



**WEEKLY UPDATE  
JULY 7 - 13, 2024**

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**DISTRIBUTIONS TO NONPROFIT AGENCIES**

**FIVE YEAR DOMINION VOTING CONTRACT**

**PASO GROUNDWATER BASIN PATRONAGE**

**BUT NOTHING FOR THE LOCKED OUT FOLKS**

**REVIVING WILTING CANABIS INDUSTRY**

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**THE DAY DEMOCRACY DIED IN CALIFORNIA**

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*And with it, direct democracy – California’s last, best hope – is also dead*

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**THE END OF AN EXPERIMENT**

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**BY EDWARD RING**

**AN OVERVIEW OF CALIFORNIA’S ENERGY ECONOMY**

*California energy is unaffordable, unreliable, and going to get worse if the legislature  
doesn’t prioritize it*

## SPONSORS



## THIS WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

ALL MEETINGS ARE AT 9:00 AM UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

### Board of Supervisors Meeting of Tuesday, July 9, 2024 (Scheduled)

**Item 1 - Request to 1) approve allocations from FC 106 – Contributions to Other Agencies for Community Based Organizations Grant and Preventative Health Grant (CBO-PHG) in the total amount of \$1,263,704; and 2) delegate authority to the County Administrative Officer and/or designee to execute the grant agreements.** The item seeks Board approval of scores of small grants to not-for-profit health and social services agencies. The grants are competitive based on a County developed point process. Although small, they are important sources of local matching share for the not-for-profit agencies as they compete for other government and private foundation funding. Click on the link below to see the types of grants, agencies, and amounts.

<https://agenda.slocounty.ca.gov/iip/sanluisobispo/file/getfile/163010>

**Item 2 - Request to 1) approve allocations from FC 106 – Contributions to Other Agencies for Other Agency Requests Grant in the total amount of \$124,687; and 2) delegate authority to the County Administrative Officer and/or designee to execute the grant agreements.** This item is an addition to **Item 1** above, which was added by the Board during the Budget adoption process.

The program has its origins in the Federal War on Poverty grants of the 1960's and 70's. When the Federal grants dried up in the 1980's, many local jurisdictions determined to continue the program at a smaller local level using their own local funds.

**Item 14 - Request to 1) approve a 5-year sole source contract with Dominion Voting Systems, Inc., including five additional automatic one-year renewals, not to exceed a total of \$848,610 for the first 5 years, and a total of \$704,287 for years six through 10, inclusive, for acquisition of voting equipment, warranties, and perpetual software licenses; 2) authorize the Clerk-Recorder to sign the contract and related documents that do not increase the level of General Fund support; 3) authorize a budget adjustment to increase the appropriation in Fund Center (FC) 110 Clerk-Recorder in the amount of \$287,876 for FY 2023-24 using unanticipated revenues, by 4/5 Vote; 4) declare specified voting machines as surplus property; and 5) update the department's fixed asset list.** This item was carried over from the June 18, 2024 meeting. Supervisor Paulding was out sick and thus the Board majority did not have sufficient votes to jam it through without discussion. The way it is framed here requires a 4/5 vote, which could result in deferral. The issues surrounding the voting and tabulation process are real. Many voters would like to return to real voting, as opposed to all mail ballots, which are subject to chain of custody issues and ballot harvesting techniques. The item should therefore be scheduled as a regular business item, and not slid through on consent.

The item, if approved, will continue the contract with Dominion Voting systems for 5 years.

In 2018, the County entered into a contract with Dominion Voting Systems, Inc. (Dominion) to replace its existing voting system. This contract provided the County with hardware, software, and professional services necessary to conduct secure and efficient elections. As the County continues to evolve in its election processes, there is a need to upgrade and maintain systems to ensure the timely and accurate counting of ballots.

What are the exact shortcomings of the current version?

*Dominion will continue to perform implementation, training, and election support services associated with the hardware and software listed in the cost proposal included in Exhibit B of Attachment 1. This includes adding one HiPro scanner and six new MBPs to the existing voting system. Additionally, Dominion will prepare and pick up 33 MBP kits and three G2140 scanners for return since they no longer will be of use and will be replaced with the HiPro and six new MBPs. (These items were originally acquired for administration of elections during the COVID pandemic.)*

The larger questions:

Is voting by mail safe in the first place?

How can the system be audited by citizen representatives? Could the Board hire an independent consultant to do this during the counting?

You can't mail in your jury service, you can't mail in your military service, and you can't mail in your diving test. Why not show up and proudly vote?

You have to have an ID to drive, fly, buy prescriptions, go to the football game, stay in a hotel, rent a car, cash a check, and just about everything else. You would think that this very important and fundamental civic act would enjoy a little vetting. The leftists support absentee voting with

no ID because it is easier to manipulate. Moreover, being able to lounge around home instead of dressing and showing up appeals to the left's tens of millions of slacker supporters.

**CAUTION - Items 15 & 21 Paso Basin Groundwater management actions.** Items 15 and 21 should be pulled and reset as business items for full public discussion. There are too many policy questions for them to be slid under the door. They were originally set on the June 18, 2024 agenda, but Supervisor Paulding was out ill. Thus the 3<sup>rd</sup> vote to force them through was absent.

**Item 15 - Request to 1) approve and authorize the Chairperson to sign a professional consultant services contract with Provost & Pritchard Consulting Group through February 28, 2025, in an amount not to exceed \$297,990, to perform a Paso Robles Groundwater Basin State Water Project Supplemental Water Supply Project Feasibility & Engineering Study; and 2) delegate authority to the Groundwater Sustainability Director to authorize time extensions and remove scope, in addition to other administratively efficient contract management actions as long as such actions do not increase the level of General Fund support required by the department.** The write-up states in part:

*The subject of today's action relates to a portion of Component 6, namely an engineering study (Study) to assess the feasibility of using State Water Project water supplies, when available, for recharge to the Paso Robles groundwater basin (Basin) and / or for agricultural use as an in-lieu water supply to allow for reduced groundwater pumping in the Basin. Other portions of Component 6 include an engineering study of the feasibility of using available supplemental water supply from the Nacimiento Water Supply Project blended with City of Paso Robles recycled wastewater supplies to stabilize groundwater levels and address surface water depletion utilizing excess water supplies. In addition, funding for Component 6 included the completion of a rate study to identify and evaluate options for assessing groundwater usage fees to commercial agricultural irrigators.*

Is this a deception? Recharge generally refers to water that originates in the basin and is injected, spread, naturally percolated, or otherwise used to fill a basin. Water banking generally refers to water that is imported from outside the basin. Some questions:

1. Does the use of State water pumped into the basin change the legal status of the water in the basin?
2. How do these provisions affect the rights of the Class I overlies?
3. Does the water that is imported to the basin become public domain water of the State of California?
4. If it becomes public domain water, what happens to the existing water rights?
5. How can the imported State water be differentiated from the other basin water?

6. Can the recharged State water be exported from the basin later on, notwithstanding the County’s “no export” ordinance?

7. If the Cooperative Committee members acquire State water for recharge and it is stored in the San Luis Reservoir, can it be sold to other system members?

8. Are there any other legal problems for the thousands of small overlies in the Basin who now have only 32% theoretical representation on the Paso Basin Cooperative Committee? Do Bruce Gibson and Matt Turentine actually represent them?

**Item 21 - Request to 1) approve the Paso Basin Cooperative Committee (PBCC) FY 2024-2025 Budget and County contribution percentage; 2) approve a corresponding budget adjustment \$406,200 in FC 205 – Groundwater Sustainability using reimbursement revenue from the other Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) for the proportional share of costs for delivery of the PBCC funded cost components of the PBCC FY 2024-25 Budget, by 4/5 vote; and 3) authorize the Chairperson to sign Amendment No. 2 to Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) regarding Preparation and Implementation of a Groundwater Sustainability Plan for the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin between the City of El Paso de Robles, the San Miguel Community Services District, the County of San Luis Obispo, the Shandon-San Juan Water District and the Estrella-El Pomar-Creston Water District to add the County as a contracting agent and establish related payment obligation percentages and terms.**

GSA	Voting / Cost Share
County of SLO	32.3%
City of Paso Robles	15.2%
Shandon-San Juan Water District	20.2%
San Miguel CSD	3.0%
Estrella-El Pomar-Creston Water District	29.3%
TOTAL	100%

*The County of San Luis Obispo’s share of the recommended PBCC Budget is \$193,800. These funds were included in the Groundwater Sustainability Department proposed FY 2024-2025 Budget. The remaining \$406,200 is requested through a Budget Augmentation Request (BAR) which will be used to pay for the proportional share of costs for the other GSAs, which subsequently be recovered through reimbursement revenues as the other GSAs repay the County in accordance with the MOA as amended by Amendment No. 2.*

