

KUMINGA'S FUTURE

Warriors forward not feeling pressure without new deal.

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AIRBNB STAYS PUT WITH NEW LEASE

Company will remain for another decade at its Showplace Square campus in S.F.

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PHIL LESH DIES AT 84

Bassist, co-founder shaped the sound of Grateful Dead.

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Door-knocking for democracy



Photos by Jen Osborne/Special to the Chronicle

Democratic volunteer Elizabeth Chur, 53, of San Francisco, left, speaks with Guadalupe Ojeda in Wasco (Kern County) on Sunday about voting. Chur was door-knocking for congressional candidate Rudy Salas.

S.F. volunteer canvasses in Central Valley every two years

By Molly Burke

WASCO, Kern County — Elizabeth Chur stood directly in the sun as she spoke with Gabriel for 40 minutes, listening to his concerns about the futility of voting and his thoughts on moving to Texas, maybe even Mexico.

Gabriel, a farming mechanic working in nearby almond orchards, was not even the voter Chur was assigned to speak to while canvassing for the Rudy Salas campaign. Gabriel's grown children, who had moved out, were the registered voters the campaign had identified as likely supporters of Salas' run for Congress against Rep. David Valadao, R-Hanford (Kings County).

"Sometimes it feels like it's not even working. Still the politicians do whatever they want to do, right? Seems like a vote doesn't even matter," said Gabriel, who asked to be identified



Chur is spending all day, six days a week, walking neighborhoods in the 22nd Congressional District.

by his first name only. "The thing is the government is not going to do better things for people."

His reluctance to vote — along with political positions that didn't point to surefire support of Democratic candidates — would have discouraged many canvassers from staying and talking. But Chur is a more dogged and determined volunteer than most. That is true of how

she approaches individual voters and canvassing in general.

Chur, who lives in San Francisco, has uprooted her life every election year to volunteer in the Central Valley. She books an Airbnb and lives in Bakersfield in the weeks leading up to the election. Chur started learning Spanish specifically to better connect with potential voters in the Central Valley and

spent weeks in Oaxaca, Mexico, to immerse herself in the language. Chur even wrote a more than 300-page book aggregating her advice on door-knocking and encouraging others to start.

Many politically active Bay Area Democrats feel they can make more of a difference elsewhere, including in nearby swing states such as Nevada and Arizona. Others have stayed in California, where a handful of crucial House races could determine control of Congress.

While Kamala Harris' ascent to the top of the ticket has galvanized volunteers in down-ballot California races, Chur has been here before.

"Most of the people I've met I will probably never see again," Chur wrote. "My life is undeniably richer for their generous gifts of time, trust, story and the bounty of their labor."

Voting continues on A9

Ex-BART workers win suit over shots

Agency owes \$7.8M for denying COVID vaccination exemptions

By Nora Mishanec and Bob Egelko

The San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District must pay \$7.8 million to six former employees after a jury found the agency discriminated against the workers who sought religious exemptions to the agency's COVID-19 vaccine mandate.

Under a 2021 mandate approved by the agency's Board of Directors, all BART employees were required to get vaccinated at the risk of being fired. The Pacific Justice Institute, a conservative legal nonprofit, filed a lawsuit on behalf of the workers the next year.

San Francisco was the first major U.S. city to require its employees to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

The jury awarded over \$1 million in damages Wednesday to each former employee in the suit. In an earlier verdict in the case, the jurors found in July that BART had failed to show that accommodating their religious objections would pose an "undue hardship" to the agency.

U.S. District Judge William Alsup, who presided over the case, ruled that BART's policies did not violate the workers' constitutional right to religious freedom. The agency's "vaccine process was neutral and generally applicable because it was not intoler-

BART continues on A8

Rules targeting deceptive online reviews in effect

By Aidin Vaziri

The days of fake Amazon and Yelp reviews may be numbered.

In a major step seeking to restore and protect consumer trust, the Federal Trade Commission's new rules prohibiting deceptive online reviews officially went into effect Tuesday.

Announced in August, the regulations empower federal authorities to impose civil penalties — up to \$51,744 per violation — on those who manipulate the digital marketplace through the use of dishonest reviews, artificial intelligence or bots.

"Fake reviews not only waste people's time and money, but also pollute the marketplace and divert business away from honest competitors," Lina Khan, chair of the FTC, said in a statement. "By strengthening the FTC's toolkit to fight deceptive advertising, the final rule will protect Americans from getting cheated, put businesses

Reviews continues on A10

Once-staid OpenTable lures trendy restaurants

By Elena Kadvanly

When Nisei opened in San Francisco in 2021, the Michelin-starred Japanese restaurant offered reservations on Tock, long considered the booking platform of choice for fine dining restaurants.

Then, late last year, a competitor came calling.

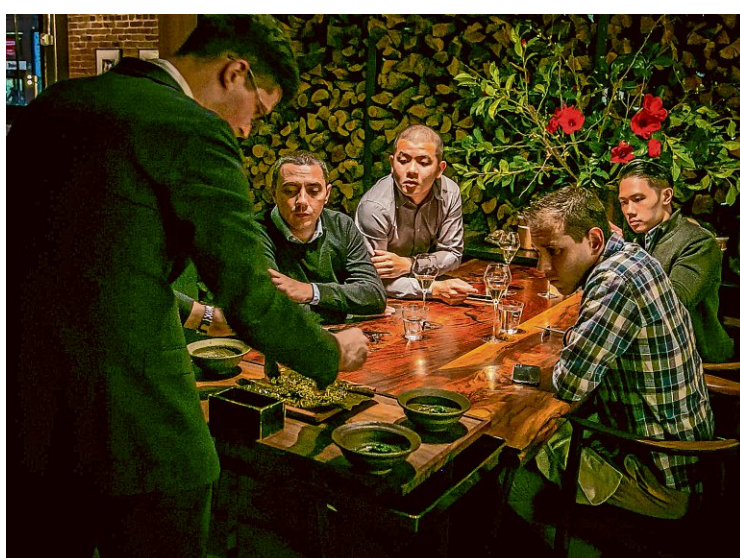
OpenTable's top leadership, including its CEO, dined at Nisei. They made "aggressive offers," chef-owner David Yoshimura said. They invited him and other top Bay Area chefs to an event and continued to court him over several months. It worked. In March, Nisei switched to OpenTable.

For months, OpenTable has been luring top Bay Area restaurants away from popular platforms such as Tock and Resy.

The company has successfully poached high-end restaurants including the three-Michelin-star SingleThread in Healdsburg, two-star Saison in San Francisco and two-star Commis in Oakland, plus nationally acclaimed newcomers such as Oakland's Burdell. They join Bay Area institutions that have long used OpenTable, such as House of Prime Rib.

OpenTable, which was born in San Francisco in 1998, seems to be shedding its reputation as an old-guard, somewhat antiquated platform facing competition from younger upstarts. Restaurateurs say its technology has significantly improved and are watching as many of their peers make the switch.

"OpenTable is, I think, making a comeback," said Burdell. OpenTable continues on A10



John Storey/Special to the Chronicle 2018

Guests dine at Saison, an S.F. restaurant with two Michelin stars, in 2018. Saison is among Bay Area restaurants that have switched to the OpenTable reservation system, which has worked to significantly improve its technology and court top chefs.

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