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**April 6 - 12, 2025**

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## THIS WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

**Paso Robles Basin Groundwater Authority Meeting of Monday April 7, 2025, 3PM  
(Scheduled-First Meeting) City of Paso Robles Council Chambers, 1000 Spring Street**

The meeting is also available via Zoom: Zoom Link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83359446962?pwd=bGJFK3pXYitOO0hWdk5mZTBXWDFoZz09>

**Meeting ID: 833 5944 6962**

**Passcode: 068456**

**Call-in: +16694449171, ,83359446962#,,, \*068456#**

**Speakers will be limited to 3:00 minutes per person.**

The agenda calls for an election of officers, a setting of a 2025 meeting calendar, a report on funding, the formation of a committee to select an Executive Director and a work-around to attempt to legitimize the agency by submitting the 2023-2024 report from the Director of The SLO County Groundwater Sustainability program to the California Department of Water Resources in lieu of having anything to say for themselves.

The big question on everyone's mind is whether this "authority" actually has any, given that the Joint Powers Agreement establishing it was required to have the approval and participation of all five agencies in the Paso Basin. To date, San Miguel has opted to remain out of the JPA, and yet, the other agencies are moving forward without them.

Another big question involves finances and water rate structures. How quickly and how big will this new government agency grow, and how much will it cost those who live off of their own private well that they drilled and pay monthly electric bills to keep it functioning.

Will the "Authority" have and exercise the power to limit water usage in drought years? Is the Paso Basin truly over drafted, and by how much? Lastly, the fundamental question is about whether a governmental agency has the right to charge a landowner for the water drawn from their own land.

Stay tuned for a classic government versus people showdown that could become yet another chapter in the long and mysterious tale of California Water Rights.

**Board of Supervisors Meeting of Tuesday April 8, 2025 (Scheduled)**

**Item 2 - Introduction of an ordinance amending Chapter 3.21 of Title 3 of the County Code - Low Value Assessments and Property Tax on Such Assessments.** The County will exempt "items of low value assessment" from the property tax. This is because it costs more to process and bill them than they pay. This is a good efficiency move.

**Item 17 - Submittal of a resolution and tabulation of changes in mileage of maintained County roads as required by the State Department of Transportation.** This is an interesting

document being proposed to be submitted to the California Department of Transportation (under Section 2121, requiring Counties to submit a declaration of mileage of its county roads) [is]? one declaring SLO County responsibility for 1,347 miles of roadway within its boundaries. There is no mention of how the County arrived at that rather extraordinary figure nor is there any mention of how many potholes exist over those many miles of County roads.

The write-up states in part:

*The current total maintained County road mileage, as of February 1, 2025, is 1,347.679 miles. This total mileage accounts for an addition of 2.559 miles in the Woodlands Tract, a reduction of 4.293 miles due to the exclusion of three emergency access roads from the County Maintained Road System (CMRS), as well as additional cleanup and reconciliation that has been done to the accepted CMRS network in GIS in the past year (March 2024 through February 2025).*

The most troubling paragraph in the report states:

*The financial implication of this action for the County Road Fund is minimal. However, as noted in prior years, gas tax revenues continue to fall short of fully funding the cost to retain the current condition of pavement throughout the county. Since then, inflation has soared and the cost of liability insurance for Roads has skyrocketed from \$856,472 in FY 2021-22 to \$3,632,873 in FY 2025-26 (\$2.7M increase over four years). To absorb these costs, Public Works had no choice but to reduce the amount of funding allocated to the pavement management program, which is further compounded by the increased cost per mile to maintain county roads. In future years, the result of this will likely be reflected in Performance Measures as a decline to the Average Pavement Condition Index (PCI) for County roads; this performance measure is already below the targeted levels with a PCI of 59 vs the target of 65.*

What is causing the surge in liability costs? Is the County making large liability suit settlements? Again, and as we pointed out during the prior Budget update, the Board should receive a report on rising liability costs and their causes.

**Item 20 - Request to 1) receive and file a report on the grant review process for homeless services funding and provide direction as necessary; 2) approve the process outlined in the guidelines for creation of an Ad Hoc Committee if necessary to resolve differences between the Homeless Services Oversight Council and a County-convened Grant Review Committee and to make recommendations directly to the Board.** Competition for funding for homeless projects, (both capital and operating) is hot and heavy among the various governmental and not-for-profit homeless providers. The Board sought to stabilize the situation:

*On May 21, 2024, the County Board of Supervisors directed the Homeless Services Oversight Council (HSOC) Executive Committee to develop guidelines for future funding allocations that will include the following:*

- *How future funding will be allocated between new project startups such as new shelters, new housing and/or new services and supporting existing shelters and services such as shelter operations, outreach services and day center services. This may include a percentage split between new projects and supporting existing projects or other allocation methodology.*
- *How performance metrics will be weighted when making funding recommendations.*
- *How the cost of services will be weighed when making funding recommendations.*

- *Resolution process for resolving differences between grant review committee recommendations and HSOC adopted recommendations.*

Now it appears that the committees assigned to resolve the issues are fighting. The Board letter states in part:

*Approve the process outlined in the guidelines for creation of an Ad Hoc Committee if necessary to resolve differences between the Homeless Services Oversight Council and a County-convened Grant Review Committee and to make recommendations directly to the Board.*

**Item 25 - Request to consider and approve support and opposition positions on various current State legislation.**

We know that the state legislature is up to all kinds of outlandish trends and hope that the Board is representative of local voters' preferences, especially when questions of transparency, accountability, and common sense are involved.

