

■ **HUNTINGTON BEACH CITY COUNCIL**



DRINKING water in Huntington Beach will continue to be fluoridated. (HBPD photo).

End to fluoridation didn't hold water

By a Staff Writer

A proposal to stop fluoridation of drinking water in Huntington Beach sank without a trace on Tuesday night. Or maybe the idea didn't hold water, or was considered "all wet" by the public.

In any case, a city council agenda item concerning

discontinuing supplemental fluoridation was pulled before the start of the meeting.

Nevertheless, several speakers addressed the council to express their opposition to the idea. Once resident who pursued a career in dentistry said that adding fluoride

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Nickelodeon Hotel Before City Planners

A 500-room project back on the agenda

By **Jim Tortolano**
Orange County Tribune

Spongebob Squarepants, wake up. We might have some big news for you.

When the Garden Grove Planning Commission meets on Thursday, it will consider three actions which could have a big impact on the city's hotel district and municipal coffers.

Planners will hold public hearings on a long-awaited project to build a Nickelodeon-themed 500-room hotel on a 3.72-acre site on Harbor Boulevard at the northwest corner with Twintree Avenue, south of the existing Sheraton Hotel.

The planned develop-



ARTIST'S RENDERING of the proposed Nickelodeon hotel on Harbor Boulevard in Garden Grove (File photo).

ment would also include 17,715-square feet of ballroom and meeting rooms; restaurants that can seat up to 600 people and the Nick Studio theater, a studio hall, and 8,532 square feet devoted to retail and fitness spa.

Kam Sang Co., Inc. is asking the commission for approval of a planned unit development, site plan and supplemental environmental impact report.

The project was original-

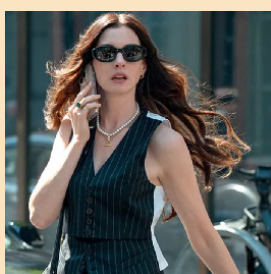
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In The Tribune



Jackson leading Ducks to glory

SEE SPORTS PAGE 6



'Prada' seems a bit overdressed

ARTS & LIVING PAGE 5

Arrest made in attempted murder

A family dispute in Garden Grove ended up with one person hospitalized with a gunshot wound and the other arrested for attempted murder.

According to Sgt. Nick Jensen of the GGPD, the incident took place on Monday in the 12100 block of Flagstone Ave-

nue, east of Harbor Boulevard and north of the Garden Grove Freeway.

GGPD officers responded to the address at 3:54 p.m. regarding a report of an assault with a deadly weapon. Both the victim and suspect were outside the residence when they arrived.

The gunshot victim — Jeff Fulgham, a 48-year-old resident of Garden Grove — had sustained a gunshot wound to his upper torso. Orange County Fire Authority personnel provided the immediate medical attention and the victim was taken to an area hospital in

Continued on page 2

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The★Tribune

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The★Tribune **Covering Garden Grove, Huntington Beach, Stanton and Westminster**

GG shooting

Continued from page 1

critical condition. Dale Shroyer, 56, of Garden Grove – the suspect – was detained by police and later placed under arrest. The events leading up to the shooting are being investigated.

Anyone with information about his incident is asked to contact Detective Heine at (714) 741-5422.

Nickelodeon

Continued from page 1

ly approved by the panel in July 2022, but the legal battles that followed delayed the beginning of construction for nearly four years.

Nickelodeon was the first pay television channel for children. Established in 1979, it's branched out to a wider audience with five “sister channels” and now also operates several theme park operations in the U.S. and Europe. It's home to the popular “Spongebob” animated TV show also produced live for the stage and motion pictures. For those who are unfamiliar with Nickelodeon, getting “slimed” involves getting a green semi-liquid substance dumped on your head, either to celebrate or humble the slime-ee.

The hotel, once completed, was estimated in 2022 to be able to generate \$3.5 million annually in revenue to the city by its third year of operation in a combination of “bed tax” charged to hotel guests, sales tax and property tax.