Why wouldn’t the other GSAs put up their share now? Is this a County advance? The new memorandum of understanding between the agencies states in part:

*Notwithstanding the foregoing, the County may also act as the contracting agent on behalf of the Cooperative Committee with respect to the retention of any and all consultants subject to approval by the Cooperative Committee. If the County acts as the contracting agent, the same*



provisions applicable to the City under this Section 6 shall apply to the County excepting that the County shall follow its own procurement policies in the engagement of such consultant(s) with inclusion of the Parties and Cooperative Committee in the selection of any consultant as set forth in Section 6.3 above. In addition, notwithstanding Section 5.3, the Parties agree that the County shall calculate each Party's payment obligation based on the following percentages: City – 15.2%; SMCS D – 3.0%; SSJWD – 20.2%; County – 32.3% and EPCWD – 29.3%; and provided that each Party has approved a budget that includes such consultant costs or its share of such consultant costs, **each Party shall remit payment to the County within thirty (30) days upon receipt of an invoice from the County that reflects the above percentages.**

**Paso Basin Cooperative Committee Budget for FY 2024-25.**

The Budget is detailed on the page below:

Attachment 2

Recommended PBCC Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Budget					
Budget Components	FY 23-24	FY 24-25	FY 25-26	FY 26-27	
<b>Grant Funded Cost Components</b>					
Grant Funded					
1 ET Ag Water Usage Program		\$ 120,000			
2 Cost of Service Rate Study		\$ 150,000			
3 Address High Priority GSP Data Gaps (Expanded Monitoring Network)		\$ 1,400,000			
4 MILR Program Framework		\$ 380,000			
5 Well Verification/Registration Program		\$ 100,000			
6 Drinking Well Impact Mitigation Program Development		\$ 200,000			
7 Blended Irrigation Water Supply Program		\$ 300,000			
8 SWP Feasibility Project		\$ 200,000			
9 City of Paso Robles Recycled Water Distribution System - Salinas River Segment	\$ 3,500,000				
10 San Miguel CSD Recycled Water Supply Project		\$ 1,000,000			
<b>Grant Funded Total</b>	<b>\$ 3,500,000</b>	<b>\$ 3,850,000</b>			
<b>PBCC Funded Cost Components</b>					
SGMA-Required					
11 Annual Report WY 2024	\$ 95,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 110,000	\$ 121,000	
12 GSP Fifth Year Evaluation		\$ 300,000			
13 ET Ag Water Usage Program			\$ 120,000	\$ 120,000	
14 Ongoing Basin Monitoring Operations & Maintenance		\$ 75,000	\$ 82,500	\$ 90,750	
GSP Initiatives					
15 Outreach Program (Continued efforts including new website)		\$ 75,000	\$ 82,500	\$ 90,750	
Administrative					
16 Develop Governance Structure (e.g. JPA, etc.)		\$ 50,000			
17 Executive Director and Support Staff			\$ 180,000	\$ 200,000	
18 Legal Counsel			\$ 82,500	\$ 90,750	
19 PBCC Administrative Costs (Insurance, Audit, Accounting, etc.)			\$ 82,500	\$ 90,750	
20 Grant Development (2 grants)			\$ 82,500	\$ 90,750	
21 Technical Consultant(s) (as necessary)			\$ 110,000	\$ 121,000	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 95,000</b>	<b>\$ 600,000</b>	<b>\$ 932,500</b>	<b>\$ 1,015,750</b>	
<b>GSA Cost Share</b>					
	FY 23-24	FY 24-25	FY 25-26	FY 26-27	GSA Cost Share %
a	County of San Luis Obispo GSA \$ 30,685	\$ 193,800	\$ 301,198	\$ 328,087	32.3%
b	Estrella-El Pomar-Creston Water District GSA \$ 27,835	\$ 175,800	\$ 273,223	\$ 297,615	29.3%
c	Shandon San Juan Water District GSA \$ 19,190	\$ 121,200	\$ 188,365	\$ 205,182	20.2%
d	City of Paso Robles GSA \$ 14,440	\$ 91,200	\$ 141,740	\$ 154,394	15.2%
e	San Miguel Community Services District GSA \$ 2,850	\$ 18,000	\$ 27,975	\$ 30,473	3.0%

**Matters after 1:30 PM**

**Item 37 - Hearing to consider proposed Amendments to the Land Use Ordinance (County Code Title 22) and Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinance (County Code Title 23) relating to Cannabis Activities (County File: LRP2023-00013). The proposed Amendments include modifying regulations pertaining to expiration of cannabis cultivation permits, hours of operation for non-storefront retail dispensaries, and abatement procedures and cost recovery relating to unpermitted cannabis activities. (Planning and Building).** Here the Board will consider several measures to attempt to revive its wilting cannabis industry.

These include:

1. Eliminate the requirement that existing approved permittees must go through a full new permit application process when their initial 5-year permit expires.
2. Set County hours for storefront dispensaries to be consistent with State permits. This would allow them to be open longer in the evening.
3. Set fees for full cost recovery for immediate abatement actions. This one will not be so helpful to the industry.

Separately, was cannabis legalization ever a good idea? What do the educators and employers report? As noted above, you have to have an ID to buy cannabis but not to vote. The left simply wants to keep its voters sedated and on various types of the dole.

Policy makers should consider the agenda as a whole and not just its individual items in isolation. For example, how is cannabis impacting the programs being funded in **Items 1** and **2** above?

**Item 38 - Hearing to consider an Appeal (APPL2024-00003) by Claudia Harmon Worthen of the Planning Commission's approval of a request by Pacific Cambria LLC for a Development Plan / Coastal Development Permit (C-DRC2022-00050) to allow a temporary event program, the Cambria Christmas Market, to operate for up to fifteen holiday seasons. The holiday season would begin the Friday after Thanksgiving (Black Friday) and would last through the last day of the year (New Year's Eve). The hours of operation are Wednesday through Sunday, and all of Christmas week, through the last day of the year (New Year's Eve) from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. The market would include temporary lighting, seasonal displays, and concession stands. Forty-six temporary vendor booths would be erected for the event and would be dismantled and removed at the conclusion of the event. Four temporary canopy covers would be erected for outdoor seating and dining purposes.** The Cambria Christmas Market is being appealed again:

*During its meeting of February 22, 2024, the Planning Commission heard and approved the request by Pacific Cambria, LLC, for a Development Plan / Coastal Development Permit (C-DRC2022-00050) to allow a new temporary event program, the Cambria Christmas Market, to operate for up to fifteen holiday seasons. The holiday season would begin the Friday after Thanksgiving (Black Friday) and would last through the last day of the year (New Year's Eve). The hours of operation are Wednesday through Sunday, and all of Christmas week, through the last day of the year (New Year's Eve) from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. The market would include*

