

# THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

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## IRVINE

# Great Park entering 'heart' of a new era



Great Park Chairman Mike Carroll, left, and Sean Crumby, Irvine's assistant city manager, talk about a planned amphitheater as they stand on a hill overlooking the site at the Great Park in Irvine on Monday. The amphitheater is scheduled to open in 2028 as part of \$1 billion in development. PHOTOS BY JEFF GRITCHEN — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

## State of the Park address tonight to share vision of 1,300-acre development

By Jonathan Horwitz  
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It's not yesterday's Great Park.

That's part of the message Great Park Chairman Mike Carroll plans to deliver this evening during a State of the Park address in front of an expected crowd of more than 2,000 people.

For years, the park has been defined by acres of sports fields and its signature big orange balloon that gives passengers an aerial view of Orange County.

But many more signature amenities are coming to the park in the years ahead — about \$1 billion worth — and Carroll wants to tell you about them.

"Tuesday's the day we let everyone know we're a lot more than a balloon and some sports fields," Carroll said, "We're a major metropolitan park on the build."

"Behind these fences," he said during an interview at the park Monday, pointing to a large construction zone by the Wild Rivers water park, "is a world-class park taking



Crumby stands in a Whoosh cable car at the Great Park in Irvine on Monday. The battery-powered prototype is expected to become a major transportation system at the park.

shape."

Irvine calls that area under construction the "Heart of the Park," meaning that if you've been to the Great Park at all, you haven't seen anything like what it could become.

In all, the Great Park — at

the site of the former Marine Corps Air Station El Toro in Irvine — will be more than 1,300 acres.

It will be bigger than San Diego's Balboa Park, San Francisco's Golden Gate Park and New York City's Central Park.

Yet, visits to the Great Park probably haven't felt that significant. That's because only a fraction of the park has been developed.

Carroll acknowledged in an

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## IMMIGRATION

# Trump launches removals program

Administration says it will pay people in U.S. illegally to leave

By Rebecca Santana  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Pushing forward with its mass deportation agenda, President Donald Trump's administration said Monday it would pay \$1,000 to immigrants who are in the United States illegally and return to their home country voluntarily.

The Department of Homeland Security said in a news release it would also pay for travel assistance and that people who use an app called CBP Home to tell the government they plan to return home will be "deprioritized" for detention and removal by immigration enforcement.

"If you are here illegally, self-deportation is the best, safest and most cost-effective way to leave the United States to avoid arrest," Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said. "DHS is now offering illegal aliens financial travel assistance and a stipend to return to their home country through the CBP Home App."

The department said it had already paid for a plane ticket for one migrant to return home to

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## NEWPORT BEACH

# Investor-swindling attorney gets almost 2 years prison time

By Sean Emery  
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A Newport Beach attorney who admitted she swindled investors out of \$8.7 million to bankroll her lavish lifestyle and high-rolling gambling habit was sentenced Monday to one year and nine months in federal prison.

A luxuriant lifestyle of high-end jewelry, luxury cars, a six-month stay at an opulent Las Vegas resort and millions of dollars in gambling losses — all financed on the back of unsuspecting well-heeled investors — ended with Sara Jacqueline King pleading guilty last year to wire fraud and money laundering.

Citing the large monetary loss and the lavish lifestyle it paid for, U.S. District Judge David O. Carter denied a defense request for a shorter prison sentence.

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## DEL MAR

# Boat capsizes; 3 dead, 9 missing

4 survivors of suspected smuggling vessel are found; search continues

By Karen Kucher  
THE SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE

A search was underway Monday after a suspected smuggling boat capsized off Del Mar in San Diego County, killing three people.

Early reports indicated nine people were missing from the boat, while four survivors were located.

"Potentially nine more individuals are unaccounted for," Coast Guard spokesperson Adam Stanton said. "That nine number doesn't mean they are in the water. They could have made it to shore."

The overturned boat was discovered just north of Torrey Pines State Beach about 6:30 a.m.

A survivor who was interviewed told first responders that nine people were missing, including one or two children, Coast Guard spokesperson Hunter Schnabel said.



