



## Statues of Columbus, other colonialists removed

Emily Hoeven

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In the wake of George Floyd's death, California protesters and lawmakers are calling for the removal of statues of historical figures associated with racism and colonialism — an effort that gained momentum Tuesday when lawmakers announced a statue of Christopher Columbus and Queen Isabella of Spain will be removed from the state Capitol, where it has stood since 1883.

- **Senate President Pro Tem Toni Atkins, Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon and Assembly Rules Committee Chair Ken Cooley, all Democrats:** “Christopher Columbus is a deeply polarizing historical figure given the deadly impact his arrival in this hemisphere had on indigenous populations. The continued presence of this statue in California’s Capitol ... is completely out of place today.”
- **Roger Niello, a former Republican assemblyman from Sacramento, told me:** “My question is, where do you stop? ... We’ve got to figure out some way of acknowledging our history in an appropriate way. ... We’re trying to work that out right now with more of an emotional approach to current events rather than a logical assessment of our history, be it imperfect as it is.”

On Monday, a statue of John Sutter was taken down from outside a Sacramento hospital also bearing his name and spat upon. Sutter, a European immigrant who colonized the land on which California gold was first discovered, also enslaved Native Americans.

Meanwhile, the city of Fort Bragg, named after Confederate Army general and slaveholder Braxton Bragg, is considering a November ballot measure to change its name — a move endorsed by Gov. Gavin Newsom.

### Other examples:

- **The city of Chula Vista** removed a statue of Christopher Columbus on Friday to prevent it from being pulled down during a protest.
- **Berkeley Unified School District** plans to rename elementary schools named after George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, former U.S. presidents who also owned slaves.

And Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, a San Francisco Democrat, wants to remove 11 Confederate statues in the nation’s Capitol building.

- **Pelosi:** “The statues in the Capitol should embody our highest ideals as Americans. ... Monuments to men who advocated cruelty and barbarism to achieve such a plainly racist

end are a grotesque affront to these ideals. Their statues pay homage to hate, not heritage.”

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**The coronavirus bottom line:** As of 9 p.m. Tuesday night, California had **153,560 confirmed coronavirus cases** and **5,121 deaths** from the virus, according to [a CalMatters tracker](#).

**Also:** CalMatters regularly updates this pandemic timeline tracking the [state’s daily actions](#). And we’re [tracking the state’s coronavirus hospitalizations by county](#).

### **1. PG&E pleads guilty to 84 counts of manslaughter two years after Camp Fire**

PG&E on Tuesday pled guilty to 84 counts of manslaughter in the 2018 Camp Fire that devastated the California city of Paradise, the same day a federal judge said he would approve the beleaguered utility’s \$59 billion bankruptcy plan. But for the more than 80,000 people who lost their homes, loved ones and livelihoods amid wildfires caused by transmission lines PG&E failed to maintain, the developments may be inadequate. It remains unclear if the utility is better prepared to protect its 16 million customers or has identified a clear path to financial stability. And the wildfire victims’ lawyers maintain the \$13.5 billion settlement could end up shortchanging them.

- **Tommy Wehe, whose mother died in the Camp Fire:** “The company’s acceptance of guilt is inconsequential if the appropriate safety measures are not enacted to prevent the future loss of life and property.”

### **2. Colliding epidemics: Fewer people addicted to drugs getting treatment**

For Californians addicted to opioids, the coronavirus pandemic has created additional hurdles to accessing treatment, even as mental health experts worry the lockdown is driving more people to use drugs, [CalMatters’ Rachel Becker reports](#). With recovery groups meeting virtually and some residential centers closing their doors or limiting admissions, fewer Californians have been accessing care. An additional difficulty: Newsom’s budget proposes scrapping \$20 million for hospital behavioral health counselors, which could tear more holes in the safety net for those seeking help with substance abuse.

- **Gary Tsai of Los Angeles County’s division of Substance Abuse Prevention and Control:** “There’s likely much more use of substances that we’re not capturing right now, either in hospitals or emergency rooms or jails. There is a lot of concern that pent-up cases will materialize once our communities reopen. I think that’s a very real risk.”

### **3. Oil tankers loitering off CA amid pandemic spewed tons of pollution**

As energy demand sank in the early months of the pandemic, massive oil tankers loitered near the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach with nowhere to go, spewing pollutants into the air that could harm both the environment and coastal communities’ long-term health, [National Geographic reports](#). In late April, there were 24 tankers sitting off California’s coast. For every day they idled, they released six tons of nitrogen pollutants, a quarter ton of sulfur pollutants, 290 pounds of PM2.5 — particles correlated with higher risks of lung and heart disease and worse COVID-19 outcomes — and 600 metric tons of carbon dioxide.

- **Yifang Zhu, an air pollution expert at UCLA’s Fielding School of Public Health:** “The ports are an environmental justice issue. The nearby communities are exposed to so many pollutants from ships and trucks, and the effects are very clear.”

**CalMatters columnist Dan Walters:** California clearly has a problem with police violence, and it’s up to the Democrats who control the state’s politics to fix it.

**What “defund the police” really means:** No one is suggesting communities eradicate the police completely. But the slogan raises meaningful questions about how police are best deployed, argues Michael Tanner of the Cato Institute’s Project on Poverty and Inequality in California.

**Divesting from police:** Using a public health approach to create community safety works — but these efforts have been underfunded and short-lived, writes Lisa Fujie Parks of Oakland’s Prevention Institute.

**We can’t cut crucial senior care programs:** Our future will be grim if we move forward with a state budget that doesn’t meet the needs of seniors and people with disabilities, argues Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez, a San Diego Democrat.