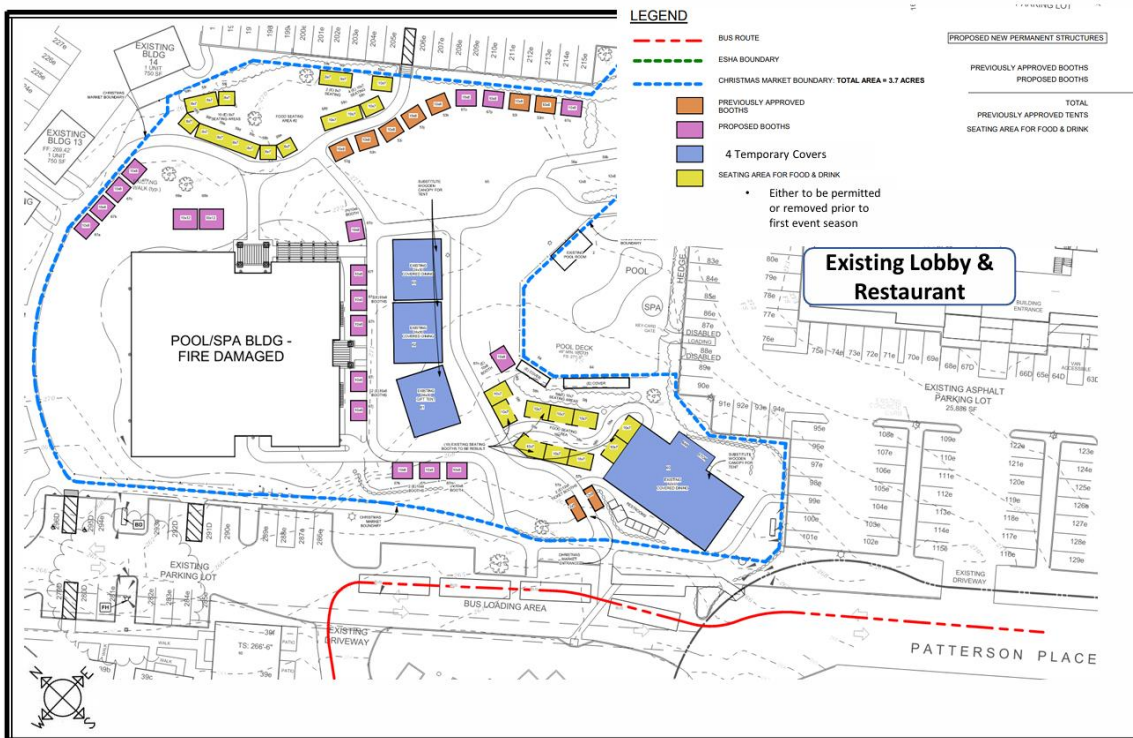


temporary lighting, seasonal displays, and concession stands. Forty-six temporary vendor booths would be erected for the event and would be dismantled and removed at the conclusion of the event. Four temporary canopy covers would be erected for outdoor seating and dining purposes. The maximum attendance on any given night would be limited to not more than 3,000 guests. The market would be located within the interior of the Cambria Pines Lodge grounds and at the adjacent Cambria Nursery. The Applicant requests a waiver of the Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinance requirement for temporary events to be setback at least 1,000 feet from a Residential Single Family land use category. The proposed project is within the Recreation and Residential Suburban land use categories and is located at 2905 Burton Drive and 2801 Eton Road in the community of Cambria

### The Appeal:

Pursuant to the (CZLUO) Section 23.01.042, the action/decision by the Planning Commission was appealable to the Board of Supervisors within 14 calendar days after the date of the action. One Appeal by Claudia Harmon Worthen (APPL2024-00003) was received requesting reconsideration of the Planning Commission's action to tentatively approve the request by Pacific Cambria, LLC for a Development Plan / Coastal Development Permit (C-DRC2022 00050) to allow a temporary event program at the Cambria Pines Lodge.

A 20-page staff report defends the Planning Commission's approval but does not state categorically that the Board should deny the appeal. There are a number of letters and lists of people who oppose or support the market. There is particular opposition by those who oppose a 15-year permit with expanded run dates.





**Item 39 - Board of Supervisor comments, activity reports, and requests for future agenda.**

**California Coastal Commission Meeting of Friday, July 12, 2024 (Scheduled)**

**Item F9a - Geophysical, geotechnical sampling, and benthic (seabed) habitat surveys in state waters off of San Luis Obispo County from the coast to the three-mile state water boundary to identify preliminary submarine export cable routing options.** The staff recommends approval of the permit with a number of conditions. The report states in part:

*Equinor subsidiary, Atlas Wind US LLC (“Atlas Wind” or “Applicant”), proposes to conduct seafloor surveys in state waters offshore of Morro Bay, San Luis Obispo County, from approximately 0.25 miles from the shore to the three nautical mile state water boundary. The proposed survey area extends northwest of Morro Bay Harbor and does not include areas inside or in front of Morro Bay Harbor. No survey activities are proposed within in front of or within Morro Bay. The proposed surveys include: (1) low energy, high resolution geophysical surveys to map seafloor features, sediment types, and subsurface sediments; (2)*

*geotechnical sampling to confirm the data interpretation of the geophysical survey mapping, provide information about sediment variability and stratigraphy, and provide samples for geoarchaeological analyses; and (3) benthic (seabed) habitat surveys, consisting of the collection of sediment plan view and profile images to evaluate the presence and abundance of benthic organisms (including rare or sensitive species).*

9-24-0411 (Atlas Wind US LLC)

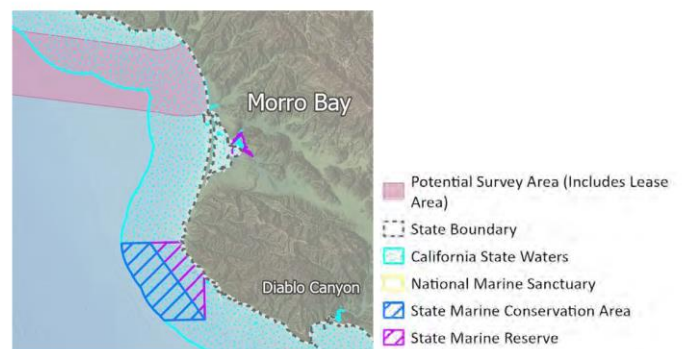


Figure 1 Map of Morro Bay showing Atlas Wind's proposed survey area, where the pink and blue dotted layers overlap, area in California State waters

## Are There Any Adverse Impacts Expected From The Survey Activities?

Equinor has selected survey technology which will allow the project to avoid and minimize impact on the marine environment.

Before taking samples, the sea floor will be inspected to avoid placing equipment where sensitive habitats, tribal cultural heritage and marine archeology are present. Although surveying will disturb small areas of seafloor, this is not expected to have a significant impact on underwater life or resources.

Any potential noise impacts from the HRG surveys has been reduced to as low as reasonably practicable and has been closely examined by the regulatory authorities. **NOAA Fisheries has determined that no threatened and endangered marine mammal mortality or serious injury is expected from the HRG surveys.**

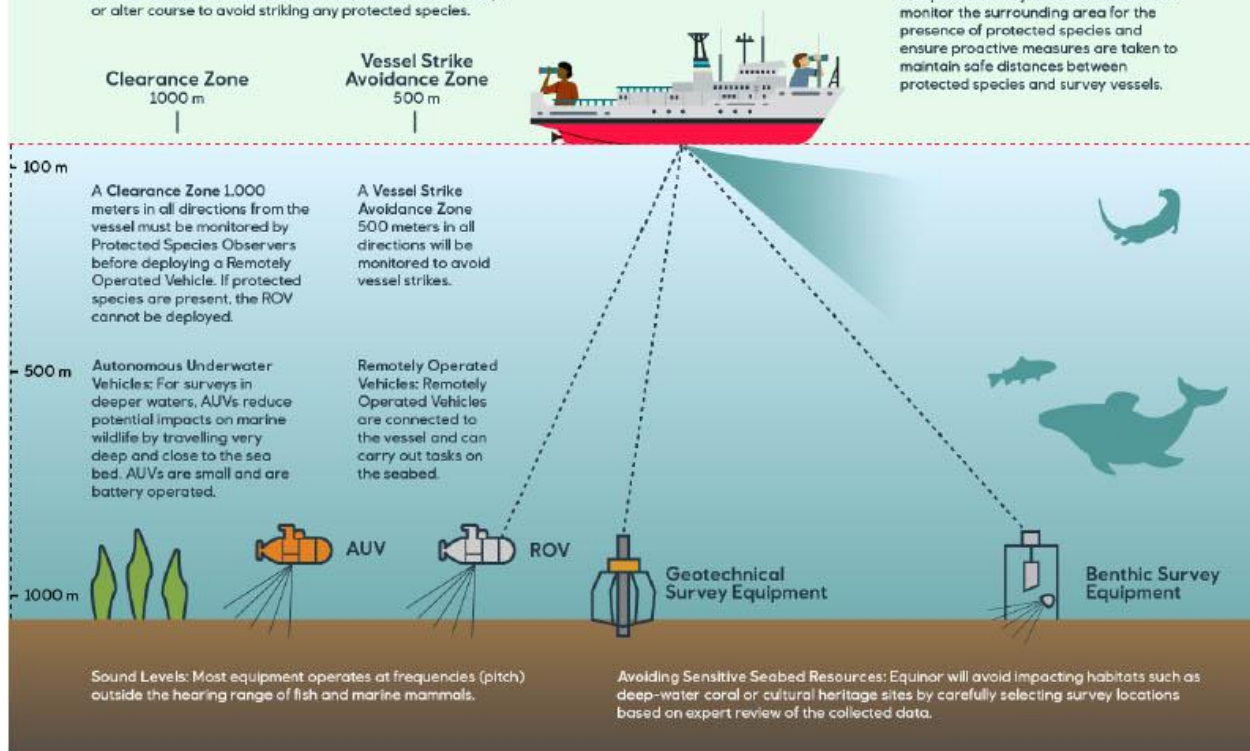
The surveys are also not expected to have an impact on air quality or birds.

## How Will Marine Resources Be Protected During Surveying?

Equinor is dedicated to the coexistence of offshore wind development with wildlife and the marine environment. The offshore wind industry adheres to more stringent marine mammal mitigation measures than any other marine industry in the Pacific.

**Navigation:** Vessel speed will be limited to less than 10 knots, which is a proven measure to reduce lethality if a vessel strike does occur. Vessels will stay at least 500 m away from any visible protected whale and 100 m from any visible sea turtle. Vessel crew will watch for protected marine animals and will direct the vessel to slow down, stop, or alter course to avoid striking any protected species.

