



WEEKLY UPDATE February 9-15, 2025

COLAB

San Luis Obispo County



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THURSDAY, MARCH 27, 2025
MADONNA INN EXPO CENTER

A NEW ERA IN GOVERNMENT

Enjoy a bipartisan dialogue on the opportunities and challenges faced by the County and State as the current revolution in Washington progresses. How can the County and Cities take advantage at the local level by tailoring initiatives and changes to the best interests of our local circumstances and issues? Two of our collaborative and experienced local elected officials will form an enlightening exploratory panel.



Dawn Ortiz-Legg, Board Chair &
District 3 Supervisor

5:00 PM SOCIAL HOUR & OPEN BAR
6:15 PM FILET MIGNON DINNER & WINE

AUCTION WILL BE HELD AFTER DINNER
(AUCTIONEER TODD VENTURA)

\$165/ PERSON
\$1,650/ TABLE (SEATS 10)



Heather Moreno, District 5 Supervisor

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Cocktail Attire Optional - More info at (805) 548-0340 or colabslo@gmail.com

THIS WEEK SEE PAGE 5

NO BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEETING

**CENTRAL COAST COMMUNITY ENERGY
AUTHORITY - 3CE**

3CE PRESSURED BY STATE REGULATIONS
RATE PRESSURE

**FORMER 3CE BOARD CHAIR AND DEFEATED SANTA
BARBARA COUNTY SUPERVISOR DAS WILLIAMS
HIRED BY 3CE AS SENIOR POLICY ADVISOR**
BLATANT PATRONAGE - SEE PAGE 8

ARE 3CE CUSTOMERS PAYING THEIR BILLS?
AGED ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE BUILDING UP

**3CE TO SIGN \$738,000,000 DEAL WITH GAS FIRED
LITHIUM BATTERY PLANT NEAR TRACY**
MORE HYPOCRITICAL BAIT AND SWITCH
SO MUCH FOR GREEN ENERGY, LOCAL JOBS, & SAFETY

PLANNING COMMISSION

LIGHT: NO BIG PROJECTS - NO POLICY

**LAST WEEK
SEE PAGE 11**

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEETING

**FEES ADOPTED FOR THE LOS OSOS HABITAT
CONSERVATION PLAN MITIGATIONS**
*ON CONSENT CALENDAR – DIDN'T THIS REQUIRE A HEARING?
NOT ACCORDING TO SHUCK & JIVE BY COUNTY COUNSEL*

PASO BASIN WATER TAKEOVER ACHIEVED
*NEW JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY APPROVED 3/2 TO
DISENFRANCHISE MOST BASIN OVERLIERS*

**2025-26 BUDGET GOALS AND POLICIES,
BUDGET BALANCING STRATEGIES,
APPROACHES, AND BOARD PRIORITIES**
SO FAR, BUSINESS AS USUAL INCUDING "SUPPORTING" STAFF

**REVISED ITEM ON \$400K KPMG
DEPARTMENTAL REVIEWS**

**COUNTY COUNSEL TO RETIRE IN MARCH
BOARD TO CONSIDER OPTIONS IN EXEC SESSION**

**HEARING ON SIERRA CLUB'S CHALLENGE TO
PHILIPP'S DECOMMISSIONING PLAN CONTINUED**

SUPERVISOR REQUESTS & NEW DIRECTION
NOTHING THIS TIME

**CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION
DOUBLED DOWN ON PROHIBITING
VANDENBERG LAUNCHES**
*THEY MADE NO COMMENTS AND SIMPLY VOTED
WEIRD VOTING PROCESS*

EMERGENT ISSUES
SEE PAGE 29

THE DAILY CHART: CRISIS AND BANKRUPTCY

**CALIFORNIA'S WAR AGAINST PRESIDENT
TRUMP HAS PROVEN TO BE A WAR AGAINST
THE AMERICAN CITIZEN**

CLIMATE CHANGE, INSURANCE, AND THE LA FIRES

**CALIFORNIA PUSHES ELECTRIFICATION AMID
SKYROCKETING ELECTRICITY COSTS**

COLAB IN DEPTH
SEE PAGE 36

THE END OF SUICIDAL UNIVERSALISM

*Trump's conflict with the governing class arises from his rejection of
universalism, challenging the liberal belief that all people deserve
equal treatment, even at the cost of national interests*

BY CHRISTOPHER ROACH

**THE GREEN PARADIGM IS SHIFTING FAST
WE NO LONGER CAN AFFORD OUR DISNEYFIED IDEALS
ABOUT NATURE**

BY BRUCE THORNTON



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THIS WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

No Board of Supervisors Meeting on Tuesday, February 11, 2025 (Not Scheduled)

The next meeting is set for Tuesday, February 25, 2025.

**Central Coast Community Energy Authority (3CE) Operations Board Meeting of
Wednesday February 12, 2025 (Scheduled) 10:30 AM**

In General: 3CE seeks to maintain its slight energy cost advantage over PG&E. Regulatory issues, rising energy costs, delayed green energy supply projects, and supply issues continue to challenge the Authority.

Item 7 - Regulatory Update - 3CE must deal with a plethora of State requirements as noted below:

- Resource Adequacy (RA)
- Integrated Resource Planning (IRP)
- Interconnections
- Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS)
- PG&E Rule 30 Applications for Transmission Service
- Distribution Planning
- Preventing Disconnections
- Load Management Standards (LMS) and Real-Time Pricing
- Power Source Disclosure (PSD) and Power Content Label (PCL)
- Integrated Energy Policy Report (IEPR)
- Provider of Last Resort (POLR) and Emergency Transition Planning

Each of these is complex and expensive to handle in terms of legal, engineering, and rate setting consultants. See **Item 13** below to see how the Resource Adequacy requirement is impacting the Agency and environment.

Item 8 - Financial report for the period October 1, 2024, through November 30, 2024.

(Note: 3CE has an October-September fiscal year.) The budget is pretty much on track, although so far they have had less electricity sales than they had anticipated. There is also some indicia of staff turnover.

Das Williams hire: One surprise appointment, among many, includes Das Williams, former Chair of 3CE's Board and former Santa Barbara County Supervisor who was defeated for re-election in November 2024. The write-up states:

Das Williams joined 3CE on January 14, 2025 as a Senior Advisor of Policy and Legislative Affairs. Das brings over two decades of public service experience to this role, including serving in the California State Assembly and most recently as Santa Barbara County Supervisor and former Chair of 3CE's Policy Board. Das has demonstrated strong leadership in environmental and energy policy, including his work on landmark legislation like SB350, which set California's path toward 100% clean energy by 2045. His extensive experience in both state and local government, combined with his deep understanding of our Central Coast communities, will help 3CE advance our mission of delivering economic and environmental benefits through clean energy resources.

It is generally considered bad practice in public serve to appoint recently retired board members of a jurisdiction to management jobs in the same jurisdiction. Some city charters and state statutes

prohibit this, usually with a few years interval required. In fact, most ethical public administrators, such city managers and county executive officers, almost never consider appointing former elected officials, as their ability to be apolitical is in doubt. Once people have tasted the forbidden fruit, they are forever suspect.

Was there a job announcement with required education, skills, and duties? Were other applicants considered? Was there an outside review panel? Was there a test?

This is a blatant patronage appointment designed to secure an income and benefits for Das until some other elected post comes up for which he can run. As readers know, we have asserted for years that 3CE is a patronage machine for engineering consultants, computer consultants, engineers, rate consultants, lawyers, and green advocates. This one is both blatant and sleazy.

- What are his actual job duties? What are the salary and benefits?
- Does he have to come into the office in Monterey, or can he work “remotely” from Montecito?
- How will he relate to the Executive Director of 3CE, whose boss he was for the past several years?
- Did he ever vote for raises for the Executive Director? (Is this payback?)
- Did 3CE consider Das’s record in Santa Barbara County - shared responsibility for:
 - a. Failure of the \$250 million Tajiguas recycling facility (it has never worked)
 - b. He supported the rigged ambulance contract bid process where the Board awarded the contract to the Fire Union, even though the staff and doctors recommended the private sector contractor AMR. The County surrendered in a law suit and had to award the contract to AMR. The Fire Department was so sure the rigged deal would work, that it bought 38 ambulances for millions ahead of the decision.
- He promoted the creation of a \$200,000 DEI Manager executive position to function as a commissar investigating the departments.
- Das provided maximum support and promotion of the cannabis industry, with especially bad results in Carpinteria.

Das is a smart guy, who is experienced in politics and actually supports programs for working and poor people, as opposed to the usual Santa Barbara County hypocritical limousine liberal stuff. However, this episode casts doubt on the integrity of 3CE as a public agency.

Aged Accounts receivable: Separately from the matters above, the financial report indicates that \$18,496,117 in bill payments are past due.

CENTRAL COAST COMMUNITY ENERGY
Summary of Accounts Receivable, Net of Bad Debt Allowance
As of November 30, 2024

Current	0 - 30 Days	31 - 60 Days	61 - 90 Days	> 91 Days	A/R Balance
\$ 20,998,166	\$ 8,919,301	\$ 2,223,207	\$ 2,427,739	\$ 4,925,870	\$ 39,494,283

It is likely that a substantial portion of those 0-30 days past due will be paid. Nevertheless, with \$91.5 million in billing revenue for November, the past due percentage of accounts receivable is 20.1%. They need to watch how much is accumulating in the greater-than-90-days bucket. Most of the 90 days and older amount probably will never be collected. How much is it accumulating month over month?

Item 13 - Approve and authorize the CEO to execute a Hybrid - Battery Energy Storage System Power (“BESS”) Power Purchase Agreement (“PPA”) with MRP Pacifica Marketing III, LLC for the Tracy Hybrid Project, in a form substantially similar to the attached, as well as any necessary ancillary documents, with a power delivery term of 15.5 years with an expected Start Date of January 1, 2027, in an amount not to exceed \$783,000,000. 3CE has found that it cannot comply with State mandated resource adequacy (RA) mandates (especially for energy at night). This seems to be a problem for many if not all of California’s community choice energy authorities (CCAs).

To partly address this problem, suppliers have arisen that provide large scale battery storage plants fueled by natural gas. This supposedly partially green arrangement counts the energy delivered from the batteries as “green,” notwithstanding that it is originally produced by natural gas. This seems like renegeing on the promise to become 100% green.

In any case, the 3CE Board is being asked to sign a 15-year contract with a company named the Tracy Hybrid Project, owned by a company called Middle River Power based in Chicago. The write-up states in part:

3CE will be a joint offtaker of this project, with 3CE taking one third of the total capacity meaning 98MW of RA from the CCGT and 13.3 MW of the 8-hour BESS facility. Two other CCAs are finalizing agreements for offtake of the other two thirds. This hybrid resource will provide valuable fixed-price RA benefits to ensure RA compliance for 3CE under the Slice-of-Day (SOD) RA paradigm, which began in 2025. If approved the proposed project would meet approximately 18% of 3CE’s RA obligation at a savings over 3CE’s forecasted RA price.

Again, the hypocrisy is oozing out all over. It is cynical to say that the energy that flows from the plant is green, even though the energy that provides the charging is fossil fuel gas. Their hyperbole is that were it not for the batteries, the electricity would have to come from fossil fuel generation at night, which they assume to be more CO₂ generating. The write-up does not provide any evidence of this assertion.