*On March 25, 2025, the Board directed staff to return with an item including recommended County positions on current proposed legislation of special impact or importance to the County, for Board approval to advocate in support or opposition of each bill. Identified bills and recommended positions are outlined in the table below.*

A number of these are contained within the text of the report.

**One that could help the housing situation:**

AB 609 (Wicks)  California Environmental Quality Act: exemption: housing development projects	Support bill, with recommendation to modify the bill to include areas identified by the local jurisdiction for urban development. It is generally less impactful on the physical environment and natural resources and more financially feasible to build housing in areas [A] in close proximity to jobs, services, and facilities, [B] with existing infrastructure and available utility services, and [C] within a stronger network of emergency and public safety services. These areas are considered more efficient from a housing location standpoint ("housing efficient areas") and are typically urbanized areas. AB 609 would essentially expand the CEQA Residential Infill Exemption to capture a wider range of housing development in urbanized areas, and as a result, would reduce the need for housing projects located within housing efficient areas to undergo unnecessary environmental review.	Trevor Keith, Director, Planning and Building
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**And another:**

AB 1206 (Harabedian)	Reduces costs by requiring the County to expedite the building permit approval for housing projects whose plans they have previously approved. The County's Building Department has a Plan Check Only process to approve a specific housing project plan. By having a Plan Check Only approval process it ensure that developers can move forward with construction faster, addressing housing shortages and providing more units to meet demand. By having a reduced permitting cost for subsequent individual lot permits on previously approved plan check only projects, will aid in reducing the financial burdens while also allowing counties to allocate resources more efficiently. When builders use pre-approved plans, they are more likely to adhere to consistent, code-compliant designs, reducing the likelihood of plan corrections and inspection delays. Faster approvals mean quicker project starts, leading to job creation in construction and related industries, benefiting the local economy.	Trevor Keith, Director, Planning and Building
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### **Not in my back yard:**

AB 303 (Addis)	This bill restores local control over the permitting of large-scale battery energy storage systems (BESS), ensuring that communities have a say in significant energy projects being sited near them. By eliminating the CEC's opt-in authority for BESS projects, this bill returns decision-making power to local governments, allowing them to carefully evaluate projects based on local land use priorities and public input. It is essential that these decisions remain in the hands of the communities most affected, rather than bypassing local government through state-level approvals. AB 303 strikes the right balance between advancing California's clean energy goals and respecting the voices of local residents.	Supervisor Paulding, District 4
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### **Laying the ground work for a half cent sales tax for transportation in 2026:**

SB 333 (Laird)	Will provide an exemption, in SLO County, to the current two percent sales tax cap rate. This exemption would enable the potential pursuit of a countywide, transportation-dedicated sales tax measure, providing voters with the choice to invest in much-needed transportation improvements across the region.	Supervisor Ortiz-Legg, District 3 Supervisor Paulding, District 4
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Some of the cities are up against the 2% cap on the imposition of local sales taxes.

### **A vacation rental cop?**

SB 346 (Durazo)	This bill would authorize a local agency to enact an ordinance to require a short-term rental facilitator, to report, in the form and manner prescribed by the local agency, the assessor parcel number of each short-term rental during the reporting period, as well as any additional information necessary to identify the property as may be required by the local agency. The bill would authorize the local agency to impose an administrative fine or penalty for failure to file the report, and would authorize the local agency to initiate an audit of a short-term rental facilitator, as described. The bill would require a short-term rental facilitator, in a jurisdiction that has adopted an ordinance, to include in the listing of a short-term rental any applicable local license number associated with the short-term rental and any transient occupancy tax certification issued by a local agency.	James Hamilton, Director, ACTTCPA
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### Who understands this?

