

**COLAB**

San Luis Obispo County



The Coalition of Labor Agriculture and Business

## **WEEKLY UPDATE**

**Au 17 -24, 2025**

### **Short and Significant Special Session**

In what was possibly the shortest meeting in its history, the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors met in an emergency session on Monday, Aug. 11 to declare an emergency with the Gifford Fire, burning since Aug.1.

The meeting lasted for just a few minutes, with the only remarks coming from Supervisor Paulding – thanks for the good job.

Along with numerous professionals from the National Forrester Service, state officials and Santa Barbara County officials, our own San Luis Obispo professionals involved include our local CalFire and County Fire Marshall, Office of Emergency Services and Sheriff. Other county staff from a variety of agencies are assisting with wide variety of needs along with countless volunteers.

We offer sincere thanks and appreciation to all the selfless individuals putting our safety as their highest priority.

For an update on the details of the fire, go to: [www.emergencyslo.org](http://www.emergencyslo.org)

## This Week

### Accountability in Action

The number one item on the agenda for the regular August 19 Board of Supervisors meeting is the approval of a contract with KPMG for auditing services of the SLO County Planning Department and the Department of Social Services.

While such audits are expensive on the front end (\$720.000 for this one), the long term savings that they often bring about can make them most worthwhile. Aside from the potential savings derived from honing the operations into much more efficient organizations, the biggest benefit is that taxpayers can be assured that their money isn't being wasted.

It's good news to know that this level of accountability is being pursued. Preliminary results probably won't be available until near the end of the year, with a final report expected in early 2026.

### Deceased Equines

Item 9 on the Aug 19 consent agenda offers yet another opportunity to beat what seems to be a very dead horse.... The item reads as follows:

**Request to approve a Fiscal Year 2025-26 Option to Renew and Amendment No. 2, with Transitions Mental Health Association in an amount not to exceed \$727,545 to provide specialty mental health services to youth in Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Programs.**

The dead horse referenced is about how we note that almost every other BoS meeting has a consent item for a half million dollars here or a little over a million there, for various programs usually under the Department of Health.

These are likely very good programs run by professionals with high standards. But hardly ever does anyone ask for a few performance measures. Nobody even asks, “How are you doing with that last million we sent over?”

We know the Department of Health recently underwent a thorough KPMG audit, and was given a good report, so there is nothing to suggest that there is anything sub-par with these expensive transactions. But it would make for good governance to ask a few questions from time to time.

## **SWAT Tool**

Item 20 is bound to raise a few eyebrows. It’s a request to approve the application for a grant of \$217,438 from the Edard Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant that would fund the purchase of a Lenco Bearcat for county law enforcement. Whether we see more anti-ICE people or just plain folk concerned about “the militarizing” of local law enforcement, it could inspire a few questions. The Bearcat is particularly useful for SWAT operations.



The Lenco Bearcat

## **Affordable? Housing Report**

The Department of Social Services Homeless Fund report on affordable housing projects will be presented under item 26. It will feature five recent projects: The Shell Beach Senior Apartments, Vine Street Homes, Rolling Hills 111, Arroyo

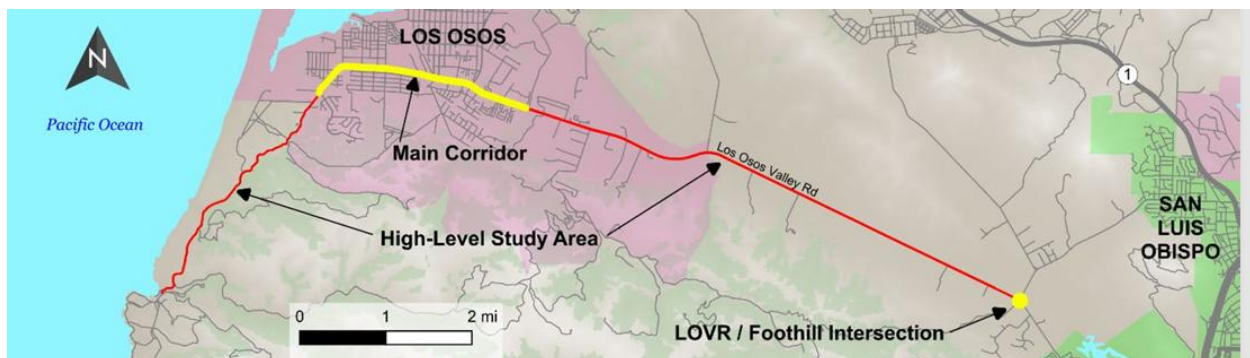
Terrace Apartments and Bally Ko On Monterey. An accounting of funds spent and funds available will be presented.