They use the table below to justify it. They must have missed the law of the Conservation of Energy:

The law of conservation of energy states that:

1. Energy can neither be created nor destroyed; it can only be converted from one form to another¹²³⁴⁵.
2. The total energy of an isolated system remains constant over time¹³⁴⁵.
3. Energy can change forms within a system

Year	GHG Emissions without Battery (tons)	GHG Emissions with Battery (tons)	GHG reduction (tons)
2027	635,341	559,930	(75,411)
2028	602,340	530,845	(71,494)
2029	596,110	525,355	(70,755)
2030	552,780	487,168	(65,612)
2031	505,818	445,780	(60,038)
2032	491,745	433,378	(58,367)
2033	423,021	372,810	(50,210)
2034	386,393	340,530	(45,863)
2035	342,349	301,714	(40,635)
2036	330,262	291,061	(39,200)
2037	323,858	285,418	(38,440)
2038	294,617	259,647	(34,969)
2039	271,583	239,347	(32,235)
2040	230,193	202,870	(27,323)
2041	182,534	160,868	(21,666)

The plant is not yet built. Curiously, no concern is expressed in the Board letter over recent fires and explosions at lithium battery plants. Bills have been submitted in the Legislature to ban such plants in the future. It is not known what farmers and residents of the area surrounding the proposed plant site think of this large facility. Will the State and/or local zoning authorities (San Joaquin County) allow the plant to be built or operate?

What an energy shell game!

EXHIBIT A
FACILITY DESCRIPTION

Site Name	
County	Tracy, CA
Site APNs	To be determined
Facility Type	Natural gas-fired plant and battery energy storage system (BESS)
Participating Transmission Owner	
Thermal Resource	
Description	336 MW Combined Cycle Gas Turbine
Generating Capacity (MW)	336 MW
Heat Rate	██████ MMBtu/MWh
Resource ID	SCHLTE_1_PLIX3
BESS Resource	
Type	Lithium Ion Battery Energy Storage System
Operating Characteristics	
Operating Procedures	See <u>Exhibit H</u>
Maximum Charging Capacity (MWh)	40
Maximum Discharging Capacity (MWh)	40
Maximum Stored Energy Level (MWh)	320
Resource ID	To be determined by CAISO

From the San Joaquin County Planning Department:

The 32-acre Project site is located at 20042 W. Patterson Pass Road within unincorporated San Joaquin County, California. Currently, the site is grazing land, with two houses within the boundaries of the Project site but outside of the area that would be disturbed by the Project. The Project site is bounded to the north by grazing land, rural residences, the West Patterson Pass, and the Union Pacific Railroad. To the east lies grazing land and open space. Rural residences, grazing land, and open space bound the Project to the south. The Project is bounded by rural residences, grazing land, and the PG&E Tesla Substation to the west within Alameda County. The County of San Joaquin General Plan Land Use Map designates the Project site as General Agricultural, and the County's Zoning Map identifies the site as Agricultural General-160. Regional access to the Project site is provided by Interstate 580 located approximately 0.9 miles to the northeast.

Project Description: The Project would involve grading of the project site for the new construction and operation of a 400 megawatt battery energy storage system to provide reliable and flexible power to the local electrical system. The Project would interconnect at the Tesla Substation immediately adjacent to the site in Alameda County via a 230-kilovolt interconnection generation tie (gen-tie) line. The energy storage facility is anticipated to house lithium-ion

batteries totaling 400 megawatts of energy. Project construction would begin in 2024 and is anticipated to come online in 2025.

It is not clear if construction has actually begun. 3CE is seeing delays on many projects for which it has contracted.

Note: the plant that burned in Marina is 300 megawatts, and the one recently protested in Nipomo is 97 megawatts.



Planning Commission Meeting of Wednesday, February 12, 2025 (Scheduled)

There are no major developments or policy issues on this light agenda.

LAST WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

SLO County Board of Supervisors Meeting of Tuesday, February 4, 2025 (Completed)

Item 1 - Consideration of an Ordinance to establish Los Osos Habitat Conservation Plan mitigation fees for implementation of the Los Osos Habitat Conservation Plan. In the end they approved it on the consent calendar by pulling it off and voting separately. County Counsel engineered the shuck and jive process. It is outrageous and shows complete disdain for the poor people who have been under a building moratorium for almost 3 decades.

This item should have been set for a date-certain hearing. They should not just come in and adopt fees on the consent calendar. This does not say that it is a 2nd reading.

GOVERNMENT CODE - GOV

Search Phrase: ordinances adoption Highlight

TITLE 5. LOCAL AGENCIES [50001 - 57607] (Title 5 added by Stats. 1949, Ch. 81.)

DIVISION 1. CITIES AND COUNTIES [50001 - 52203] (Division 1 added by Stats. 1949, Ch. 81.)

PART 1. POWERS AND DUTIES COMMON TO CITIES AND COUNTIES [50001 - 51298.5] (Part 1 added by Stats. 1949, Ch. 81.)

CHAPTER 1. General [50001 - 50290] (Chapter 1 added by Stats. 1949, Ch. 81.)

ARTICLE 2. Powers and Duties of Legislative Bodies [50020 - 50034] (Article 2 added by Stats. 1949, Ch. 81.)

50022.4. After the hearing, the legislative body may amend, adopt or reject the adopting ordinance in the same manner in which it is empowered to act in the case of other **ordinances**; and, except as to the **adoption** of a code of existing **ordinances** of the adopting agency, nothing in this article shall be deemed to permit the **adoption** by reference of any penalty clauses which may appear in any code which is adopted by reference. Any such penalty clauses may be enacted only if set forth in full, and published, in the adopting ordinance. It is further provided that all changes or additions to any code made by the legislative body shall be published in the manner which is required for **ordinances**.

(Added by Stats. 1953, Ch. 1466.)

Mitigation Fee Summary per Square Foot¹

Restoration /Management/Administration Fee	1.72
Habitat Protection Fee	0.23
Total	1.95

¹ Project fees will be charged by multiplying the area of ground-disturbing activities in square feet by the values listed here.

Summary of Los Osos Habitat Conservation Plan Mitigation Costs and Fees ^{1, 2}			
Category	Acres ²	Planning Level Mitigation Total Costs (\$)	Percentage of Total Mitigation Costs
Mitigation Cost			
Administration (permit term)	532	16,683,835	38%
Administration (post-permit)	532	4,060,452	9%
Management and Monitoring (permit term)	386	5,892,370	14%
Management and Monitoring (post-permit)	386	6,899,673	16%
Preserve Start-Up	279	1,944,715	4%
Restoration	46	3,020,422	7%
Acquisition of Fee Title	77	4,934,145	11%
Total Cost		43,435,612	100%
Mitigation Fee Summary per Acre			
Restoration /Management/Administration Fee	532	72,435	
Habitat Protection Fee	521	9,467	
Total		81,901	
Mitigation Fee Summary per Square Foot³			
Restoration /Management/Administration Fee	532	1.66	
Habitat Protection Fee	521	0.22	
Total		1.88	

¹ The costs in this table have been updated from the December 2020 version of the LOHCP (Table 7.8).

Item 24 - Request to approve and authorize the Chairperson to sign two versions of the Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement for Administration of the Paso Robles Area Groundwater Sub-Basin Groundwater Sustainability Plan and creating the Paso Robles Area Groundwater Authority, one that includes all five Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (“GSAs”) (the County of San Luis Obispo, the City of Paso Robles, the San Miguel Community Services District, the Shandon San Juan Water District and the Estrella-El Pomar-Creston Water District) and one that includes all of the GSAs with the exception of the San Miguel Community Services District in substantial form to the documents attached hereto and approved as to form and legal effect by County Counsel. The project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act. The Board approved this item on a 3/2 vote, with Moreno and Peschong dissenting. Peschong eloquently and forcefully spoke against the item on behalf of his constituents and other overlies of the basin. The 3-member Board majority led by Gibson was locked in on driving the action through, no matter what. They even allowed a substantial staff presentation, under the guise of questions and answers, after public comment. There was considerable public opposition and comment. Expect rebellion from residents of the Paso Basin unincorporated areas. There is real anger underlying this outcome, process, and treatment of the public.

Approval effectively created a new government entity to control the water use in the Paso Basin. Approval is tantamount to resurrecting the AB 2453 water District that voters rejected by more than 70 percent of basin voters in 2016. Proponents will argue that this is different on the grounds that the structure and various details are different. While this is superficially true, the real purposes and outcomes were and are always the same:

- Place control of the water in the basin in the hands of larger landowners who pump about 90% of the water. These include out-of-county corporations, foreign pension systems, and real estate investment corporations, in addition to real wine producers. If the large users simply reduced their pumping by a collective 9,000 acre-feet per year, none of this would be necessary and the problem would be solved. Then they could develop new sources and best practices, as recommended in the adopted SGMA Plan. For example, if the City of Paso could stop pumping so much ground water and use its Naci water instead, thousands of acre-feet could be saved. The problem is that the groundwater is cheaper.
- Provide an ongoing patronage system for spending millions of dollars on redundant engineering and water studies, fattening a cadre of consultants who are regurgitating the same million dollar studies over and over.
- Enable the wheeling of water credits throughout the State for huge profits to some of the proportionate operators.
- Force diminimus users and non-users to pay for water to which they already have the primary rights and to help offset the costs to the large users.

- Enhance 2nd District Supervisor Bruce Gibson’s control over the Basin and distribution of patronage and related campaign financing returns. Note that he received \$55,000 from proponents and affiliates of this effort in in his 2022 campaign.
- Vitiate the will of the voters who voted over 70% to not surrender democratic control of the basin’s 8,000 overlies to a few hundred large water users.

Election results

Paso Robles Basin Water District, Measure B		
Result	Votes	Percentage
✖ No	2,285	73.05%
Yes	843	26.95%

- Perpetuate the 2013 water moratorium on smaller users to make it easier for the large users to comply with SGMA .
- Strike hard after former Supervisor Debbie Arnold retired. She had opposed this whole scheme for years.

The Board letter states that the alleged purpose of the new joint powers authority is:

The purpose of the Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement is to establish the Paso Robles Area Groundwater Authority (“Authority”) and to set forth the terms and conditions under which the Authority is authorized to implement the GSP and otherwise manage the Basin under SGMA within the collective service area of the GSAs that enter into the JPA Agreement (referred to in the JPA Agreement each as a “Member” and collectively as the “Members”).

Of course the Board letter does not answer the fundamental question: What problem are we trying to solve? There is no analysis of why a new government entity should replace the current cooperative board representing the affected agencies. There is no analysis. It simply states that 1) they want to establish fees over the entire area, and 2) they believe that consolidated administration would be more efficient. No current problems are listed. No examples of why it would be more efficient are provided.

