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LEZLIE STERLING lsterling@sacbee.com



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Sen. Butler boasts 'win' for crime victims fund despite less money

BY DAVID LIGHTMAN
dlightman@mcclatchydc.com

WASHINGTON

Earlier this month, outgoing California's U.S. Senator Laphonza Butler boasted that she

had "secured wins for California," and cited as one of her achievements \$1.3 billion for the federal fund to help crime victims.

While that figure is accurate, Butler failed to say the funding is not a win. It's a steep drop

from funding the previous year and the year prior to that.

And her claim — which suggested all the money would go to California — was perhaps misleading. The \$1.3 billion will go to help crime victims across the country. California will re-



Laphonza Butler

ceive only some of those funds — possibly between \$80 and \$100 million, according to state Office of Emergency Services estimates.

Butler's office says the senator met with advocacy groups and helped win congressional approval of the money.

"It's not misleading. The point of our press release is to tout the wins that will go back to California in some way," said Audrey Lopez, the senator's communications director. "We

SEE BUTLER, 9A

Dems: Tax would help Medi-Cal funding amid deficit

BY LINDSEY HOLDEN AND MATHEW MIRANDA
lholden@sacbee.com
mmiranda@sacbee.com

California Gov. Gavin Newsom and state lawmakers are trying to find a way to fund Medi-Cal and other promised safety net programs while dealing with a projected deficit of \$38 billion to \$73 billion.

One solution is increasing a managed care organization, or MCO, tax on health insurers to raise an additional \$1.5 billion in federal dollars through 2026. California uses the tax to draw down federal dollars and fund services related to Medi-Cal, the state's version of the federal Medicaid program.

But Democratic budget leaders have been unclear about how exactly that new \$1.5 billion will be spent, angering Republicans who are already unhappy about Newsom's continuing push to expand health coverage for undocumented Californians.

Here's where the funding will go and who will benefit from ongoing Medi-Cal spending.

HOW WILL THE STATE SPEND THE MONEY?

Under the governor's budget, the state will spend nearly \$36 billion in general fund dollars on Medi-Cal during fiscal year 2024-25, down about \$1.4 billion from the previous year, the Legislative Analyst's Office reported.

To capture additional funding in a tough budget year, lawmakers during their final week of session before their spring recess approved a \$1.5 billion increase to the MCO tax the Legislature signed off on last year. The federal government still needs to OK the extra money.

The tax is "a mechanism to generate new state funds that can be used to match with federal funds to bring additional federal Medicaid dollars to California," according to the California Department of Health Care Services.

California last year was slated to get \$19.4 billion

SEE FUNDING, 6A



ERIN SCHAFF NYT

From a nearby shore, people look out to the cargo ship Dali and the destroyed Francis Scott Key Bridge Friday in Baltimore. The thus-far unexplained cascading collapse of the Dali's vital operating systems left it adrift before it struck the bridge.

Spotlight turns to crew members in Key Bridge collapse

BY EDUARDO MEDINA
NYT News Service

BALTIMORE

Even from miles away, the destruction of the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore is a

jarring visual: Chunks of steel jut above the water like metallic icebergs. Twisted gray beams protrude in crooked positions. From a park near Fort McHenry, visitors can see the giant cargo ship that struck the bridge and remains lodged in the wreckage.

Less visible, however, are the 22 crew members from India who have remained on the ship, named the Dali, since the disaster Tuesday.

Little is publicly known about them other than that they are seafarers who embarked on a journey aboard the 985-foot-long cargo ship that was on its way to Sri Lanka, carrying 4,700 shipping containers, when it lost power and struck the Key Bridge, causing the structure to collapse.

Since the accident, which killed six construction workers, the crew members have found

themselves in an unexpected spotlight. While keeping the ship operable, they are answering a deluge of questions from officials investigating the nighttime catastrophe, as the evidence of what occurred lays around them in mangled ruins stretching across the bow and deck.

While officials investigate what could have caused the tragedy, another question has emerged this past week: What could the crew members, who have limited access to the out-

SEE BRIDGE, 6A

Spread of organic farms may prompt more pesticide use, not less

BY KAREN KAPLAN
Los Angeles Times

To help California fight climate change, air quality regulators would like to see 20% of the state's farmland go organic by 2045. That means converting about 65,000 acres of conventional fields to organic practices every year.

But depending on how that transition happens, the change could lead to an overall increase in the amount of pesticide used

by growers throughout the state.

So suggests a recent study in the journal *Science* that examined how organic farms influence the behavior of their neighbors. Researchers found that when new organic fields come online, the insects that come with them may prompt conventional growers to boost their pesticide use by an amount large enough to offset the reduction in organic fields — and then some.

"We expect an increase in organic in the future," said

study leader Ashley Larsen, a professor of agricultural and landscape ecology at UC Santa Barbara. "How do we make sure this is not causing unintended harm?"

Organic farming practices help fight climate change by producing healthier soil that can hold on to more carbon and by eschewing synthetic nitrogen fertilizers, which fuel greenhouse gas emissions. Organic methods are also more sustain-

SEE FARMS, 6A



JAY L. CLENDENIN Los Angeles Times

Robert Dedlow, owner of Kentor Canyon Farms in Fillmore, cuts organic thyme during a tour of his farm in 2021. The plan to boost the number of organic farms in the state could lead to an overall increase in the amount of pesticide used by growers throughout the state.

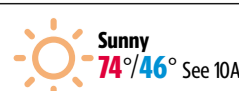


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