The commission will meet at 7 p.m. in the Community Meeting Center, 11300 Stanford Ave.

Fluoridation

Continued from page 1

to the drinking water was especially important for less affluent families who had less access to affordable dental care.

Another cited research which indicated that communities that lacked fluoridation in their drinking water had a 25 percent higher rate of cavities and other dental problems than the average.

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News & Views

What's the real problem with voting system?

"In the classic movie (and actual historical record), investigative reporters were directed to the heart of the Watergate conspiracy by this pithy advice: "Follow the money."

In trying to sort out the motivations of people (and groups) who are pushing for a particular issue, my personal compass tends to point toward this Latin phrase: "cui bono" (or "cui bon est") which means, roughly this: who benefits?



Retorts
Jim Tortolano

One of the measures on the primary ballot for the November general election is the California Voter ID initiative which – if approved by voters – would require voters to provide identification and U.S. citizenship verification to cast a ballot.

There's a problem with voting, all right. But it's a little different than the one that will be contested this fall.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in the last presidential election in 2024, of the 73.6 percent of the citizen voting-age population who were registered to vote (about 174 million people) 65.3 percent voted. That means that fewer than two-thirds of citizens actually cast a ballot in an era when it is easier than ever to vote. You can do it by mail, in person, at a secure drop box, etc.. One third, essentially, "sat this one out."

I suspect that so many people do feel so disconnected from the political process – or are just lazy-bones – that no amount of incentive would move the needle. For some folks, if the registrar of voters came to your house, brought

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SUSPECT FLEEING from Westminster police found that getting away was not easy as it seemed. (WPD photo).

Westminster foot chase ends up with handcuffs

A foot chase didn't end well for a man fleeing from Westminster police.

On April 28, WPD officers made a traffic stop for multiple violations in the area of Magnolia Street and Bolsa Avenue.

While the officer was getting the vehicle occupants' information, the driver took off on foot. The officer gave pursuit and more officers were summoned.

The driver sought to escape by

running, ducking and hiding in a trash can, but was eventually found and arrested.

He was discovered to have outstanding felony warrants and was on county probation. The driver was booked at Orange County Jail for his felony warrants and felony-related drug charges.

The vehicle was released at the scene to the licensed passenger.

Attempted murder suspect arrested in SA after standoff

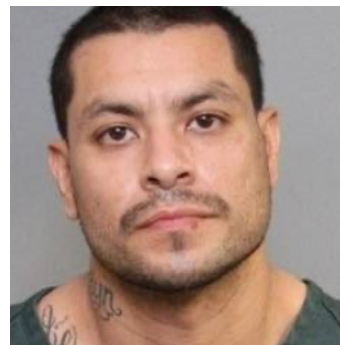
After a tense, long standoff, a 37-year-old Santa Ana man was arrested for attempted murder in Santa Ana.

According to the SAPD, the case began when police responded to a call of an assault with a deadly weapon on Jan. 2.

The victim reported being beaten by the suspect, later identified as Joseph Angel Palacios.

On Sunday morning officers located Palacios at a Motel 6, 1501 N. Harbor. He barricaded himself inside a room and refused to surrender, say police.

Crisis negotiators and SWAT responded to the scene and confirmed he was inside the room and with a woman who was a "willing participant."



JOSEPH PALACIOS
(SAPD photo)

After about eight hours of negotiations and operations by SWAT, both the woman and Pa-

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History Minute

Did Teddy ever pay a visit to Huntington Bch?

Thursday has been declared Theodore Roosevelt Day in Huntington Beach by the city council. But did "Teddy" ever visit and why did he come here, if he did?

According to what may turn out to be little-known history or perhaps merely legend, the famous "Rough Rider" of Spanish American War fame came to the West and California back in 1903. He was reportedly a friend of railroad tycoon Henry Huntington, after whom the present-day "Surf City" is named.

But an internet search offers no supporting information.



PRESIDENT THEODORE ROOSEVELT

There may be some confusion with the Town of Huntington, N.Y. near TR's home in Oyster Bay.