The GSAs were able to delay the discussion of a long-term governance structure due in large part to the fact that the majority of early GSP administration / implementation costs have been grant funded. However, now that the GSAs have taken steps to establish a fee(s) to fund GSP implementation and the County retained a rate consultant to conduct a fee study as contemplated

in Section 10.2 of the GSP, it has become clear that the MOA (and PBCC) needs to be replaced. At the same time, it has become apparent that an agreement creating a single separate agency to levy the fee(s) and conduct implementation activities funded by said fee(s) would likely be the best option to ensure a unified / coordinated approach to Basin management. As a result, and in coordination with efforts on the fee study, GSA legal counsel began preparing a Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement to replace the MOA.

Did the Board of Supervisors authorize staff to undertake this project? – not in public.

If the above is true, why were the 2 new water districts (El Pomar and San Juan) created in the first place?

There were both process and substantive problems that demanded that this ploy be rejected:

Process Issues:

1. Why was such a contentious major policy issue placed on the consent agenda? Since it impacts thousands of people, shouldn't it actually be a pre-noticed public hearing item or at least a business item?
2. What was the rush? Why were staff and the proponents attempting to slide this under the door with only 5 days (2 are weekend days) notice on a consent calendar that was released the previous Wednesday morning (January 29, 2025)?
3. Did staff ever run this by San Luis Obispo County Cattlemen, County Farm Bureau, Quiet Title Group, Templeton Community Advisory Committee, small grape growers, other crop growers, COLAB, or anyone other than the Paso Basin Wine Alliance?
4. Who authorized the hiring of Cooperative Committee Counsel, Stoel Rives, LLP, to prepare the proposed governing document? Did the County representative concur? Who was that? Was the full Board of Supervisors aware? Or was this similar to the treatment of some Board members during the development of the putative AB 1453 water district run-up, when some were cut out? Who decided and who was provided the information?
5. How much has Stoel Rives, LLP, been paid so far? How much more expense have they incurred? How much is their retainer? Has the County been fronting this expense?

Substantive Issues and Inadequacies of the Board Letter:

1. The Board letter contains no estimates of the administrative overhead costs for the new entity. It will have an executive director, clerical staff, billing staff, contract counsel, liability incurrence, pension costs, HR management, office space, and all the other costs of running a government entity.
2. What are the estimated program costs for the next few years, including for those projects already being undertaken and those that are likely to be added? What will a typical budget look like in 2026, 2027, and going forward? For example, how much in fees will this require?

3. From this analysis, what is the general level of fees that will be necessary to offset the costs? Are these likely to be uniform, or will small users, cattle grazers, and owners of fallow land be exempt or subject to a lower fee? The write-up states in part:

As indicated above, the JPA Agreement provides that it is anticipated that the vast majority of costs associated with the GSP implementation activities delegated under the agreement will be funded through a fee(s) on all extractors within its boundaries.

4. How much in fees will be assessed to the owners of property who are still subject to the 2013 water moratorium?

5. Will the fees be subject to the **Proposition 218** 50% fee challenge provision?

6. How can the Board of Supervisors agree to this without such an analysis?

7. The governing structure is inherently undemocratic and loaded in favor of the 2 new water districts and the City of Paso. The 2 water districts contain only a few hundred property owners. The City of Paso is an appropriator, pumping water with high power pumps located outside the City. The City will have one vote. The other 8,000 residents will only have one vote (for the entire group). That vote could well be Supervisor Gibson. Shouldn't it be Supervisor Moreno or Supervisor Peschong if this Authority is actually enacted? Will Gibson foreswear serving as the representative?

8. In regard to **Item 7** above, members of JPAs are required by law to represent the interests of the JPA as a fiduciary duty, even if there is a conflict with the policies of the agency they are representing. Supervisor Gibson is famous and infamous in adhering to this law, especially in connection with his opposition to **Proposition 3**.

9. For whatever reason, the write-up makes a point of stating that the current agreement does not empower the new Authority to undertake any capital projects but that if it does seek this power in the future, it will be exempt from CEQA under the water code .

Although the JPA Agreement does not authorize the Authority to undertake any capital projects identified in the GSP without further approval by the GSAs, the Authority would conduct the required CEQA review for any projects that it undertakes. Based on the foregoing and the fact that adoption of the GSP is statutorily exempt under Page 6 of 8 Water Code Section 10728.6, approval of the project is exempt under CEQA Guidelines Sections 15378(b)(4), 15378(b)(5) and 15061(b)(3).

This seems strange, since at least one capital project is already underway. The County has received a State grant of \$7.6 million to execute some of the projects and has parceled some of the money out to the City of Paso Robles (\$3 million) and the San Miguel Community Service District (\$1 million). The SMGA plan lists a number of conceptual projects:

Table 9-1. Conceptual Projects

Project Name	Water Supply	Project Type	Approximate Location	Average Volume (AFY)
City Recycled Water Delivery	RW	Direct Delivery	Near City of Paso Robles	2,200
San Miguel Recycled Water Delivery	RW	Direct Delivery	Near San Miguel	200 ^a
NWP Delivery at Salinas and Estrella River Confluence	NWP	Direct Delivery	Near the confluence of the Salinas and Estrella Rivers	2,800
NWP Delivery North of City of Paso Robles	NWP	Direct Delivery	North of Huer Huero Creek, due west of the airport	1,000
NWP Delivery East of City of Paso Robles	NWP	Direct Delivery	East of the City of Paso Robles	2,000
Expansion of Salinas Dam	Salinas River	River Recharge	Along the Salinas River	1,000

This project will use up to 2,200 AFY of disinfected tertiary effluent for in-lieu recharge in the central portion of the basin near and inside the City of Paso Robles. Water that is not used for recycled water purposes will be discharged to Huer Huero Creek with the potential for additional recharge benefits. The general layout of this project and relevant monitoring wells are shown on Figure 9-2. Infrastructure includes upgraded wastewater treatment plant and Paso Robles Subbasin GSP November 13, 2019 9-19 pump station, 5.8 miles of pipeline, a storage tank, numerous turnouts, and a discharge to Huer Huero Creek. Additionally, a conceptual pipeline to the north of the main line will deliver recycled water to a larger geographical area. The cost to upgrade the wastewater treatment plant is also not included in the cost estimate, since the upgrades were required per the NPDES permit regardless of use for recycled water. Since this project is already in the predesign phase, the predesign project cost estimate is provided for this GSP.

What is the status of this project? Do they have any customers signed up to take the water?

10. Eminent Domain: A number of these projects require extension of water lines into the Paso Basin. Will these be subject to CEQA, or not? More concerning is whether they will require eminent domain if a property owner or many property owners will not sell them right of way for the water pipes being extended into the basin. The Board letter is silent on this issue.

11. Issuance of Debt: Some of these projects will be very costly and will require the sale of treated water every year to amortize their cost. The write-up indicates that the authority powers do not include the issuance of debt. How can this work? Is this just a subterfuge to grease the vote through now? Later the Authority will add the debt power. The statute is clear that the authority to issue debt is already embedded :

6515 In addition to other powers, any agency, commission or board provided for by a joint powers agreement entered into pursuant to Article 1 (commencing with Section 6500) of this chapter between an irrigation district and a city, if such entity has the power to acquire,

construct, maintain or operate systems, plants, buildings, works and other facilities and property for the supplying of water for domestic, irrigation, sanitation, industrial, fire protection, recreation or any other public or private uses, may issue revenue bonds pursuant to the Revenue Bond Law of 1941 (commencing with Section 54300) to pay the cost and expenses of acquiring, constructing, improving and financing a project for any or all of such purposes.

Does the clause above mean that they could issue debt under the umbrella of the City of Paso's debt issuance powers?

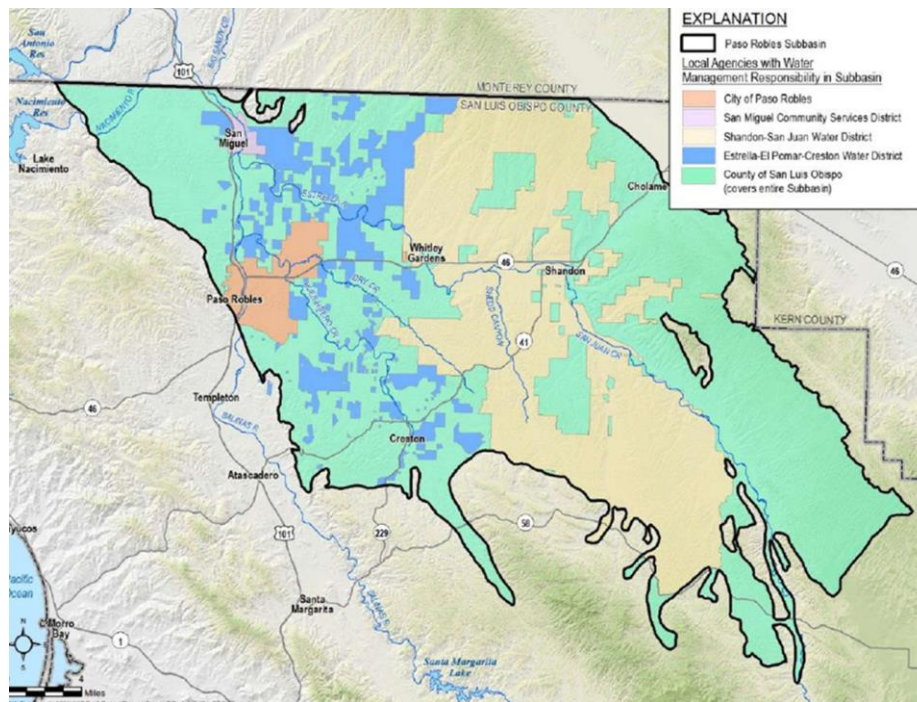
12. Liability of Agencies: Debt for capital projects is supposedly not the responsibility of the member agencies. However, debt for everything else (such as liability lawsuits) is the responsibility of the member agencies. The write-up is deficient in that it does not disclose this. The legal analysis below outlines the problem that is not disclosed in the write-up.

Debts, Obligations and Liabilities of Joint Powers Authorities

In contrast to the manner in which the enabling legislation expressly insulates member agencies from obligations of a joint powers authority related to the issuance of revenue bonds, the legislation specifies that member agencies are jointly and individually liable for all other obligations and liabilities unless the joint powers agreement provides differently. Section 6508.1 states:

[T]he debts, liabilities, and obligations of the agency shall be debts, liabilities, and obligations of the parties to the agreement, unless the agreement specifies otherwise. A party to the agreement may separately contract for, or assume responsibility for, specific debts, liabilities, or obligations of the agency. (Emphasis added).

Whenever any public entities enter into an agreement, they are jointly and severally liable upon any liability which is imposed by any law other than this chapter upon any one of the entities or upon any entity created by the agreement for injury caused by a negligent or wrongful act or omission occurring in the performance of such agreement. (Emphasis added).



Paso Basin Prescriptors

Item 35 - Review of the FY 2025-26 Budget Goals and Policies, Budget Balancing Strategies and Approaches, and Board Priorities, and provide direction to staff as necessary. This item was the annual check-in with the Board by the CAO to make sure that the impending Budget preparation is in line with the Board's policies. This is important in case there are changes. The Board listened to the standard presentation but made no major changes in policy.

