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EDUCATION

SCHOOLS CHIEF GRILLED ON ANTISEMITISM CASES

Berkeley: Superintendent Enikia Ford Morthel faces 2 hours of scathing criticism, scrutiny from Republican-led House panel over her handling of anti-Jewish incidents in the district



ANNA MONEYMAKER — GETTY IMAGES

Enikia Ford Morthel, superintendent of the Berkeley Unified School District, listens during a hearing Tuesday with subcommittee members of the House Education and the Workforce Committee in Washington on antisemitism in K-12 schools.

By Molly Gibbs

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In a first-of-its-kind congressional hearing on antisemitism in public K-12 schools, Berkeley Unified Superintendent Enikia Ford Morthel faced two hours of scathing criticism and scrutiny of her handling of alleged antisemitic incidents and pro-Palestinian protests in the district as the Israel-Hamas war continues to rage.

Ford Morthel testified in Washington, D.C., that while the district faces multiple complaints accusing it of antisemitism — including a federal civil rights investigation — discrimination is not tolerated in the small school district and is dealt with appropriately.

“Antisemitism is not pervasive in Berkeley Unified School District,” she said. “When investigations show that an antisemitic event has occurred, we take action to teach, correct and redirect our students.”



AMANDA ANDRADE-RHOADES — THE NEW YORK TIMES

Karla Silvestre, a school board president in Montgomery County, Md., right, listens to Kobie Talmoud, 16, a high school junior from Silver Spring, Md., talk about his experiences with antisemitism.

Ford Morthel was one of three school leaders from across the country to testify during the Republican-led House education subcommittee hearing. New York City School Chancellor David Banks and Montgomery County School Board President

Karla Silvestre of Maryland also faced questions on how they are handling a national rise of antisemitism in K-12 public schools.

The hearing comes a day after President Joe Biden spoke at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and condemned a “fero-

cious surge of antisemitism” in the U.S. following Hamas’ Oct. 7 attack against Israel.

Previous hearings by the committee involved testimony by presidents of college campuses, including Harvard, University of Pennsylvania, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and, most recently, Columbia University. The presidents of Harvard and Penn resigned following their appearances amid criticism of their answers about what constitutes free speech or violates the institutions’ code of conduct.

In his opening statements, Florida Republican Aaron Bean, who chairs the House Education and Workforce subcommittee on elementary and secondary education, said, “The very need for this hearing is a travesty” and added that the witnesses represent “some of the largest school districts in the nation where there’s been some vile antisemitism.”

HEARING » PAGE 5

TRANSIT

BART to use cars bound for San Jose

VTA to pay \$173M for rail cars that extension won’t see for a decade

By Grace Hase

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In yet another unintended consequence of the repeated delays facing San Jose’s BART extension, the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority is purchasing 48 rail cars for the South Bay that will run throughout the BART system and have the wear and tear of more than a decade of use before they ever travel through downtown San Jose and up to Santa Clara.

The VTA Board of Directors last week narrowly approved the \$172.6 million purchase for the cars that will eventually run on the six-mile, four-station extension from the Berryessa Transit Center in north San Jose. But the transaction, which came to light now due to a soon-to-be expired deal with BART to get the cars at a discounted rate, faced pushback from many of the directors — even some who voted in favor.

The issue boils down to timing. The 48 cars are expected to be delivered in 2026, which was when the second phase of the Silicon Valley extension was originally supposed to open. However, the project has faced multiple delays and escalating costs, and now won’t open until 2037 if all goes according to the current plan.

Keeping the cars in storage
BART » PAGE 5

CALIFORNIA

Court mulls pulling tax measure from ballot

Initiative would make it harder for state and local governments to raise rates

By Olga R. Rodriguez

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO » The California Supreme Court is weighing whether to keep a measure off the November ballot that would make it harder for the state and local governments to raise taxes, in a legal battle pitting Gov. Gavin Newsom and Democratic lawmakers against the business groups and taxpayer advocates who organized the initiative.

Several of the seven justices who heard arguments Wednesday questioned whether keeping the entire measure from the ballot, which would be a rare step for the court, was the best option. The justices also sought to better understand the measure’s impact on local governments’ ability to raise taxes and fees.

Under the current system, the Legislature can raise taxes with a two-thirds vote in both the Senate and Assembly. The initiative would require that voters also approve any new tax hikes after legislative passage for them to take effect.

The measure would also change the voting threshold by
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OBITUARY

McCloskey, ex-South Bay congressman, dies at 96

Last ‘progressive, green, anti-war Republican’ had called for Nixon to resign

By Paul Rogers

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Paul N. “Pete” McCloskey, a decorated Korean War combat Marine who beat celebrity Shirley Temple to win a seat in Congress representing the Peninsula and South Bay in the late 1960s, then became the first Republican in the House to call for Richard Nixon’s resignation and a co-chair of the first Earth Day, died Wednesday. He was 96.

A colorful, contrarian figure for generations, McCloskey died at his house in Winters, in rural Yolo County, of congestive heart failure.

Throughout his life, McCloskey was known as someone who put principle over politics, even when it ruffled feathers. A square-jawed iconoclast, he was a prominent member of what today is nearly an extinct breed in Congress — a liberal Republican.

McCloskey also was a champion of environmental issues who saw his work as a continuum of the conservation efforts



JEFF CHIU — THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Former Congressman Pete McCloskey, here in 2006, was a pro-environment, anti-Vietnam War California Republican.

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