Los Angeles Times

$3.66 DESIGNATED AREAS HIGHER © 2026 TUESDAY, AUGUST 18, 2026 latimes.com

BRIAN VAN DER BRUG Los Angeles Times

"THAT WAS FUN," one online bettor said on a thread predicting the containment date for the Palisades fire.

While L.A. burned, online gamblers bet on the damage

Experts say prediction sites that allow wagers on disasters can create dangerous incentives.

By Hannah Fry

As deadly firestorms raged in Los Angeles County, carving a path of destruction that displaced families and killed 31 people, bets online were rolling in.

The wagers flowed into Polymarket, a company that bills itself as the largest platform for predicting global events, where it posed frequently asked questions about the Eaton and Palisades fires as they scorched communities. How fast would the blazes grow? How long would it take to contain them? How much would be destroyed?

According to a letter sent from nine senators this month to the U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commission, which regulates prediction market platforms, Polymarket accepted more than $1.2 million in predictions, or bets, on the January 2025 fires.

"That was fun. Thanks everyone. Until the next time!" one Polymarket user commented on a thread where users could put money on the Palisades fire's containment date. Others, however, expressed some concerns about the morality of cashing in on the destruction.

"This is deeply unethical," one commented.

Prediction market platforms have exploded in popularity in recent years, facing condemnation from lawmakers and others who argue the sites commodify human suffering and, in some cases, incentivize wrongdoing. Proponents argue that the markets, their term for a question you can bet on, provide a more accurate snapshot of public opinion than traditional polls because of the financial incentives.

California Sens. Alex Padilla and Adam Schiff, along with seven other lawmakers, urged the federal government in their letter to rein in such betting and prevent people from profiting

[See **Betting**, A6]

Pro-Iran alliance bloodied but also unbroken

'Axis of Resistance' has been surprisingly resilient in face of U.S. campaign, analysts say.

By Nabih Bulos

AMMAN, Jordan — When the U.S. launched the Iran war nearly six months ago, it was to be the coup de grace in dismantling the "Axis of Resistance," an Iran-led alliance of armed groups and governments arrayed against the United States and Israel.

The axis included not just the militant groups Hamas and Hezbollah, but Yemen's Houthi rebels, militias in Syria and Iraq, and the government of Syria's then-dictator Bashar Assad.

The thinking was that with the axis' "tentacles" weakened, if not vanquished, all that would remain, as Israeli and U.S. officials often said, would be the "head of the octopus": Iran.

But it now appears reports of the axis' unraveling are exaggerated.

The Islamic Republic, far from capitulating under the U.S. and Israel's withering assault, has compounded its leverage by closing the Strait of Hormuz.

Hamas and Hezbollah remain stubbornly in place, with the latter maintaining its lethality, even as Iraqi militias — defying Baghdad's attempts at defanging them — have launched attacks on America's Persian Gulf allies.

And though Assad has been ousted from Syria, the Houthis in Yemen now threaten to restart their long-running feud with Saudi Arabia and seal another crucial choke point — the Bab al Mandab strait linking the Red Sea and the

[See **Alliance**, A3]

Netflix leans into YA with YouTube threat

Youth hub makes hundreds of shows easy to find

By Wendy Lee

Young adult dramas have always been pivotal to Netflix's programming. Think of massive global hits such as "Stranger Things" and "Outer Banks."

Now, the streaming giant wants to make it easier for viewers to find them on its vast and eclectic platform.

Netflix on Friday launched a new hub for YA content that includes several hundred titles of original or licensed movies and shows about the coming-of-age stories of young adults.

The genre is popular with viewers: 23 young adult titles made Netflix's global top 10 list this year. Those include the third season of "XO Kitty," about a young woman studying in Korea, and an ice skating drama called "Finding Her Edge."

Since 2023, Netflix said its YA shows and movies have generated more than 10.5 billion global views. The programs also are buzzy on social media, with YA titles representing 30% of Netflix's most-talked-about titles since 2022, according to the Los Gatos-based company.

"It's just been really clear that this audience has a voracious appetite, and they really look to Netflix as a premier destination for these types of stories," said Jinny Howe, Netflix's head of scripted series for the U.S. and Canada.

Netflix is not alone. The genre has become increasingly important to streamers as stories about first loves, high school drama and coming-of-age tales connect with a wide demographic, from young people to older generations. The third and final season of "Euphoria" ranks among HBO Max's three most-watched returning seasons. Amazon Prime Video in June held a fan event for its YA series and films called "Obsessed Fest." "Off Campus," which launched in May, reached 36 million viewers in its first 12 days on Prime Video, Amazon said.