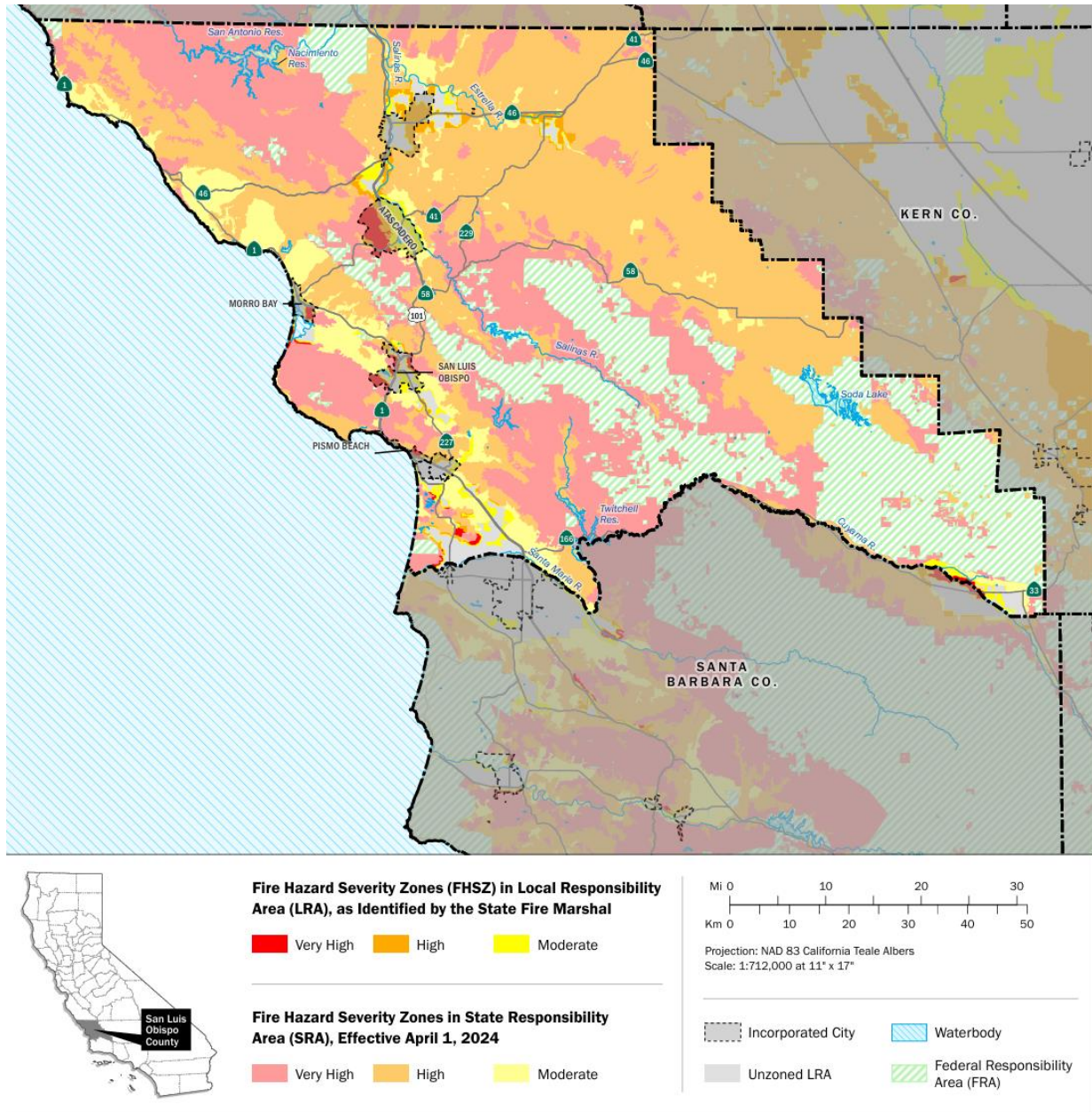
SB 540 (Becker)	Existing law provides for the establishment of an Independent System Operator (ISO) as a nonprofit public benefit corporation and requires the ISO to ensure efficient use and reliable operation of the electrical transmission grid consistent with achieving planning and operating reserve criteria no less stringent than those established by the Western Electricity Coordinating Council and the North American Electric Reliability Council. Existing law, the Clean Energy and Pollution Reduction Act of 2015, provides for the transformation of the ISO into a regional organization, with the approval of the Legislature, pursuant to a specified process. This bill would delete the existing provisions providing for the transformation of the ISO into a regional organization. The bill would authorize the ISO and the electrical corporations that are participating transmission owners whose transmission systems are operated by the ISO, in lieu of the ISO managing related energy markets, as provided, to use <i>voluntary</i> energy markets governed by an independent regional organization, provided that specified requirements are satisfied.	Supervisor Ortiz-Legg, District 3
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### A good idea:

AB 305 (Arambula)	Existing law prohibits the State Energy Resources Conservation and Development Commission (Energy Commission) from certifying a nuclear fission thermal powerplant, except for specified powerplants, and provides that a nuclear fission thermal powerplant, except those specified powerplants, is not a permitted land use in California unless certain conditions are met regarding the existence of technology for the construction and operation of nuclear fuel rod processing plants and of demonstrated technology or means for the disposal of high-level nuclear waste, as specified. This bill would exempt small modular reactors, as defined, from those provisions. This bill contains other related provisions and other existing laws.	Supervisor Ortiz-Legg, District 3
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**Item 26 - Request to introduce an ordinance adopting the Local Responsibility Area (LRA) Fire Hazard Severity Zones as recommended by the Office of the State Fire Marshal (County Fire).** This significant item is a request to introduce an ordinance adopting the Local Responsibility Area (LRA) Fire Hazard Severity Zones as recommended by the Office of the

State Fire Marshal. A large area of the county is designated as high or very high risk of fire hazard. CalFire may discuss its methodology for its determination, but we are concerned that they seem to have had very little public input. It is also unclear whether mitigation measures, such as brush clearance and fuel reduction, could change the hazard identifications laid out on the map. We are concerned that this process impacts the ability of property owners within those identified areas to obtain fire insurance, and believe the Board should postpone adoption of the map pending more public input.



## LAST WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

**No Board of supervisors Meeting on Tuesday, April 1, 2025 (Not Scheduled)**

**San Luis Obispo County Council of Governments (SLOCOG) meeting of Wednesday, April 2, 2025 (Completed)**

### **In General**

There were numerous items and updates on the agenda relative to the allocation of various State and Federal funding programs and their uses by the County, the 7 cities, and the State. It did not appear that there were any items related to a future sales tax measure or refeudalization of the citizens though mobility limitations, car bans, stack-and pack housing, mileage fees, mass transit, bike lanes, climate change, and the other usual doctrinaire policies (other than those already embedded in the various grant program requirements).

