



MATT ROURKE Associated Press

PRESIDENT Trump helps to open the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library in Medora, N.D., this week.

Trump recasts America 250th to celebrate him

After funding cuts to local shows, historians see a declaration of imperialism at capital.

By MICHAEL WILNER

WASHINGTON — Small towns across America had big plans to celebrate the nation's semiquincentennial this weekend. Local historical societies scheduled town square readings of the Declaration of Independence, hired bands to play patriotic tunes, organized parades and set up themed baking contests.

But many of their most ambitious plans were scrapped after the Trump administration cut \$100 million in federal funding for humanities nonprofits and state councils at the start of its term. The decision severely hampered local planning for America's 250th anniversary, disrupting history projects, museums and educational programs nationwide.

Instead, the Trump administration funneled tens of millions in federal dollars to Event Strategies, the firm

behind Trump's infamous rally at the Ellipse on Jan. 6, 2021, to organize anniversary events throughout the nation's capital centered on President Trump.

The result, historians say, has become a centralized, more politicized spectacle, marking the national milestone as a celebration of an imperial presidency rather than a revolution from kingly rule.

The spectacular show that Americans will see features Trump at its center, culminating a year of concerted efforts by the president to put his face on passports and currency, national park passes and government buildings.

Yet, beyond the noise of the nation's capital, historians and teachers, docents and curators, archivists, tour guides and reenactors have sustained the messy, organic discourse of the American story, less funded but no less vocal in their patriotism.

"The way history has been argued since Trump returned to office has been a reminder that governments and political figures have re-

[See 250th, A6]

U.S. races to build a 'smart wall' on border

Use of cameras and sensors fuels concerns about privacy and risks for migrants.

By REBECCA SANTANA

PHOENIX — For decades, all that separated the U.S. from Mexico was barbed wire.

Now, after a massive infusion of cash from Congress, President Trump's administration is swiftly building what it has dubbed a "smart wall," a combination of 30-foot-tall steel fencing and an array of sophisticated technology such as sensors, cameras and towers that enables the Border Patrol to surveil the territory.

The wall is under heavy scrutiny for the billions of dollars being dedicated to it when border crossings are at their lowest in decades. Critics say the U.S. is militarizing the border as it increasingly deploys sophisticated surveillance technology to the area, affecting local communities.

"We are seeing a massive expansion of surveillance and surveillance technology across the borderlands," said Ricky Garza, border policy counsel at the Southern Border Communities Coalition, an advocacy group. "The wall in all its forms is harmful to communities."

Officials say the technology is complementary to the physical wall and frees up agents for other tasks.

"It's a smart wall. It's not just a barrier," Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Rodney Scott said during recent congressional testimony. "It maximizes the use of our most valuable resource, which is our

[See Border, A8]

New leaders have landed in Hollywood

In the streaming age, power of giants has shifted

By Meg James

Decades of Hollywood empire-building ended with a quake in 2017 when Australian media mogul Rupert Murdoch decided to sell much of his Fox entertainment holdings amid the rise of Netflix and other tech giants.

This week, another titan who has been instrumental in shaping American media and telecommunications began to unwind his Hollywood holdings.

Brian L. Roberts — who with his father built Comcast into a cable TV and internet colossus — announced his company would spin off its prestigious NBCUniversal unit into a separate publicly traded company sometime next year.

The move reverses Roberts' purchase of NBCUniversal in 2011 — a bold bet that created a behemoth with popular programming and cable pipes to pump that content into consumer homes.

Comcast's breakup marks the close of a Hollywood era, one dominated for 40

years by a class of maverick moguls: Murdoch, CNN founder Ted Turner, Viacom's Sumner Redstone, cable titan John Malone and the Philadelphia-based Roberts family.

Now, a new crop of leaders has emerged, reflecting Silicon Valley's vast influence over the film and TV business, which has been upended by streaming and, now, artificial intelligence.

"There was a time that Murdoch, Malone and Brian were really industry leaders who could effect change," said Bank of America managing director Jessica Reif Ehrlich in an interview. "That's not true any longer."

Analysts widely believe Monday's announcement is a prelude to eventual sales of both Comcast and NBCUniversal, a theory that Comcast rejects.