We look forward to learning how “affordable “ affordable housing really is.

## LOVR Corridor Concept

A concept for the ‘Los Osos Valley Corridor will be presented under item 27. This ambitious concept calls for big changes in street and intersection layout through the center of town. It will enhance bicycle and pedestrian access, along with updating parking and intersection layouts. For our “round about” fans, the concept includes one at the intersection of Foothill and LOVR.

Below is a map of the proposal:



Here is the suggested round about:

### LOVR / Foothill Blvd



No mention is made of specific projected costs in the documentation, but possible funding sources are outlined:

## **Potential Funding Sources**

- Federal, State and Regional Grants
  - SLOCOG Community Betterments
  - State; SB1, ATP, LSRP, LPP, OTS, STP
  - Federal; CMAQ, SS4A, RAISE, STBG, SHA
- Road Improvement Fee Capital Projects
- Prioritize Phase 1 Rodman to Doris
  - No current identified funding sources

It seems highly likely that costs will be a discussion point at the conclusion of the presentation. This is simply a highly detailed concept, and not a blueprint or a plan of action. It allows planners to continue with the concept as they address future projects along LOVR. The BoS may receive and file, or may show a stronger level of support for the concept, but it does not create a commitment to put all (or any) of the details into a formal construction project.

The key element to this concept is funding. Total costs and where the funds might come from – but just as important is what this project would compete with for funding. Sadly, due to too many years of deferred maintenance, we have hundreds of miles of roads throughout the county that are in dire need of repair and resurfacing. Putting patches on patches and filling potholes with what seems like powdered pudding mix just kicks the can down the road and makes repairs even more expensive in the long run.

## **The Phillips 66 Saga Continues**

As we have been reporting in recent months, the cleanup/remediation plan by Phillips 66 for their former refinery site in south SLO was approved by the county, but that approval was appealed by the Sierra Club. After a delay of a few weeks (presumably to facilitate discussion amongst the appellant and Phillips 66) the hearing is now set for the BoS meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup>.



This is a bigger deal than most realize, because it covers many different key aspects including private property rights, possible undue cost burdens to the property owner, the future of a key location along our southern coast and the economic impact of whatever might be established on the site.

All this as a result of the unreasonable resistance to allowing a short railroad spur into the refinery when it was in business supplying needed gasoline and petroleum products, providing over 140 full-time well-paying jobs and contributing a great deal to our local economy and tax base.

We look forward to hearing the details of the appeal and the mitigation possibilities that may have come about in the run up to the hearing.

## **Another Taxing Question**

The question of “when do fees become taxes” is a never-ending debate. That very debate will continue as the BoS wraps up the Aug 19 meeting with its last couple items on the agenda that involve challenges to proposed rate hikes for solid waste collection by two different providers. We will report next week on the details and the resolution – which we hope is fair to the rate payers that are questioning the legality of the increases.

### **Last Week**

## **Ugly Tricks**

Once again, a small group of political hacks have used misinformation to foment fear within our community.

The Aug 5 SLO County Board of Supervisors meeting started off with about 20 activists in the audience agitated because they believed that the SLO County Sheriff was entering into an agreement with Homeland Security to allow Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers to pick up undocumented people from the jail through the acceptance of a Homeland Security grant for equipment purchases – the same grant that our county has received annually for a decade.

Of course, the information provided to activists that led them to believe this was false.