## **EMERGENT TRENDS**

**Item 1 - California (the Coastal Commission) "Overstepped" By Banning Off-Roaders, Appeals Judges Say, by Jonathon Klein**



Oceano Dunes© RideApart.com

### **Shady politicians are everywhere.**

There are days I feel like we live in some Bizarro World. A world where reality and common sense have been replaced by vibes, feelings, and this attitude of "This is my way of doing things, it's the only way of doing things, and I'm going to push it through despite everyone else telling me it's a terrible idea."

By far, the biggest concern of the group was that of the threatened Western Snowy Plover bird and how off-roaders threatened its habitat. And so, to save the bird—or so it claimed—along with all its other issues with the recreational area, it would shutter the OHV Zone by 2024.

**Lawsuits ensued.**

A group of off-road enthusiasts, as well as local business owners, banded together to form the Friends of Oceano Dunes, which sued the commission. According to **Courthouse News Service**, "In 2023, a judge agreed with the group and ruled that the commission improperly modified a coastal development permit held by California State Parks." But as you'd expect, "The commission appealed the ruling the same year." This brings us to the appellate court which stated that the California Coastal Commission didn't have the authority to ban OHVs from the Oceano Dunes.

**Item 2 - California's tax-hikers are busy dreaming up more ways to take more of your money.**  
By JOHN SEILER | Orange County Register, April 3, 2025



(iStockphoto via Getty Images)

California taxes could go up – again. That's if the speakers have their way from a March 27 [conference](#) at the state Capitol, "Funding California's Future: Building a Strong Revenue System." It was sponsored by the Service Employees International Union, the California Budget & Policy Center, the California Tax Reform Association and GRACE – End Child Poverty CA.

Based on viewing a video of the event, what struck me most is that the presenters didn't seem to understand that higher taxes on corporations can yield unfavorable outcomes like higher costs for consumers as the cost of taxes are passed down. Or, more severely, some corporations might respond to higher taxes by relocating to another state. Some might even go bust.

First speaking was Sam Wilkinson, senior policy associate of End Child Poverty. She [pointed](#) out the child poverty rate increased from 11% in 2021 to 18.9% in 2023, "the highest in the nation," and that one in three households cannot afford a decent standard of living. All of which brings a "disparate impact on Black, Brown, Indigenous and immigrant families"

What Wilkinson left out is that the massive amount of money the government has to help the poor is not being spent sensibly. A [report](#) a year ago by state Auditor Grant Parks looked at \$24 billion in homeless spending from 2018-19 through 2022-23 and found,

“The State lacks current information on the ongoing costs and outcomes of its homelessness programs.”

Nevertheless, Wilkinson said the state needs to “map out what it takes to raise revenues equitably at the state level.... The fight to end poverty, to raise revenues, has been ongoing for many years.”

She also attacked President Trump’s budget cuts and decried extending his 2017 tax cuts, which will expire next year. “All of that is going to fund billionaires’ tax breaks, all of which is despicable.” Actually, I got a \$1,000 yearly tax cut and I’m middle-class – lower level in ludicrously expensive California.

Next up was Kayla Kitson, senior policy fellow at the California Budget & Policy Center. She talked about “why it’s critical to raise revenues and how we can go about doing that” so the wealthy can “pay their fair share.” She warned of “state budget deficits looming on the horizon as well as massive federal cuts,” but also didn’t point out that the state’s problem is that it overspends.

Kitson called for closing the “water’s edge loophole,” which enables corporations the option to avoid about \$3 billion in state taxes by shifting profits overseas. Instead of the 8.84% flat corporate tax paid by most companies, she wants a graduated tax similar to the income tax. If she got her way, many businesses will just leave.

Then spoke an old opponent of mine, Lenny Goldberg of the Tax Reform Association. For four decades he’s [pushed](#) for a “split roll” property tax, almost as long as I’ve written editorials opposing that. It would gut the 1978 [Proposition 13](#) property tax limitation that has undergirded what remains of the state’s prosperity. A split roll would keep Prop. 13’s limit on home property increases to 1% of assessed value a year, but allow commercial property taxes

## **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**

## **REFLECTIONS ON THE COUNTER - REVOLUTION IN AMERICA**

*Trump is racing to dismantle decades of leftist policies, but success hinges on speed, discipline, and the Supreme Court—while facing fierce resistance from entrenched institutions*

**BY Victor Davis Hanson**

When Donald Trump entered office, he faced a number of choices that had confronted the last three Republican presidents, Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, and George W. Bush. They all had the choice to either shrink government and reduce deficits or slow government growth while cutting taxes.

They had the choice of using American power to restore deterrence by invading belligerents (e.g., Grenada, Panama, Iraq, Afghanistan) or targeting enemies without deploying ground troops to change governments.

Republicans could either impose tariffs to ensure trade balances and fair trade or argue that free, even if unfair, trade was in the U.S.'s interest by lowering consumer prices, keeping domestic producers competitive, and assuming foreign subsidies were unsustainable.

They had the choice to either reverse the left-wing domination of culture or moderate its fated influence.