Roberts, 67, told analysts he will remain involved in both NBCUniversal and

[See Roberts, A11]

Neighbors refuse to waver on flag ban

Homeowners group has fined some who display Old Glory

By Hannah Fry



SANDY HUFFAKER Los Angeles Times

IN SAN MARCOS, Calif., Amy Cooke is fighting her homeowners association to hang her American flag.

Amy Cooke and her husband have been proudly flying the U.S. flag outside their San Marcos, Calif., condominium for more than 20 years.

But now their homeowners association is threatening them with a \$100 fine, arguing the display of Old Glory flies in the face of community rules.

Cooke has made it clear that the flag isn't coming down without a fight.

"It's a symbol of freedom," she said in an interview with The Times. "What does it say to people who are risking their lives for our country ... that we can't fly this flag? It makes me very angry."

The fight between residents in the complex and the Ambiance Owners Assn. began in 2024, after the HOA passed a policy prohibiting any flags, signs or banners from being displayed in common areas.

At the time, neighbors such as Cooke thought the policy was meant to deter flags showing support for sports teams or espousing

[See Flag, A6]



GENARO MOLINA Los Angeles Times

PEOPLE cross at Indiana Avenue as smoke rises last month from the Lineage facility fire in Boyle Heights.

L.A. grapples with pollution from fire

Warehouse incident exposed people to smoke and soot worse than deadly '25 blazes.

By TONY BRISCOE AND HAYLEY SMITH

The air near the Lineage refrigerated warehouse fire in Boyle Heights carried astronomically high levels of smoke and soot, surpassing some of the worst air pollution during the Los Angeles County fires in January 2025, according to preliminary data from air officials.

The fire spewed thick black smoke for days. From downtown Los Angeles to the San Gabriel Valley, tens of thousands of people were enveloped in unhealthy levels of smoke, even as some local officials told residents that the air posed no danger.

As the days wore on, worst off were communities nearest the blaze. On June 19, three days after the facility ignited, a temporary air quality monitoring station at Eastman Avenue Elementary School in unincorporated East Los Angeles measured an extremely hazardous 755 micrograms per cubic meter of fine particles for more than an hour, according to the South Coast Air Quality Management District.

For comparison, a Caltech air monitor in Pasadena recorded about 650 micrograms per cubic meter during last year's Eaton fire.

These high levels of fine particles, known as PM 2.5, probably resulted in the surge of residents into local emergency rooms during the fire, according to local health officials. But even now with the smoke gone, people still have not been

[See Pollution, A7]

California EV rebates coming soon

State budget has \$135 million for buyer incentives

By CAROLINE PETROW-COHEN

Nearly a year after the expiration of a \$7,500 federal tax incentive for new electric vehicles, California is stepping in to try to motivate buyers to go electric.

Gov. Gavin Newsom allocated \$135 million in his new state budget to provide incentives for new and used EVs.

Participating automakers will match the funds. California leads the na-

tion in EV adoption, though the market has taken a hit under the Trump administration.

The state budget — a more than \$350-billion spending plan — went into effect Wednesday. The EV incentives will take effect in the coming weeks as the California Air Resources Board irons out agreements with dealerships.

Here's what you need to know:

Size of incentives

Senate Bill 168 tasked the

California Air Resources Board with setting incentive amounts for new and used electric vehicles sold in California.

Eligible buyers will receive \$3,500 off for new EVs and \$1,750 off for used ones. Unlike the federal tax credits that expired in September, these incentives offer an instant discount and don't require buyers to apply for credit later.

State funds will cover half of the incentive amount, and auto manufacturers will cov-

[See Incentives, A12]



ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times

SERVING VENEZUELA

L.A. restaurateurs such as Kelly Montano, whose parents, above, are missing after the quakes, find ways to help their home country. CALIFORNIA, B1

U.S. burned by World Cup call

Team's win comes with costly red card, but the VAR system is to blame, Mirjam Swanson writes. SPORTS, B10

Fire insurance surcharges stay

A judge declines to block statewide levies imposed to offset the cost of a Fair Plan bailout. BUSINESS, A10

Weather Turning sunny. L.A. Basin: 80/60. B6