A lifeguard gathers debris, including life jackets and gas cans, as authorities work to secure the scene where a suspected smuggling panga overturned in the Del Mar surf early Monday morning. K.C. ALFRED — THE SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE

Personnel from several agencies were involved in the search, including Coast Guard and San Diego Fire-Rescue Department helicopters, a 45-foot Coast Guard

response boat, and lifeguards in rescue boats and personal watercraft. Some people were combing

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## VATICAN CITY

# Conclave will be most geographically diverse

By Nicole Winfield  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

VATICAN CITY — There is no rule that cardinals electing a new pope vote a certain way according to their nationality or region. But understanding their makeup in geographic terms can help explain some of their priorities as they open the conclave Wednesday to choose a new leader of the 1.4 billion strong Catholic Church.

A cardinal who heads the Vatican's liturgy office might have a very different set of concerns from the archbishop of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. A cardinal who runs a large European archdiocese with hundreds of priests likely has other priorities than the Vatican ambassador ministering to war-torn Syria or the archbishop of Managua, Nicaragua, whose church has been under siege by the government.

There are 135 cardinals who are under age 80 and eligible to vote in the conclave, hailing from 71 countries in the most geographically diverse conclave in history. Already two have formally told the Holy See that they cannot attend for health reasons, bringing the number of men who will enter the Sistine Chapel down to 133.

"We must look at all five continents," Cardinal Luis José Rueda Aparicio, archbishop of Bogota, Colombia, said Monday as cardinals met ahead of the conclave. "The Holy Spirit looks at them all."

A two-thirds majority is needed to be elected pope, meaning that if the number of electors holds at 133, the winner must secure 89 votes.

"We support whoever is the best person," Singapore's

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## CLIMATE

# States sue the Trump administration for blocking the development of wind energy

By Jennifer McDermott  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A coalition of state attorneys general filed a lawsuit Monday against President Donald Trump's attempt to stop the development of wind energy.

Attorneys general from 17 states, including California, and Washington, D.C., are challenging an executive order Trump signed during his first day in office, pausing approvals, permits and loans for all wind energy projects both onshore and offshore. They say Trump doesn't have the authority to unilaterally shut down the permitting process, and he's jeopardizing development of a power source critical to the states' economic vitality, energy mix, public health and climate goals.

They're asking a federal judge to declare the order unlawful and stop federal agencies from implementing it.

"This arbitrary and unnecessary directive threatens the loss of thousands of good-paying jobs and billions in investments, and it is delaying our transition away from the fossil fuels that harm our health and our planet," New York Attorney General Letitia James, who is leading the coalition, said in a statement.

White House spokesperson Taylor Rogers said Democratic attorneys general are "using lawfare to stop the president's popular energy agenda," instead of working with him to unleash American energy and lower prices for families.

"The American people voted for the president to restore America's energy dominance, and Americans in blue states should not have to pay the price of the Democrats' radical climate agenda," Rogers said in a statement to The Associated Press.

Trump vowed during the campaign to end the offshore wind industry if he returned to the White House. His order said there were "alleged legal deficiencies underlying the federal government's leasing and permitting" of wind projects, and it directed the Interior secretary to review wind leasing and permitting practices for federal waters and lands.



Donald Trump vowed during his presidential campaign to end the offshore wind industry. Above, wind turbines are seen off the coast of Block Island, R.I., in 2024. SETH WENIG — AP

The Biden administration saw offshore wind as a climate change solution, setting national goals, holding lease sales and approving nearly a dozen commercial-scale projects. Trump is reversing those energy policies. He's boosting fossil fuels such as oil, natural gas and coal, which cause climate change, arguing it's necessary for the U.S. to have the lowest-cost energy and electricity in the world.

The Trump administration took a more aggressive step against wind in April when it ordered the Norwegian company Equinor to halt construction on Empire Wind, a fully permitted project located southeast of Long Island, New York, that is about 30% complete. Interior Secretary Doug Burgum said it appeared the Biden administration rushed the approval.