Sadly, this is not the first occurrence of irresponsible misinformation used to generate fear locally,

During the Midstate Fair, a local political leader spread the false rumor that ICE would be “raiding the fair”. This on a day that featured many popular Latino artists performing a highly anticipated concert. Unfortunately, the false information served to generate panic within the Latino community resulting in a deeply reduced turnout at the fair.

This kind of sophomoric behavior may generate a few snickers and chuckles from the political elite perpetrators, but it is in fact cruel. Apparently designed to highlight an already emotional issue, the stunts served to fire up the activists unhappy with the current administration’s approach to immigration. For those that attended the board meeting, the truth was fully explained. However, for the many that were not present, the fear still haunts them.

Will the Tribune or KSBY set the whole story straight? Will those that played this rotten trick fess up and tell the truth about their manipulative trickery?

Perhaps they will explain they were dumb enough to believe that ICE travels around with a bunch of Navy sailors on training missions? Maybe they will claim that the language of the Homeland Security grant had hidden verbiage that only they could decode. Will they admit to being that simple, or will they fess up to their dirty tricks where the end justifies the means?

Kudos to Chairwoman Ortiz-Le gg for getting a clear and concise report from County Emergency Services Director Scott Jalbert and Sherrif Ian Parkinson at the onset of the Board meeting regarding what the grant is really for, and how the Sherrif Department complies with California law on the subject of dealing with ICE.

Following those clarifications, many people still commented on how unjust they find various aspects of ICE enforcement illegal, immoral and frightening. A common theme was “masked men with no identification in unmarked cars kidnapping innocent migrants”. Ironically, one of the presenters wore a mask while making her remarks.

Whichever side one is on regarding immigration, it is clear that the issue has become a crisis. Getting the whole story, free from political hyperbole or bias is almost impossible. Here on the Central Coast, we find ourselves approaching

harvest season for so many of our agricultural crops and wondering if we will have the people needed to help with the work. The hospitality industry is in the same position.

In the meantime, violent criminals, some who are not here legally, and some with gang affiliations and lengthy arrest records are making headlines and creating victims. There are some very bad people causing a fear that all immigrants are dangerous. It is never right to paint a whole segment of people with a broad brush, but the bad deeds of a few too often impact the many.

The public seems to be either polarized or ambivalent. It doesn't appear that any constructive dialogue is producing solutions for the many challenges with our immigration problems. Anybody with realistic suggestions for fixes should contact Senators Padilla or Schiff, or Congressmen Carbajal or Panetta. Immigration is a federal issue. With regard to our Sheriff and any potential interactions with ICE (all local law enforcement is prohibited by state law from cooperating) contact state Assembly member Adis or State Senator Laird. All of their contact information can be found on the roster at the end of this newsletter. It should be noted that Sheriff Parkinson, along with his department, has never been accused of improper dealings with ICE.

Imagine the lost productivity from 20 people making signs and practicing their 3 minute comments, then driving to and parking in downtown SLO. Then sitting through a couple of hours of unnecessary business at the Board meeting. All instead of doing something that could make a difference. Imagine the countless number of families and individuals who had been looking forward to a fun evening at the fair (probably having bought their tickets in advance), only to stay home out of fear because of a fictitious and dirty trick.

This kind of manipulation is the same as yelling fire in a crowded theater. We hope that the tricksters will be held accountable and that the use of fear as a political tool in our community stops.

## **Homeless Report Almost Accountable**

A report on the programs for homeless services was delivered to the SLO County Supervisors. The report gave a comprehensive outline of the various efforts to reduce homelessness by spending category and had some good numbers to report. Apparently the homeless population in SLO County is down by as much as 30%.



While the report gave a lot of information on spending, it was light on specific performance data on a per program basis.

The report coincided with a hope to disperse \$2.5 million that the Supervisors had earmarked and set aside during budget hearings to be used as bridge or gap funding that could be used to help providers transition to more independent funding models.

This, due to the reality that county funds, along with state and federal funds are all facing cuts.

