



## Weekly Update

**November 17 – 24, 2025**

## What Happened to the Road Repair Funds?

A curious item is listed on the agenda for the November 18 Board of Supervisors. Item 2 on the agenda, apparently put on by Supervisor Paulding reads:

Resubmittal of a bid opening report for the Cecchetti Temporary Bridge (Project) (Contract No. 310014) to 1) award the base bid for the subject contract (Clerks File) to Souza Construction Company, Inc., the lowest responsive, responsible bidder, in the amount of \$475,998; 2) authorize the Director of Public Works or designee to approve construction contract change orders, if needed, in a cumulative amount not to exceed \$47,600 for a total contract value of up to \$523,598; 3) authorize a budget adjustment for FC 245 – Public Works - Roads (WBS 310014) by \$656,000, consisting of \$250,000 from FC 24503 (WBS 300711) and \$406,000 from FC 24503 (WBS 300691). (Public Works)

Regular readers will recall that we have covered this subject previously. Most recently, at Paulding's request, the Board considered appropriating a large sum of

unbudgeted funds to build a temporary crossing at the Cecchetti crossing. Since the funds were new expenditures, a 4/5 vote was required.

Supervisors Peschong and Moreno expressed concern that the temporary crossing would only be in place for as little as eight months over the two-year interim (before the permanent crossing will be built) and felt that the total cost was too high for such a project. The request for additional funding did not pass.

Now, it seems, Paulding has “found” extra money in a road fund and is seeking to use it for the Cecchetti project. Below is a graph illustrating the funding mechanism proposed by Paulding:

| <b>Project Cost Estimate</b><br>Cecchetti Temporary Bridge Project<br>WBS 310014  |                     |                       |                 |
|---|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Expenditures</b>   | <b>Total Budget</b> | <b>Total Estimate</b> | <b>Variance</b> |
| Cecchetti Temporary Bridge - Base Bid Only  | 0                   | 656,000               | 656,000         |
| <b>Total Expenditures</b>   | <b>0</b>            | <b>656,000</b>        | <b>656,000</b>  |
| <b>Funding Sources</b>  |                     |                       |                 |
|   |                     |                       |                 |
| <b>Additional<br/>Funding</b>   |                     |                       |                 |
| SB1090 Proceeds – Infrastructure Designation  | 0                   | 250,000               | 250,000         |
| (300711) Road Fund from (300691)  | 0                   | 406,000               | 406,000         |
| <b>Total Funding</b>  | <b>0</b>            | <b>656,000</b>        | <b>656,000</b>  |
| When the initial \$250,000 was approved in June 2025, a project number for the temporary bridge had not yet been established. Consequently, the funds were temporarily budgeted within the Cecchetti Permanent Bridge Repair Project (WBS 300711) as a placeholder. |                     |                       |                 |

Perhaps Paulding is to be congratulated for his dedication to constituent service. We wonder, however, whose constituents won’t be getting that \$406,000 worth of road repair? Further, with a projected \$11 million budget shortfall on the horizon, is this a wise investment? So much for all that business about the greater good....

## Airport Parking Joys Coming Soon

Speaking of budget items and 4/5<sup>th</sup> votes, Item 5 on the November 18 BoS agenda calls for a Request to 1) approve a capital improvement project for Fund Center (FC) 425 – Airports to design and construct Aero and Broad Parking Lots at SLO County Airport (SBP) (WBS 330055); and 2) authorize a corresponding budget adjustment in the amount of \$960,000 in capital outlay from Airport Enterprise Funds, by 4/5 vote.

We wonder if this might be a Paso-esque type of project where some bureaucrats think there is a fortune to be made by charging big bucks for parking – only ending up irritating everybody while actually loosing money.



Parking lots are surprisingly expensive to maintain. There is constant need for cleaning and repairs, along with utility bills, monitoring and security and of course the payment collection system, upkeep and management. Least we forget, there is also staff management and oversight – along with the benefits and pension that is included... Will there be a (expensive) shuttle?

These points are not an indictment of the project. It may be that the project will be very popular with travelers who will find it to be convenient and reasonable. Or it may be the side lot to push everybody to while a fancy multi story LAX style super expensive lot is constructed in the airport loop.

As the City of Paso Robles recently discovered, there are plenty of companies who will sell a municipality on a plan to charge parking fees with promises (fingers crossed) of new high revenue sources. In the end, those companies make big bucks on management fees, and the municipality ends up with little revenue but plenty of angry constituents. What is being done to avoid such a disaster here?

Everybody loves the San Luis Obispo airport for its small-town atmosphere and simplicity. The airport itself even makes the point in its own advertising. Big complicated and overly expensive parking structures don't exactly fit in that picture. And by the way, for social engineering planners, travelers do not take mass transit buses to the airport. Do not rationalize and dream of "incentivizing" travelers (with their small children, elderly passengers and far too much luggage) to take a bus to the airport in order to save money from exorbitant parking fees.

For a small county with a small airport and a big budget problem, we hope that the financial planning of airport parking is sound and wise. The travelling public needs to know the details of how parking will work, how much it will cost and how it will hopefully be a good deal for the County of San Luis Obispo.

## **Tax Worries Fixed**

With two sales tax measures being prepared for SLO County voters, inquiring minds are wondering what the passage of those taxes could mean for our total sales tax cost. It may not be well known, but California law caps local sales taxes at 2% above the base rate.

Our Base Rate is 7.250%, but Atascadero, Grover Beach, Morro Bay, Paso Robles, Pismo Beach and the city of San Luis Obispo all have additional sales tax measures that bring their rates up to 8.50% and Arroyo Grande is at 8.75%.