The real policy is to adopt so called “status quo” budgets. This essentially means cost plus incremental budgeting. All existing programs are carried forward at higher cost to employee salary increases. No programs are eliminated or contracted out to lower cost producers. This policy in turn exerts continued pressure to raise fees and taxes. Fundamental needs such as road maintenance are deprioritized, while vital public safety programs, such as more robust fire engine deployment and staffing, are viewed as too expensive or require a tax increase.

There was no discussion of lost time due to absenteeism (due to sickness), liability management, workers comp management, or how many employees are “remote working” from home. Millions spent on homelessness; over-regulation; over-matches on health, mental health, and social service programs; and slow or unachieved data processing system conversion projects that eat up millions.

This is the self-fulfilling gap.

This year's report was divided into 2 main parts:

Part I: The first dealt with restructuring the County's financial reserves, including the consolidation of some major accounts. Another facet of this section is to adopt a policy to provide for a higher level of general reserves (unrestricted), as much of the money now in reserves is earmarked for specific functions and would not be available for purposes other than those which are earmarked.

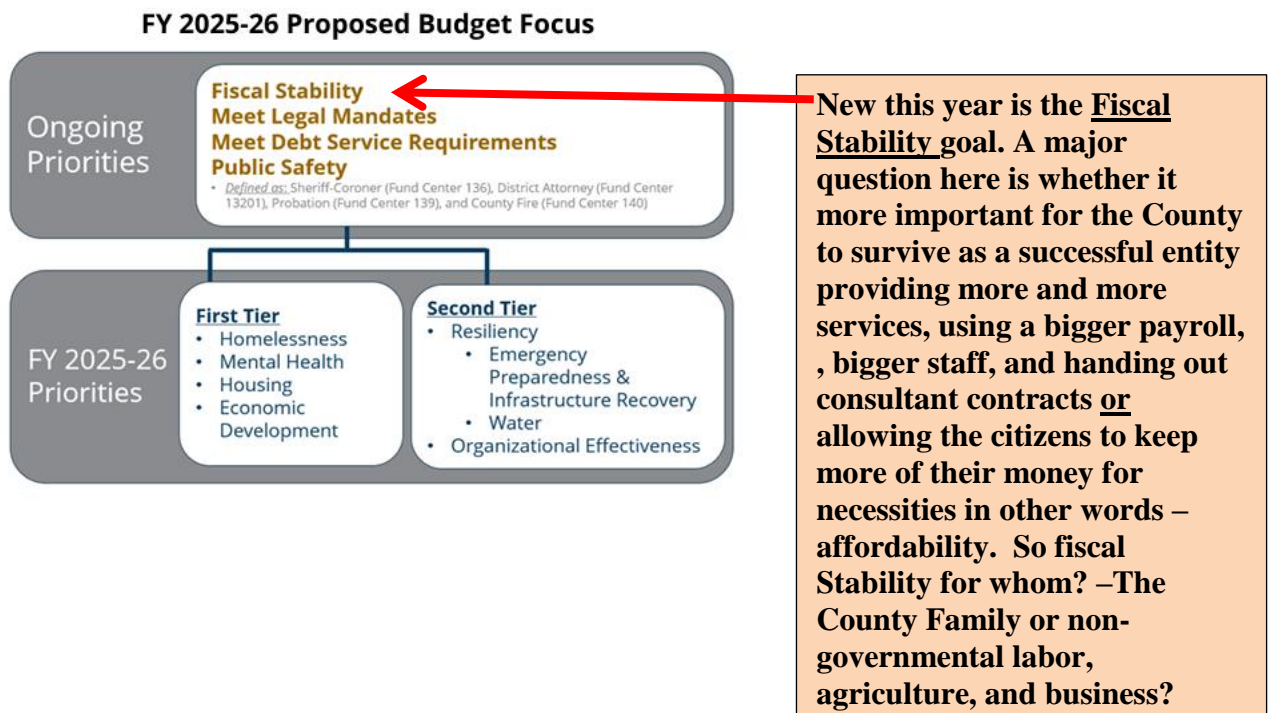
Designation	Current Balance	Recommendation
COVID 19	\$6.1M	Recommendation A - Eliminate the COVID 19, Rainy Day Funds, and Solar Plant Mitigation designations and transfer balances (\$26.6M) to the Tax Reduction Reserve.
Rainy Day Funds	\$4.8M	
Solar Plant Mitigation	\$15.6M	
SB 1090 Econ. Dev.	\$306K	Recommendation B - Transfer \$2,248,173 from SB 1090 Infrastructure to SB 1090 Economic Development Designation per the SB 1090 Spending Plan
SB1090 Infrastructure	\$3.9M	
General Gov. Building Repl.	\$46.5M	Recommendation C - Eliminate the Library - Cambria designation and transfer the balance (\$1,698,552) to the General Government Building Replacement designation.
Library-Cambria	\$1.7M	
Facilities Planning	\$9.2M	Recommendation D - Eliminate the New Government Center Repairs Designation and transfer the balance (\$1,986,400) to the Facilities Planning designation.
New Govt Ctr Repairs	\$2M	

Why is it recommended that the entire Solar Mitigation reserve be transferred to the Tax Reduction Reserve? This is funding from the solar plants in the eastern county for Sheriff, roads, fire, and other facilities and services. Is Supervisor Moreno okay with this, or is it another rip off of funds that will ultimately fund projects in the 2nd District (after being laundered through the tax reduction reserve? These funds are ordinarily paid to compensate local governments for taxes lost because of tax relief measures, such as the homeowner's exemption. Does this mean they are giving away the \$15.6 to cities and school districts?

Solar Plant Mitigation			X	15,640,187	●	N/A - Recommend transferring funding to Tax Reduction Reserve and eliminate designation
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Part II: This section contained the County's traditional presentation of:

1. The established Budget priorities and staff recommendations for any changes.



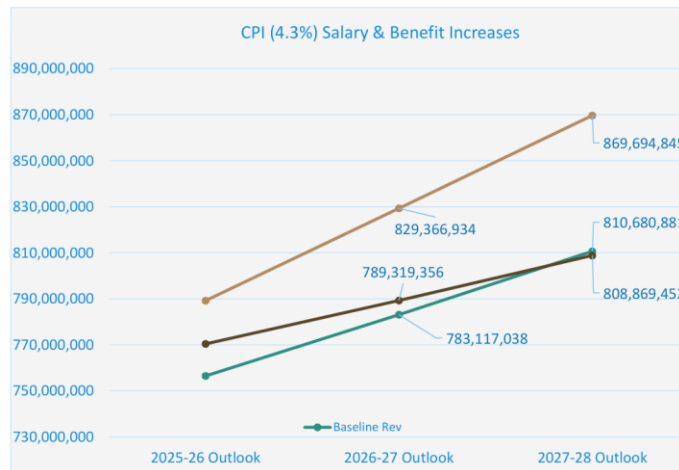
As an alternative priority, a Board of Supervisors could adopt: ***Reduce the number of services, reduce civil service unionized staff, private wherever possible, and the regulatory environment to promote homes and business expansion.*** Fat chance: The County government is a monopoly without competition, sustained by its favorable location next to the ocean in a Mediterranean climate with most of its scenic amenities historically protected by private agriculture and the National Forest Service. State hospitals, prisons, universities, tax exempt hospital corporations, local school districts, and one heavily regulated utility provide most of the jobs.

2. A forecast for next year's FY 2025-26 Budget's revenues and expenditures.

At this point the staff is forecasting a \$10-13 million revenue expenditure gap. Barring some catastrophe, such as a sudden recession or a Trump impoundment of Federal funds for California, it is likely to be largely resolved by June, when the Board takes up the Budget. This one is confusing, because the year's forecast displays a \$32.5 million gap for next year. This is predicated on salary negotiations costing 4.3% above current levels.

3. Also included is a 3-year Budget forecast (should be a 5-year forecast). This year's version displays minimal problems, again if there are no sudden and unexpected shocks.

Multi-Year Forecast – 4.3% CPI Salary & Benefit Increases



	FY 2025-26	FY 2026-27	FY 2027-28
Revenues	\$756,515,505	\$785,232,740	\$812,887,558
Expense	\$789,242,710	\$829,366,934	\$869,694,845
Deficit	-\$32,727,205	-\$44,134,194	-\$56,807,287

Item 38 - Executive Session – PERSONNEL (Government Code section 54957.) It is the intention of the Board to meet in closed session to: **(17) Consider Public Employee Appointment for the Position of County Counsel.** They could have appointed someone, planned a recruitment, or taken other related actions. However, they took no reportable action. The current County Counsel, Rita Neal, is retiring in March. She is a Gibson favorite. He is featured prominently on the County Website, stating:

“Rita is an exceptional person and attorney and it’s been a great pleasure to know and work with her for more than 25 years.” Said Gibson. *“During my time in office, she helped guide the county through extremely difficult events, always with her calm good nature and solid legal advice. Her strength, composure and commitment to public service are extraordinary – I, along*

with our organization and communities, will miss her greatly and wish her the best in her next phase.”

We will see if she pops up as a Superior Court Judge next. The County family that preys together, stays together.



Separate Budget Issue

Once again, we recommend that the Board adopt a more intense Budget review process. A few afternoons should be set aside each week in May to go through the Budget in detail, using both the Budget Book and the underlying accounting sheets. This would allow the Board to understand what is actually to be expended in each department. They could meet in budget workshops in the classroom on the first floor in scheduled open meetings. A problem is that the County budgets at such a high level of generality that the program level and its related costs and staffing are invisible. This places the staff in a commanding position over which the Board cannot connect the requested resources to the program outputs – performance measures.

No one perked up on this idea -- again.

Added Consent Item:

Added item #42 - Request to 1) waive the terms of the County Contracting for Services Policy and approve a sole source professional services contract with KPMG LLP, for an assessment and management review of the Health Agency; and 2) approve a corresponding budget adjustment in the amount of \$436,700 from General Fund Talent Development Reserve Designation to FC 104 - Administrative Office, by 4/5 vote. The project was reapproved unanimously.

What happened here? We thought that the contract was approved several meetings ago. Was there a legal glitch in authoring a sole source contract without a bid? Did County Counsel have second thoughts and determine to rework the recommendation? In any case, this is a more refined and detailed agenda item than the first version:

The County Administrative Office recommends initiating the first phase of an intended multi-year assessment to review each County department designed to provide a high-level assessment of each department, identify strengths, opportunities and weaknesses, compare financial and operational areas with similar jurisdictions, as well as identify baseline and enhanced levels of services and recommended evidence based best practices for implementation. The goal of the

assessment is to assist the Board of Supervisors in weighing public needs and setting its priorities for the most effective utilization of the limited financial resources available.

Item 39 - Amendment to Item #39 - Hearing to consider an appeal (APPL2024-00029) by the Sierra Club of the Planning Commission's approval of a request by Phillips 66 for a Development Plan/Coastal Development Permit (DRC2022 00048, ED23-054) to allow demolition and remediation of the Santa Maria Refinery, affecting approximately 218 acres of developed area within the 1,642-acre Phillips 66 owned property at 2555 Willow Road, Arroyo Grande. The Project includes aboveground demolition of refinery structures to ground level, followed by site characterization and soil remediation. Belowground infrastructure would be removed where necessary, to accommodate removal of contaminated soils. After demolition and remediation, hardscape would be replaced where removed and exposed soil areas would be revegetated. At Project completion, features to remain include asphalt and concrete surfacing, perimeter fencing, an electrical substation, water wells, truck scales, and two rail spurs, as well as monitoring wells and equipment associated with ongoing remediation under separate permits. The Sierra Club requested that the item be continued to April 29th. This will give them more time to shake Phillips down for millions of dollars to make their objections go away.