**Protected Species Observers (PSO):** Each vessel will include independent and professionally trained observers to monitor the surrounding area for the presence of protected species and ensure proactive measures are taken to maintain safe distances between protected species and survey vessels.



## For More Information

To learn more about Atlas Wind and our commitment to sustainability and environmental protection, please visit [AtlasWind.com](https://atlaswind.com).



# LAST WEEKS HIGHLIGHTS

## No Board of Supervisors Meeting on Tuesday, June 2, 2024 (Not scheduled)

The last full meeting took place on Tuesday, June 18, 2024. The Board then took a 2-week summer recess from June 23, 2024 - July 6, 2024. The next meeting after that is on July 9, 2024. The Weekly Update was shut down after June 18, 2024 until the Week of July 9, 2024.

### 2024 Board of Supervisors Meeting Calendar - June & July, 2024

June						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

July						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

Board Meetings  
Special Redistricting Eve Mtg

Swearing in Meeting  
Budget Hearings

Board Break  
Holidays

CSAC Annual Conference  
BOS Chambers AV Work

# EMERGENT ISSUES

## THE DAY DEMOCRACY DIED IN CALIFORNIA

*The Taxpayer Protection Act, a product of private grassroots groups, is dead.*

*And with it, direct democracy – California’s last, best hope – is also dead*

**BY EDWARD RING**

On June 20, the [California Supreme Court ruled](#) that the [Taxpayer Protection Act](#), a ballot initiative that would have given voters veto power over new taxes, was a violation of the state constitution. The initiative, for which proponents had already gathered nearly 1.5 million signatures to qualify it for the ballot, was a desperate attempt by taxpayers and businesses to get California’s state and local government spending under control.

The [court decision hinged](#) on whether the initiative’s language constituted a “revision” of the state’s constitution or an “amendment.” The answer to this question is subjective and hinges on the “totality of the impact on the basic constitutional powers of government entities.” Ignoring

ample contradictory evidence and precedent, the court decided that the changes proposed by the initiative were sufficiently sweeping to categorize it as a revision to the state constitution, and unlike amendments, revisions to the state constitution are only possible if the initiative is brought to voters by an act of the state legislature.

Thus, the Taxpayer Protection Act, which was a product of private grassroots groups, is dead. And with it, direct democracy – California’s last, best hope – is also dead.

Everything about this situation evokes a frustration that defies description. When assessing the “totality” of taxes and fees – sales tax, utility tax, excise tax, carbon emissions fees, payroll tax, income tax, property tax, permit fees, registration fees, payments on state bonds, municipal bonds, school bonds, the gasoline tax... the list of various fees on businesses is endless – Californians pay more to support their government than anywhere else in America. It is oppressive and it is driving people and businesses to flee to other states while it smothers the households and businesses that remain. The only people left making real money are the tech giants.

Some frustration may be directed at the proponents of this initiative. It isn’t unreasonable to wonder why, before they went ahead and spent millions of dollars to gather signatures and qualify this initiative for the state ballot, they didn’t anticipate a potentially devastating court ruling. The problem with that reasoning, however, is that it lacks the requisite cynicism with which to accurately regard any situation that threatens California’s special interests. Witnesses attending the proceedings left the court confident of an easy victory. Arguments by the initiative’s proponents were compelling. The state’s arguments were an incoherent stretch. That didn’t matter to the judges. Let the state keep on calling new taxes fees. Let the legislature raise taxes at will. That’s democracy in action – California style.

The overwhelming share of frustration must be directed at the corrupt elites who run California today. There is no doubt who these judges favored—and feared—the most. Here are the special interests that lined up to keep this initiative off the ballot:

Governor Gavin Newsom. The California Democratic Party. Public sector unions, including AFSCME, SEIU, and the California Professional Firefighters. Public agency associations, including the California Contract Cities Association, the California Special Districts Association, the California State Association of Counties, and the League of California Cities.

Notice what all these groups have in common. They are all supported by taxpayers, and the Democratic party, which they control, is their collection agency. The Taxpayer Protection Act would have taken away the most egregious prerogatives of this collection agency, which, for the last several years, has been out of control. It’s not hard to see why. The state legislature is currently empowered to raise taxes if they can get two-thirds of the state senate and two-thirds of the state assembly to vote in favor of the increase. That’s easy. Democrats control 78 percent of the [seats in the assembly](#) and 80 percent of the [seats in the senate](#). They can raise taxes anytime they want, and they do, over and over.

It's also not hard to identify the special interest that is at the heart of everything that has gone wrong in California. Public employee unions. If you want to know why California's state general fund spending has increased from [\\$96 billion in 2013](#) to [\\$226 billion in 2023](#), it's the unions. Even after adjusting for inflation, that is a per capita increase that has nearly doubled in only ten years.

Publicly available [reports on campaign contributions](#) to California's state legislators make it all too clear who controls these politicians. In almost every case, the Democrats in the state legislature have received most of their campaign funds from public sector unions. The imbalance is almost absurd. Typically, the top ten largest contributions by amount come from government unions, and it is even common to see every one of a politician's top twenty contributions coming from these unions.

In California, public sector unions collect and spend [nearly \\$1 billion per year](#). During every two-year election cycle, they collectively pour hundreds of millions into political campaigns, with enough money to reach into every elected office, from a local water board, school board or city council all the way to seats in the legislature and top state offices, including the governor. These unions are joined by government agencies or government-supported associations, such as the League of California Cities, to fund allegedly non-political "information" campaigns. Hence the city funded flyers that inundate residential mailboxes, calculated to innocently "inform" voters of the consequences to public safety and child welfare if the latest local tax increase or bond issuance isn't approved.

The public sector runs California, and if it seems cynical to suggest that for them, social failure equals government success, then just consider the evidence. The bigger the failure, the more new spending is required. Per capita government spending has doubled in the last decade in California. Has anything improved? Better schools, better roads, less crime, fewer homeless, more affordable anything? No. It's all gotten worse.

To ensure that things continue to get worse, the state legislature and the governor are pulling out all the stops. As noted, they filed a lawsuit to make a biased court of handpicked judges throw a [tax reform off the ballot](#). They have also placed two of their own pro-tax initiatives on the ballot. One of them, if approved by voters, will further [erode the tax protections](#) that Californians still retain. The other one will make any further attempts to use the initiative process to [lower taxes virtually impossible](#). Expect them to spend tens of millions to con voters. As always, for these campaigns, they've got all the money they'll ever need.

Things will also get worse in California thanks to a raft of last-minute, allegedly anti-crime laws that the legislature has passed, [complete with poison pills](#). These new laws—which are too little, too late—include language to automatically nullify them if voters approve another grassroots initiative that will [actually untie the hands](#) of California's law enforcement. They couldn't get that one off the ballot, so they're being extra clever in this case. Expect California's attorney general to give this initiative, which would actually curb crime, a ballot description that reads something like this: "Initiative to Repeal Penalties for Crime."



These are just a few recent examples of the convoluted gyrations of a totally self-interested cabal that wields absolute power in California. Normal working families in California endure obscene levels of taxation, crippling over-regulation of everything, failing public services, crime and disorder, and a punitive cost of living. In return, they are obligated to support a government that operates according to a simple, diabolical formula: the worse things get for them, the better things get for us.

## **CALIFORNIA SUPREME COURT'S SHOCKING DECISION BLOCKING THE TAXPAYER PROTECTION ACT FROM THE BALLOT**

*Voters denied opportunity to act on Taxpayer Protection Act*

**BY KATY GRIMES**

Today, the majority Democrat-appointed judges on the California Supreme Court silenced the 1.43 million Californians who signed and placed the Taxpayer Protection Act on the November ballot.

The following are statements on California Supreme Court Ruling on Taxpayer Protection Act:

### **The Taxpayer Protection and Government Accountability Act (TPA) campaign**

The Taxpayer Protection and Government Accountability Act (TPA) campaign issued the following statement from Rob Lapsley, president of the California Business Roundtable, Jon Coupal, president of the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association and Matthew Hargrove, president and CEO of the California Business Properties Association:

“Today’s ruling is the greatest threat to democracy California has faced in recent memory.  
Governor

Newsom has effectively erased the voice of 1.43 million voters who signed the petition to qualify the Taxpayer Protection Act for the November ballot. Most importantly, the governor has cynically terminated Californians’ rights to engage in direct democracy despite his many claims that he is a defender of individual rights and democracy. Evidently, the governor wants to protect democracy and individual rights in other states, but not for all Californians.

We are disappointed that the California Supreme Court has put politics ahead of the Constitution, disregarding long-standing precedent that they should not intervene in an election before voters decide qualified initiatives.

Direct democracy and our initiative process are now at risk with this decision, showing California is firmly a one-party state where the governor and Legislature can politically influence courts to block ballot measures that threaten their ability to increase spending and raise taxes. Using the courts to block voters’ voices is the latest effort from the Democrats’ supermajority to remove any accountability measures that interfere with their agenda – a failed agenda that continues to drive up the cost of living with little accountability and few results.