Equinor went through a seven-year permitting process before starting to build Empire Wind last year to provide power to 500,000 New York homes. Equinor is considering legal options, which would be separate from the complaint filed Monday. The Norwegian government owns a majority stake in Equinor.

Wind provides about 10% of the electricity generated in the United States, making it the nation's largest source of renewable energy. The attorneys general argue that Trump's order is at odds with years of bipartisan support for wind energy and contradicts his own declaration of a "national energy emergency," which called for expanding domestic energy production.

States have already invested large sums to develop wind energy. The coalition includes Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Washington and Washington, D.C. They say they've invested hundreds of millions of dollars collectively to develop wind energy and even more on upgrading transmission lines to bring wind energy to the electrical grid.

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said the executive order sows chaos, when businesses need clear regulations to effectively operate. Large, ocean-based wind farms are the linchpin of state plans to shift to renewable energy, particularly in populous East Coast states with limited land. The nation's first

commercial-scale offshore wind farm opened a year ago, a 12-turbine wind farm east of Montauk Point, New York. A smaller wind farm operates near Block Island in waters controlled by the state of Rhode Island.

Massachusetts has invested in offshore wind to ensure residents have access to well-paying green jobs and reliable, affordable energy, Massachusetts Attorney General Andrea Campbell said. The state has three offshore wind projects in various stages of development, include Vineyard Wind. The U.S. Supreme Court on Monday denied to hear a case brought by fishermen's organizations challenging the approval of Vineyard Wind.

The Trump administration has also suspended federal funding for floating offshore wind research in Maine and revoked a permit for a proposed offshore wind project in New Jersey.

Elsewhere, political leaders are trying to rapidly increase wind energy. U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced a major investment in wind power in April while hosting an international summit on energy security. Nova Scotia plans to offer leases for five gigawatts of offshore wind energy by 2030, Nova Scotia Premier Tim Houston said in Virginia last week at an Oceanic Network conference.

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## KING

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"This is a lot of money," Carter said. "There has always been a tremendous sense of betrayal."

King opted not to speak during the sentencing hearing at the federal courthouse in Santa Ana. But her defense attorney, Sam Cross, cited alcohol, drug and gambling issues as having pushed King, both physically and emotionally, away from her family and toward the multimillion-dollar fraud.

"She has been humbled," Cross told the judge. "She has lost everything. She has to rebuild from nothing at the age of 41. She is really starting from zero."

First Assistant U.S. Attorney Jennifer Waier acknowledged that King, in a separate criminal case, provided the government assistance in convicting another man, John McCabe, of defrauding a 78-year-old Irvine man out of nearly \$2 million. But the

prosecutor noted that even after pleading guilty in her own case, King described herself as "Lady Mafia" during an appearance on a podcast.

"It was brazen," Waier said of King's scam. "It went on for a long time."

"This defendant is a lawyer," the prosecutor added. "She had the trust of the public."

In a letter to the court, one of the defrauded investors who had been friends with King's husband accused King of using her legal knowledge to "destroy the lives of those who trusted her." The investor described receiving phony documents from King that included fake photos of cars and luxury watches King apparently claimed they were going to lend against in order to "give the illusion of security and legitimacy."

"This wasn't a mistake," the investor wrote. "It was an elaborate, sustained scheme built on lie after lie. What she did took planning, effort, and

cold disregard for the damage it would cause. She took not only my money, but my peace, my trust in others, and my ability to feel safe in my relationships."

King's eye-popping lifestyle and tales of around-the-clock gambling drew headlines when she was first accused in a federal civil lawsuit in early 2023 of scamming a lender out of more than \$10 million.

King, through her Newport Beach-based King Family Lending LLC, provided short-term, high-interest loans to professional athletes, celebrities and other wealthy individuals, she acknowledged in a written plea deal. The loans were supposed to be secured by the borrowers, whose assets included designer handbags, watches, luxury cars, yachts and earnings from guaranteed sports contracts.

Investors, whom King recruited from January 2022 to January 2023, were told that their funds were secured by the same collat-

eral as the loans themselves. If a borrower defaulted, King assured them she would sell the collateral to pay the investor in full.