How can we contend with evil when it is done in the name of good?

Item 41 - Any Supervisor may ask a question for clarification, make an announcement, or report briefly on his or her activities. In addition, Supervisors may request staff to report back to the Board at a subsequent meeting concerning any matter or may request that staff place a matter of business on a future agenda. Any request to place a matter of Business for consideration on a future agenda requires the majority vote of the Board. There were no new requests.

California Coastal Commission Meeting of Thursday, February 6, 2025 (Scheduled)

Item 9 - On October 10, 2024, the Coastal Commission objected with the subject consistency determination by a vote of 6-4. Because the Commission action differed from the staff recommendation on the consistency determination in relation to the motion, resolution and findings that were adopted, this report contains revised findings to reflect the Commission's action. Commissioners who are eligible to vote on the revised findings are those from the prevailing side who were present at the October 10, 2024, hearing (Commissioners Hart, Bochco, Escalante, Newsom, Uranga, Aguirre). The proposed revisions below reflect the Commission's action and will be incorporated into the adopted findings. Modifications to the previous staff recommendation are shown as additions, in underlined text, and deletions in strikethrough text.

The Commission voted 6/0/0 to deny the Consistency finding with the Coastal Act. The vote was a fraud because staff and Counsel ruled that the matter was limited to approval by the Commissioners who voted yes on its prior action on October 10, 2024. At that time 6 Commissioners voted to deny the finding and 4 dissented. In the latest convoluted logic, only the 6 who were in the original majority were allowed to vote. No discussion of anything but the accuracy of the staff findings and report of the October 10, 2024 action were permitted. Likewise, public comment was narrowed to the same subject. Thus, if some Commissioners had changed their minds, they were prohibited from bringing the subject up or voting differently.

This process sounds as if it came right out Stalin's Rules for the Politbureau.

Background: As stated in the title, the Commission denied the US Air Force and Space Force Application for a consistency determination (that additional launches are consistent with the Coastal Act). Staff has gone back and written up final language and rationale for the denial. The Commission was about to approve the determination back in October, when Commissioner Newsom (no relation to the Governor) blew the whole meeting up over sonic booms. Backed up by the biased staff report, she contended that the sonic booms are a threat to marine life, animals on land, and people. Five of the Commissioners ended up agreeing with her. Obviously, they have not come to their senses in the ensuing months. Rather than admit it, they could have simply said that since the Board item was prepared, the Air force has clarified some data and then the Commission could have voted to approve the consistency determination.

She further asserted that Space X, one of the contract launchers, is a capitalist private sector exploiter and that the Airforce and Space Force were illegally benefitting a private company. She expressly condemned Space X and Elon Musk of being allied with then-candidate Trump. Of course, this violates the standards of a regulatory agency. Subsequently, Musk has sued the Commission.

A key paragraph in the Air Force's application states:

It is in the national interest to continuously enhance Starlink network capacity, particularly in furtherance of U.S. Government purposes and objectives. SpaceX's rapid launch capability and continuous deployment of Starlink satellites on orbit directly correspond to improved network performance that scales directly with network growth to meet escalating demand. Starlink launches are not incidental; each individual Starlink launch is part of a deliberate, planned effort to meet capacity needs to support specific requirements or demand, including the U.S. Government. The capability of new satellites allows SpaceX to add capacity more

quickly and interconnect the Starlink constellation, to serve critical U.S. Government needs around the globe, and to launch critical communication services for aviation and maritime in the U.S. and the rest of the world's most remote locations.

Background:

1. For several years the Air Force and the Space Force have sought a consistency permit from the Coastal Commission to increase the number of rocket launches from Vandenberg. The current request is to go from 12 to 36 per year. It is expected that in November, the Space Force will apply for an increase from 36 to 50. In 2026 it is expected that there will be a request to increase the number from 50 to 100 or more per year.
2. Increased launches are good for Santa Barbara and SLO Counties, as more private firms that support a variety of involved technologies expand in the two counties, creating jobs and related economic multipliers.
3. During the spring of 2024, the Air Force and Space Force reached agreement with the Coastal Commission staff on a very expansive and expensive series of monitoring and mitigations that the Commission required.
4. Subsequently, someone complained to the Commission about sonic booms. This caused the Commission to add 3 new very lengthy and costly conditions to the draft permit that had already been proffered. During the August meeting, the Air Force declined to accept the 3 new late hit conditions. The Commission then denied the Consistency. Commissioners also complained that the main contractor for launches is SpaceX, owned by Elon Musk. SpaceX launches private sector and military Starlink satellites as well as other military payloads.
5. Some Commissioners then began to complain that the SpaceX and other contractors should not have the benefit of having their launches approved under the Federal (Airforce) Consistency Permits. They suggested that the private sector companies should apply for regular coastal development permits as private entities.
6. Surprisingly, as the time approached for the October meeting, the published agenda indicated that the Air Force had changed its position and agreed to the new permit conditions related to sonic booms, and that the Commission staff and the Air Force had collaborated extensively and were signing Kumbaya. The staff recommended approval of the expanded permit that now included Sonic Boom mitigation provisions. It was expected that this would be approved at the October meeting.

At the October 10, 2024 Meeting:

1. It became apparent that the Air Force turnabout was fostered by the highest levels. It turned out that Assistant Secretary of the Air Force, Dr. Ravi Chaudhary (a Biden appointment) had taken over management of the issue.
2. It is not known how Chaudhary's injection had been engineered. Chaudhary came to California and, assisted by the Vandenberg AFB Commander, agreed to the Commission's demands.

3. Commission Chairwoman Caryl Hart, three of the Commissioners, and Commission staff were hosted at the Base, where they toured many environmental projects. They came away very impressed. In fact, they were so effusive that they forgot to notice their ex-parte discussion with the applicant Air Force. This required them to correct on the record during the meeting.

4. Chaudhary is a well-spoken retired Air Force Officer who is very highly educated and slathered praise on the Coastal Commission staff. In the end (right on the floor of the meeting) the Commission proposed yet another condition tantamount to requiring that SpaceX apply separately for permits and not operate under the Air Force consistency. This was again a bridge too far and Chaudhary demurred.

5. A new Commissioner, Gretchen Newsom, (not related to the Governor) led the attack on the approval consistency, the Air Force, SpaceX, Elon Musk, and just about everything else. She was focused, organized, articulate, and a firebrand. Her anger was not flagrant but simmering hot. Separately from environmental issues, Newsom painted Musk as a corrupt and harsh employer who allows his workers to suffer from injuries and harassment. She called him the richest man in the world. She read her statement before deliberations and indicated she would oppose the Consistency. Her day job is the public relations manager for a northern California unit of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

The other Commissioners were stunned, but 5 of them plus Newsom rolled over to deny.

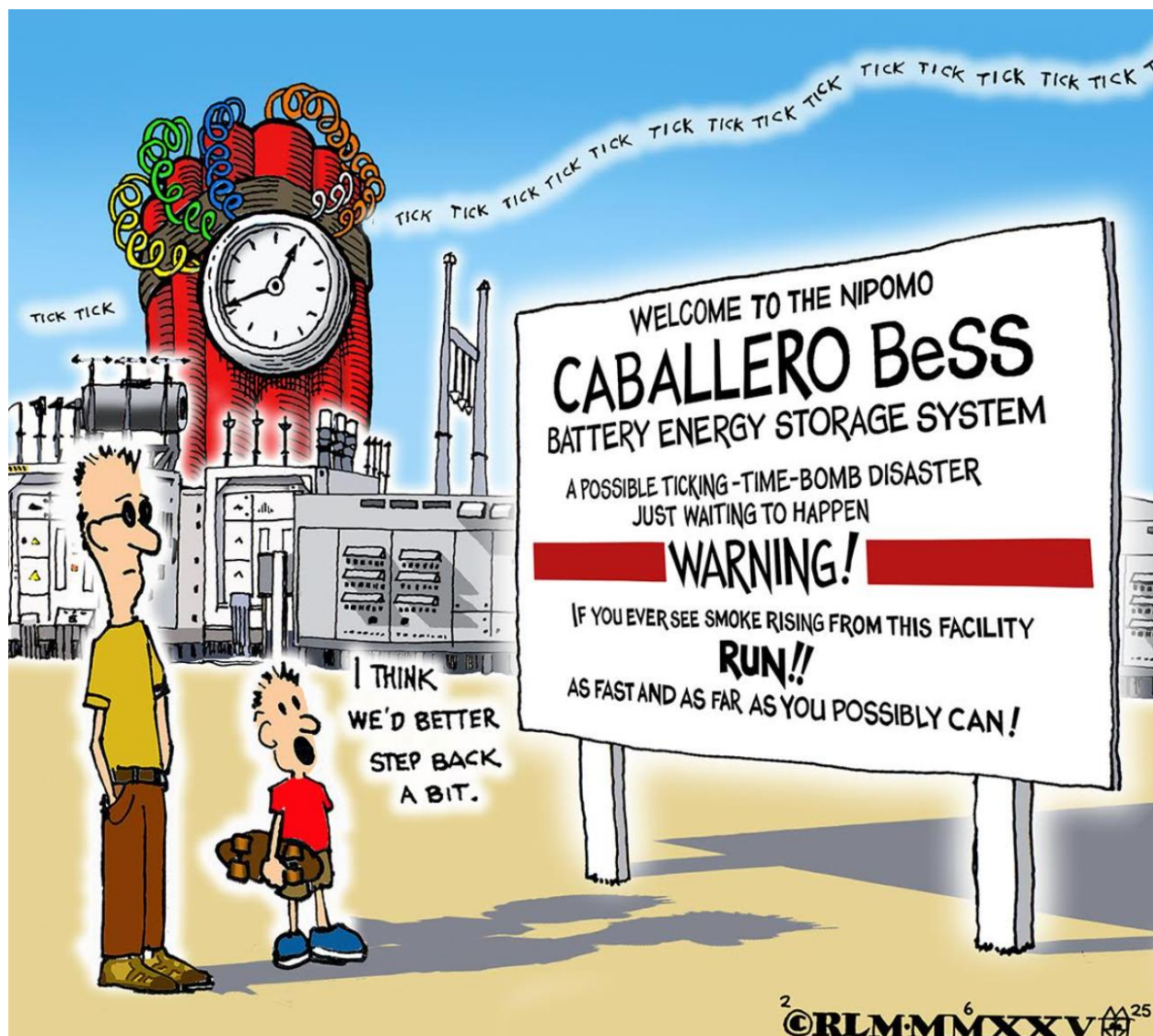


Watch out for her in the future. Once the Socialist takeover is complete, she will be one of the commissars sending you to the Gulag or the killing fields.

Wonder what the new Sheriff in Town will do about the Coastal Commission interfering with national defense? Hopefully, the Commissioners and staff can be deported to Guantanamo.