Given the lack of specific performance measures on a programmatic basis, Supervisor Gibson expressed an unwillingness to proceed with granting any new funds.

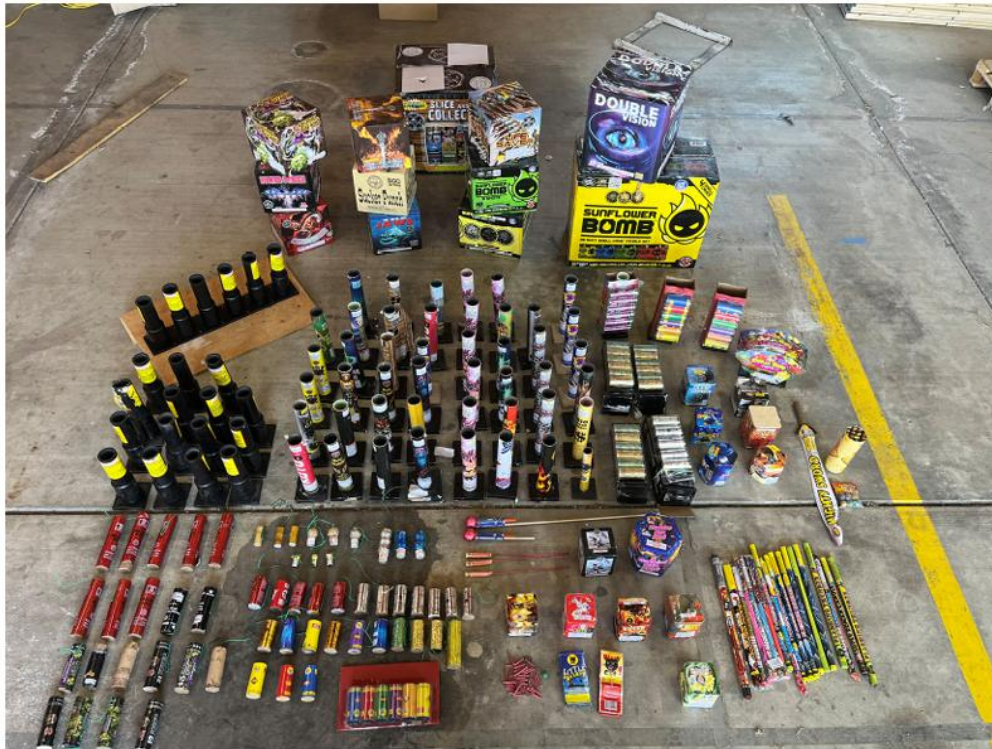
So, the good news is that our homeless population is apparently declining and our homeless service providers are working at providing clear accountability measures for the many millions of dollars that they spend in delivering their services.

We offer rare appreciation to Supervisor Gibson for seeking the high level of accountability in this case that we wish would apply to every spending program throughout all levels of government.

## **Illegal Fireworks Confiscated**

It comes as no surprise to learn that illegal fireworks were confiscated over the 4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend. It is somewhat surprising that nearly 600 pounds of them were collected.

San Luis Obispo County Undersheriff Chad Nicholson reported that they had over 1000 emergency calls on the 4<sup>th</sup>, with 900 of those coming in after 6 PM. He said the use of drones helped to identify 24 violations resulting in 350 pounds of confiscated illegal fireworks. San Luis Obispo County Fire Marshal John Owens reported that his agency had 100 contacts resulting in 3 citations and 250 pounds of confiscated illegal fireworks. He said that they had 16 fires throughout the county (not including various cities) that were likely attributed to illegal fireworks. Here is a photo of some of the confiscated illegal fireworks:



## **EMERGENT TRENDS - SEE PAGE 12**

**California Congressional Redistricting,  
East Coast Dictated**

**Why California should avoid revenge politics  
and stay out of the redistricting wars**

## **COLAB IN DEPTH SEE PAGE 15**

**California Media Ignores Redistricting 'Power  
Couple' Jodi Hicks and Paul Mitchell**

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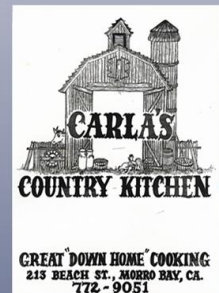
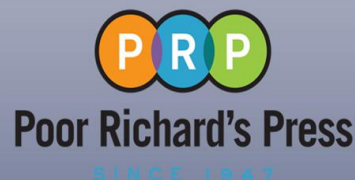
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# California Congressional Redistricting, East Coast Dictated

*Why should California do what it is told by corrupt easterners?*

By Richard Stevenson, August 17, 2025



Gov. Gavin Newsom, AG Rob Bonta. (Photo: gov.ca.gov/2024)

The present California Governor Gavin Newsom and California Attorney General Rob Bonta proposed Congressional redistricting to allegedly to counter Texas Congressional redistricting has no legal or moral equivalency.

Whether one does or does not one like the proposed Texas Congressional redistricting maps, they are generated by and for Texans. That is a far cry from what is taking place in California. The proposed California Congressional maps, to be voted upon this week by our legislature, were mandated and presented to our legislature by Julie Merz, Executive Director the New York and Washington D.C. run Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, The Hill **reported**. "Earlier today, the DCCC submitted a proposed congressional map to the legislative public portal with collaborative input from stakeholders and legislators. We anticipate this proposal will have widespread support both among California office holders and various stakeholders across the state," executive director Julie Merz said in a **release**. "We will not stand by as Republicans attempt to rig the election in their favor and choose their voters."



New York is presently and historically very politically corrupt, judged by numerous forced resignations by several recent NY Governors and state Attorneys General, to include the present New York Attorney General under investigation for fraud. Why should California do what it is told to do and adopt Congressional districts deliniated by corrupt easterners?

Even during the 1848 Gold Rush, the small population of California refused to be dictated to by the East Coast New York political machines that then approved of slavery, which California notably opposed. Now Gavin Newsom seeks the radical East Coast dictation and approval of California Congressssional districts in the hope that those corrupt easterners will allow him become the democrat nominee for President. The East Coast dictated California Congressional maps presently proposed maps will be voted upon by the state Legislature in this coming week, and will be likely be submitted to California voters in November.

California Atorney General Rob Bonta was appointed to that office by Gavin Newsom. Bonta, perhaps legally improperly, utilized state legal resources to render a highly questionable rationale for the proposed Newsom California Congressional redistricting dictated by those from outside, and thousands of miles, from our state.

Newsom will be the chief "cheerleader" of that proposed electoral corruption of California politics, based soley on supposed California's hatred for President Trump, along with Newsom's desperate hunger for higher office, and Rob Bonta's desperation to remain California's Attorney General. Remember, Bonta had few qualifications for the office of California Attorney General prior to appointment by Newsom.

One may not like Trump, but all Californians should revolt against the politically dirty east coast dictating of political minutiae and Congressional districts in our state.

## **Why California should avoid revenge politics and stay out of the redistricting wars**

**BY JEANNE RAYA**

**AUGUST 13, 2025**

In 2008, the Voters First Act created California's Citizens Redistricting Commission, an independent body consisting of people who reflect the state's



diversity. Good government groups pushed the ballot measure forward, seeking to make sure voters were put first. I served on the first commission two years later.

Voter approval of an independent commission effectively ended the backroom political gerrymandering that characterized redistricting in California for decades.

Commission members drew new maps with full transparency, giving citizens access to more than 100 public meetings and different ways to submit written comments. Voters could describe their communities, their environment, their infrastructure and their economy, so the commission could create districts giving them a fair chance at electing accountable representatives.

Drawing fair maps was a challenging yet rewarding experience that took nearly a year to complete. Now California's commission is considered the gold standard for redistricting, free of partisan self-interest and conducted fully in public view.

If only Texas could learn from California. There, legislators' current attempt to rig the 2026 election in favor of Republicans — at the behest of President Donald Trump — represents the basest self-interest of officials so fearful of losing power, all they can think to do is cheat.