So far, however, we are left with this digital conclusion: "There is no historical evidence that President Theodore Roosevelt ever visited Huntington Beach."

But, on the other hand, if there is some evidence of such a visit by the 26th President to coastal Orange County, let us know and, "Bully For You!"

NewsUpdate

Pause Guiding Ships Through Hormuz

Blockade will remain as peace deal is sought

The effort by the U.S. to guide stranded vehicles out of the Strait of Hormuz will be paused, said President Donald Trump on Tuesday, in an effort to strike a deal to end the Iran war.

According to the Associated Press, the president made his announcement in a social media post. However, the American blockade of Iranian ports will remain.

The change, stated Trump, came “on the request of Pakistan and other countries.” Further details were not forthcoming, but the AP reports that the negotiations with Iran have stalled.



THE NARROW STRAIT of Hormuz (Shutterstock).

In related news, the United Arab Emirates reported that it has been hit by attacks by drones and missiles fired by Iranian forces.

Preceding the announcement by the president, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said that the key goal on the road to peace would be Iran agreeing to abandon its

nuclear development program and to re-open the Strait of Hormuz, a vital path for the shipping of oil products.

\$1 billion for White House security added by the GOP

Republicans in the U.S. Senate added \$1 billion in security enhancements for the White House on Tuesday.

According to The New York Times, the additional funding was connected to a bill to pay for immigration enforcement. It doesn't appear to have a relationship with President Donald Trump's

plans to replace the demolished East Wing of the White House with a lavish ballroom.

The president has said that he expects that the new ballroom would be paid for with private donations.

The entire project would total \$70 billion and would boost the Custom Enforcement and Border Patrol agencies.

Weather: Getting a bit warmer

Spring will edge toward some summer-like days in our West Orange County cities for a while. We will have partly-cloudy conditions with a gentle climb in daytime temps. Wednesday is forecast for a daytime high of 73 with an overnight low of 57. Thursday rises a bit to 76 (59); Friday is about the same. Saturday is expected to warm to 79 (59).

Smith College investigated by the DOJ for admitting 'transgender' women

Smith College, a small women's college in Massachusetts, is being investigated because it admits transgender women.

According to United Press International, the Department of Education will have its Office of Civil Rights determine whether the college broke the law "by allowing biological males into women's intimate spaces, including dormitories, bathrooms, locker rooms and athletic teams."

At issue is 1972 Title IX of the Education Amendments to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which bans sex discrimination at schools and colleges that receive federal funds.

Smith began admitting transgender women – those born as males who have been medically altered – in 2015 to “represent the diversity of women's lived experiences.”

Great Thoughts

“Heaven is a place where all the dogs you've loved come to greet you.”

– Oliver Gaspirtz

“The day of one's birth is a good day for the believer, but the day of death is the greatest day that a Christian can ever experience in this world because that is the day he goes home, the day he walks across the threshold, the day he enters the Father's house.”

— R.C. Sproul

Arts & Living

'Prada 2' Is A Bit Overdressed

Meryl Streep,
Ann Hathaway
are back again

By Jake Coyle
AP Film Writer

Fashion trends are notoriously fickle but some things, like Meryl Streep and Stanley Tucci, never go out of style.

So you can see why making "The Devil Wears Prada 2," two decades after the original, was hard to resist. The cast, led by Anne Hathaway, have hardly aged. The then-little-known Emily Blunt has turned into a star. Throw in some stiletto heels and a few T.J. Maxx quips and the thing practically writes itself.

Yet time has worn on "The Devil Wears Prada 2," a fitfully functional sequel that doesn't fit its cast nearly as snugly as the 2006 original did. Nostalgia, haute couture and the sheer appeal of Streep and Tucci will be enough for some to celebrate this 20-year reunion.

The actors all don their old roles seamlessly. But the trouble with "The Devil Wears Prada 2" isn't its winning cast. It's that everything else has changed. The sequel, which returns director David Frankel and screenwriter Aline Brosh McKenna, valiantly tries to catch up to the times, but the result is enough to make you wish they had said "That's all" after the first one.