They could have shut down the open border and eliminated illegal immigration or publicly condemned it while tacitly maintaining an influx of hundreds of thousands per year for the corporate world, rather than millions.

In general, no Republican president of the past 50 years sought to radically reduce the size of government and balance the budget. None closed the border and began deportations. None avoided optional ground wars while solely hitting aggressors from the air. None led a cultural counter-revolution to reverse the left's long march through our institutions.

## **Why?**

Because to have done so would have constituted a veritable cultural counter-revolution that would incur an unacceptable level of hatred and resistance from the entrenched left—defined by the nexus of the media, bureaucracies, campuses, foundations, Wall Street and Silicon Valley, and the Democratic Party. The latter were deemed just too formidable—and dangerous—to confront in a single term, if ever.

Or so it was felt by prior Republican administrations. So, most stayed clear and sought to deregulate, cut taxes, keep illegal immigration to about 30,000 or so a month, and use rhetoric to oppose the left's cultural revolution.

Not so with Trump. The target of four years of lawfare in his wilderness years, he has now become a true counterrevolutionary determined not to slow down the progressive trajectory of the last 60 years but to end it and return the U.S. to the center—at least as now defined by a balanced budget, reciprocal fair trade, full use of all modes of energy, a closed border, legal only immigration, no optional ground wars abroad and a fierce effort to end the woke/DEI/ESG/Green New Deal leftwing orthodoxy.

## **Will it work?**

The left's revolution had become so deeply institutionalized that the once-bizarre had become the politically correct norm: three, not two, sexes; illegal aliens de facto not different from

American citizens; a country without borders; massive debt and trade imbalances propped up for years by near-zero, de facto interest rates; and nation-building abroad as the country's interior at home was hallowed out.

Trump is currently waging a 360-degree, 24/7 effort to undo at least the last 20 years of the most recent manifestation of the leftist cultural revolution inaugurated by Barack Obama.

Given that war and the economy often determine the legacy of a president's tenure, Trump's success or failure will hinge on several factors:

1) Flooding the Zone – Can he achieve enough massive cuts to the federal workforce and federal spending to realistically project a balanced budget in 2-3 years? Can he use tariffs to adjudicate rough trade parity without panicking Wall Street and reduce our huge trade deficit—while stimulating the economy through increased energy production, some tariff income, massive inflows of foreign capital and private-sector jobs, deregulation, and tax cuts? And in addition, can he end the war in Ukraine while denuclearizing Iran without blowing up the Middle East? The answers remain uncertain because no one has really attempted all of these measures simultaneously.

2) Speed – Speed is of the essence. He must see most of his major counterrevolutionary steps enacted this year while avoiding a recession before the midterms. Otherwise, he may see a new Democratic majority House in 2026 that will do nothing but issue subpoenas, conduct investigations, and impeach him. The Democrats seem to have little desire to offer a comprehensive counter-agenda that would reflect their own ideas on how to achieve balanced budgets, a secure border, a deterrent foreign policy, fair trade, and energy dynamism. For now, bizarrely, these new Jacobins are de facto Trump's allies by becoming so unhinged, often so repugnant in their smutty rhetoric and street violence, and so angry without constructive alternatives that the counter-revolutionary Trump seems centrist in comparison.

All know that Trump's agenda of cutting the size of government, balancing the budget, deregulating, achieving trade parity, expanding gas, oil, nuclear, and hydroelectric energy, and leveraging massive foreign investment in the U.S. will soon result in a booming economy. But the question is, how long will the bitter medicine of cutting spending, federal jobs, and the size of government, forcing trade symmetry, and shocking voters with layoffs and deregulation last? Or to put it another way, will the new oncologist be allowed to apply sufficient harsh radiation and chemotherapy to a near-terminal patient to see him recover?

3) The Supreme Court. The Supreme Court must restore our constitutional tripartite government. The court must stop allowing the brazen lower-court judiciary's hijacking of U.S. foreign policy and national security—and do it within the next month or so. Otherwise, a group of minor federal judges, some 300-400 unelected but cherry-picked liberal appointees, will essentially be running the country. Power has gone to their narcissistic heads, and they grow ever more emboldened as special activist lawyers—funded by foundations and political action committees—send them an endless stream of marching orders and writs. Currently, a once-unknown but now megalomaniac Judge Boasberg believes he is a more powerful adjudicator of U.S. foreign policy and national security than the combined power of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the National Security Advisor, and the President. And he may be right.

4) No Margin of Error – Trump has no margin of error, given thin congressional margins and the left-wing cultural juggernaut.

So far, his nascent counter-revolution has been largely disciplined and well-managed. But he can afford no more avoidable psychodramas like the still inexplicable Signal leak to the likes of a hyper-partisan Jeffrey Goldberg.

Cabinet officials should grow more silent but carry even bigger sticks. The entire messaging of Team Trump must be sober, even tragic, without braggadocio. The latest Fox interview by Brett Baier of a reflective, soft-spoken Elon Musk and his DOGE team did more to win the public over to their thankless but critical task than all the grandstanding on social media or chainsaw theatrics.

They need to remind Americans that the Trump team did not open the border but are now forced to close it if the country is to exist.

The public needs to recall that it is recklessly easy to allow entry to 12 million illegal aliens but almost impossible to find them all in a country of 345 million.

