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ANDY ALFARO aalfaro@modbee.com



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The Modesto Bee



ANDY ALFARO aalfaro@modbee.com

Red-light camera at Coffee Road and Sylvan Avenue in Modesto, Monday, March 16.

Modesto's red-light cameras raise concerns among advocates

BY TREVOR MORGAN
tmorgan@modbee.com

Cameras across Modesto capture, store and transfer personal information for law enforcement purposes. But concerns over that data's security, and how it's being used, remain.

Earlier this month, the Modesto Police Department found that data from automatic license plate readers (ALPRs) was unintentionally shared with federal agencies, including Border Patrol. The discovery was mentioned in a lawsuit recently filed by the ACLU against the city and MPD Chief Brandon Gillespie.

Now, after being dormant

for nearly a decade, red-light cameras are back and use new technology, such as high-quality video, to enforce the law. But what happens to the data collected? How is it used? Is it safe from hackers?

The Modesto Bee reached out to Verra Mobility, the company that runs Modesto's red-light cameras, and MPD to answer some of these questions. Two separate lists of questions, specific to each, were sent to Verra and MPD. However, Verra responded in an email stating its response was a "coordinated response in partnership with the PD and city." The Bee's questions for MPD were not answered.

YOUR DATA WHEN THE CAMERAS FLASH

Verra Mobility's red-light cameras activate when its systems automatically detect an "event" — typically when a vehicle enters an intersection, or turns right too quickly, while the light is red.

The automated system determines what an "event" is through "business rules" the customer, in this case the city, and Verra agree upon. MPD did not respond when asked what the business rules were.

Photos and high-quality video of the event, along with data that back-end systems can use to identify the driver, is entered into Verra's Axis Smart Mobility Platform — a system that can be

accessed by MPD through "any computer connected to the internet," according to Verra Mobility's request for a contract with the city.

Verra's automated system then uses this data to find out who the driver is by getting personally identifiable information from the DMV and Nlets. The latter is a private nonprofit that local, state and federal law enforcement agencies use for "criminal justice information sharing," according to the company's LinkedIn page.

All of this information is then sent to MPD for review. If someone at the Police Department determines a violation

SEE CAMERAS, 5A

Modesto's third No Kings protest focuses on action

BY KATHLEEN QUINN
kquinn@mcclatchyservices.com

Modesto's No Kings protest started Saturday morning at Graceada Park with a few hundred people gathered around a stage listening to speakers while others checked out booths to register to vote, sign petitions and donate to local organizations.

Within an hour, that number had ballooned to around 2,000 marching toward Five Points with a near-constant cacophony of supportive honks.

It was part of No Kings protests nationwide against President Donald Trump's administration and policies.

In the park, some people

brought their dogs and their kids and stood in the shade on the warm day. They listened to the two main speakers scheduled for the rally: Moses Abeyta, a 17-year-old Downey High School student and member of Youth Leading Modesto, and Michael Masuda, a Democratic candidate hoping to unseat Tom McClintock in the 5th Congressional District.

Abeyta participated in the last No Kings protest and helped organize large student walkouts last month. "Of course, with the walkouts, there was a very, very big incentive to have a youth speaker up there," he said.

He has been among the students participating in mutual-aid events and organizing student walkouts.

Masuda, who lives in Stanislaus County and is the frontrunning Democratic candidate for the congressional district long held by McClintock, did not mince words when speaking out against the incumbent.

"For those of you who voiced your displeasure over email or to his office, he responded, 'If you don't like the law, change the law,'" Masuda said. "I say 'F--- that, we're going to start

SEE PROTEST, 3A

Gubernatorial candidate speaks at Si Se Puede lunch in Modesto

BY KATHLEEN QUINN
kquinn@mcclatchyservices.com

Gubernatorial candidate Xavier Becerra was the main speaker at the first farmworker "Si Se Puede Luncheon" at the Red Event Center in downtown Modesto.

Armando Mendoza, a representative of the Cesar Chavez Community Celebration Committee was quick to address the elephant in the room. "As many of you already know, we are in the process of name changing the nonprofit 501(c)(3), but what will not change is our support for the farmworkers and their families," Mendoza said.

The event happened at time when school administrators,

city councils and artists quickly set out to rename namesake places and events and remove Chavez from murals following corroborated accounts that he sexually abused children and raped his United Farm Workers co-founder Delores Huerta.

Eduardo Hernández Chávez, a retired linguistics professor from the University of New Mexico, gave a speech that sought to thread the needle between celebration and support for farmworkers and acknowledgement of the gravity of Chavez's abuse against women and girls.

"Some even advocate for removing any mention of him in classical history lessons,

SEE CANDIDATE, 6A

Parents raise concerns after school herbicide spraying

BY JULIETTA BISHARYAN
jbisharyan@modbee.com

After an employee sprayed weed control at Apricot Valley Elementary School earlier this month, Tomasa Estrella's grandchild started experiencing panic attacks. He worried that his classmates who experienced rashes and skin irritation were going to die that day, she said.

Estrella and about 20 other concerned residents gathered at Stonegate Community Center in Patterson on Thursday evening with questions about the apparent case of pesticide drift that occurred at the Patterson school on March 13 and impacted about 30 students and staff members. Pesticide drift is the unintentional movement of pesticide particles or vapors through the air during or after application.

According to Patterson Joint Unified School District, the spraying appeared to have violated its protocols. Herbicide applications usually are scheduled when students and staff are not on campus.

That morning, the herbicides were applied in areas between buildings where cracks and weeds were present and around a portion of the school perimeter.

The two herbicides used were Cornerstone Plus and Cheetah Pro. The active ingredient in Cornerstone Plus is glyphosate, while Cheetah Pro contains glufosinate-ammonium.

SEE HERBICIDE, 4A



PASSOVER

A WEEKLONG FESTIVAL

This evening marks the beginning of Passover, one of Judaism's most sacred holidays, marking the Israelites' departure from ancient Egypt.



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