This ruling sends a damning message to businesses in California and across the country that it is politically perilous to invest and grow jobs for the future.

In light of this ruling and the state's large budget deficit, a huge amount of tax increases are on the way that are sure to make California's cost of living even higher.

We will continue to explore our legal options and fight for the people's right to hold their government accountable through direct democracy."

**Assembly Republican Leader James Gallagher** (Yuba City) statement on the California Supreme Court decision to remove the Taxpayer Protection Act from this November's ballot: *"This decision is an outrageous abuse of power by seven Justices who think they know better than the 40 million people of California. The Court is supposed to look out for the people, not rubber stamp the anti-democratic schemes of politicians hell-bent on protecting their power. Today, the Court silenced the voices of Californians and shredded its credibility in the process."*

**Assemblyman Bill Essayli (R-Riverside):**

"California is a fallen republic. When the CA Supreme Court can block the People from voting on a ballot initiative, we have devolved from a constitutional to a banana republic. This decision is outrageous and I hope voters will make their voices heard in November by voting out every incumbent democrat who supported this attack on our democracy."

[Click here to read the full article in the California Globe June 22, 2024](#)

## **CALIFORNIA SUPREME COURT REMOVES TAXPAYER-PROTECTION MEASURE FROM NOVEMBER BALLOT**

**BY WILL SWAIM**

There's much to be ticked off about following the state Supreme Court's [decision](#) yesterday to remove a taxpayer-protection measure from the November ballot.

There's also a solution, one that's available to every Californian over the age of 17 years and 364 days: Think like the Apple ad campaign and Vote Different.

That opportunity will come in November.

This morning, watch as every member of the Party of Government — elected Democrats who own every state office and the legislature, the seven black-robed judges on the state's high court (each of whom ought to be outfitted with a bright yellow helmet), unelected agency officials, and

government union leaders in public education, public safety, and the DMV — is wearing a white Patrizia von Brandenstein suit, pointing at a rotating mirror ball in 4/4 time, and dancing 140 beats per minute to Kool & the Gang's "Celebration." They're high on endorphins, these officials, feeling the rush of the body's natural painkillers, living the California progressive's exhilarating dream: they control everything, and they still want to claim they're part of the proletariat, celebrating like it's October 1917.

But tomorrow will come, and then they'll also own the baleful results of indulging themselves in the privilege of endless tax hikes and fees. Here's what will happen next: Prices will rise, consumers will struggle as the cost of living spikes like swinging a cartoonish mallet at the lever at the base of one of those Hi-Striker games at the county fair, and then the economy will make the flatulent sound of a balloon exhausting itself. State and local officials will express astonishment as Californians flee to other, less-hostile states. And when the tax revenue associated with all this chaos declines, they'll blame the rich — Big Oil, "wealthy" business owners who don't "pay their fair share" — and then raise taxes again.

It's already happening, of course, so this isn't really a prediction so much as an elaboration on current trends. Already laboring beneath the nation's highest taxes — and, consequently, the highest cost of living — run-of-the-mill Californians may be surprised to find that leaders of government unions think those taxes ought to be higher.

That's not what you'll hear them say. See if you can find the Google translator for "American English to Marx" here:

"The Taxpayer Deception Act was a flagrant attempt by a few extremely wealthy real estate developers to undermine our entire democratic system and our voice as voters and devastate the vital services Californians rely on — all to avoid paying their fair share," [David Huerta, president of SEIU California and SEIU United Service Workers West, said in a statement.](#) "Today's ruling is a strong warning to corporate interests that even those with the fattest pocketbooks will be held accountable to follow our laws."

"We applaud the Supreme Court's decision to remove the Taxpayer Deception Act from the ballot," [Lorena Gonzalez, who heads the California Labor Federation, said in a statement.](#) "This unconstitutional measure was another cynical and self-serving effort by corporate interests to put their greed ahead of the needs of all Californians."

"We have argued from day one that the Taxpayer Deception Act is an illegal revision to the constitution funded by a handful of wealthy real-estate developers and landlords desperate to avoid paying their fair share," [said Jonathan Underland, a spokesperson for the campaign opposing the initiative.](#) "The Supreme Court's decision to take this dangerous initiative off the ballot avoids a host of catastrophic impacts, protecting billions of dollars for schools, access to

reproductive healthcare, gun safety laws that keep students safe in classrooms” and, oh, “paid family leave.”

Speaker of the Assembly Robert Rivas (D-Salinas) is especially effusive. “I’m very pleased,” he said in a statement — pleased that “the California Supreme Court rejected this unlawful and extreme effort to take power away from local communities to pay for essential services like police and firefighters. I will always work to protect hardworking Californians and remain committed to responsible government action that uplifts all residents of our state.”

Break down Rivas’s statement and you’ll find almost everything that’s broken in California:

## THE LEGAL FLAWS

The justices acknowledged “the important state interest in protecting the fundamental right of the people to propose statutory or constitutional changes through the initiative process,” a fundamental right that “requires that a court exercise considerable caution before intervening to remove or withhold the measure from an imminent election.”

For that reason, the justices said, “We typically review constitutional challenges to an initiative after an election in order to avoid disrupting the electoral process and the exercise of the franchise.”

That’s what legal professionals and scholars call “post-enactment review.” The court says it took the unusual step of intervening before the election in order to avoid inflicting psychological distress on Californians.

“Deferring a decision until after the election not only will defeat the constitutionally contemplated procedure ... but may contribute to an increasing cynicism on the part of the electorate with respect to the efficacy of the initiative process.... It will confuse some voters and frustrate others, and an ultimate decision that the measure is invalid, coming after the voters have voted in favor of the measure, tends to denigrate the legitimate use of the initiative procedure.”

It’s impossible to find those polite considerations for our mental wellbeing anywhere in the state constitution, of course. And you might be excused for feeling, well, cynical, confused and frustrated following the court’s remarkable intervention in this case.

“When I read this, my head exploded,” says California Policy Center attorney Julie Hamill. “The court should have refrained from preelection review, let the voters decide, then, if the measure

was adopted by voters, conducted postelection review while staying implementation of the problematic sections until a decision is made on the merits.” At that point, Hamill says, if the court found “certain sections unconstitutional, it could have severed those sections” while preserving the rest of the initiative.

## THE ECONOMIC FLAWS

When you raise taxes, you raise the cost of everything. It’s “hardworking Californians” — consumers who live in “local communities” — who will pay. What’s “extreme” is Rivas’s economic illiteracy.

Same goes for the measure’s limit on government agencies’ power to add fees to every service government provides. State Democrats are still trying to get political traction for the idea that among the gravest threats facing California — fossil fuels, police, parents of school kids, Republicans — is the specter of hidden fees in commercial transactions. But most of us get the irony: Democrats like Rivas are silent on the myriad ways in which government acts like an exotic, multi-armed religious god, an omnipresent deity with at least one hand in every pocket. This measure would have put the god in a box.

## THE PROBLEM OF GOVERNMENT UNIONS

Rivas’s statement also reveals who was behind the effort to kill this measure. The people cock-a-doodling loudest about the court’s decision are the people behind the people behind Gavin Newsom — California’s government union leaders.

For them, the Taxpayer Protection and Government Accountability Initiative was like the preternaturally tall skeletal guy wearing a black shroud and carrying a scythe. It was the end of the road for endless tax hikes. What was Reagan’s line? “Government’s view of the economy could be summed up in a few short phrases: If it moves, tax it. If it keeps moving, regulate it. And if it stops moving, subsidize it.”

California Teachers Association president David Goldberg — who, though it’s hard to imagine, signs his emails “in solidarity” — declared the measure a “dangerous attempt by wealthy corporations to undermine our state constitution and defund our public institutions.” He also alerted us to what’s next — that is, more taxes. In his letter to union members yesterday, Goldberg, who earns nearly half a million per year, promised to “fight forward to win the funding and resources that California’s schools and communities deserve.”

Goldberg and the state’s other government union leaders are to taxes what Homer Simpson is to an all-you-can-eat seafood buffet — neither man nor beast but a remorseless eating machine.

Union leaders are behind every tax hike in California. That makes them natural enemies of every attempt to restrain them. When Goldberg says “wealthy corporations” were behind the Taxpayer Protection Act, he’s projecting: No single entity in California spends more on politics than the California Teachers Association: the teachers union raises and spends \$315 million annually to influence state and local elections. No one else comes close.

It’s worth noting that government unions — including American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, California Teachers Association, Association of California School Administrators, California Statewide Law Enforcement Association, and California State Council of Laborers — have contributed at least \$2.45 million to Rivas’s campaign this election cycle.