It is not hard to borrow and spend, but it is unenviable and unpopular to cut and save.

It is much less trouble in Washington to dine with and leak to media celebrities, become a power couple on the A list, and play tit-for-tat and don't-rock-the-boat than to become a despised disrupter on behalf of far-away people in rural Kansas, along the southern border, or in the inner-city without lobbyists, national audiences, or a fat checkbook.

It is easy to smile, pal around, and hand out money and commitments abroad at summits while foreign leaders welch on their military commitments and run up unsustainable trade surpluses with the US. But it quite another thing to demand from our allies and neutrals trade parity, reciprocity, and keeping defense commitments as prime ministers and their state media damn you as either crazy or sinister.

In sum, we are witnessing the greatest effort to reinvent or, rather, restore the U.S. since the first 100 days of FDR's radical New Deal revolution. It can succeed even against the street theater nihilism, mainstreamed vulgarity, neo-terrorism, lawfare, and the congressional circus arrayed against it.

But success hinges on speed and audacity (*"L'audace, l'audace, toujours l'audace!"*), the rapid reassertion of its constitutional duties by the Supreme Court, constant discipline to prevent needless errors and leaks, calm and tragic explication and messaging rather than boastful high-fiving, and a constant reminder that their desperate opposition wishes to destroy this last effort to stop what had become sheer madness.

*Victor Davis Hanson is a distinguished fellow of the Center for American Greatness and the Martin and Illie Anderson Senior Fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution. He is an American military historian, columnist, a former classics professor, and scholar of ancient warfare. He has been a visiting professor at Hillsdale College since 2004, and is the 2023 Giles O'Malley Distinguished Visiting Professor at the School of Public Policy, Pepperdine University.*

*Hanson was awarded the National Humanities Medal in 2007 by President George W. Bush, and the Bradley Prize in 2008. Hanson is also a farmer (growing almonds on a family farm in Selma, California) and a critic of social trends related to farming and agrarianism. He is the author of the just released New York Times best seller, The End of Everything: How Wars Descend into Annihilation, published by Basic Books on May 7, 2024, as well as the recent The Second World Wars: How the First Global Conflict Was Fought and Won, The Case for Trump, and The Dying Citizen. This article first appeared in the American Greatness of March 29, 2025*

## **A MOLOTOV COCKTAIL TOAST TO THE ENVIRONMENT AND DEMOCRACY**

***The United States government brings in \$5 trillion per year in tax revenue and spends nearly \$8 trillion***

**BY ANDY CALDWELL**

Tesla is the only electric vehicle manufacturer that is, or was, making money on electric cars. Most all other manufacturers lose thousands if not tens of thousands, per vehicle, on their electric vehicle fleets. Moreover, despite being an electric vehicle, Tesla model Y has become the best-selling car in the world! Hence, if the left is successful in taking down Tesla, their green dreams of forcing all motorists to drive an EV will be reduced to ashes because, apart from Tesla, the economics don't pencil out for any other manufacturer.

The progressive left has been telling us for years that we have to go all-electric to save the planet. Now, they are telling us we must destroy Elon Musk and his efforts via DOGE to save our democracy. Somehow a few eco-terrorists have decided the best way to go after Musk is to attack Tesla. This reminds me of an unattributable quote that states that "An evil man will burn his own nation to the ground to rule over the ashes".

The quote perfectly describes the eco-terrorists who have been firebombing Tesla stores with Molotov cocktails no less, while others were caught on video damaging individual cars. There have also been countless other types of protests, mostly peaceful, including in Santa Barbara, where hundreds gathered to protest against Elon Musk and President Trump.

It must be hard to live with yourself when you want to save the environment and democracy and the best idea you can come up with is either outright attacking or protesting the most successful electric car manufacturer in the world.

As CNN reports, California has the most Tesla owners in America, and that democrats by a 2:1 margin own more Teslas than republicans. Hence, it is safe to say the green revolution is eating its own.

The quote about those who would rather rule over ashes also describes many of the protesters who are complaining that the DOGE effort is resulting in too many firings and layoffs. Albeit many of the people who are no longer working for the federal government took an early buyout or were new employees still on probation. Thus far, however, the Trump administration hasn't come close to the 400,000 federal workers fired by President Clinton in the early 1990's.

Lost on these people is how perilously close America is to bankruptcy. That is, Trump's simultaneous attempts to reduce our foreign trade deficit, revitalize American manufacturing and industry, unleash our energy sector, reduce fraud and frivolous spending, and reduce the size of the federal bureaucracy couldn't come a moment too soon.

In the Annual Financial Report of the United States Government signed by Janet Yellen in January, 2025 for the fiscal year 2024, she outlines the fact that comparing total government assets of \$5.7 trillion (including \$1.8 trillion of loans receivable, net and \$1.3 trillion of Property, Plant, and Equipment (PP&E)) to total liabilities of \$45.5 trillion (including \$28.3 trillion in federal debt and interest payable, and \$15.0 trillion of federal employee and veteran benefits payable) yields a negative net position of \$39.9 trillion.

Furthermore, the report indicates that the debt-to-GDP ratio was approximately 98 percent at the end of FY 2024. Under current policy and based on this report's assumptions, it is projected to reach 535 percent by 2099. The projected continuous rise of the debt-to-GDP ratio indicates that current policy is "unsustainable."