In the meantime Vandenberg tenants, including the Airforce, Space Force, Space X, and other private operators happily launched 46 rockets and space planes in 2024 versus the 36 that had been “allowed” by the Commission. They may plan for up to 100 in 2025.

Non-Agenda Item – General Public Comment 9:00AM Tuesday, February 4, 2025 (Complete)



Concurrent Issues Not Yet on the Board Agenda.

Item 1 - Nipomo Residents Upset Over PG&E Battery Storage Plant.

A large group of about 45 Nipomians showed up to request that the Board pend Caballero's permit until alleged safety and permitting errors could be examined. There was considerable negative public comment. Board Chair Ortiz-Legg limited speakers to 2 minutes.

In the end, on advice from County Counsel, the Board coalesced around the idea that nothing could be done, as the battery company had an approved permit, thus granting a vested right. Counsel forecast that the County would be sued if it held up the plant.

The Board could have directed staff to meet with Caballero executives to ascertain if some of the safety systems could be upgraded beyond what had been approved. There did not seem to be any appetite for that path.

Now the residents will sue the County.

The large fire at the Vistra battery storage facility in Marina, next to Monterey Bay, as well as other similar fires around the nation, have stirred up concern about County approval of a 99 MGW facility in Nipomo.

Nipomo Caballero Lithium Battery Storage Plant

What Blows Up in Nipomo Doesn't Stay in Nipomo! **By Andy Caldwell**

The County of San Luis Obispo has completely failed the citizens living in the area between Orcutt and Five Cities, including Guadalupe. All these communities are well within what I am going to refer as the toxic-gas blast zone, depending on wind conditions and inversion layers, for a new battery energy storage facility located in Nipomo, a mere 1,000 feet from the 101 freeway.

Whereas the SLO county government only bothered to notify residents within a mere 300 feet of the new project before construction began, up in Monterey County, where a similar type of battery plant just blew sky high, residents within 8 miles of the facility were forced to evacuate. And upwards of 100,000 residents throughout the region were advised to shelter in place. Moreover, schools were ordered to be closed 70 miles away.

When the County of SLO did environmental review of the possible impacts of the project on the community, they had the gall and temerity to determine it was *not likely* that the facility could create a *significant hazard* to the public or the environment through *reasonably foreseeable* upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment! Tell that to the folks in Monterey County who are now living amidst a toxic waste site because of the fire and explosion that happened at Moss Landing battery storage site. In San Diego, two of their three battery facilities had fires too, one lasting two weeks!

At a minimum, the entire region should have received the following warnings and instructions that were buried online as it pertains to a mandatory evacuation or sheltering in place. Before a Battery Energy Storage System facility incident, you are to do the following if you live or work near a facility: Build an emergency supply kit with the addition of plastic sheeting, duct tape and scissors. Make a family emergency plan and remember to include emergency planning for your pets. Ensure that you have signed up for emergency alerts. Know how to operate your home's ventilation system because you are going to have to shut it off and seal it! Identify an above-ground shelter room with as few openings as possible.

Further instructions for sheltering in place include: Bring pets inside. Close and lock all exterior doors and windows. Close vents and fireplace dampers. Turn off heaters and air conditioners. Seal gaps under and around the following areas with wet towels, plastic sheeting, duct tape, wax paper or aluminum foil: doorways and windows, air conditioning units, stove and dryer vents. Avoid eating or drinking any food or water that could be contaminated. Note: ten square feet of floor space per person will provide enough air for up to five hours.

Again, these protocols could easily apply to everyone living in the area from Orcutt to Five Cities in the event of an emergency!

Wow! And they call this green energy? How come every single household in the region has not received a set of these instructions? Moreover, one additional instance of gross negligence on the part of SLO County which approved this facility has to do with the fact that there was no mention, no planning, and no evaluation or concern issued regarding the fact that dozens of farmworkers work the fields in the immediate vicinity of this facility.

Finally, we have serious concerns that the first responders who would be called on in the event of an emergency have not been properly trained and equipped for a fire at this facility. The standard practice is to let lithium battery fires burn themselves out because putting water on them can make the fire worse. However, in the meantime, first-responders should all be equipped with self-contained breathing apparatus including members of the Highway Patrol who would be charged with closing the 101 freeway during the incident.

We are asking the SLO County Board of Sups on Tuesday, Feb 4 at 9 am, during public comment, to declare an emergency and prevent this plant from starting up until our concerns about public safety and first responder issues are answered to our satisfaction.

Please show up to the county government center located at 1055 Monterey Street in San Luis Obispo (first floor of the government building) at 9 am on Tuesday, Feb 4, to voice your concerns.

Andy Caldwell is the Executive Director of COLAB of Santa Barbara County, a regional public affairs radio show host, and long term government watchdog.

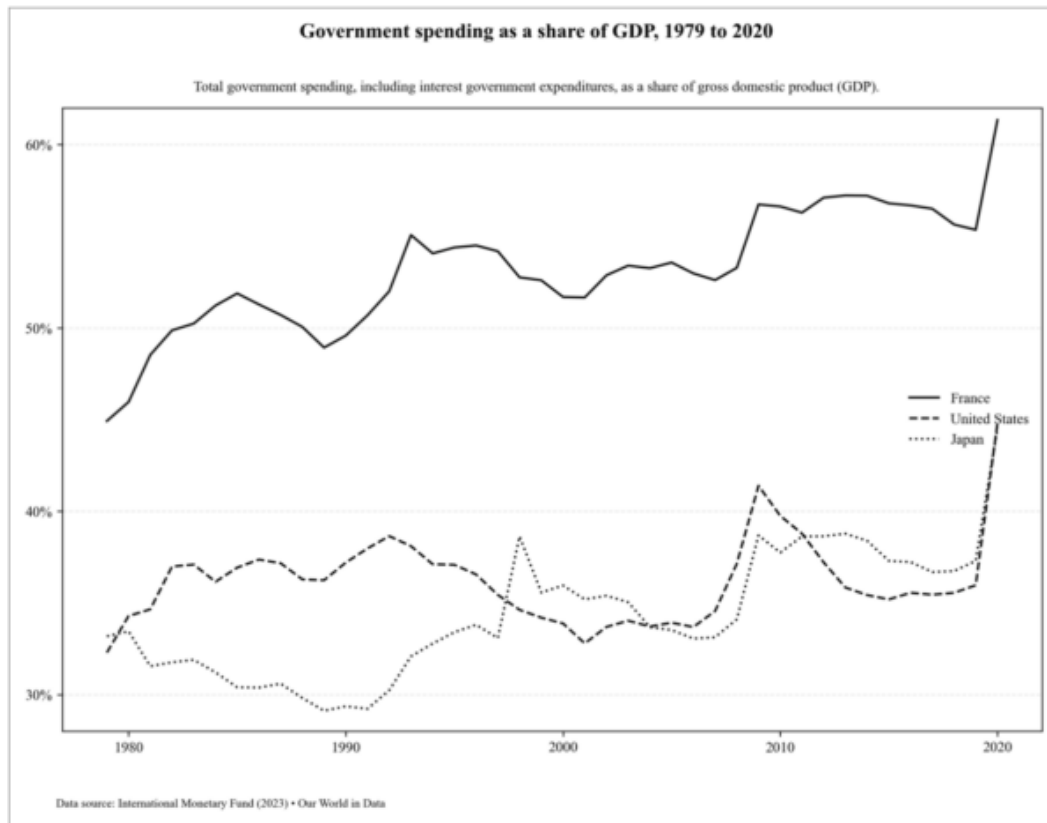
EMERGENT ISSUES

Item 1 - POSTED ON FEBRUARY 4, 2025 BY STEVEN HAYWARD IN THE DAILY CHART

THE DAILY CHART: CRISIS AND BANKRUPTCY

One of the great books about the growth of government over the last century is Robert Higgs's Crisis and Leviathan: Crucial Episodes in the Growth of Government. It explains and gives examples of the “ratchet effect,” whereby a crisis—a war, economic calamity, or . . . a pandemic perhaps—provides a reason for the expansion of government power and spending in

response, but then the government never shrinks back to its old size after the crisis is over. And so government ratchets ever larger crisis after “crisis.”
Looks like Covid can be added to the data set:



Everyone knows that the U.S., and other leading industrial democracies, face a growing debt problem that may someday soon create an economic crisis, or at least kill economic growth. A new edition of *Crisis and Leviathan* will surely place Covid and its policy responses high among the examples.

Item 2 - California's War Against President Trump Has Proven to be a War Against the American Citizen



President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump, with Ric Grenell, inspect Los Angeles fire regions. (Photo: The White House)

California's War Against President Trump Has Proven to be a War Against the American Citizen

Governor Newsom and state Democrats need to get their stories straight

By Katy Grimes, February 4, 2025

Only 10 days ago, President Trump visited Los Angeles, flying in and viewing the destruction of the Pacific Palisades fire from Marine One, and meeting with several state and local leaders to discuss wildfire recovery.

During his visit, Trump announced two conditions in order to receive federal aid: voter ID laws and for the state to stop diverting water flows to the Pacific Ocean, and instead send Northern California water to the southern state.

Trump also hunted that FEMA could either be overhauled or eliminated.

It's only Democrat politicians who push for no voter ID to vote, who push for illegal aliens to have a valid ID, and who have allowed California's water to flow to the ocean instead of to farmers and Central and Southern California cities.

Governor Gavin Newsom had a tarmac talk with the President, hoping to secure hundreds of millions of dollars in federal recovery aid.

I wonder if Trump was thinking about the day after the November Election when the California Governor wasted no time after Trump's landslide win, harassing and threatening the soon-to-be 47th president.

As the Globe reported, Newsom issued a bridled threat "to stand with states across our nation to defend our Constitution and uphold the rule of law."

He followed that subtle threat with specifics – planned lawsuits against the Trump administration:

Newsom issued a proclamation convening a special session of the California Legislature "shoring up California's defenses against an incoming federal administration that has threatened the state on multiple fronts."

That's government-speak for "we will be suing the Trump administration as fast as we can prepare the lawsuits" over "an agenda that could erode essential freedoms and individual rights, including women's rights and LGBTQ+ rights," Newsom actually said.

The lawsuits will likely be over California's environmental policies and climate change woo woo, as well as any federal policies impacting California like withholding High Speed Rail funding, offshore drilling/fracking for natural gas, water policy, dam removal, forest management, to name just a few.

It is quite telling that California's Democrat supermajority is prioritizing frivolous lawsuits against the president rather than cleaning up their own very messy state.

The Assembly Democrats just passed two bills appropriating \$50 million taxpayer dollars to "Trump proof" California. "We do not trust President Donald Trump," Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas said.

Yet it was Speaker Rivas who had the temerity to tell Trump not to play politics when it comes to California wildfire recovery aid. Pot, meet kettle.

California Democrats need to get their act together... and get their stories straight, or the Trump Administration may just withhold federal funding. Spending \$50 million to sue Trump and his administration won't endear the state's legislative Democrats to the President.

California's Democrat supermajority Legislature is filled with elected politicians who have been raised as activists, rather than policy wonks who understand and appreciate common sense governing.