"The Devil Wears Prada," Lauren Weisberger's 2003 novel, was born out of an earlier media age when the New York magazine was a midtown dream of power, cachet and free-flowing expense reports. Weisberger, who had worked as a personal assistant to Vogue editor Anna Wintour, famously based her Runway magazine editor-in-chief Miranda Priestly (Streep) on her former boss.

But the sequel takes place in a very different media ecosystem. In the opening scenes of the new film, Andrea Sachs (Hathaway)



ANNE HATHAWAY in "The Devil Wears Prada 2" (20th Century Fox).

Movie Review

receives an award for her investigative journalism for a newspaper called The Vanguard only to, moments before her speech, find out that she and her colleagues have been laid off. If Chanel-styled escapism is part of the promise of "The Devil Wears Prada," reporters will likely find it soberly realistic. There is, for better and worse, an awful lot of Hathaway preaching about the power of journalism here.

Things at Runway aren't much better, either. The magazine is more digital than glossy now; going viral matters more than shaping fashion trends. After the magazine unwittingly publishes a laudatory profile of a label soon after revealed to be a sweatshop, Runway chair Irv Ravitz (Tibor Feldman), in PR crisis mode, hires Andrea to run the features department.

So it takes quite a bit of narrative

cross stitching to, 20 years later, make Miranda Andrea's boss again. At their reunion, an over-excited Andy is met by a typically cool Miranda, who characteristically doesn't even remember her. Their task of reviving the reputation of Runway gets significantly more difficult when Irv's tech bro

Fair ★ ★

son (B.J. Novak) takes over ownership. Further corporate jeopardy follows when other players — including Blunt's Emily Charlton, now a Dior executive, and her

Continued on page 8

'Some Girls' like The Amp

The Garden Amp in Garden Grove will bring the "ultimate Lynard Skynyrd Experience" to Orange County on Sunday, May 16 with Skynyrd Nation, Some Girls (Rolling Stones tribute) and with Thelma and Louise, and The Wildflowers. The Amp is at 12762 Main St. (at Main Street) in the Village Green.



TheSportsPages

*Want a better Angels team?
Get a new park*

In the news business, the “title” of a regularly occurring event is called a “standing head.”

So the topic of “What’s Wrong With the Angels?” might be similarly labeled. I mean, the Halos – who have not had a winning season since Barack Obama was president – have (as of Tuesday morning) lost 13 of their last 15 games and settled into last place not just in the American League West with a 13-23 win-loss record (winning percentage of .361), but also the worst record in all of Major League Baseball.

At the other end of what might be called the Other Side of the Tracks (ALW) in first place are The Athletics, a team so destitute that it’s homeless, playing in a minor league park in West Sacramento



Sports Retorts
Jim Tortolano

while the team awaits the construction of a new stadium in Lost Wages.

What’s interesting to me are two factors that join these two teams. Both have a history of playing in crumbling, outdated stadiums and both have been stinking up the standings for years. From 2022 to 2025, the A’s had losing records (the worst being 2023, with a 50-112 mark).

I realize it’s too early to predict who will be the best (or worst), but it occurs to me that a main difference between the two is the ball park. Both the Oakland Coliseum and Angel Stadium are long past their expiration dates, but the A’s have the consolation of a fresh start with a state-of-the-art facility to look forward to. The Angels appear to be no closer to checking out

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‘Who’s That?’ Not Jackson

New Ducks star has them into Stanley Cup play

By Greg Beacham
AP Sports Writer

ANAHEIM (AP) — When Jackson LaCombe signed a \$72 million contract extension with the Anaheim Ducks last September, casual hockey fans around North America responded to the news online with countless variations of the same clueless refrain: “Who’s that?”

Seven months later, anyone who still doesn’t know about the Ducks’ top defenseman clearly isn’t paying attention to this sport.