Hence, the United States government brings in some \$5 trillion per year in tax revenue and spends nearly \$8 trillion for a deficit-spending budget of negative \$3 trillion. We owe some \$45 trillion, so at the current deficit spending annually of negative \$3 trillion, our government debt would grow to over \$50 trillion in just two years....and that doesn't include the trillions owed for social security and Medicare commitments. And yet, people are protesting Trump's effort to eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse?

*Andy Caldwell is a government watchdog, business and taxpayer advocate, and a Central Coast opinion leader. Andy is the Executive Director of COLAB (The Coalition of Labor, Agriculture and Business), a non-profit organization that serves the families, the heritage of, and the Central Coast economy. California Globe, April 4, 2024*

## **RESTORING THE CALIFORNIA DREAM**

### **BY EDWARD RING**

There's no place like California. Situated on the western edge of North America, isolated from the rest of the world by alpine mountains to the north and east, vast deserts to the south, and nestled against the Pacific Ocean, it might as well be an island. And what an island. The megacity of Los Angeles, music and entertainment capital of the world. The legendary Silicon Valley, still the global epicenter of high tech. The hills of San Francisco, perhaps the most beautiful city in America. Napa wines. Farms that grow crops year round in soil that rivals the deep loam of Iowa. Redwood trees. Magnificent beaches. Olympic skiing. California has it all.

The American dream as a concept now endures into its third century basically unchanged. Work hard, save, buy a home, have a family, find your place as an equal in a nation without caste or class. Follow that dream with integrity and it will come true, because America is the land of opportunity.

California took that dream and gave it a unique cache. Nearly two centuries ago when gold was discovered on a tributary of the American River, adventurers from everywhere on earth streamed into California, nearly quadrupling the population between 1850 and 1860. But the growth never stopped. The gold fever subsided, but the Golden State was still a magnet for dreamers willing to work hard. The young state's growth consistently outstripped the rest of the nation: 1.5 million people in 1900 grew to 10.6 million people by 1950. The post-war boom in California saw the population grow to 20 million people by 1970, 30 million by 1990, and nearly 40 million by 2020. And then something happened that nobody expected. People started to leave faster than they arrived.

After peaking at 39.4 million in 2018, California's population went into slow decline. Today, eight years later, the population is back up to 39.4 million but hasn't grown. The trend was obvious. Today, renting a 26 foot truck to go one-way from Sacramento to Houston costs \$5999. The other way? Only \$2,196, less than half as much.

What happened? If California has everything, certainly including the best weather on earth, why aren't people moving here anymore?

The biggest problem is that getting to California is about the only thing that's still affordable. The average home price in California is \$773,000. In Los Angeles, it's \$948,000, and in San Jose, it's a ridiculous \$1.4 million. By contrast, the average home price in Texas is \$299,000. In Dallas it's \$301,000, and in Houston it's \$264,000. That's quite a contrast.

None of this had to happen. There's no reason California's housing should cost so much. The state is only 5 percent urbanized; not quite 8,000 square miles of cities and suburbs in a state that covers 163,000 square miles. There's plenty of room. But housing, along with gasoline, electricity, natural gas, and water, is effectively rationed by a state legislature that has committed itself to the bleeding edge of renewables technology and an extreme version of "smart growth." In practice, this means establishing "greenbelts" around every major city and doing everything possible to confine all new construction to "infill." In practice this means neglecting investment in practical infrastructure – roads, conventional power plants, oil drilling and refining, water supply projects – to instead ration these essentials such that nearly 40 million Californians live with infrastructure designed for 20 million people.

It's not just fanatical environmentalism that has made California unaffordable. When billions of dollars are withdrawn from productive public investments, that money is freed up to pay for a bloated public sector that can only claim they're not overpaid because the policies their unions have supported in the legislature. Hence the synergy between the public sector and the environmentalist community – stop the projects to be green, pocket the savings to fund public sector pay and pensions.

The cronyism doesn't stop there. Crony capitalism finds lucrative expression in California's homeless industrial complex, along with its less exposed but even bigger affordable housing industrial complex. The equation is diabolical: enact regulations on homebuilding so

onerous that no private builder can make a profit selling a home at a price people with median household incomes can afford. Then once they've been driven out of the market, pay subsidies to developers to build homes and apartments at a cost of \$400 (or more) per square foot, and pay further subsidies to renters who can't otherwise afford to live in them. This scam has sucked hundreds of billions out of California's economy to do an inadequate job that back in the 1950s was performed with ease by the private sector.

It may be that California's golden age was the 1950s and 1960s. During that time of rapid growth there wasn't a housing shortage, and homes were affordable. Instead of paying outrageous pensions and excessive salaries to state workers who nowadays are mostly bureaucrats, the state paid contractors to get on with it, constructing freeways, reservoirs, aqueducts, and what was at the time the finest public university system on earth. But those days are long gone.