Disney+, Paramount+ and HBO Max

[See **Netflix**, A10]

Buss contests family sale of Lakers stake

Court made her owner for life, she says, after siblings announce deal

By Thuc Nhi Nguyen

WALLY SKALIJ Los Angeles Times

JEANIE BUSS, with Kobe Bryant in 2009, has been the face of Lakers ownership for more than a decade.

For more than four decades, the Lakers were a family-run business. The sibling rivalries still remain.

Jeanie Buss is fighting back after her siblings reportedly voted to sell the family's remaining stake in the Lakers on Monday. The team's governor, Buss sent a letter through her attorney to her brothers' attorneys stating any votes to sell the family's remaining 17.8% stake in the team to new majority owners Bob Iger and Joshua Kushner are void because the sale cannot be completed without approval of the other trustees: Jeanie and her younger siblings, Janie and Joey.

ESPN reported Monday that the six Buss family siblings, who took over team ownership after their father, Jerry Buss, died in 2013, are selling their shares of the Lakers to Iger and Kushner following a family vote. Iger, the longtime Disney chief executive, and Kushner, a venture capitalist and entrepreneur, agreed last week to buy Mark Walter's control-

[See **Lakers**, A7]

CLIPPERS PROBE: Sides clash in latest phase of Leonard inquiry. **SPORTS, B10**

Gang war blamed in Shakur's death

Trial of the alleged mastermind behind rapper's killing gets started in Las Vegas.

By Richard Winton

Nearly 30 years after Tupac Shakur was gunned down near the Las Vegas Strip in a killing that rocked the rap world, the trial of the man prosecutors allege did everything but pull the trigger got underway Monday with new revelations.

Nevada prosecutors allege Duane "Keffe D" Davis, a onetime Compton gang member, orchestrated Shakur's killing as revenge for an attack on his nephew hours earlier and are using Davis' own words in interviews and a book he coauthored as evidence.

In opening statements, prosecutors said an ugly gang rivalry on the streets of Compton led to the slaying of Shakur, the rapper and actor, who died six days after he was shot.

The Sept. 7, 1996, shooting, they said, was rooted in a war between Southside Crips-Burris Street, led by Davis, and Mob Piru, a gang long associated with Death Row Records. Shakur was closely affiliated with Death Row, and the record company's boss, Marion "Suge" Knight, was inside his car the night he was attacked.

In court testimony Monday, it was revealed that Shakur was conscious en route to the hospital after the shooting but did not cooperate with authorities.

The first witness, Garry Dale, a Las Vegas Metro police officer, testified that he saw Shakur pulled out of the car with gunshot wounds and rode in the ambulance with him.

When he asked Shakur who shot him, the rapper replied, " 'No, we'll take care of it,' " Dale said. "I couldn't

[See **Shakur**, A6]

MATT SAYLES Associated Press

'NASHVILLE' STAR DIES

Hayden Panettiere, who began as a child actor in films before landing major roles on TV series such as "Heroes," was 36. **ENTERTAINMENT, E1**

Hybrid cars are hot again as EV demand slips

By Chester Dawson, Valentine Hilaire and Alisha Sachdev

Even with gasoline prices near a four-year high, global sales of electric vehicles are slowing as consumers balk at steep prices and a spotty charging infrastructure. In this odd climate, hybrid cars are hot again after a quarter-century out of the limelight. Automakers are selling more of them than ever, and in more countries, ramping up production to meet demand.

Hybrids accounted for about 14% of new cars sold in the U.S. last year, up from less than 3% in 2020. In Spain, hybrids made up almost half of all new cars; in Japan, more than half.

In the U.S., demand is expected to more than double over the next decade. Even California is back on the bandwagon, with hybrid registrations overtaking those of EVs in the second quarter.

"The consumer has spoken, and hybrids are a hit," said David Christ, who leads the Toyota brand in North America. "We're just going to keep building more."

The gasoline-electric category has come a long way since the Toyota Prius arrived around the turn of the century. Where hybrids were once seen as a pit stop in the transition to fully electric vehicles, consumers are choosing them over EVs in greater numbers because they are usually cheaper, have a longer driving range and can be refueled at any gas station. For automakers battered by inflation and tariffs, hybrids also are attractive, fetching a premium of $1,500 to $3,000 per vehicle over wholly gasoline-powered models, according to Edmunds.com.

Auto executives say they still think EVs will win out over time, but that could

[See **Hybrids**, A10]

L.A. mayoral poll was fake

The company behind a purported survey showing Bass with a wide lead comes clean. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Paramount seeks funds from states

Studio asks a judge to require a $1.9-billion bond in antitrust lawsuit. **BUSINESS, A9**

Weather
Partly sunny.
L.A. Basin: 90/69. **B6**

For the latest news, go to **latimes.com.**

7 85944 00200 5