LaCombe just finished dominating his first Stanley Cup playoff series, scoring nine points — second-most in the entire NHL — and tirelessly spearheading the Ducks’ defensive efforts against Connor McDavid and Leon Draisaitl while upstart Anaheim eliminated the two-time conference champion Edmonton Oilers in six games.



ANAHEIM DUCKS’ defenseman Jackson LaCombe (2) brings the puck across the blue line against Nashville Predators’ center Ryan O’Reilly (90) during the first period of an NHL hockey game Tuesday, April 7, 2026, in Anaheim (AP Photo/Scott Strazzante).

After agreeing to the richest contract ever handed out in Anaheim, LaCombe scored 58 points in a breakout regular season while making the U.S.

Olympic team’s roster and leading the Ducks to their first playoff berth since 2018.

His performance under the post-

Continued on page 9

Halos over Sox; Dodgers fall

It wasn’t like winning a World Series, or even the division title, but the Los Angeles Angels were feeling pretty good on Tuesday night in Anaheim when they defeated the Chicago White Sox 4-3 for their second win in 11 games.

The Halos broke a 2-2 tie with the winning runs in the fifth inning, including Zach Neto’s sixth homer of the season. Mike Trout started the Angel scoring with his 11th home run, in the first inning. He continued to gradually improve his stats with a 2-for-2 night that included two hits and two walks.

Despite the victory, the Orange County team remains in fifth and last place in the American League West with a 14-23

AL West Standings

	W-L	Pct.	GB	L10
Athletics	18-17	.514	—	5-5
Seattle	17-20	.459	2	5-5
Texas	16-19	.457	2	3-7
Houston	15-22	.405	4	5-5
ANGELS	14-23	.378	5	2-8

NL West Standings

	W-L	Pct.	GB	L10
DODGERS	22-14	.611	—	5-5
San Diego	21-14	.600	0.5	4-6
Arizona	17-17	.500	4	3-7
Colorado	14-22	.389	8	4-6
San Fran	14-22	.389	8	3-7

record, one game behind the fourth place Houston Astros and five games out of first place.

Five pitchers worked for the home team, with the win going to Jose Fermin (1-1).

The two teams will play again on Wednesday.

Astros 2, Dodgers 1: Shohei Ohtani pitched well in Texas on Tuesday night, but the temporarily feeble Blue Crew offense didn’t do much to support him.

Ohtani (2-2), with a glittering 0.97 ERA, worked seven innings, struck out eight batters and yielded four hits and two runs. He was outdone by the Astros’ Peter Lambert (2-2), who also pitched seven innings, giving up three hits and no earned runs while striking out four.

The sole LAL run came in the ninth inning on Andy Page’s RBI single.

■ **Prep Sports Spotlight**

Four local teams won baseball league titles

Four local high school baseball teams are league champions and can look forward to the CIF-SS playoffs starting next week.

Huntington Beach – ranked number one in Orange County – is the Sunset League winner. The Oilers had a 16-2 league mark and are 20-6-2 overall.

Tied for third in the Sunset are Edison and Marina, each with 8-10 SL records.

Pacifica finished third in the Freeway League with a 6-4 conference record and is likely to get a playoff berth.

Garden Grove won the Orange Coast League. The Argonauts are 9-1 in league and 15-8 overall. Westminster finished third in the OCL.

Los Amigos grabbed the Orange League crown, winning nine of 11 league games, and finishing 17-8 overall.

The Orange Panthers finished first in the Grove League, going 10-1 in league and 17-9 overall. Rancho Alamitos finished third.

The CIF-SS brackets for baseball will be announced on Saturday, May 9 at 1 p.m.

■ **NHL and NBA**

Thunder beats L.A.; Ducks fell to Knights

The Oklahoma City Thunder are the best team in the National Basketball Association and the first game of the Western Conference Semifinals against the Los Angeles Lakers on Tuesday proved it.

Despite an impressive effort by LeBron James – and without injured Luka Doncic – the Lakers fell behind early and lost 108-90. James scored 27 points, grabbed four rebounds and had six assists for LAL. Rui Hachimura scored 18 points and Marcus Smart added 12 points.