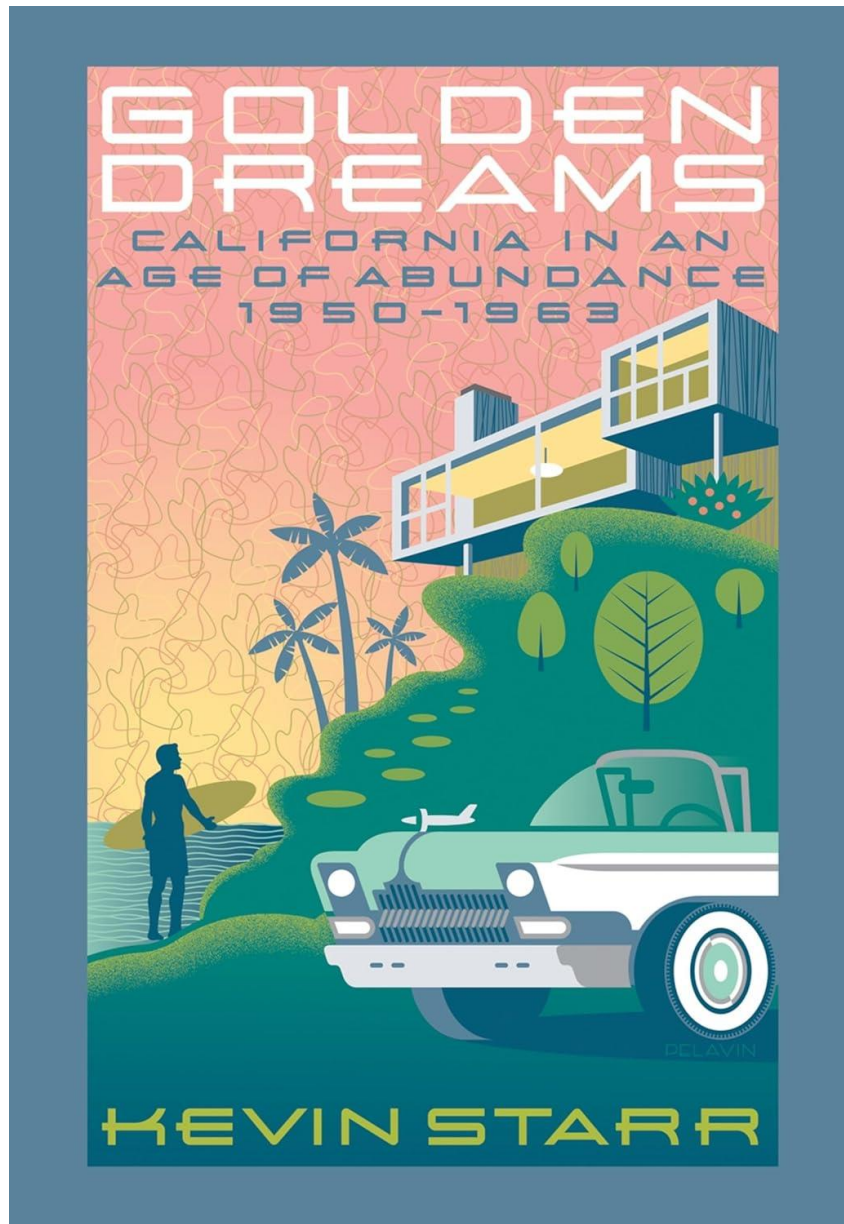
Some changes were necessary. California led the nation in getting rid of unleaded gasoline. Californian wildlife biologists brought back the magnificent California Condor from what was otherwise certain extinction. But it has gone too far, and environmentalism in the state is now dominated by special interests. A "bullet train" that will never make financial or economic sense, set to cost well over \$100 billion. Offshore wind proposals, sailing through the state legislature, that will squander additional hundreds of billions on a science project that is only certain to wreak havoc on the supposedly inviolable marine environment.

California's dream is all but gone. The state is still beautiful, if you avoid the blighted cities where crime and homelessness remain endemic. The universities still attract some of the brightest minds in the world, so long as you steer clear of the woke indoctrination that masquerades as degrees for students admitted for reasons other than academic excellence. Hollywood and Silicon Valley still glisten and for some, still deliver spectacular success. But for most Californians, home ownership is unthinkable. Anyone hoping to start a family does not move to California. They move out of California. They go to Texas, or to Florida, where the American dream is still alive.

Progressive fanatics, misguided environmentalists, and the special interests that feed on their zealotry, have made a mess of California. But in historical terms today's dysfunction is still an aberration, a few decades of decline after more than a century of glory. Restoring the California dream will require a movement that offers struggling families a vision they can believe. It requires leaders who will explain not only what's gone wrong, but a believable win-win scenario. An agenda of growth that lowers the cost-of-living by investing in enabling infrastructure instead of public pay and benefits. A recalibrated version of environmentalism that sets more realistic goals in order to enable dramatic deregulation.

It isn't going to be easy. Californians have been conditioned to mistrust the private sector, even though it is the most corrupt, crony elements of the private sector that thrive when voters support more government bureaucracy and more regulations. The reality of that irony is California's tragic obstacle to realignment and a return to prosperity. We may only hope a critical mass of reform minded people can turn the tide.

*This article was originally published by American Habits, a publication of the State Policy Network. It was republished by the California Policy Center on April 3, 2025. 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. He is also a senior fellow with the Center for American Greatness, and a regular contributor to the California Globe. His work has appeared in the Los Angeles Times, the Wall Street Journal, the Economist, National Review, City Journal, and other media outlets*



Cover: Golden Dreams: California in an Age of Abundance by Kevin Starr



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