Their determination to stack the congressional deck prompted Gov. Gavin Newsom to threaten retaliatory mid-cycle redistricting in California, to elect more Democrats. He proposes sidelining the independent commission and holding a special election to approve new maps drawn by legislators "just this once."

As a registered Democrat, I would celebrate replacing members of Congress who have forgotten their oath to serve constituents and protect the Constitution. But it can't be at the expense of California's Constitution — nor its voters, who mandated fair, nonpartisan redistricting.

## **California Media Ignores Redistricting 'Power Couple' Jodi Hicks and Paul Mitchell**

August 17, 2025 By Katy Grimes

'These two are about as high profile as you get in the Capitol community'  
Thank you for reading this post, don't forget to subscribe!

She is the CEO and President of Planned Parenthood Affiliates California. He is “setting the lines for Democrats’ mid-decade gerrymander of California’s congressional map.” Yet nowhere in two articles does Politico declare that Jodi Hicks and Paul Mitchell are married.

“California Governor Gavin Newsom had a DNC-style rally in Los Angeles Thursday, and invited potty mouth leaders of Planned Parenthood, the California Teachers Association, SEIU CA, Senator Adam Schiff, and other Democrat politicians to speak, all praising abortion, big labor, big teacher labor... Oh, and redistricting, as an after thought.”

It was comical to hear Jodi Hicks, [CEO & President of Planned Parenthood](#) say “we are doubling down on our values here in California,” and then whine that Planned Parenthood has had their federal funding cut. She was the only speaker to mention “redistricting” up front, but she did it in the context of the “anti-choice justices appointed to the Supreme Court.”

“You take away our freedom; we’ll take away your seats,” Hicks threatened Republicans.  
Blah. Blah. Blah.

What is so much more interesting than Jodi Hicks’ abortion rhetoric is that she is married to Paul Mitchell, Gov. Newsom’s redistricting map creator tasked with creating five new Democratic members of Congress.



Mitchell/Hicks. (Pho

Named the #5 political power couple in [Capitol Weekly’s Top 10 Capitol power couples](#) in 2024, it’s no coincidence that Hicks was a prominent speaker at Newsom’s DNC-rally Thursday and Mitchell is drawing the news districts for the governor.

However, State political media appears reluctant to identify this power couple and their close proximity to Newsom, as well as their influence. Hmm. Why? Will McCarthy of Politico completely ignored the Hicks/Mitchell marriage in his profile piece on Paul Mitchell today:

“Mitchell was tapped this summer by the state’s Democratic leaders to engineer Gov. Gavin Newsom’s brazen attempt to match Texas’s mid-decade partisan gerrymander of its U.S. House map with one that gives Democrats offsetting gains in California.

But it seems pretty relevant in this developing redistricting story. Especially since Mitchell usually charges for his map making efforts, it will be interesting to see if, when, and where his outputs get reported as a contribution, a gift or an expenditure. Maybe Mitchell is just volunteering his time and expertise?



**Paul Mitchell** @paulmitche11 · 9h



No patchouli oil here. Had a good conversation with @abc7kristensze about the coming redistricting ballot measure and fighting back against Trump and Texas Republicans.



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Paul

Mitchell. (Photo

I sincerely doubt it.

This is Capitol Weekly's description of the #5 power couple, noting that “It’s almost unfair how influential Jodi Hicks and Paul Mitchell are as a couple”:

### Jodi Hicks and Paul Mitchell

It’s almost unfair how influential Jodi Hicks and Paul Mitchell are as a couple.

Hicks is the CEO and president of the Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California, arguably the state’s most active combatant in this era’s culture war over abortion.

Her leadership on the issue stretches far beyond the boundaries of the Golden State, with her voice carrying considerable weight nationwide. Mitchell, as the vice president of Political Data, Inc. and owner of Redistricting Partners, is seemingly every California news outlet's favorite election analyst. A top pollster, Mitchell has a knack for not only plumbing California election data for original insights, but also talking about them in an engaging, easy-to-understand way. These two are about as high profile as you get in the Capitol community.

###

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