With San Luis Obispo County of Governments preparing a sales tax measure for the November Ballot that would focus on Transportation, and the SLO County Board of Supervisors attempting to put one on the June ballot for public safety, the total amount of sales tax that we could end up with might exceed the base plus 2% rule. We know that the goal of the public safety measure will be a full penny. We expect the transportation tax to be half-cent, but official language has yet to be released.

Concerned taxpayers may be wondering if we would be getting close, or perhaps exceeding the 2% limit should these taxes pass. Enter Senator John Laird, along with his colleagues Senator Monique Lemon and Assemblymember Dawn Addis. Together, they sponsored SB 333 to take the worry out of any such problem.

SB. 333 authorizes the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments, by an ordinance adopted by the council, to levy a tax pursuant to the Transactions and Use Tax Law at a rate not to exceed 1%, for general and special purposes, subject to voter approval on or after January 1, 2026. The bill would authorize the board to exceed the 2% limit described above to impose the retail transactions and use tax. It was signed into law last month.

So, fear not, should San Luis Obispo County voters choose to do so, sales taxes can go up, up up....

## Boo Hoo to Public Safety

Get ready for the hand wringers and pearl graspers. The San Luis Obispo Sheriff's office will be submitting its annual Military Equipment list to the BoS on Tuesday as required by state law.

On September 30, 2021, the Governor approved Assembly Bill 481 (AB 481). AB 481 requires law enforcement agencies to obtain approval from the applicable governing body (the Board of Supervisors) for the funding, acquisition, and use of military equipment. Under California Government Code section 7070, subsections (c)(1) through (c)(16), any defined items are categorized as military equipment. Additionally, AB 481 mandates approval for the continued use of military equipment acquired prior to January 1, 2022. The Board of Supervisors must annually review the ordinance to ensure compliance with specific standards. Moreover, law enforcement agencies must create a military equipment use policy, publish it on their website, and provide a copy to the Governor.



The items on the 42-page list range from drones, bullet proof vests and night vision goggles to specific forms of armament. They are all used to protect public safety and the safety of law enforcement personnel.

Nonetheless, the publication of the list seems to bring out plenty of folks worried that the equipment doesn't give criminals a fair chance. Many are especially concerned that the equipment will be used against migrants that are not legally in the United States.

Don't be surprised if Immigration and Customs Enforcement haters show up demanding that the Sheriff protect violent criminals who are not in our country legally. Moreover, do not expect ICE haters to even acknowledge the victims of such criminals or express any concern for their wellbeing.

Such drama means that Sheriff Parkinson needs to take the better part of a day to sit in the Board chambers until this item comes up. He then needs to present the same explanations and assurances that he does every year to set the record straight about the need for such equipment and its uses.

At least we can all sleep well knowing that our Sheriffs are well equipped, well trained and well managed so that should an unfortunate incident occur, there will be an appropriate response.

## **Potential for Another No-Growth Gripe Session**

With the final vote for the Dana Reserve slated for the November 18 BoS meeting, some are wondering if we will hear another stammering word salad gripe session from Supervisor Gibson as he attempts to bully his no growth attitude onto his colleagues.

Is it even remotely possible that Supervisor Paulding could recognize his earlier blunder and switch to a yes vote? He does like to be all things to all voters!

We don't really expect anything to change, but neither Supervisor likes to be on the losing side, so skullduggery shouldn't be surprising.

## **Save Prop 13**

As one of the most impactful and important ballot measures in California's history, Proposition 13 has not just saved taxpayers billions of dollars, it has saved countless homeowners from being forced to sell due to ever increasing tax bills.

Almost as important, Prop 13 has curtailed the tax and spend politicians who think government is the answer to everything and spending other people's money is a fine way to solve problems. These types make themselves look good by generously handing out taxpayer dollars and acting as if they are opening their own wallets.

It's no surprise that these wannabe Santa Clauses are doing everything they can to undo Prop 13. The measure has held up remarkably well, but fans of big government have chipped away at it with small but expensive revisions such as the simple majority vote requirements for local general tax increases.

The Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association has undertaken an effort to put a "Save Prop 13" measure on the ballot that will restore all of the taxpayer protections that the original Prop 13 measure encompassed. Petitions are now available and are simple to use. Simply go to [SaveProp13.com](http://SaveProp13.com) and download the convenient form, sign it and drop it in the mail.

# LOCAL TAXPAYER PROTECTION ACT TO \$AVE 13 PROP

The story of Prop 13 needs to be remembered. Howard Jarvis was a Los Angeles based apartment building owner and Paul Gann was a Sacramento car salesman. Both had fought for tax limitations individually before joining forces for the 1978 ballot measure that became Prop 13. It was truly a volunteer effort and ended up passing with a nearly 2-1 margin. Neither was a professional politician, a consultant or worked in a profession that made money from promoting the measure. Since its passage, Prop 13 has withstood numerous lawsuits and legislative attempts to overturn it, or aspects of it.



Howard Jarvis and Paul Gann are modern day heros.

We are very fortunate that Jarvis and Gann came along at the right time, with the right message to inspire the thousands of volunteers that went to work getting petitions signed. Homeowners can plan and budget for property taxes knowing they won't be displaced if some big spender forces a property tax increase. Renters can relax knowing their landlord's taxes won't be climbing beyond reason. All taxpayers can celebrate that their elected officials are constrained by common sense.