King claimed to the investors that she would keep a percentage of the interest earned from their loans and would pass along the remaining percentage of the interest to the investors, along with their initial investment.

Those promised loans, however, never actually existed.

King spent the majority of the funds on a six-month stay at the Wynn Las Vegas resort, where she gambled "24/7" and lost an estimated \$6 million to \$7 million, according to a lawsuit investors have filed against her. As part of her plea deal, she also admitted to buying a \$132,156 Porsche Taycan electric sports car, prosecutors allege.

In all, King in her plea deal admitted to defrauding five investors out of \$8.7 million.

One of the investors, British Virgin Islands-based LDR International Limited, has

## TRUMP

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Honduras from Chicago and said more tickets have been booked for this week and next.

Trump made immigration enforcement and the mass deportation of immigrants in the United States illegally a centerpiece of his campaign, and he is following through during the first months of his administration. But it is a costly, resource-intensive endeavor.

While the Republican administration is asking Congress for a massive increase in resources for the Immigration and Customs Enforcement department responsible for removing people from the country, it's also pushing people in the country illegally to "self-deport."

It has coupled this self-deportation push with television ads threatening action against people in the U.S. illegally and social media images showing immigration enforcement arrests and migrants being sent to a prison in El Salvador.

The Trump administration has often portrayed self-deportation as a way for migrants to preserve their ability to return to the U.S. someday.

But Aaron Reichlin-Melnick, a senior fellow at the American Immigration Council, which advocates for immigrants, said there's a lot for migrants to be cautious about in the latest offer from Homeland Security.

He said it's often worse for people to leave the country and not fight their case in immigration court, especially if they're already in removal proceedings. He said if migrants are in removal proceedings and don't show up in court they can automatically get a deportation order and leaving the country usually counts as abandoning many applications for relief, including asylum applications.

And Homeland Security is not indicating that it is closely coordinating with the immigration courts so that there are no repercus-

sions for people in immigration court if they leave, he said.

"People's immigration status is not as simple as this makes it out to be," Reichlin-Melnick said.

He questioned where Homeland Security would get the money and the authorization to make the payments and he suggested they are necessary because the administration can't arrest and remove as many people as it has promised so it has to encourage people to do it on their own.

"They're not getting their numbers," he said.

As part of its self-deportation effort, the Trump administration has transformed an app that had been used by President Joe Biden's administration to allow nearly 1 million migrants to schedule appointments to enter the country into a tool to help migrants return home. Under the Biden administration, it was called CBP One; now it's dubbed CBP Home.

Homeland Security said "thousands" of migrants have used the app to self-deport.

But Mark Krikorian, who heads the Center for Immigration Studies, which advocates for less immigration, said he doesn't see the offer of paying people to go home as an admission that something in the Trump administration's immigration enforcement agenda isn't working.

Considering the millions of people who are in the country illegally, he said, it's impossible to deport all of them so the administration has to combine its own enforcement efforts with encouraging people to go home voluntarily.

Krikorian said he supports the idea of paying migrants to leave although he questioned how it would work in reality.

"How do you make sure that they've actually gone home? Do you make them sign an agreement where they agree not to challenge their removal if they were to come back?" he questioned. "The execution matters, but the concept is sound."

## PARK

From Page 1

interview Monday that building the Great Park got off to a "bumpy first couple of years" and that Tuesday's event is a "bit of a reboot."

Orange County voters approved the idea for a central park, nature preserve and multiuse development at the site of the former air base back in 2002. That plan won out over an idea to convert the base into an international airport much larger than John Wayne Airport.

Over two decades, private developers have built up thousands of units of housing around the park, but the city has been slower to bring amenities into the park itself.

Carroll, who in 2019 joined the Irvine City Council, which oversees the park, said the dissolution of redevelopment agencies in California in 2012 caused financing issues, which in turn caused delays.

Then, after the city recovered from that to develop

the sports complex and related amenities, including the 5,000-seat soccer stadium (home to the OC Soccer Club), the coronavirus pandemic "really put everything on hold for a bit," he said.

