threaten California election workers with criminal charges, even after its demands to segregate contested ballots were struck down by the Supreme Court.

The appellate court's final decision came on election day, just after the Justice Department announced it was sending out "1,000 election monitors and observers" across the U.S. in what it called "the largest monitoring effort in DOJ history."

Los Angeles, New York, Chicago and Detroit were among the dozens of jurisdictions where monitors were sent under the auspices of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 — legislation that President Trump has worked tirelessly to gut across both his administrations.

The Justice Department said it also would send monitors to San Diego, Sacramento and Alameda County in the San Francisco Bay Area. A department spokesperson said that the federal monitors "will be at polling locations," but that the department is not "giving out precinct details."

The move was widely seen as an intimidation tactic.

[See **Monitors,** A6]





Photographs by Genaro Molina Los Angeles Times

WORTH THE WAIT

People cast their ballots at Grand Central Market, top, in downtown Los Angeles on Tuesday. At USC, voters waited more than an hour. Scan this code to read our coverage at latimes.com and in our eNewspaper, where subscribers get an exclusive "LATExtra."

Little room for error for the next mayor of L.A.

Whoever is elected faces slew of problems, including on budget, police and housing.

By Jenny Jarvie

Homeless encampments line the streets. Buying a home — or even finding an affordable place to rent — is increasingly out of reach for many. Roads are riddled with potholes, tens of thousands of streetlights are out, and water and power bills are surging.

For many Angelenos, quality of life in the city is slipping.

These challenges have left some longtime political experts wondering how much the next mayor can control in this vast city of 3.8 million.

"The expectations, given the powers that the mayor actually has, are probably too high," said Tom Hogen-Esch, a professor of political science at Cal State Northridge. "You have all of these wicked problems that are difficult to solve in a perfect scenario, and [even more] in a governmental system as tangled and confused as L.A."

Along with the enduring problems of deteriorating infrastructure, police reform and budget woes, there is also the unprecedented task of rebuilding Pacific Palisades after catastrophic firestorms and trying to help the city's ailing film industry — all while preparing the city for the global spotlight of hosting the 2028 Olympics.

A recent UC Berkeley Institute of Governmental Studies poll of likely L.A. voters, co-sponsored by The Times, found that the top priority for the next mayor to address was reducing the number of homeless encampments, followed by ensuring public safety and building more affordable housing. Protecting immigrant communities was the next most cited concern, followed by balancing the city budget.

After studying L.A. politics for more than three decades, Hogen-Esch said the city feels stuck.

"We're talking about the same issues over and over and over ... and a general underlying frustration with city government," he said. "It's almost like you could wake up 30 years later in a Rip Van Winkle dream and you're in the same spot."

Homelessness

When Karen Bass launched her 2021 mayoral campaign, she proclaimed homelessness was her "overwhelming top priority."

After nearly four years of her leadership, she has failed to make a serious dent on homelessness. This year, the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority announced that more than 45,194 people in the city were homeless — not significantly different from 46,260 homeless people in January 2023.

After spending more than $391 million on Inside Safe, Bass' flagship program to clean up homeless encampments and house homeless people, the city moved about 6,500 people into interim housing. But about 42% of the program's participants have returned to homelessness.

Bass says Inside Safe has made progress, clearing 140 encampments across the city. But the difference is not visible to many residents as encampments continue to

[See **Mayor,** A6]

Real work awaits Democrats in state

Party maintains its grip on California but will have to deal with its chronic problems.

By Jenny Jarvie

For all their dominance, California Democrats will emerge from Tuesday's election facing a list of considerable difficulties.

As polls show nearly 6 out of 10 Californians believe the state is going in the wrong direction and even more anticipate bad financial times ahead, the state's new governor and legislators will have to confront some chronic problems, including a severe budget deficit, housing unaffordability, homelessness, and rising energy and insurance costs.

They will also have to grapple with difficult decisions on whether the state can provide Medi-Cal healthcare to low-income residents, how to make the state more resilient to climate change, and who pays for wildfire damage.

"There's not going to be a long honeymoon period," said Mark Baldassare, the survey director at the nonpartisan Public Policy Institute of California.

Californians are in a "pretty grumpy mood," Baldassare said. Although their dissatisfaction is mostly hyperpartisan, with Democrats pointing the finger at President Trump and Congress as Republicans blame Gov. Gavin Newsom and Sacramento legislators, he said, a majority of Californians are worried about the state of the economy and want to see better government performance.