In these days of ballot measures being big business for campaign consultants, complete with millions of dollars for paid signature gathering, social media and deceptive advertising, it's nice to know that a true grassroots campaign changed everything for California. Save Prop 13 is attempting to do the same and will preserve all the aspects of Prop 13 for many future generations.

We encourage you to visit [SaveProp13.com](http://SaveProp13.com) and take a couple minutes to sign the petition and put it in the mail. Be sure to print out a couple extra petitions for friends and family.

## Last Week

### **Dana Reserve Survives Grumpy No-Growthers**

The Dana Reserve project received tentative approval from the San Luis Obispo Board of Supervisors in a 3-2 vote at the November 4 meeting. Final approval needs to take place at the November 18 meeting in order to comply with legal noticing requirements. The final vote, however, should be procedural in nature.

As predicted, Supervisor Gibson put on a song and dance routine. First, he continued his rant regarding the private settlement agreement. After exhausting that topic, he moved on to gripe about the loss of homes from the settlement and how that loss, replaced by some property set aside for environmental preserves is a bad deal for “the people”.

He voted against the previous plan last fall and now voted against the current plan because it isn’t as good as the previous one! He failed to clarify why he is so obsessed with the private settlement but had the audacity to say that he would entertain a “contribution of three million dollars” from the developer for low-income housing support.

Supervisor Paulding voiced concern over the proposed property set-aside for the Cuesta College campus, wanting to be sure that if Cuesta opted to locate elsewhere, that the property be made available for the YMCA or a similar community activity center. So, while opposing the project, he still wanted to put conditions on it. Paulding finished his comments by saying that the development is too large.

Public comments on the Dana Reserve project amounted to just three speakers who all spoke in favor. The main theme of the comments was that this project sets the tone for future projects around San Luis Obispo County – its passage or failure lets builders know whether it’s wise to invest in future projects, or to go elsewhere. Hopefully the message is positive.

## **Fiscal Forecast Not Trending Well**

County staff presented a report regarding the County’s Fiscal Year 2026-27 and Multi-Year financial forecast. The best way to describe the presentation is to say it was “guarded”.

The following were the general trends identified:

## FY 2026-27 General Fund Forecast

- Higher level of uncertainty
- Financial Rebalancing and Resilience Initiative (Year 2)
- Forecast continues to present a challenging picture
- Continued constrained revenue growth with expenditures outpacing revenues
- Future enactment of Board-adopted “Budget Goals and Policies” and “Budget Balancing Strategies and Approaches” will be essential in addressing expected budget gaps

The fourth point is the most concerning. Constrained revenue growth with expenditures outpacing revenues means we are spending more than we are taking in. Here is a look at our revenues:

### Revenue Assumptions

| Financing Source Category           | 2025-26 Budget  | 2026-27 Forecast | \$ Diff         | % Diff       |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| <b>Fund Balance Available (FBA)</b> | \$51.8M         | \$47.5M          | -\$4.3M         | -8.3%        |
| <b>Non-Departmental Revenue</b>     | \$296.9M        | \$304.5M         | \$7.6M          | 2.6%         |
| <b>Departmental Revenue</b>         | \$438.2M        | \$426.2M         | -\$12M          | -2.7%        |
| <i>Subtotal</i>                     | \$786.9M        | \$778.2M         | -\$8.7M         | -1.1%        |
| <b>Cancelled Reserves</b>           | \$30.2M         | \$1.1M           | -\$29.1M        | -96.4%       |
| <b>Total Financing Sources</b>      | <b>\$817.1M</b> | <b>\$779.3M</b>  | <b>-\$37.8M</b> | <b>-4.6%</b> |

On the expenditure side, forecast apparently used great restraint. Recall that the current budget, while cutting \$38 million, still grew by almost 9% over the previous fiscal year. Reductions in the scale reflected in the forecast illustrated below would call for some stark cuts:

## Expenditure Assumptions

| Expenditure Category         | 2025-26 Budget  | 2026-27 Forecast | \$ Diff         | % Diff       |
|------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| <b>Salaries and Benefits</b> | \$423.6M        | \$430.5M         | \$6.9M          | 1.6%         |
| <b>Non-Salaries</b>          | \$352.0M        | \$317.6M         | -\$34.4M        | -9.8%        |
| <b>Contingencies</b>         | \$37.3M         | \$37.4M          | \$0.07M         | 0.2%         |
| <b><i>Subtotal</i></b>       | <b>\$812.9M</b> | <b>\$785.5M</b>  | <b>-\$27.4M</b> | <b>-3.4%</b> |
| <b>New Reserves</b>          | \$4.1M          | \$1.3M           | -\$2.8M         | -68.0%       |
| <b>Total Expenditures</b>    | <b>\$817.1M</b> | <b>\$786.8M</b>  | <b>-\$30.3M</b> | <b>-3.7%</b> |

The final point of the summary listed above calls out the Board of Supervisors for guidance with priorities because staff know that cuts or adjustments will need to be made in order to deliver a balanced budget.

While it seems that Board Members are hopeful that improvements in Department of Health financial procedures (brought about through the KPMG audits) will improve revenues in that category, simple extrapolations would indicate that there are some difficult decisions for the Board of Supervisors as they consider where cuts may need to be made.

Here is the bottom line of the forecast (assuming everything stays on track):

### FY 2026-27 General Fund Budget Forecast

|                      |                                     |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| \$779,318,475        | Total financing sources (revenues)  |
| \$786,832,072        | Total financing uses (expenditures) |
| <b>(\$7,513,597)</b> | <b>Total forecast surplus/(gap)</b> |

**Forecasted Range**  
=   
**Gap of \$4-\$11 million**

While a gap of \$4 – 11 million doesn't seem alarming for a \$1 billion budget, it does indicate a trend line that has the potential to get worse and seems to call for budgetary constraint.