Chet Holmgren scored 24 points for the Thunder, and Ajay Mitchell and Shai Gilgeous-Alexander had 18. Overall, the Thunder outshot the Lakers 49 to 42 percent from the floor and 92 percent to 77 percent from the free throw line. Now leading the series 1-0, the Thunder will host Game Two on Thursday.

Golden Knights 3, Ducks 1: The Anaheim Ducks opened the second round of the NHL West playoffs with a loss to the Western Conference leader on Monday in Las Vegas.

The sole goal scorer for the Ducks was Mikael Granlund, who lit the red lamp in the third quarter. Lukas Dostal had 19 saves on 21 shots.

Game Two will be played on Friday in Anaheim.



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'The Devil Wears Prada 2'

Continued from page 5

wealthy boyfriend, Benji Barnes (Justin Theroux) — join the mix. The second "Devil Wears Prada" plays out a bit like a fashion world "Succession," with better clothes and a lot less cursing. While these shifting power dynamics make for some dramatic reversals, they don't get near the pure enjoyment of the novice assistant-tyrannical boss relationship that defined the original.

That might be the real rub of "The Devil Wears Prada 2": Mid-life career changes aren't nearly as compelling or relatable as a newbie assistant thrown into the high-fashion fire. All we really want is to see Meryl Streep say cutting things to Anne Hathaway,

with a few zingers from a well-tailored Tucci on the side.

The sequel delivers a little of that, but it mostly tries to cover its narrative issues with trips to the Hamptons and Milan, and a long list of cameos, from Karl-Anthony Towns (go Knicks) to Kara Swisher. There's also Kenneth Branagh as Miranda's violin-playing husband, Lucy Liu as a sought-after interview and Patrick Brammall as an Aussie developer and Andrea's love interest. (Pour one out for Adrian Grenier's sous

chef, who doesn't return in the sequel.)

The first "The Devil Wears Prada" was about having career ambitions while not entirely sacrificing your personal life, too. In the sequel, the struggle is for maintaining a standard of quality, in journalism and taste, when those things are going increasingly out of fashion.

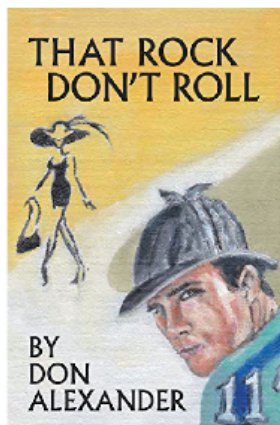
What else has gone by the way-side? The cruel boss. "The Devil Wears Prada" might have very well had Miranda, in the intervening years, be canceled and have to claw back her seat of power. Instead, she has two assistants. One, played by Simone Ashley, is a sharp-elbowed heir to Blunt's character. The other, played by

Caleb Hearon, is smiley and chipper. Andy has an assistant (Helen J. Shen) too, but they get along terrifically.

In the workplace, this would be called progress. On the screen, it's a setback. Everyone, even Miranda, is a bit too, well, nice in "The Devil Wears Prada 2." We should relish every Streep performance. It's been five years since she had a major role in a movie; a once constant joy of moviegoing has turned infrequent. I wouldn't begrudge anyone who just wants to see her and these actors together again. But the movie, well stocked in Prada, could have used a bit more of Streep's unflappable devil.

Some serious fun

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That Rock Don't Roll

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- The Orange County Tribune

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Don Alexander has been a sports columnist, a sports broadcaster, talk show host and a college instructor. This is his first novel.



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Who sponsors a defibrillator program to save lives when heart attacks strike?
Garden Grove Rotary

Who recognizes 6th grade students for achievement in academics and scholarship?
Garden Grove Rotary

Who sponsors and contributes to training high school students on leadership and citizenship?
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Sports Retorts: A's or Halos?

Continued from page 6

of the Antiquated Big A than they were a decade ago.

The A's are scheduled to move into their new home for the 2028 season at the glittery price of \$2

billion.