Nevertheless, Carroll believes the park's doldrums are behind it, and a golden age of construction lies ahead.

"Each and every major metropolitan park in America took decades to come to life," Carroll said. "I'm excited that it's officially go time for the Great Park."

Financing for the park comes from community and redevelopment-related funds, city bonds and a community facilities district tax levied on residents near the Great Park in the Altair, Cadence Park and Novel Park neighborhoods.

Currently, the city of Irvine is building out 800 additional acres of the park, adding 22 acres of cascading lakes with waterfalls, islands and a shorefront restaurant to which diners will be able to

boat up to or paddle up to in canoes.

Nearby will be a 10,000-person amphitheater, set to open in 2028, which will replace the temporary Great Park Live venue that opened last year and will become a sort of "Irvine Meadows 2.0," Carroll said.

"Hopefully, we'll be able to have many of our citywide events and graduations here," he added as staffers explained how the dug-in nature of the amphitheater and the placement of buildings will help insulate the sound from nearby neighborhoods.

On the other side of the lakes, the city plans to add an arboretum and botanical garden, a veterans memorial, a retail center and a central library.

"Every great city needs to have a great library," Carroll said.

A part of the park known as the cultural terrace, which broke ground last year, will become home to the Flying Leatherneck Aviation Museum, the Pretend

City Children's Museum, the Orange County Music & Dance school and a forthcoming Asian American history museum.

These spaces will open over the next few years, with the city working to launch many of the venues by the time the Olympics come to Southern California in 2028, Assistant City Manager Sean Crumby said.

"It's such a diversity — museums, parks, retail, sports — it's tremendous," Carroll said. "I think this can be the finest metropolitan park in America."

Tuesday's event — at Great Park Live — will showcase all these attributes in virtual reality, but the biggest tech draw is something else entirely. It's the chance to step inside a Whoosh cable car, the centerpiece of what could become the park's futuristic transportation system.

In April, the City Council approved entering into negotiations with Swyft Cities to build an auton-

ous elevated cable transit network that could ferry visitors around the park.

Dubbed the Whoosh system, cars in the battery-powered aerial transit system can reach up to 30 mph and could eventually take people from the nearby Metrolink station across the 4-square-mile park in a matter of minutes.

The Whoosh system has not been built anywhere else in the world, but another pilot project is underway in Queenstown, New Zealand.

While Irvine has only just begun to negotiate with Swyft Cities, both parties have expressed interest in a deal where Swyft Cities would front the cost for the initial segment of the park's Whoosh system in exchange for naming it as "the transportation module for the Great Park."

The initial segment would connect the park's visitor center to The Canopy retail area, a stretch estimated to cost almost \$10 million and that could move nearly 3,000

people per hour, co-founder Clay Griggs said.

Griggs said the Great Park system could eventually include 12 stations and move up to 10,000 people per hour around the entire park.

The city would need to spend an estimated \$40 million more to make that happen.

At an April council meeting, Crumby said the city has looked at other transportation options for the park, such as trams, people movers and bus circulators. The Whoosh system, in early estimates, would be cheaper and less disruptive to existing ground infrastructure, according to city staffers.

Representatives from the company, as well as from the forthcoming Great Park museums and the Anaheim Ducks (due to their connection with Great Park Ice), will all be at today's family friendly showcase.

The State of the Great Park runs from 4 to 7 p.m. Live music and refreshments will be provided.

at Resorts World Las Vegas. Richards sent the photo to casino security, who used facial recognition technology to confirm King's identity and then escorted her from the property.

King has previously accused her now ex-husband, Kamran Abbas-Vahid, a French citizen who lives in Morocco, of pressuring her to gamble loan proceeds in order to recoup the money she owed LDR International.

King, in her own court filings, has alleged that Abbas-Vahid did not work and had no money and claimed that she purchased two Long Beach buildings valued at \$5 million to house his failed cannabis business. She also claimed her husband would accompany her as she played in the high-limit slot room at the Wynn Las Vegas and would collect her winnings when she hit a large jackpot.

Staff writer Scott Schwabke contributed to this report.