## TWO SOLUTIONS

First, Californians ought to abandon all hope in the state’s initiative and referendum system. Defenders of the system — a 1911 product of the progressive movement, mind you — will point out that state ballot measures offer voters direct access to the levers of political power. But we Californians already have direct access to that power — in elections of statewide officers and state legislators. If we don’t like how our elected officials operate, we ought to throw the bums out on their, um, bums. Attempting end runs through outrageously expensive ballot campaigns designed to circumvent the three branches of government distracts us from our power to directly affect the outcomes of state races.

We can respect the people who aspire to transform government — like our friends behind The Taxpayer Protection and Government Accountability Act – without agreeing that multi-million-dollar ballot measures are prudent.

Second, the state of California is dysfunctional because we voters have elected people with whom you would not trust the repair of a hairbrush, people like Newsom and Rivas, men and women who believe that our primary duty is to expand government.

Knowing who to vote for can be complicated. Here’s a hack: look at endorsements for each candidate and ballot measure. If you see a government-union endorsement — teachers, police, fire fighters, prison guards, SEIU and others — run. Do not look back lest you be transformed into a pillar of salt. Do not vote for candidates backed by government unions. Individually, the men and women in these unions are as good as the Bell Curve that describes the distribution of virtue among the general public. But when these people pay dues to unions, they are funding the campaigns of the candidates who have driven California toward the abyss.

*Will Swaim is president of the California Policy Center and co-host with David Bahnsen of National Review’s “Radio Free California” podcast. Cal policy center June 25, 2024.*



## THE END OF AN EXPERIMENT

*The Supreme Court's ruling in Grants Pass returns homeless policy to state and local governments—where it belongs.*

BY JUDGE GLOCK

For almost six years, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals has conducted an experiment in homeless policy. Circuit judges have used a singular reading of the Constitution to overturn local laws against street sleeping and camping. The results were disastrous and led to more homelessness and chaos in the Western states under the Ninth Circuit's jurisdiction. On Friday, Justice Neil Gorsuch, with five other Supreme Court justices, put an end to that experiment.

Gorsuch's strong but reasoned opinion returns homeless policy to states and local governments, where it belongs. It also offers a chance for these governments to act against the growing problem of street encampments.

In 2018, a panel of Ninth Circuit judges decided the case of **Martin v. Boise**, ruling that the Constitution's Eighth Amendment clause against "cruel and unusual punishments" prevented cities from enforcing laws against street sleeping or camping, if homeless people didn't have sufficient alternatives.

Any hopes that the **Boise** case would have helped the homeless were quickly dashed. Homelessness in the Ninth Circuit states increased by over 25 percent by 2022, while in the rest of the country it decreased. Nonetheless, in that year the Ninth Circuit extended its decision in **Boise**, ruling in the **Johnson v. Grants Pass** case that even civil fines against some types of camping and sleeping were unconstitutional.

Gorsuch's opinion overturning the **Grants Pass** ruling lays waste to the Ninth Circuit's arguments. First, he shows that the claim that the Eighth Amendment prevents camping laws is absurd on its face. The Eighth Amendment is about preventing types of punishments, such as beatings, not about banning whole categories of laws proscribing certain behaviors. The punishments authorized by the city of Grants Pass, Oregon, such as civil fines and a ban on camping in public parks, were both restrained and common.

Gorsuch's opinion also points out a fact many activists like to deny: homeless encampments are dangerous and violent. Rulings that prevent the clearing of those camps can lead to more violence. Gorsuch notes that by one estimate, over 40 percent of the shootings in Seattle are linked to homeless encampments, despite the homeless being a small fraction of the city's overall population. As others have pointed out, the main victims of these acts of violence are other homeless people. About 25 percent of Los Angeles's murder victims are homeless, for example, though they make up about 1 percent of the population.

It's difficult to see how the Ninth Circuit's rulings have helped the situation for the homeless on the West Coast. Today, California alone contains almost half of the nation's unsheltered homeless. Seattle's King County saw a new record of homeless deaths last year, 415—an increase of more than a third from the previous year's total, which was also a record. Los Angeles sees about 2,000 homeless people die a year, a figure up almost 300 percent since 2014 and which even local officials believe is an undercount.

Despite valiant efforts by the Left to portray the attacks on the Ninth Circuit as a right-wing effort, the court's rulings on the homeless united a broad spectrum of opponents. The National League of Cities, representing more than 19,000 American municipalities, and individual cities from San Francisco to Colorado Springs asked the Supreme Court to review the **Grants Pass** ruling. Justice Gorsuch included a footnote in his opinion, taking up most of a page, that listed all the people and organizations that petitioned the court to review the case, including everyone from California governor Gavin Newsom to the International Municipal Lawyers Association.

The homeless advocates' argument rested on the idea that homelessness was an involuntary status and that local governments couldn't punish people simply for their status or for activities that flowed from that, such as sleeping. But the activists' position brought up some uncomfortable questions. During the oral argument, Justice Gorsuch wondered whether, if sleeping in public was necessary for the homeless, might cooking in public be, too? Justice Amy Coney Barrett pointed out that defecating was also necessary. Should cities be forced to allow public defecation? And how would cities prove that homelessness was "involuntary"? As the opinion notes, most residents of homeless encampments refuse shelter beds even when they are offered.

Local governance is a formidable challenge that involves weighing diverse preferences and enforcing rules across the vast panoply of human behavior. While the **Grants Pass** ruling does not guarantee that Western states and cities will handle homelessness well, it at least gives them a chance. They will certainly do better than distant judges who could not begin to comprehend the difficulties of dealing with growing encampments filled with human suffering.

*Judge Glock is the director of research and a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute and a contributing editor of City Journal. June 28, 2024, City Journal*

**COLAB IN DEPTH**  
**IN FIGHTING THE TROUBLESOME LOCAL DAY-TO-DAY ASSAULTS**  
**ON OUR FREEDOM AND PROPERTY, IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO**  
**KEEP IN MIND THE LARGER UNDERLYING IDEOLOGICAL,**  
**POLITICAL, AND ECONOMIC CAUSES**

# THE WAY TO UNITE AMERICA'S POLITICAL SPECTRUM IS ECONOMIC

BY EDWARD RING

*"They got you fighting a culture war to stop you from fighting a class war. It was designed that way in 2012 when the woke left & right were created. Occupy Wall Street/The Tea Party were making inroads uniting the political spectrum & the people against Wall Street following the 2008 crash. 'We'll get them to argue about women & their cocks instead'"*

Andrew Breitbart famously said politics is downstream from culture. He's right, but we still have to recognize that when every American institution is pushing transgenderism and abortion on demand, their primary objective is not to turn America into a transgender, abortion-loving nation. That may motivate many of them, but the power behind the woke movement has a very different priority: they want to divide us.

The motivation for populist unity ought to have America's establishment elites feeling threatened. Their economic model is systematically disenfranchising the entire American middle class and denying upward mobility to everyone else. In 2023, one percent of the population controlled 76 percent of all household wealth in America, and overall, the top 10 percent owned more than the bottom 90 percent combined. To disparage this inequality may correctly be dismissed as class envy, but it is nonetheless appropriate to criticize why America's elites are mopping up greater and greater percentages of total wealth. The game is rigged, and it isn't racial or gender "privilege" that's responsible. It's also not "unbridled capitalism." On the contrary, it is excessive government regulation that catalyzes centralization of private wealth.

Wealth inequality is getting worse because lower- and middle-class households and small businesses do not have the sophistication and resources to navigate the regulatory obstacles to achieving and maintaining prosperity and profits. A billionaire, or a multi-billion dollar corporation, can easily hire the attorneys and consultants needed to avoid taxes and comply with an otherwise crippling array of regulations. They can access the most favorable credit markets, they can diversify their investments, and they have the financial resilience to withstand economic shocks that will destroy middle-income households and small businesses.

We saw this during the COVID pandemic, which triggered what was possibly the greatest spasm of regulatory overreach in American history. Retail businesses that were already reeling from online competition were forced to shut down, along with manufacturers and business offices. Emerging in the aftermath of the pandemic were online behemoths: Amazon, Apple, Microsoft, Google, and Facebook, with market caps that had doubled or even tripled. And while households and small businesses had been increasingly challenged for years, the inflationary leap since COVID came along made those challenges much worse.

And against this milieu, we argue over the definition of a woman.

The question we should be asking is: What are we being distracted from? Where are America's elites, along with their counterparts throughout Western Europe, trying to take us? Why is it, as if inflation weren't bad enough thanks to trillions of magically materializing dollars, that we have to shut down our conventional energy industry in favor of "renewables," shut down our farms and cull our livestock to cope with the "climate crisis?" No wonder everything is so expensive. What is the point?