The entire report can be found at:

<https://agenda.slocounty.ca.gov/iip/sanluisobispo/agendaitem/details/19590>

## **Coastal Commission Pauses**

The November 6 California Coastal Commission hearing on the application for a 20-year extension for the operations of the Diablo Canyon Power Plant was a long and often redundant discussion involving nearly 100 comments from the public and elected officials. Staff recommendation was to grant the necessary permits with conditions put on the lands surrounding the plant for conservation and mitigation purposes. By the end of a long day, commissioners opted to delay their decision pending further negotiations about the land set-asides.

Public comments ranged from supporters pointing out the need for clean reliable power and the significant contribution to the local economy to opponents dragging out the tired old arguments of seismic concerns and spent fuel storage. Somewhere in the middle there were concerns about which lands would be subject to conservation and how that would happen.

One big question that never seemed to be fully addressed was that of the fate of Cherry Valley. A recent court decision has granted a lease holder about 150 years life to its lease, but many environmentalists didn't understand or care and demanded that that land be included in conservation plans.

State Senator John Laird, who has part of San Luis Obispo in his large district, submitted a six-page letter calling for a more stringent land conservation program.

His letter became a rallying point for many including State Assemblywoman Dawn Addis and County Supervisor Bruce Gibson.

Another convoluted issue was that of tribal land. The Yak Tityu Tityu yak Tiłhini Northern Chumash Tribe, also known as the YTT Northern Chumash Tribe, pushed hard for a return of much of the land surrounding the power plant. Other representatives from the Chumash tribe also made similar requests, but the two seemed to be in some sort of rivalry.

One common theme among those calling for greater levels of conservation was funding. Practically every advocate called for additional endowment funding for trail maintenance and habitat restoration. No mention was made of funding sources nor did anybody volunteer to do the fundraising.

Some of the more ambitious opponents called for mitigation in the form of artificial reefs, filters for sea water inlets and/or cooling towers.

There was a strong pattern of aspirational forecasts of wind and solar energy sources meeting and in some cases exceeding California's electrical power grid needs before 2030, but specifics were scarce.

For now, Coastal Commission staff are setting meetings with PG&E to ascertain whether adjustments can be made to the land conservation aspects of the agreement. We will provide details on the next steps and as always, will invite and encourage your participation.

## **Fee Increases Coming**

One significant source of income for county government is the charge of fees for services provided. County staff brought forward at the November 4 Board of Supervisors meeting a proposed update for fees charged for various county services. This is a response to suggestions that the county should endeavor to achieve full recovery of the costs of the various services that it offers.

To many, this begs the question of why we need to pay county taxes in the first place. It is a fair question to ask; if we are charged full cost for a service, where did the tax revenue go that used to cover those costs? It is also reasonable to point out that it isn't fair for all taxpayers to shoulder the cost for all services when they may only use a few.

These questions bring up the challenge of recovering extraordinary costs while still providing basic services. In its 74-page report, county staff provided detailed breakdowns of fees currently charged and the proposed changes.

Most fees naturally went up, but a few were decreased. Some of the standouts include EMT Certification going from \$31 to \$115 (70% increase), Tobacco Retail Licensing from \$1,268 to \$2,055 (62% increase) and a Gun Permit from \$100 to \$300 (300% increase).

Included in the proposal were various building fees, but they were set aside so that they could be reviewed after the KPMG audit of that department is completed.

A few examples of the fee schedules and proposals follow:

#### Changing Fees

Due to the use of the new fee model, the department is proposing to increase 148 out of the current 247 fees, with an average increase of 90.4%. The table below provides an overview of the fees increasing by fee grouping and the percentage increase for each fee grouping.

| Average Fee Increases by Fee Grouping                       |          |  |
|---|----------|--|
| Fee Grouping  | % Change | Explanation  |
| New Construction Plan Check and Inspection Fees             | 20.1%    | Increase in Salaries, CPI, and other related changes |
| Fixed Fees _ Mechanical                                     | 115.2%   |  |
| Fixed Fees _ Plumbing/Gas                                   | 69.1%    |  |
| Fixed Fees _ Electrical                                     | 96.6%    |  |
| Fixed Fees _ Grading  | 106.5%   |  |
| Fixed Fees _ Building Miscellaneous                         | 81.1%    |  |
| Fixed Fees _ Other Building (Fire-rated and Time extension) | 112.8%   |  |

| Significant Fee Increases                           |  |                    |                       |          |
|---|--|--------------------|-----------------------|----------|
| Fee Indicator No.                                   | Fee  | FY 25-26 Fee       | Proposed FY 26-27 Fee | % Change |
| <b>4000 - VETS/COMMUNITY BUILDINGS-Full Day Use</b> |  |                    |                       |          |
| 4002  | Main Hall and Right Wing                                 | \$1,105.00 per day | \$1,700.00 per day    | 54%      |
| 4003  | Main Hall and Right Wing, Non Profit/Governmental Entity | \$550.00 per day   | \$850.00 per day      | 55%      |
| <b>5000 - VETS/COMMUNITY BUILDINGS-Hourly Use</b>   |  |                    |                       |          |
| 5001  | Main Hall and Right Wing                                 | \$220.00 per hour  | \$340.00 per hour     | 55%      |
| 5002  | Main Hall and Right Wing, Non Profit/Governmental Entity | \$110.00 per hour  | \$170.00 per hour     | 55%      |