For voters, a key concern is unaffordability. More than half of Californians rank cost of living, inflation and the economy — along with hous-

[See **Democrats,** A7]

Specter of new fighting grips Mideast

Mixed U.S. signals on Iran war stoke fears of more dangerous, more destructive escalation.

By Nabih Bulos

MANAMA, Bahrain — Conferences in the Persian Gulf are usually positive affairs, with government officials, executives of state-owned companies and armies of consultants touting petro-fueled visions promising fantastical technology and prosperity.

Yet optimism seemed in short supply at the Manama Dialogue, an annual security and geopolitical summit held in the Bahraini capital. Instead, the dominant mood among the Middle East diplomats, defense officials and experts assembled last weekend was fear over the consequences of another bout of U.S.-Iran fighting.

"The rules of logic tell us that the Iranian stand and the American stand are far apart. And if these positions are not bridged, then we have to worry about the worst," Anwar Gargash, a presidential advisor in the United Arab Emirates, said in an address at the summit.

Gargash added that it's not in the interest of the regional countries or Iran to go through another round of war.

"While we're going through this period of protracted crisis of no war, no peace, we are clearly seeking a political off-ramp," he said.

In his address, Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty said, "We have to push very hard in order to prevent the escalation."

Noting that more fighting would affect food and energy security, he added, "The second round will be more

[See **Mideast,** A4]

$4 billion in Israel aid to be cut off

Trump says the annual monetary support is superfluous and a boon for Democrats. **WORLD, A2**

Utilities lobby for wildfire cost shield

California's power companies seek legislation to protect their shareholders.

By Melody Petersen

As a criminal investigation into Southern California Edison's actions before last year's deadly Eaton fire continues, the state's for-profit utilities are lobbying for legislation that would protect their shareholders from paying for future catastrophic fires they cause.

According to slides recently presented by a Pacific Gas & Electric executive to a group of state senators, the utilities are asking for a permanent cap to limit their corporate liability for a fire where they are found to have acted negligently or imprudently. The slides were reviewed by The Times.

"If ratepayers are forced to pay the lion's share for fires utilities cause, there is no imperative for the for-profit utilities to take safety and fire mitigation seriously," said Jamie Court, president of Consumer Watchdog.

The utilities say their shareholders must be shielded from wildfire costs because the risk of future fires has damaged their credit ratings. Lower credit ratings mean the companies must pay higher interest rates on borrowing, an increased cost that gets passed on to electricity customers.

"It is in our customers' interest to have action in 2026," Pedro Pizarro, chief executive of Edison International, told Wall Street analysts last week when asked about the utilities' push in Sacramento for a liability cap.

Caroline Choi, Edison's executive vice president of

[See **Utilities,** A11]

A pitfall of new ADUs: Loss of parking

Push to build more housing creates a burden for car-reliant elderly and disabled tenants

By Grace Toohey

With her cane, Tracey Ellis can just manage the 20-foot walk from her apartment to her garage.

She's unsteady on her feet, with severe pain even after short walks, so the parking spot included in her lease is crucial for her daily needs, enabling her to drive to doctor's appointments or the grocery store.

But recently, her landlord alerted tenants that a new apartment would be built over their garages, eliminating parking during one to two years of construction and possibly beyond.

"Parking in this city is a lifeline for people, and to take away their parking — why don't you just take half my house or apartment?" said Ellis, 70, who has lived in the eight-unit, rent-stabilized building near the Sunset Strip since 2001. "It's my freedom."

In Los Angeles, an increasing number of landlords are converting parking spaces and garages into accessory dwelling units under a new state law intended to help ease California's housing crisis.

But some tenant advocates say that taking away the parking spaces violates leases and particularly harms the city's most vulnerable: senior citizens and those with disabilities who aren't mobile enough to compete for street parking, as well as those who can't afford to move.

The clash appears to be most pronounced in dense L.A. neighborhoods including Koreatown, Pico-Union, Silver Lake and Hollywood, where street parking is extremely limited and many buildings are rent-stabilized, according to attorneys tracking the issue.

"We're seeing more and

[See **Parking,** A14]



Robert Gauthier Los Angeles Times

TENANT Tracey Ellis, 70, is concerned about losing her parking space during construction of an ADU.

Religion at issue in preschool case

High court weighs rights of Catholic providers that shun same-sex couples and their kids. **NATION, A5**

Long Beach gets erosion relief

A dredging project is replenishing sand washed away by high surf. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Lakers' 'flowing' offense has flaws

The team ranks second in the league in scoring, but the chemistry still isn't there. **SPORTS, B10**

Weather
Sunshine.
L.A. Basin: 76/58. **B6**

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