One answer, at least for America, is that we are trying to preserve the global demand for dollars. We monetize the world with dollars through, for example, our trade deficit, through remittances from foreigners working in the U.S. sending their earnings back to their homes abroad, through hundreds of military bases spending money in foreign nations, or through foreign aid. And all those dollars can come back to the U.S. in the form of investments by foreigners who purchase our assets: our factories, our real estate, our farmland, and our mineral resources. So why not utilize environmentalist regulations to limit the supply of everything and make those assets cost more?

What a concept! "Green" policies help us collateralize our currency. So what if ordinary Americans can't afford to live in America anymore? If you're a member of the green elite, you are indifferent to gas that costs \$6 a gallon or "starter homes" that cost \$850,000. It's pocket change.

There are better solutions to America's debt binge. There are ways to restore upward mobility and make products and services reasonably affordable again. In the long run, they would also guarantee the status of the dollar as a hard currency. They're not complicated, either, but they're controversial because they will reverse the ongoing transfer of what remains of decentralized private wealth into the pockets of oligarchs.

Here, then, are some dollar-hardening, debt-eliminating alternatives to what author Steve Milloy quite aptly refers to as Green Hell: Spend public money on cost-effective infrastructure that yields long-term economic dividends instead of on "renewables" and on welfare payments. Totally abolish welfare for anyone able to work. Restrict immigration to a limited number of highly qualified and productive individuals who arrive legally. Rewrite (and in some cases repeal) environmental laws in order to restore the ability for entrepreneurs to log, mine, quarry, farm, ranch, manufacture, and build homes. Deregulate so small businesses can again compete with big businesses. Dismantle the entire DEI/ESG industrial complex and incentivize hiring, contracting, and investing based purely on merit. Put criminals in jail and provide the homeless with inexpensive congregate shelters where they are required to be sober and can recover their lives.

That's it. That's all there is to it.

As it is, these practical solutions had better come soon. America's ability to print as much money as it wants while still retaining a reasonably hard currency has just taken a major hit. On June 9, Saudi Arabia declined to renew their 50-year agreement to sell oil exclusively in dollars. This comes at the same time as the BRICS group which is committed to trade using currencies other

than the US dollar—has now expanded to include ten nations: Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia.

When nations in the rest of the world decide what currency to use for international trade, shall they continue to use the dollar, knowing that if they incur the wrath of the US government, their dollar assets may be seized? Once the US started using seized Russian assets to finance war against Russia, a message was sent to every sovereign wealth fund in the world: Your US dollar holdings are not safe. Is the BRICS group a safer alternative? Here is how the GDP of the BRICS group compares to the US and the world.

### The Expanded BRICS Group Population and GDP Comparisons to US & World

	Population (millions)	Nominal GDP (trillions)
Brazil	218	2.33
Russia	144	2.06
India	1,442	3.94
China	1,425	18.53
South Africa	62	0.37
Egypt	106	0.35
Ethiopia	107	0.21
Iran	84	0.46
United Arab Emirates	9	0.53
Saudi Arabia	37.50	1.11
<b>Total BRICS</b>	<b>3,635</b>	<b>29.9</b>
<b>% of world</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>27%</b>
<b>United States</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>28.80</b>
<b>% of world</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>26%</b>
<b>World</b>	<b>7,951</b>	<b>109.0</b>

shown on the chart, the BRICS group already represents 27 percent of global GDP, narrowly eclipsing the US at 26 percent. But this is nominal GDP, which doesn't take into account the lower cost of living in most of the BRICS nations compared to the US. One way to get an idea of the purchasing power GDP of the BRICS nations is to consider their total population, which is nearly half the world at 46 percent, compared to 4 percent for As the US. The BRICS nations represent a formidable challenge to the US dollar.

Which brings us back to the question of where the American and European elites are trying to take us—and the world—in the near future. Because if the threat of Muammar Gaddafi trying to form an African currency union and of Saddam Hussein selling Iraq's oil in Euros, both precipitated the strangely coincidental experience of US military intervention, what coincidence awaits us as BRICS begins to flex its muscles?

Another massive coincidence seems to be the timing of the COVID pandemic, coming at the very moment populist movements around the world were gaining momentum, not least of which was the very real possibility of President Trump getting reelected. What did they fear? Four more years of peace and prosperity? Today, as populist parties gain unprecedented momentum in Europe, the words “far right” [tumble out of BBC](#) and [Deutsch Welle](#) broadcasts at a rate of perhaps 20 or 30 per minute. Meanwhile, Trump’s possible victory in November 2024 is being marketed by NPR, ABC, CBS and NBC as a looming catastrophe for democracy. Why is every major western news organization pushing such obvious hyperbole?

The goals behind current policies of western nations, led by the US, appear to be to degrade their own middle class while engaging in WW3 brinkmanship with Russia. These goals are inexplicable unless they are motivated by the false and self-serving belief that middle-class lifestyles are economically and ecologically unsustainable and must end, along with a grandiose desire to conquer the world, or, at the very least, preserve the ability for the United States Treasury to print currency at will and without consequences.

Remember this the next time your political organizing and personal obsessions gravitate towards fighting the culture wars. They matter a great deal and cannot be ignored. But in spite of how much you are being impelled to think so, they are not on center stage.

*Edward Ring is a senior fellow of the Center for American Greatness. He is also the director of water and energy policy for the California Policy Center, which he co-founded in 2013 and served as its first president. Ring is the author of Fixing California: Abundance, Pragmatism, Optimism (2021) and The Abundance Choice: Our Fight for More Water in California (2022). American Greatness, June 25, 2024.*

## **RINGSIDE: AN OVERVIEW OF CALIFORNIA’S ENERGY ECONOMY**

***California energy is unaffordable, unreliable, and going to get worse if the legislature doesn’t prioritize it***

Energy in California is unaffordable and unreliable, and it’s going to get worse if the priorities of the state legislature don’t dramatically shift. The state’s default policy is to create energy scarcity in order to protect the environment, and in the process they are pursuing impractical, grotesquely expensive projects that have the ironic side effect of harming the environment far more than they help the environment.

Before discussing some of the worst energy ideas coming out of Sacramento, along with some vastly preferable alternatives, it is useful to review the best online sources for *quantitative* facts about energy and water in California. Here are some of the best.

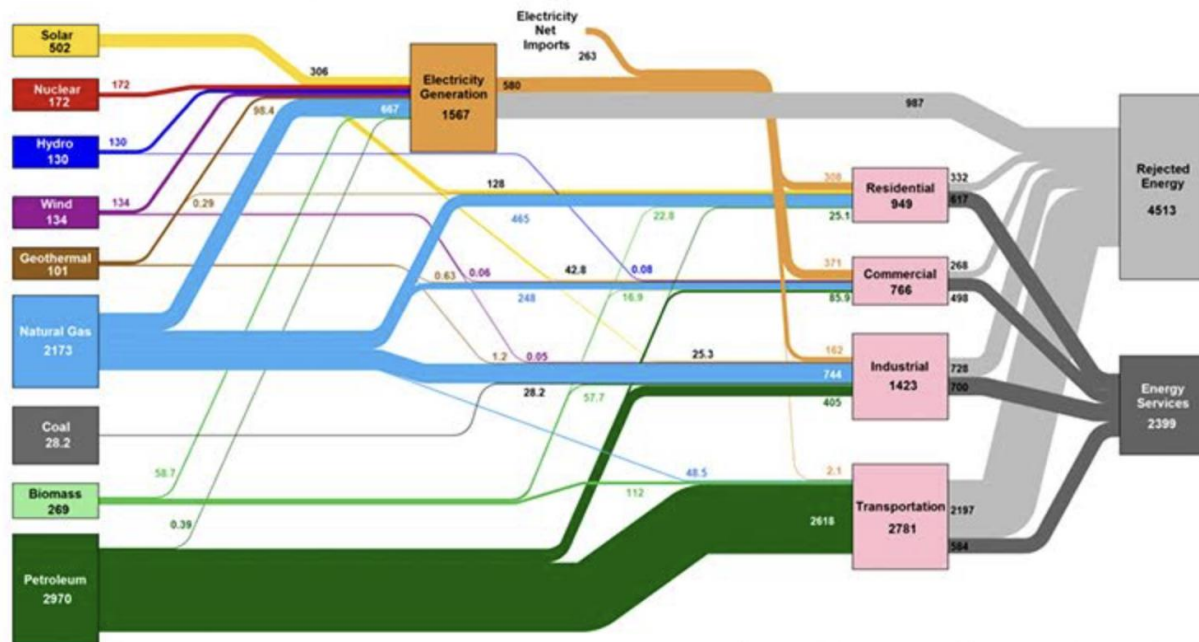
An indispensable primary source is the [Statistical Review of World Energy](#). Updated every year, this encyclopedic reference provides information on energy production and consumption by nation, breaking it down by type of fuel. For every nation, it also includes comprehensive



information on electricity, showing generation by source. There are tremendous insights to be gained from studying this reference. For example, in 2022, over 80 percent of all global fuel inputs came from burning coal, oil, and natural gas. Also, most notably, per capita energy consumption in the United States in 2022 was 283 gigajoules, compared to a paltry 118 gigajoule average for Europeans, and a mere 14 gigajoules per person in Africa. For the moment, never mind the use of what most of us might consider to be an abstruse unit of energy measurement: “gigajoules”. It’s the differing portions that matter, and they aren’t subtle.