| Significant Fee Decreases |                                 |              |                       |          |  |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|----------|--|
| Fee Indicator No.         | Fee                             | FY 25-26 Fee | Proposed FY 26-27 Fee | % Change | Explanation  |
| 4006                      | Cannabis Tax Compliance Program | \$4,324      | \$2,304               | (47%)    | Fee is decreasing due to the decision to withdraw from the California Cannabis Authority (CCA). The withdrawal will be effective at the end of FY 25-26. |

| Significant Fee Increases         |  |              |                       |          |
|-----------------------------------|--|--------------|-----------------------|----------|
| Fee Indicator No.                 | Fee  | FY 25-26 Fee | Proposed FY 26-27 Fee | % Change |
| 11004                             | Livestock/Domestic Large (Horse/Cattle/Etc.)   | \$210.00     | \$240.00              | 14.3%    |
| <b>12000 - DISPOSAL FEE</b>       |  |              |                       |          |
| 12001                             | Under 10 pounds                                | \$79.00      | \$93.00               | 17.7%    |
| 12002                             | 10-50 pounds                                   | \$79.00      | \$93.00               | 17.7%    |
| 12003                             | 51-90 pounds (2 person) Modified Weight        | \$117.00     | \$134.00              | 14.5%    |
| 12004                             | 91-150 pounds (2 persons)                      | \$117.00     | \$134.00              | 14.5%    |
| <b>13000 - CITATION /FINES</b>    |  |              |                       |          |
| 13001                             | Potentially Dangerous Dog Fee                  | \$580.00     | \$695.00              | 19.8%    |
| 13002                             | Vicious Dog                                    | \$465.00     | \$560.00              | 20.4%    |
| 13003                             | PDD License Surcharge                          | \$150.00     | \$182.00              | 21.3%    |
| <b>14000 - NUISANCE ABATEMENT</b> |  |              |                       |          |
| 14001                             | Substantiated Nuisance Abatement Investigation | \$580.00     | \$700.00              | 20.7%    |
| <b>16000 - PERMITS</b>            |  |              |                       |          |
| 16001                             | Commercial Kennel & Pet Shop                   | \$290.00     | \$330.00              | 13.8%    |
| 16002                             | Hobby Breeder (for 2 litters per year)         | \$174.00     | \$212.00              | 21.8%    |
| 16007                             | Each additional litter                         | \$47.00      | \$58.00               | 23.4%    |
| 16008                             | Non-Commercial Multiple Animal Owned           | \$174.00     | \$212.00              | 21.8%    |
| <b>18000 - SERVICES OFFERED</b>   |  |              |                       |          |
| 18002                             | Officer Call Out- Non Emergency                | \$60.00      | \$73.00               | 21.7%    |

If you find yourself doing something that requires a fee paid to the county, be prepared to see an increase. For the entire report, go to:

<https://agenda.slocounty.ca.gov/iip/sanluisobispo/agendaitem/details/19593>

## Prop 50 Results

It seems a little introspection would be in order for those that opposed Proposition 50. That so many people supported the measure without consideration about

whether it was good policy tells us something about the electorate's state of mind. This is reinforced by election results from around the country.

Here are the unofficial results from San Luis Obispo County:

### **PROPOSITION 50 (Vote for 1)**

Precincts Reported: 93 of 93 (100.00%)

|             | Polling | Vote by Mail | Total  |                  |
|-------------|---------|--------------|--------|------------------|
| Times Cast  | 4,537   | 84,800       | 89,337 | / 182,200 49.03% |
| Undervotes  | 2       | 72           | 74     |                  |
| Overvotes   | 0       | 8            | 8      |                  |
| Candidate   | Polling | Vote by Mail | Total  |                  |
| <b>YES</b>  | 1,666   | 48,376       | 50,042 | 56.07%           |
| NO          | 2,869   | 36,344       | 39,213 | 43.93%           |
| Total Votes | 4,535   | 84,720       | 89,255 |                  |

Final certified results may take another week or two. For those still looking for a silver lining (or a silver bullet) read the article from Katy Grimes at the end of this newsletter.

**Emergent Trends  
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## **DOJ Sues California Over Prop 50's 'Power Grab'**

# CA Public Defenders use Alinsky Tactics in Attack on DA Dan Dow for X Posts

**COLAB In Depth**

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## Ringside: The Regulatory Burden that Prevents Abundance



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## DOJ Sues California Over Prop 50's 'Power Grab'

*The lawsuit cites the Equal Protection Clause: 'Our Constitution does not tolerate this racial gerrymander'*

By [Megan Barth](#), November 13, 2025

Today, the U.S. Department of Justice, led by Attorney General Pam Bondi, announced they have joined a lawsuit against California's redistricting ballot initiative, Proposition 50, which overwhelmingly passed in a special election last week. The lawsuit names Governor Gavin Newsom and Secretary of State Shirley Weber as defendants (see below).

“Race cannot be used as a proxy to advance political interests, but that is precisely what the California General Assembly did with Prop 50,” said Jesus A. Osete, Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights. “Californians were sold an illegal, racially gerrymandered map, but the U.S. Constitution prohibits its use in 2026 and beyond.”

In a social media post, AG Bondi states, “Newsom should be concerned about keeping Californians safe and shutting down Antifa violence, not rigging his state for political gain.”

In an emailed statement to the Associated Press, Bondi continued, ““California’s redistricting scheme is a brazen power grab that tramples on civil rights and mocks the democratic process. Governor Newsom’s attempt to entrench one-party rule and silence millions of Californians will not stand.””