If you were a top-notch free agent, where would you rather go to: a chronic loser in a rusty ball park, or a rising power in an air-conditioned gilt-edge palace?

Retorts: Vote or voice-less

Continued from page 3

you a layer cake, petted your dog and gave you a hot stone massage and a \$100 gift card to Target, millions of Americans would still yawn and say, "What's in it for me?"

Many educators —and not without some good reason — focus their efforts on making sure that today's kids "can code" or learn a second language.

But a disturbing number of the end result is that a lot of them in adulthood think the U.S. Constitution is just an old boat in Boston Harbor or that "sepa-

ration of powers" has something to do with how the NFL keeps the Rams and Eagles in separate divisions.

When government does something dumb — and this is something both major parties do — we're tempted to ask, "Who could do such a dumb thing?"

Well, the better question might be this: Is it possible that dumb or corrupt politicians benefit from voters who don't vote, or don't know much about or what they're voting for. "Cui bono," fellow Americans.

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Suspect held

Continued from page 3

lacios surrendered. He was taken into custody and booked at the Santa Ana Jail for attempted murder.



Ducks' LaCombe is making all the difference

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season spotlight has cemented everything Ducks fans already knew about him — and his Anaheim teammates think it's long past time for LaCombe to be known beyond the West Coast. "It's crazy to me that people are just now figuring it out about him sometimes," Ducks forward Troy Terry said. "And I realize that we haven't been on this stage, and that's when guys get seen. But it's been almost wild to me that people haven't realized

how good this kid is. Every night we play, he controls the game with his legs. He plays both ends. He's the first guy on the attack for us. He's playing McDavid. He literally doesn't have a weakness in his game, and he's so calm.

"He's been our leader out there, honestly. He's been carrying the play on both ends, and we're lucky to have him."

Only Draisaitl scored more points in the first round of the Stanley Cup playoffs than La-

Combe, whose puck-moving acumen was a key to Anaheim's 26-goal barrage. LaCombe logged 27 minutes per game, matching up with McDavid and/or Draisaitl alongside partner Jacob Trouba whenever possible to slow the Oilers' two superstars.

LaCombe naturally wasn't checking the playoff points leaderboard during the series, but he still learned he was on top for much of that time.

"People kept saying stuff to me, so I did figure it out, but it is

what it is," LaCombe said with a grin.

He said the newfound attention is "part of the job, I guess, and part of playing. But I'm just excited we're winning hockey games."

LaCombe's teammates know he was a major reason why the Ducks earned a trip to the second round to face the Vegas Golden Knights, who sneaked past slumping Anaheim to win the Pacific Division title last month.

Terry and Leo Carlsson scored eight points apiece against the Oilers, but both forwards feel it wouldn't have been possible without LaCombe leading the Ducks' back-end play.

"He's one of the best players in the playoffs, and one of the best players in the league, too," said the 21-year-old Carlsson, who broke into the NHL alongside LaCombe two seasons ago. "Super-fun to watch him. Super-fun to be rookies together, and then we're here. ... He's just great. To shut down the best player in the world like that is pretty awesome."

Anaheim coach Joel Quenneville spent 11 seasons with the Chicago Blackhawks coaching a roster anchored by Duncan Keith, the Hockey Hall of Famer to whom LaCombe is frequently compared. Both defensemen were second-round draft picks who grew into stardom by thriving at both ends of the ice with strong skating, hockey smarts and aggressive play on the puck. Quenneville doesn't downplay the comparison at all, instead noting their many similarities — right down to the No. 2 on their backs.

"They're both comparable exactly where they were in their games at almost the same time," Quenneville said.

LaCombe played four years at the University of Minnesota before jumping straight to the NHL in 2023. He locked down a roster spot in training camp that fall, and he led the Ducks in ice time last season while scoring 14 goals — the most by an Anaheim blueliner since 2011.

But he hadn't experienced NHL team success until this season, when the Ducks opened up their style of play and surged into the top half of the conference in Quenneville's first season.

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