These politicians are responsible for California's terrible policies which have and continue to result in devastation, loss of property and loss of life, the Globe recently reported. Democrats prioritized "Trump Proofing" the state over fireproofing it. They have other priorities: Rather than prioritizing hiding children's gender transitioning from parents, they could have shown concern about California's ridiculously high cost of living, which is exploding even higher on essentials like housing, food, utilities, gas, insurance, and healthcare. Rather than scheming on ways to increase the state's already highest taxes in the nation, they could have cut taxes and regulations. Rather than increasing gas taxes making our gas the highest priced in the country, they could have re-opened oil drilling and natural gas extraction, and removed the severe regulations and restrictions on the few remaining refineries in the state.

These are the priorities of the people of California. How many cities, neighborhoods and houses have to burn down before the people start demanding that our priorities become the politicians' priorities?

In our 2017 book California's War Against Donald Trump: Who Wins? Who Loses? James Lacy and I took a thorough, analytical look into the clash between Donald Trump's policies and those of California's liberal leaders who mounted a vigorous "resistance." We revealed who was winning, and losing, from all the political grandstanding. With hundreds of references cited, dealing with subjects spanning California's sanctuary city policies, to "The Wall," to healthcare, education, the temporary travel ban, federal regulatory policy, thwarting enforcement of immigration laws, and especially climate change, the battle between liberal Democrats in Sacramento and Trump was vividly detailed, from a perspective that agrees with Trump that California is "out of control," and that politicians would do much better for the state by dropping the hostility and finding some sort of common ground.

Deja vu. Has anything changed in California from 2017?

A war against President Donald J. Trump has proven to be a war against the American Citizen.

Katy Grimes, the Editor in Chief of the California Globe, is a long-time Investigative Journalist covering the California State Capitol, and the co-author of California's War Against Donald Trump: Who Wins? Who Loses? California Globe, February 4, 2025.

Item 3 - CLIMATE CHANGE, INSURANCE, AND THE LA FIRES

by [Randal OToole](#) 02/05/2025



Scientific American [blames](#) the Los Angeles fires on climate change. A Yale University publication [agrees](#). An [article](#) in *Quartz* predicts that climate change is going to make housing “uninsurable.” Instead of insurance, a *New York Times* [op-ed](#) by a former California insurance commissioner argues that oil companies should be forced to pay for fire damages.

It’s a neat argument that appeals to homeowners eager to blame the loss of their houses on anything other than their own decisions to buy or build flammable homes with flammable landscaping in a fire plain. Yet there are valid reasons to believe that climate change is not the issue, and that even if climate change is occurring, it won’t make homes uninsurable. In fact, people who believe climate change is the problem should be all the more interested in making sure that homes and landscaping are fireproof.

A key weakness in most of the arguments for anthropogenic climate change is that they rely on data that goes back only about 55 years or so. The 1970s were one of the coolest decades in the 20th century, so any data that start from there will make it appear that temperatures are rising. The Yale article cites one study that uses data back to [1971](#) and another that goes back to just [2001](#).

Both of those studies are also not of climate change but of fire data, but that’s problematic because the Forest Service and other wildland fire fighting agencies dramatically changed how they fight fires since the 1990s. Where they once risked firefighter lives by having them directly attack the fire fronts, they now do huge amounts of back fires and rely more heavily on aerial drops of water and retardant. This, not climate change, has increased acres burned and the sizes of the largest fires. Acres burned are a symptom of climate change, but they can also be a symptom of other factors as well.

Relying on actual climate data, rather than symptoms, climatologist [John Christy](#) has shown that [heat waves](#) in the West, the [number of days over 100 degrees](#) in California, and [southern California rainfall](#) have not particularly changed over the last 110 years. If anything, some of these indicators have cycled up and down, with the 1970s, as mentioned above, being a cool, wet period.

Even if you believe that climate change is the problem, blaming the oil companies is the wrong answer. For one thing, the oil that has been burned over the past century was burned by us, not the oil companies, who only sold it to us. More important, as Bjorn Lomborg showed in

the [Financial Post](#) last week, recent studies have estimated that climate change is going to reduce global GDP by only 2 to 3 percent, while the actions climate activists want us to take to slow climate change will reduce it by 25 percent, both increasing poverty and making us less resilient to any changes that come about as a result of increased temperatures.

As I've noted here before, the main reason I am suspicious about the whole climate narrative is that most of the things that activists want us to do, such as spend more on mass transit or increase urban densities, won't really reduce greenhouse gas emissions and are simply part of an agenda that existed long before climate was thought to be a problem.

Read the rest of this piece at [The Antiplanner](#).

Randal O'Toole, the Antiplanner, is a policy analyst with nearly 50 years of experience reviewing transportation and land-use plans and the author of [The Best-Laid Plans: How Government Planning Harms Your Quality of Life, Your Pocketbook, and Your Future](#).

Item 4 - California Pushes Electrification Amid Skyrocketing Electricity Costs



California's energy transition is running into a cost conundrum.

It is no secret that electricity bills in the Golden State are skyrocketing. Residential electricity rates jumped nearly 50% from 2019 to 2023 and are now almost double the national average.

A new report from the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) sheds light on why. The report, released in January 2025, points to clean energy mandates and other climate programs as key contributors to the state's rising rates:

“[The state] requires utilities to provide a certain percentage of retail electricity sales from renewable generation. While the costs of generating electricity from renewable resources have declined in recent years, this transition still has added costs for ratepayers ...

[California ratepayers] also bear other costs related to supporting the state’s efforts to meet its GHG targets ... IOU ratepayers are now supporting a range of ZEV, energy efficiency, and other climate-related programs through the public purpose charges on their rates.”

With hundreds of billions in major energy transition investments slated for the decades ahead – including a massive buildout of renewable energy and grid infrastructure to triple the state’s generation capacity – electricity bills in California are expected to keep rising. The LAO found that electricity rates “are projected to continue to outpace inflation over the next few years.”

That’s bad news for families and businesses already struggling under California’s affordability crisis – and for the state’s energy transition at large.

Severin Borenstein, director of the UC Berkeley Energy Institute, has warned that high electricity costs pose “a huge problem” for transition efforts in California, noting that “mandating electrification when you’re charging people 30 or 40 cents a kilowatt-hour is going to be immensely expensive.” According to the latest federal data, Californians paid 32.68 cents per kilowatt-hour in November 2024.

As the Los Angeles Times Editorial Board asked last year:

“Who wants to invest thousands of dollars in a heat pump or induction stove only to be punished with higher bills?”

E&E News put it this way:

“California wants residents to swap gasoline-fueled cars and natural gas heaters for electric models. But if power rates keep rising, it will cost more to plug in an EV at home than to fill up a gas tank, economists project.”

While legislators may want to lower electricity costs, their efforts are fundamentally hamstrung by an unavoidable reality: California’s energy transition requires massive amounts of new spending that is ultimately funded by customer bills.

As the LAO concluded in its recent analysis:

“Fundamentally, however, the Legislature may also be faced with a frank decision about how to balance the state’s ambitious GHG reduction goals – and all of the associated benefits – against the inevitable costs that will result for ratepayers.”

California is still in the early stages of its energy transition, but the upshot is clear: electrification mandates amid skyrocketing electricity rates are sentencing consumers and businesses to an “immensely expensive” energy future.

Policymakers need to recognize this electrification cost conundrum and shift course. To affordably and reliably meet demands, California still needs all forms of energy to work together.

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 END OF SUICIDAL UNIVERSALISM

*Trump's conflict with the governing class arises from his rejection of
universalism, challenging the liberal belief that all people deserve
equal treatment, even at the cost of national interests*

BY CHRISTOPHER ROACH

Much of the friction Trump has with the governing class arises from his rejection of universalism, the metaprinciple at the heart of liberalism. This principle declares that one's brother, father, wife, child, neighbor, countryman, coreligionist, or fellow tribe member are all supposed to be treated no differently from an absolute stranger. For universalists, those naturally closer to us have no priority claims upon our time and resources, and it is unfair and discriminatory to proceed otherwise. After all, [we are all human beings](#).

In the spirit of universalism, we have been taught for many years that America is [chiefly an idea](#) or a [creed](#), but these teachers forget to acknowledge that we are also a particular people with a shared history and a shared ancestry living on a particular piece of geography . . . in other words, a nation.

For the universalists, our country is just a grab bag, a money machine for do-gooderism and, more often than not, [do-badderism](#).

NGOs Fuel Mass Illegal Immigration

Universalism ain't cheap. The waves of illegals who arrived under Joe Biden depend upon [an extensive network](#) of nonprofits, NGOs, foundations, charities, and other institutions that paved the way for their arrival, helped them get government aid, or sometimes directly [gave them money with no conditions](#), and collectively have done absolutely nothing to strengthen our country or improve the lot of citizens.

This collection of nonprofits, government-funded NGOs, and charities has become a parallel path for the managerial class, a place to make a living or kill time between administrations. The estimable Z Man has presciently described this ring of organizations as a "[shadow government](#)." Not merely helping refugees, these institutions also engage in other activities important to the

government, like [fomenting color revolutions](#) abroad and disseminating [COVID propaganda](#) at home.

While ostensibly neutral and separate from the government, these [cutouts](#) are paid to conduct studies that support government policies, as in the case of [foreign “independent” media](#) funded by the U.S. Government, and otherwise to do the government’s bidding with less accountability. Real war nerds may remember a classic example, the idiotic [“NAFO” trolling campaign](#) in support of American efforts in Ukraine.

When Trump decreed a pause in government funding of nonprofits to evaluate conformity to his agenda—until foiled by the courts—[it quickly created chaos](#). Perhaps this was by design. While the pause led to some pushback about its scope, the tumult has also exposed the nature and extent of the enormous, [parasitical world](#) of [government-funded nonprofits](#).

It turns out [a whole bunch of people](#) are on the gravy train, and, without ongoing funding, these organizations would have to fold up the tents, and their people would have to find remunerative, private-sector employment. Much of this work lacks parallels in the for-profit sector, and many of these people are otherwise unemployable because they are ideological true believers and absolute weirdos. Some will drop out from the white-collar middle class into something like waiting tables or working in factories if this funding goes away. Pity.

The funding cut does not merely restrain “woke” stuff. The federal government’s budget is out of hand, having reached [astronomical levels](#) during the COVID pandemic. This is why cutting government jobs, which Trump’s voluntary buyout policy will encourage, is not enough.

Most of the government’s money is spent and wasted through contracts with private companies and nonprofits, both large and small, for everything from refugee settlement and “independent media” in Ukraine to endless efforts at COVID education, even now, years after the end of the pandemic.

The portion of that money spent subsidizing an army of unskilled, unemployed, and hostile foreigners is a perverse mockery of [what every government is supposed to do](#). Rather than contributing to the public good, the immigration nonprofits exist to hurt us by facilitating the mass migration of [extremely alien foreigners](#) in order to devolve the remaining fragments of national unity that have survived the social changes of the last 50 years. The least we can do is make them pay their own way.

Arguments that this is all some type of noble charity work that we are [morally obliged](#) to continue ad [infinitum](#) are now falling on deaf ears.