Newsom spokesperson Brandon Richards responded in a statement, “These losers lost at the ballot box and soon they will also lose in court.”

The lawsuit cites, “Race cannot be used as a proxy to advance political interests, but that is precisely what the California General Assembly did with Proposition 50 — the recent ballot initiative that junked California’s pre-existing electoral map in favor of a rush-job rejiggering of California’s congressional district lines.”

The AP reports: “The Trump administration accuses California of racial gerrymandering in violation of the Constitution by using race as a factor to favor Hispanic voters with the new map. It asks a judge to prohibit California from using the new map in any future elections.”

This week, The Globe reported that the United States Supreme Court could rain on Newsom’s Prop 50 parade by finding that redistricting by race is unconstitutional, in that race-based redistricting could violate the Constitution’s Equal Protection Clause.

A case currently with the U.S. Supreme Court about racial gerrymandering could nullify California’s just-passed Proposition 50, the mid-decade redistricting scheme Governor Gavin Newsom and Democrats cooked up ahead of the 2026 midterm elections to secure more Democrat seats in Congress by redrawing district maps, or “gerrymandering” numerous California Republicans out of their congressional districts.

The Supreme Court will decide in Louisiana v. Callais whether the state’s intentional consideration of race to create these voting districts violates the Constitution’s Equal Protection Clause. The Supreme Court could also invalidate Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act and require race-neutral maps.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 is a landmark U.S. federal law that prohibits racial discrimination in voting, aiming to protect the voting rights of all citizens, particularly racial minorities.

The high court appears ready to strike down Louisiana's 2024 congressional map as unconstitutional racial gerrymandering – a violation of the 14th Amendment's equal protection clause.

Elections Law attorney Mark Meuser explained in detail that “The Supreme Court could soon change how every congressional map in America is drawn, including California:”

“*Callais v. Louisiana, a case that could reshape redistricting for decades.* Here's what's at stake: for years, federal courts have interpreted the Voting Rights Act (VRA) to require states to gerrymander congressional districts so minority groups are virtually guaranteed the ability to elect a representative of their same race. *Callais* challenges that approach, arguing that the current interpretation of the VRA violates the Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution because it forces states to make race the predominant factor in drawing district lines.

*Democratic-aligned advocacy groups have weaponized this reading of the VRA to carve out safe Democratic seats. Instead of drawing compact districts that follow cities, counties, and communities of interest, states are pressured to create bizarre, snake-like districts designed to hit racial targets. The result is a distorted Congress. In 2024, Donald Trump won the presidential election decisively, yet Republicans hold only a razor-thin margin in the House. That mismatch is not by chance. When districts are drawn to guarantee that one party always wins, it shifts power away from the people and toward special interests. It lets political insiders and activist groups pick the politicians who govern us, rather than letting voters choose their representatives.*

*If the Court agrees with *Callais*, the decision could dramatically limit the use of race in redistricting nationwide. That means the gerrymandered maps Gavin Newsom is pushing with Prop 50 could be ruled unconstitutional. This is one of the most important redistricting cases in decades. The outcome could restore fairness, compactness, and accountability to how congressional districts are drawn.“*

The DOJ's lawsuit uses the public statements made by California Democrats as the basis for their complaint:

In the press, California's legislators and governor sold a plan to promote the interests of Democrats in the upcoming midterm elections. But amongst themselves and on the debate floor, the focus was not partisanship, but race.

“[T]he first thing” that map drawer Paul Mitchell “did in drawing the new map”—the “number one thing that [he] first started thinking about”—was to create a new

“majority/minority Latino district.” And legislators focused—not on the purported vote dilution of Democrats elsewhere across the country—but on the supposed dilution of the voting power of racial groups in other states. They feared that a “Latino voice in Texas is worth one third of the representation as a white voice.” That Texas would “slid[e] back” to the days of “Black Codes and Jim Crow.” And that Texas legislators would “silence the voices of Latino voters.” Proposition 50 would serve as a “shield” against “racist maps,” they told each other, so that minorities in California could “stand up and be counted.” The end result is a map that manipulates district lines in the name of bolstering the voting power of Hispanic Californians because of their race.

Our Constitution does not tolerate this racial gerrymander.

Should the Supreme Court find that states have gerrymandered districts based on race, thereby violating the Equal Protection Clause, an estimated 30 states may be impacted and forced to redistrict ahead of the 2026 midterm elections, in a outcome that could lead to Republicans drawing 19 more seats and Democrats losing up to a dozen local seats, primarily in the South. A decision by the Supreme Court is expected as early as next Spring.

## **CA Public Defenders use Alinsky Tactics in Attack on DA Dan Dow for X Posts**

*‘False ad hominem accusations do not deserve a response’*

By Katy Grimes, November 13, 2025

San Luis Obispo District Attorney Dan Dow is under attack by the California Public Defenders Association for posting his concerns about Zohran Mamdani’s radical politics and recent election as New York Mayor.

The public defenders association fell just short of calling DA Dow a racist:

“The California Public Defenders Association (CPDA) condemns the racist, anti-Muslim statements made by San Luis Obispo County District Attorney and President of the California District Attorneys Association (CDAA) Dan Dow. Dow’s recent social-media posts linked the election of New York City’s first Muslim mayor to the September 11 terrorist attacks. This, along with his past statements and prosecutorial decisions, reflect a pattern of prejudice wholly incompatible with the duties of a prosecutor or any person acting in the criminal legal system.”