Next, turn to these Energy Flowcharts courtesy of the U.S. Lawrence Livermore Laboratory. The interface is fairly self-explanatory, allowing views of multiple entities including the whole world, the United States, and the state of California. One of the benefits of these flowcharts is to easily recognize the proportion of raw fuel inputs (watch out, they gross up the “non-thermal sources” allegedly to show how much combustible fuel they displace, which can mislead the casual observer), as well as the energy outputs which are split between “rejected energy” and “energy services.” The fact that we still waste nearly twice as much of our raw fuel in the form of friction and heat losses is compelling evidence that we need to adopt more efficient technologies. This fact underlies much of the push for electrification. Note these analysts chose Trillion BTUs as their unit of energy. Don’t fret, 1 billion gigajoules is an exajoule, and one exajoule is 948 trillion BTUs. Huh? Have a look anyway. The proportions depicted on these flowcharts are intuitive, and very helpful if you want to understand where we get our energy and how we use it.

### California Energy Consumption 2021 - 6,912 Trillion BTU



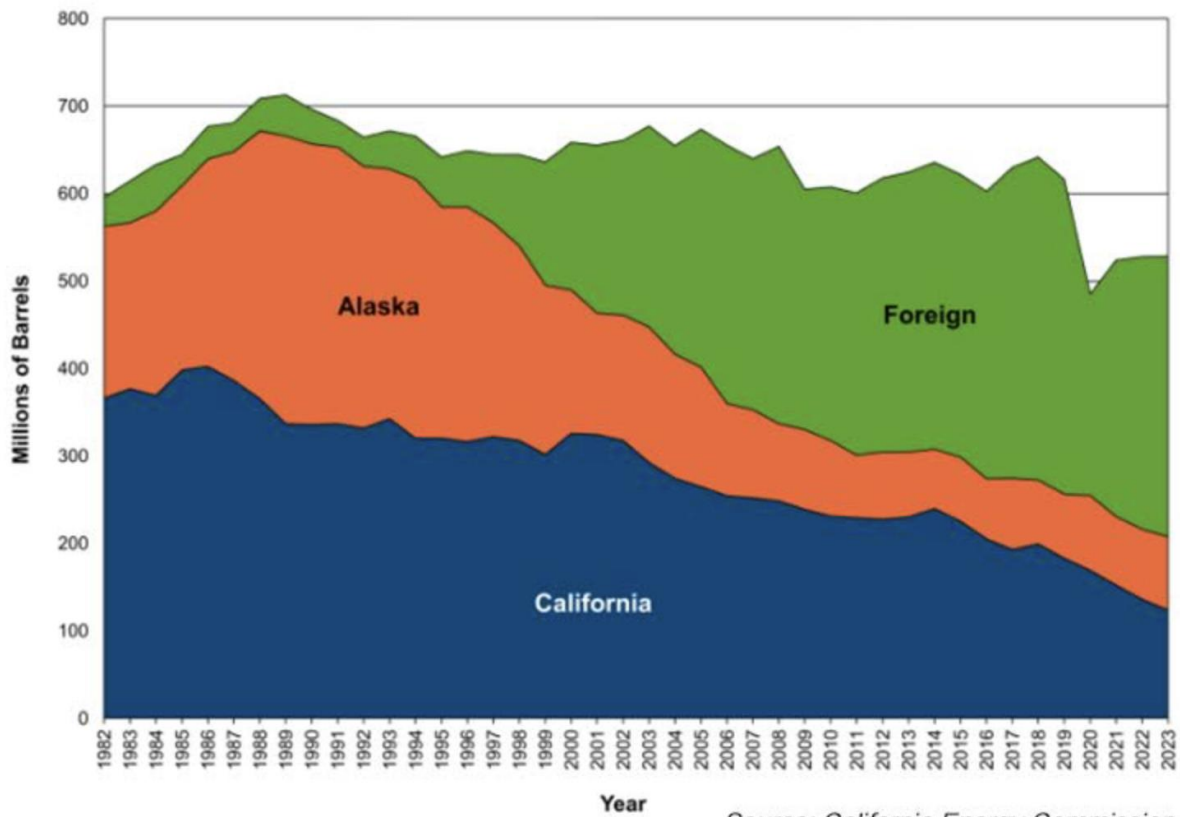
Source: Lawrence Livermore Laboratory

Zeroing in on California, this next chart from the U.S. Energy Information Administration shows the state’s energy consumption by fuel. There’s one simple takeaway: In terms of raw fuel inputs, we are still depending on petroleum for 50 percent of our energy, and natural gas for

another 30 percent. For all the work we've done on renewables over the past 20 years or more, we are exactly on pace with the rest of the world.

Next, from the California Energy Commission, have a look at [our own oil production](#). As the table indicates, we have gone from supplying 61 percent of our in-state oil needs in 1982 to only 23 percent today. This isn't because we are running out of oil, it's because our state legislature – abetted by powerful litigants and lobbyists – has decided that importing oil from petrostates is preferable to creating jobs right here. Californians have the option to revive in-state oil production significantly, then draw it down on a reasonable timetable of 20-30 years, all the while perfecting the cleanest, most environmentally responsible practices in the world. Or we can continue to prop up despots whose regard for the environment and labor standards is nonexistent.

### Annual Oil Supply to California Refineries 1982 - 2023



When it comes to electricity, the favored unit is gigawatt-hours. According to the California Energy Commission's report "[2022 Total System Electric Generation](#)," California consumed 287,000 gigawatt-hours in 2022, but only generated 203,000 in-state. And of that in-state production, 96,000 gigawatt-hours came from natural gas – nearly half. California's last surviving nuclear power plant added another 18,000 (I'm rounding), hydroelectric also 18,000,

geothermal a surprising 11,000, and biomass 5,000. The big renewables delivered 40,000 via solar, and 14,000 from wind.

When discussing wind and solar, “capacity” vs. “yield” is often discussed. It is inaccurate to evaluate wind and solar merely based on capacity. The [next chart from the California Energy Commission](#) compares total generation (yield) to capacity. Knowing these percentages are essential to understand how much actual power you’re going to get from any intermittent source of electricity. As it is, in 2023, wind generated 14,000 gigawatt-hours, but had an installed capacity of 6,000 megawatts. Since 14,000 gigawatt-hours is equal to 1,600 megawatt-years, that means the yield from wind farms in California was  $(1,600/6,000)$  27 percent. For solar, the yield was 23 percent. And for natural gas – because we only allow these plants to run when the wind isn’t blowing and the sun isn’t shining – the yield was 27 percent.

If you’re still wading through this, the takeaway is simple: Whenever you hear about how many gigawatts a wind or solar farm is going to produce, divide the reported “nameplate capacity” by four and add tons of batteries. That lower figure represents how much these intermittent sources will actually deliver over time in terms of continuous, usable baseload power. And to square the circle – California’s total electricity use in 2022 of 287,000 gigawatt-hours equates to 32 gigawatt-years. Remember that number. It means that Californians draw, on average, 32 gigawatts of electricity from the grid. It fluctuates, of course. Nighttime lows can drop under 20 gigawatts, and summer afternoon highs will top 50 gigawatts.

This is a lot to digest, which may explain why California’s current energy policy is completely dominated by special interests that benefit from the stratospheric prices for energy that come when cheap conventional sources are restricted. It’s easy to claim natural gas power is no longer cost-effective when a natural gas powerplant is only allowed to operate 27 percent of the time. If these plants were permitted to operate at capacity, they would be spreading three times as much electricity revenue over their fixed costs, and the price of electricity to the consumer would come back down to earth.

Next week, expect information about specific energy options for California, including floating offshore wind, natural gas generated electricity with carbon sequestration, and the challenges and opportunities posed by the electrification of California’s transportation and residential sectors.

*Edward Ring is the director of water and energy policy for the California Policy Center, which he co-founded in 2013 and served as its first president. The California Policy Center is an educational non-profit focused on public policies that aim to improve California’s democracy and economy. He is also a senior fellow of the Center for American Greatness. Ring is the author of two books: "Fixing California - Abundance, Pragmatism, Optimism" (2021), and "The Abundance Choice - Our Fight for More Water in California" (2022). June 27, 2024, California Globe.*



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