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County GOPs are split on Prop. 45 CEQA reform stance

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It is hard to imagine a longer standing or clearer cut political cause for Republicans than battling bureaucratic red tape in California.

For decades, leaders of California's long-suffering minority party have campaigned against the myriad rules and regulations that slow construction and increase its costs.

And yet this election cycle, a handful of county-level Republican parties have split from the state central committee over

perhaps the most significant opportunity to speed building in decades: Proposition 45, a ballot measure proposing to streamline approval under the California Environmental Quality Act for a range of construction projects.

Six county central committees — Sonoma, San Luis Obispo, Solano, Marin, Fresno and Del Norte — voted to recommend a "No" vote on Prop. 45.

Twenty-nine county Republican parties recommended a "Yes" vote, according to a Sacramento Bee analysis, either making the decision themselves or aligning with the state cen-

tral committee and Reform California, the weighty conservative political organization of Assemblymember Carl DeMaio, R-Valley Center. Both those groups have endorsed Prop. 45.

The small but notable splinter group of county-level Republicans is indicative of a ballot measure that has not generated a clean ideological fight. While the state Democrat party opposes Prop. 45, many party leaders have not taken a position on it.

Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas and Senate President pro Tem Monique Limón, D-Santa

Barbara recently criticized the Yes campaign for funding the GOP and Reform California, as both groups campaign for a ballot measure to impose voter identification restrictions. But notably, neither legislative leader has taken a position on Prop. 45 itself.

September polling from the Public Policy Institute of California showed both party's voters were equally split on the measure. Among Republicans, 51% of likely voters said they'd vote yes, while 47% said no.

That sentiment could shift as Reform California and the state party broadcast their positions

in the run up to Nov. 3.

COUNTY OFFICIALS ASK WHO BENEFITS?

Distrust of state government and the powerful tech industry drove the dissenting county party officials to say no, county leaders told The Sacramento Bee in interviews. Fresno and Sonoma counties' party representatives did not respond to repeated requests for comment.

"This is a wolf in sheep's clothing or a trojan horse," said Republican Party of San Luis Obispo County Chairman Randall Jordan.

Jordan, who has worked in construction for over four decades, said he was familiar with the hurdles and delays CEQA appeals and litigation can bring. But he did not believe smaller building companies would get the benefits of the

SEE PROP. 45, 7A



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Pacific Neon Company employee Fred Escobar works on the W.F. Gormley & Sons Funeral Home sign on Tuesday.

Historic neon sign restored for funeral home's new site

BY GRAHAM WOMACK
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The historic neon sign from W.F. Gormley & Sons funeral home was unmistakable as it

sat Tuesday inside Pacific Neon's warehouse in north Sacramento.

But some subtle changes to the sign were also apparent.

Pacific Neon workers removed the sign on Aug. 18 from

2015 Capitol Ave., where W.F. Gormley & Sons has operated since the 1920s. The removal came ahead of the funeral home's upcoming move to Land Park, so the sign could be touched up before going to the

new location at 2691 Riverside Blvd., where George L. Klumpp Chapel of Flowers used to operate.

The W.F. Gormley & Sons sign still bears the same porcelain finish and glass letters as before. At close inspection, though, the sign had received new wiring and fresh black paint near two letters that had to be repaired.

SEE NEON SIGN, 7A

UC enrollment rises, permanent faculty hiring lags

BY TARINI MEHTA
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The University of California serves 67,000 more students today than it did 15 years ago. That's equal to the size of about two UC Berkeleys and amounts to an increase of 28%. This is, at least in part, a result of a concerted effort by the university to increase its population of Californian students per an agreement with the state.

While the university is ahead of schedule in meeting those goals, it has not hired permanent faculty to teach those students at the same pace — a trend that is leaving professors increasingly concerned.

Since 2011, the UC's permanent faculty has grown from more than 9,000 to a little less than 11,000, marking a spike of less than 19%. The university had one permanent faculty member for every 26 students in 2011; in 2025, that number has increased to 28 students. Tenured and tenure-track faculty, according to the UC, are core to the university's mission of teaching, research and public service. If they are not hired in adequate numbers, the uni-

SEE UNIVERSITY, 4A

Court to hear case on gray wolf protections

BY SHARON BERNSTEIN
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Federal protections for gray wolves could be ended through-out the United States if a panel of judges agree with the Trump administration in a case set for oral arguments before the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals on Tuesday.

The case, which grew out of a California lawsuit against an effort by President Donald Trump's first administration to remove the predator canines from the federal list of endangered

species, is one of three wolf-related proceedings to be heard by the three-judge panel.

All are appeals of federal court orders in favor of conservation groups that sued to stop gray wolves and Mexican wolves from losing environmental protections.

Wolves were hunted to local extinction in California in the 1920s, and did not return to the state until a 2-year-old male dubbed OR-7 crossed into the state from Oregon in 2011. They are currently protected by both the state and federal Endangered Species Acts.

But, as in other states where

their populations have begun to recover, wolves near ranches and farms have preyed on sheep and cattle, and frightened residents of rural communities.

KILLING LIVESTOCK

Last year, a single wolf pack was responsible for killing about 100 calves in the Sierra Valley area of Plumas and Sierra counties in less than 7 months after becoming unusually habituated to eating livestock, highlighting the state's difficulty in managing its populations of protected predators.

Some states in the northern Rocky Mountains, where wolves are no longer listed as endangered, have begun to allow increased hunting and trapping of the animals.

In 2020, the first Trump administration enacted a new rule



California Department of Fish and Wildlife

The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals will hear arguments Tuesday about whether gray wolves should be removed from the federal list of endangered species.

under the Endangered Species Act meant to de-list the wolf nationwide. The conservation group Defenders of Wildlife sued, say-

ing the rule was illegal. A federal judge for the Northern District of

SEE GRAY WOLF, 2A



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