What is District Attorney Dow’s crime? He retweeted two X posts with images of 9-11 in New York City on Election Day, Nov. 4th, and commented on Zohran Momdani’s election.

One post is by End Wokeness:

And the other X post by Amy Meck:

“I shared the posts because, in my opinion, Mamdani is going to destroy New York being a self-proclaimed socialist,” Dow told the LA Times. “I support the Muslim community and have strong ties to our Muslim community in San Luis Obispo.” This is what the LA Times said:

On Wednesday, Dow retweeted a post on X from a popular right-wing account that appeared to show a snapshot moments after flames jutted from the World Trade Center’s South Tower, the second of the twin towers struck by a plane on Sept. 11, 2001.

This “popular right-wing account” End Wokeness is one I follow, along with 3.9 million other followers.

Dan Dow, who is an Army Veteran of 32 years and several overseas deployments, reminded the Globe this isn’t his first rodeo with vicious attacks by the public defenders. They did have their knives out for him during the Black Lives Matter protests, as well.

“I remember like it was yesterday our nation being attacked by Islamic extremists on 9/11/2001,” Dow wrote. “I love this country and I do not in any way share the same views as the ... socialist Zohran Mamdani.”

He said in his tweet: “I am very sad to see the Big Apple torn apart by electing an un-American socialist who wants to trample on the values and freedoms that millions of Americans have fought and died for.”

The San Luis Obispo Tribune first reported on Dow’s X posts in an editorial titled, “DA Dan Dow can’t serve justice while spreading anti-Muslim hate.” The online link said, Dan Dow’s reposts undermine trust in SLO justice.

When asked why he reposted the tweets, Dow said:

“I am a United States Army veteran who has served over 32 years and has had 4 tours overseas. I remember like it was yesterday our nation being attacked by Islamic extremists on 9/11/2001. I love this country and I do not in any way share the same views as the 33-year-old socialist Zohran Mandami. I am very sad to see the Big Apple torn apart by electing an un-American socialist who wants to trample on the values and freedoms that millions of Americans have fought and died for.” Notably, the End Wokeness post received 985.9K Views, and 7,200 retweets. Amy Mecks’ post received 7.1 million page views and 25,000 retweets.

“The California Public Defenders Association has issued the below statement, condemning the recent racist statements and actions from San Luis Obispo County District Attorney Dan Dow,” their email from Erin Williams (she/her/hers) at The Worker Agency read. The Worker Agency specializes in “narrative change,” “excesses of corporate power,” and “economic, climate and racial justice campaigns.”

This is the statement from the CPDA – notice the Saul Alinsky tactics:

### **California Public Defenders Association Condemns Racist Statements From San Luis Obispo County District Attorney Dan Dow**

SACRAMENTO – The California Public Defenders Association (CPDA) condemns the racist, anti-Muslim statements made by San Luis Obispo County District Attorney and President of the California District Attorneys Association (CDAA) Dan Dow. Dow’s recent social-media posts linked the election of New York City’s first Muslim mayor to the September 11 terrorist attacks. This, along with his past statements and prosecutorial decisions, reflect a pattern of prejudice wholly incompatible with the duties of a prosecutor or any person acting in the criminal legal system.

“District attorneys hold immense authority in people’s lives and in a community,” said Kate Chatfield, Executive Director of the California Public Defenders Association. “When that authority is exercised by someone who publicly expresses

racial, religious, or gender-based bias, it endangers both individual rights and the integrity of the justice system itself.”

California’s Racial Justice Act (Penal Code § 745) was enacted to ensure that no conviction, sentence, or prosecutorial decision is made “on the basis of race, ethnicity, or national origin.” The posts and comments of Dow demonstrate explicit bias, calling into question the validity of prosecutions by his office.

We note that no other District Attorney in California has publicly condemned these statements. Not one of Dow’s peers, or the other leaders of the California District Attorneys Association, has expressed concern about the messages he has sent to Muslim, LGBTQ+, or Black Californians.

Alinsky’s most notorious rule: “Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it, polarize it. Don’t try to attack abstract corporations or bureaucracies. Identify a responsible individual. Ignore attempts to shift or spread the blame.”

In an email and a call with the Globe, DA Dow said:

“The response of character assassination, to my repost of an X message about the danger from New York City electing a self-proclaimed socialist as mayor, confirms how right I was to express my concern. The radical ‘progressive’ left of our country will not tolerate truthful opposition to their agenda that is purposed to destroy the foundations of our country. Socialism produces the enslavement and oppression of its people. The United States of America was created by our Founders to secure, promote, and preserve Liberty and justice for all. Socialism is not compatible with a free society and if we go down that path, it will destroy our nation. November is the month we celebrate Veteran’s Day. Let us take this opportunity to remember that the freedom we have enjoyed for 250 years was not given to us for free. It cost the blood, sweat, tears and lives of countless patriots – of every race, color and creed – who served in our Armed Forces to ensure that we never lose our Liberty.

At this time of political chaos, we would be wise to be reminded of California Governor Ronald Reagan’s words from his Inaugural Address on January 5, 1967, ‘Perhaps you and I have lived too long with this miracle to properly be appreciative. Freedom is a fragile thing and it’s never more than one generation away from extinction. It is not ours by way of inheritance; it must be fought for and defended

constantly by each generation, for it comes only once to a people. And those in world history who have known freedom and then lost it have never known it again.' My office mission is to bring justice and safety to our community by aggressively and fairly prosecuting crime and protecting the rights of crime victims. Our motto is *Veritas et Justitia* (truth and justice). Everything we do is in support of that mission and guided by the motto. I will never apologize for stating the truth. False ad hominem accusations do not deserve a response."