[A False Morality is Fueling National Destruction](#)

One of the dumber ideas to grow out of the post-9/11 Global War on Terrorism was the notion that because we had ourselves established a free and democratic government that protected natural rights, somehow we were obliged to export this model of government to the whole world, even in the face of violent resistance.

Missing from this crusading idea was any recognition of the human terrain. People are different. Fitness for self-government depends upon certain traits of culture and character that are themselves revealed only when such a government is a product of a people's own efforts and struggles. The democracies we imposed on Iraq and Afghanistan quickly became illiberal and unstable because they were not the product of an organic growth but were instead imposed upon them by an overly idealistic and hubristic United States.

The same hubris lies behind much of the immigration-charity industrial complex. Advocates conflate our obligations to foreigners with our obligations to our neighbors and to our people. Indeed, they reverse these obligations because the people running these operations are not merely indifferent but actively hostile to Americans and their welfare.

We saw this hostility vividly in the Biden administration's utter failure to assist the people of North Carolina after the devastating floods, even while [boatloads of money](#) were spent on assisting illegal immigrants to thrive and pursue fraudulent asylum claims.

Everything the government does needs to be subject to a microscope and to the scythe. In other words, everything it does and funds should be presumptively shut down until examined very closely and proven to be necessary. We are no longer as wealthy in relative terms as we once were, and, even if we could afford all of these things, a government is not supposed to undermine its own people's welfare to benefit another's in the pursuit of a false morality that puts strangers above one's own community.

Christianity does not [require the destruction of nations](#). While a certain amount of universalism is [presaged by the Christian faith](#), the individual obligations we have to the poor as Christians cannot be made abstract and taken over by a behemoth, managerial state. Rather, charity must spring from the heart and be [limited by countervailing obligations](#) to those whom one is commanded by scripture to look after first: one's family, one's children, and one's nation.

Christopher Roach is an adjunct fellow of the Center for American Greatness and an attorney in private practice based in Florida. He is a double graduate of the University of Chicago and has previously been published by The Federalist, Takimag, Chronicles, the Washington Legal Foundation, the Marine Corps Gazette, and the Orlando Sentinel. The views presented are solely his own. This article first appeared in the February 6, American Greatness.

THE GREEN PARADIGM IS SHIFTING FAST WE NO LONGER CAN AFFORD OUR DISNEYFIED IDEALS ABOUT NATURE BY BRUCE THORNTON

In just a few weeks, Donald Trump has started shifting a number of establishment paradigms, including the idealistic “rules-based” foreign policy, and the ghoulish transgender treatments and surgeries. However, the most dangerous for our economy and its future is the so-called “green energy” policies based on “climate change” ideology.

On November 5, voters sent the message that they’re sick of high gas prices, government diktats about what kind of cars they have to drive, billions in subsidies to “green renewable” energy industries, and EVs, and hectoring virtue-signaling from snooty elites about “settled science” and climate change “deniers.” The winds of change have set the “green” paradigm tottering.

What happened? Recently the *Wall Street Journal*’s Barton Swaim wrote, “The possibility that an entire academic discipline, climate science, could have gone badly amiss by groupthink and self-flattery wasn’t thought possible. In many quarters this orthodoxy still reigns unquestioned.” But this statement begs the question that the more accurate name for “climate change,” —Anthropogenic Catastrophic Global Warming (ACGW)— reflects true science, which has “gone wildly amiss” because of “groupthink and “self-flattery” and other human frailties.

In fact, the real problem is the claim that, as the honest name above says, CO2 emissions from humans will eventually heat the atmosphere to the point that it becomes uninhabitable. But this is not a scientific fact established by the empirically based scientific method, but a dicey hypothesis. We simply do not have a thorough enough understanding of the complexity of global climate over time and space. For example, we don’t know precisely how water vapor in the atmosphere, the biggest greenhouse gas, interacts with CO2, or how it contributes to cyclic cooling and warming.

These gaps in our models and computer simulations have been exposed by many physicists, to whom we should listen rather than “climate scientists.” For example, MIT professor of atmospheric science Richard Lindzen, and Princeton emeritus professor of physics William Happer, wrote in 2021, “We are both scientists who can attest that the research literature does not support the claim of a climate emergency. Nor will there be one. None of the lurid predictions — dangerously accelerating sea-

level rise, increasingly extreme weather, more deadly forest fires, unprecedented warming, etc. — are any more accurate than the fire-and-brimstone sermons used to stoke fanaticism in medieval crusaders.”

The weakness of the “science,” then, makes not just “groupthink” and “self-flattery” possible, but also politicization, the fear-mongering of apocalyptic scenarios, and old-fashioned greed fed by government subsidies, tax breaks, and grants. Worse are the mandates to eliminate carbon-based energy and replace it with intermittent energy from windmills and solar panels, even though the infrastructure needed to store and deliver electricity to cover down times, is many decades from becoming a reality. This is a huge problem for the warmists, since those “clean, renewable” but intermittent energy sources require back-up reserves of electricity generated by natural gas and coal.

So how did ACGW gain such traction given its lack of any scientific bona fides? As with any issue that relies on claims of science, the lack of familiarity with how science works has increased among our students over the postwar decades, who leave K-12 schooling with globally pathetic levels of proficiency in science and mathematics.

Take the popular claim that ACGW is “settled science.” Such a statement violates the protocols of the scientific method, which physicist Richard Feynman defines as “a kind of scientific integrity, a principle of scientific thought that corresponds to a kind of utter honesty—a kind of leaning over backwards. For example, if you’re doing an experiment, you should report everything that you think might make it invalid—not only what you think is right about it: other causes that could possibly explain your results; and things you thought of that you’ve eliminated by some other experiment, and how they worked—to make sure the other fellow can tell they have been eliminated.”

Or as the theorist of the scientific method Karl Popper put it more bluntly, “The method of science is the method of bold conjectures and ingenious and severe attempts to refute them.” Yet those doing just that regarding the claims of ACGW are met with epithets like “denier,” a sly slur borrowed from “holocaust denier,” and professional ostracizing and “cancellation.” There’s nothing “scientific” about such responses to challenges.

But it’s not just bad science or scientism that explains the “green” energy cult, itself an offshoot of romantic environmentalism. Ancient myths that have been part of Western culture for millennia also have influenced the way we think about the natural world and our place in it. One, the myth of the Golden Age, has been especially pervasive. This explanation of the human condition posits a simpler time in the past during which humans lived in harmony with nature, which like a benevolent mother

provided us all we need to survive and flourish. People lived communally, without law, class distinctions, rulers, technology, wealth, or private property, which are all the seeds of war, slavery, conquest, greed, and suffering.

Related to this myth is the Noble Savage—peoples over the millennia who seemed to live lives redolent of the Golden Age. This myth became popular in the West during the Age of Discovery, when Europeans encountered the simpler tribal peoples of the New World. The journals and other writings of early explorers like Christopher Columbus are filled with tropes and references to both the Golden Age and the Noble Savage.

Today these mythic motifs and ideals saturate modern environmentalism, including hypotheses like ACGW, and policies like the protection of animal species threatened with extinction, even at the expense of human well-being. Popular culture has been filled with these ideas, from Disney cartoons to movies that feature American Indians as Noble Savages and peaceful environmentalists, contrary to their actual history. Other exotic ethnicities likewise are labeled by this same Western cliché.

Moreover, as historian of ideas Isaiah Berlin writes, these mythic residues like the Noble Savage have political uses: “The notion that somewhere whether in a real or imagined society, man dwells in his natural state, is at the heart of primitivist theories; it is found in various guises in every anarchist and popramme of the last hundred years, and has deeply affected Marxism and the vast variety of youth movements with radical or revolutionary goals.”

Modern environmentalism, especially ACGW, is a good example of this malign dynamic. Al Gore has been one of the most famous activist lobbyists for the “green new deal” and its feckless assault on fossil fuels. In 1992 he published his influential bestseller *Earth in the Balance*. Like today’s “woke” left, Gore puts a “dysfunctional” Western civilization on trial for severing humanity’s ties to nature, while it indulges “wasteful consumption” to avoid the psychic pain, or alienation that follows losing our natural home. He continually decries our “technological hubris” and “technological alchemy” for their “increasingly aggressive encroachment into the natural world” and the resulting “froth and frenzy of industrial civilization.”

Whatever validity inheres in these complaints about “Satanic mills,” very few people, including Al Gore, would want to live in the world of our ancestors, a world of disease, scarcity, short life-spans, and famine. But should the “green” war on cheap, abundant carbon-based energy—which has created the modern civilization that has mitigated those evils—ultimately prevail, that dystopia could be our future.

Finally, the fundamental principle of our interactions with nature is simple: human well-being trumps nature's. That doesn't mean we can pollute and destroy resources. We avoid unnecessary waste or pollution because humanity needs the resources that provide sustenance and comfort to as many people as possible both now and in the future. But much of environmental policy—from willfully making energy less efficient and more expensive, to protecting nature and endangered species of no practical use to people—threatens our economies and our ability to flourish.

We recently saw a particularly graphic example of environmentalism damaging human well-being in California during the massive wildfires. Poor forest management allows fuel to accumulate, making the natural fires that have occurred for millennia more destructive. That's why American Indians long before Europeans arrived made sure forests didn't grow too thick and big. But our romantic idealization of nature, and concerns for endangered species disincline people to disturb and mar nature's pristine beauty with unnatural technologies.

More handwork of romantic environmentalism includes California's refusal to build more dams and reservoirs in order to protect a useless bait-fish alleged to be going extinct. So, millions of acre-feet are just dumped into the Pacific Ocean, instead of being collected and stored so people can grow food, and cities can provide water to drink and put out wildfires. In addition, California's governor recently destroyed four dams so the rivers could be restored. Meanwhile, the recent fires in Southern California destroyed as many as 12,000 homes and businesses while fire-fighters had to watch because fire hydrants were dry and the nearby reservoir was empty.

We no longer can afford our Disneyfied ideals about nature, or old myths about a fantasy world of a beneficent, maternal nature upon which our happiness and meaning depend. Nature is literally inhuman, a "fierce, eternal destructive," as Keats said, indifferent to whether we live or die. Our concerns should be with our fellow human beings and their well-being, which depends on a nature we alter and control with the products of our unnatural minds.

And energy is the key for our ability to survive and flourish rather than living in Hobbes' primitive world of those who came before us—"solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." Cheap, abundant, fossil fuels have made that improvement possible. We can no longer risk losing that better world because of "green" fantasies about impossible utopias and "harmony" with nature.

That feckless paradigm must be discarded, and human well-being restored as our purpose and guide.

Bruce S. Thornton is a Shillman Journalism Fellow at the David Horowitz Freedom Center, an emeritus professor of classics and humanities at California State University, Fresno, and a research fellow at the Hoover Institution. His latest book is Democracy's Dangers and Discontents: The Tyranny of the Majority from the Greeks to Obama. Front Page Magazine, February 5, 2025.



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916-319-2030 Sacramento
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assemblymember.addis@assembly.ca.gov

SLO County Supervisor Bruce Gibson
805-781-4338 District
bgibson@co.slo.ca.us

SLO County Supervisor Heather Moreno
805-781-4339 District
hmoreno@co.slo.ca.us

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805-781-5450 District
dortizlegg@co.slo.ca.us

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