The public defenders association has pushed their vicious attack of DA Dow statewide, and attacked his colleagues at the California District Attorneys Association.

## **Ringside: The Regulatory Burden that Prevents Abundance**

*'California is over-regulated, over-litigated, and over-taxed, so much so that many are quitting and moving out or simply not starting a new business'*

By [Edward Ring](#), November 13, 2025



The cost-of-living has become a national issue, a favored topic of partisan debate. The debate is governed by emotions, ideology, and widely divergent economic theories, probably in that order. Our contribution to this debate, drawing on all three of those influences, is simple: Abundance lowers prices, and deregulation enables abundance. Conversely, scarcity increases prices, and excessive regulations create scarcity.

To expand a bit further on those premises: regulations empower large corporations while destroying small emerging competitors who might drive prices down, and the most significant variables affecting the cost-of-living are the price and the availability of energy and water, because affordable access to those inputs drive the cost to produce almost everything else.

Having briefly summarized both our bias and our focus, maybe the best way to explore the timely issue of affordability would be to describe just how hard it has become to do business in California. And what better way to do this than to simply list the host of agencies that a small company has to deal with. The following lists were provided by a small business owner who prefers anonymity. Among other things, creating and distributing their product requires earth moving and trucking. Any one of these agencies can shut them down:

*Federal: Army Corps of Engineers, Dept. of Agriculture, Agency for Toxic Substances, Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of Safety & Environmental Enforcement, Census Bureau, Dept. of Labor, Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Mine Safety & Health, US Geological Survey, Mine Safety & Health, Occupational Safety & Health Administration, Occupational Employment Dept., Surface Mining & Reclamation Enforcement, Federal Dept. of Weights & Measures.*

It is reasonable to wonder why, with all this federal oversight, it is necessary for any additional regulatory oversight to be required by the state. Which is, by the way, the governing sentiment in dozens of state legislatures where it is much easier to do business, and much more affordable. But not in California.

Here's what our state adds: *Air Resources Board, Dept. of Drug & Alcohol Programs, Division of Apprenticeship Standards, CAL EPA, CALTRANS, Dept. of Conservation, Contractor's State License Board, State Comp Insurance Fund, DMV, EDD Industry Verification, Unemployment Insurance Program, California Dept. of Fish & Wildlife, Franchise Tax Board, Dept. of Food & Agriculture, California Highway Patrol, Dept. of Industrial Relations, Dept. of Labor Standards & Enforcement, Office of Mine Reclamation, Secretary of State, Disabled Veterans Business Program, Dept. of Toxic Substances Control, Dept. of Transportation, Dept. of Water Resources.*

And here, at least for this particular business, is what their county adds: *Agricultural Commission – Weights & Measures, Air Pollution Control District, Integrated Waste Management, Hazardous Waste Program, Stormwater Resources Board,*

*Building & Planning Dept., Public Works, and Regional Water Quality Control Board.*

In all, this company reports to 18 federal agencies, ten of which conduct regular inspections, and eight of which collect fees. This is dwarfed by the state and county burden, where they have to report to 33 state and county agencies, 21 of which conduct regular inspections, and 22 of which collect fees.

It isn't sufficient to merely point out how time-consuming and costly it must be to deal with 18 federal agencies, and then on top of that another 33 state and county agencies. But compliance itself requires far more than competence and good intentions. As the owner puts it, "Every government agency comes and goes with the complexity of its regulations and the ability of meeting those requirements. Quite frequently it is the competing regulations between Federal, State and County that are most difficult to decipher, which one do I follow, which one supersedes the other."

Which is to say, these myriad regulations aren't merely complicated and change frequently, but they are often in conflict with each other. And even this doesn't begin to describe how hard it has become to do business in California, because many regulations are grossly unreasonable. Again, from the owner:

"The cost of having to purchase new equipment or new motors to meet the State Air Resource Board is the most financially burdensome. I am being forced to replace motors with an annual usage of less than 200 hours. The same goes for the heavy equipment with low hours. Large companies can simply purchase new equipment in California and move the older equipment to Arizona, or any other State in the Union. Insurance is also hard to get in California. Often, I simply cannot get a competitive insurance rate, and on many occasions I can only get one quote as no other insurance company is quoting heavy construction in California. I am trying to compete with large corporations that are self-insured."

How the burden of compliance falls harder on small companies is another reason so many productive entrepreneurs avoid California. As the owner wrote, "The regulatory burden of having to start a new business in California is simply too much. A young person wanting to get into business gets hit hard with regulations that cannot be met by completing paperwork after the workday was done, as my parents' generation did. Regulations, compliance and the paperwork involved takes

up a major portion of the workday. I like to tell people thinking of starting a business that 50 percent of your work is going to be paperwork. California is over-regulated, over-litigated, and over-taxed, so much so that many are quitting and moving out or simply not starting a new business with new ideas and a fresh approach.”

There is growing bipartisan agreement that California needs to deregulate, but so far the politically viable solutions are limited. The consensus seems to be we can deregulate high-density housing but must retain urban service boundaries. Or that we should deregulate renewable energy yet continue to attack providers of conventional energy. As for water, are there even limited examples of deregulation?

Until meaningful deregulation is enacted in California, all the nascent talk among politicians in both parties of “abundance” is just posturing for cameras and pandering for votes. Against these headwinds, with no relief in sight, the bravery of California’s embattled yet enduring small businesses is heartrending.

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