



## **Weekly Update January 19 - 26, 2026**

### **Cordial Candidates Confer**

The first candidates' debate of the season took place on Thursday evening, January 15. Fourth district Incumbent Supervisor Jimmy Paulding debated challenger Adam Verdin in an on-line forum presented by the Tribune newspaper.

Hosted by two Tribune Editorial Board members, the discussion was civil and informative, with no clear winner. Paulding supporters will declare his performance best, while Verdin's supporters will feel fine that he did so well.

The dominant takeaway was that both candidates know the issues well.

Two standout differences came up. One regarding immigration, where Verdin said that he doesn't like what is going on but understands it. Paulding dragged out that tired old chant about people being grabbed off the streets by masked men in unmarked cars. Neither candidate mentioned the criminal aspect of so many of the

people being picked up by ICE, nor was there any acknowledgement of the victims left without justice when such criminals are protected by ICE protesters.



Another contrast came up with the subject of the Oceano Dunes. Neither candidate suggested closing the dunes to off-road vehicles, but Paulding was clear that he thought further restrictions and reductions in allowable activities should be made. Verdin was well informed on the economic impact and about the variety of activities that take place at the dunes and was clear about his support for ongoing activity at the current level.

When asked about changing his position on Diablo Canyon, Paulding appeared defensive while pointing out that he was opposed to the 20-year operating permit for the power plant only until the Nuclear Regulatory Commission issued its report declaring the facility safe to operate for that period of time. He was equally defensive about his stand on Proposition 13 when he explained that he supported one facet of legislation that made some sort of modification to the measure but was supportive of the Proposition as a whole. The explanation sounded a bit more equivocated than he probably intended.

The Tribune showed its colors with a question about gerrymandering in Texas and the terrible consequences that such redistricting was causing for California. The question then drifted into the last San Luis Obispo County redistricting process. Really, neither candidate handled the question as well as they could have. Paulding got points when mentioned his work to establish a citizen redistricting panel, but said he took no position on Proposition 50 – kind of a weird contradiction. Verdin

said he opposed Prop 50 but didn't point out how the measure did exactly the thing that Paulding was boasting about having eliminated – politicians drawing their own lines. Both went into detail about coastal communities such as Oceano and how they should be represented. The comments probably made sense to Oceano residents.

On the subject of campaign contributions, Paulding attempted to make a big deal about Verdin's acceptance of a maximum contribution from a developer. Paulding said that he is striving to take many small donations from lots of people rather than a few big donations. The inference was that Verdin would somehow be beholden to the donor, but Verdin had a good answer and pointed out that all donations were public record, that he had nothing to hide and that he is a pro-housing guy.

Paulding was obviously sensitive about the battery storage issue and took great care to assemble a timeline that attempted to explain differing understandings about when and how he engaged in helping the developers of the Caballero Battery Storage facility with permit assistance. It all sounded somewhat plausible until he tried to turn it around and accuse Verdin of misinformation.

Perhaps the starkest difference between the two candidates was the delivery style. Verdin's answers were short. He never seemed to take up his full allotment of time and even caught the moderators off guard a couple times when his answer was only a few seconds long. Paulding rarely finished before the time limit and included more details in his responses. We are not sure whether one approach was better than the other.

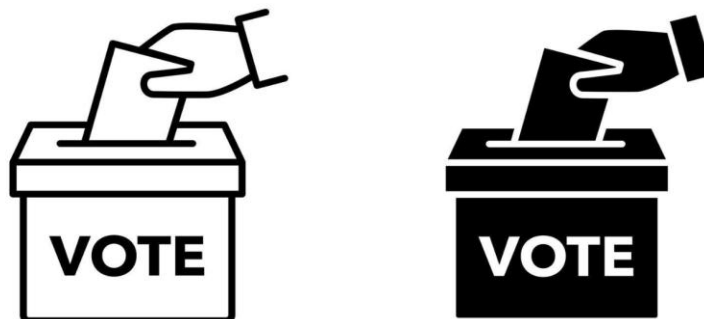
In the end, the forum established both candidates as well informed and prepared. With the event taking place so early in the race, it came off more as a discussion than a debate which was a good thing. It told us as much about who the candidates are as it did about their positions on the important issues. We thank both candidates for their participation and the Tribune for hosting. We hope to see more such events over the next few months, both for the 4<sup>th</sup> district as well as for the 2<sup>nd</sup> district and any other countywide races that develop.

## Ballot Integrity

We live in a time where many people who dislike the current administration feel perfectly content interfering with law enforcement and are quite comfortable disrespecting laws. It could make one wonder if someone is willing (proud?) to get arrested for other crimes, why not do a little voter fraud as well? Civil disobedience while sticking it to the bad guys...

But wait – according to mainstream media, no one ever abuses the electoral process! Ever!

Yet we have a system that is wide open, some could say inviting to fraud and misuse. As important as free elections are to our society, we do absolutely nothing to ensure that only those entitled are voting nor do we make sure they only vote once per election.



It's as if we work harder to protect the potential for fraud than we do to prevent it. But the concern about fraud continues to grow, and the more steadfast in support of the status quo people become, the more vocal the reformers get. A few steps are currently underway to address the issue.

In yet another story about Californians doing battle with the Trump administration, we learn recently that Federal Court Judge David O. Carter has dismissed a lawsuit brought by the Department of Justice requesting the ability to review California's voter rolls.

Carter is known as an opinionated and activist judge who has been removed from at least one case because his overreach jeopardized any future involvement in litigation on the issue at hand.

In this case, the DOJ, concerned about possible poor maintenance of our voter rolls, sought to verify their accuracy and current condition. We often hear concerns and allegations about voters who have passed away, but their name remains active on the voter list and a ballot is automatically mailed to their last known address. We hear about noncitizens being encouraged to register. We hear about multiple voters registered at the address of a studio or one bedroom apartment.

Carter expressed concern that any review of the voter rules could discourage potential registrants for fear of their information being used for other purposes.

On another front, the California Voter ID Initiative seems to be moving along well with some predicting that it will have enough signatures to qualify. We applaud the effort and hope for success but still see a major flaw in the voting system.

Anyone can fill out a voter registration postcard in private, send it in and automatically be set to cast a vote. Then, when election time rolls around, they fill out the ballot that was mailed to them -again in private - and simply drop it in the mail. No checks, no verification other than a possible cursory glance to see if the signature is similar. No one checks to see that the person registering is who they say they are. This leaves the system vulnerable to misuse and manipulation regardless of ID requirements at the polling place.

It is amazing how diligent people get in protecting the process from any sort of validation while labeling anybody who shows concern about protecting the vote from fraud as a kook or a conspiracy theorist. Fraud and abuse exist in almost every other aspect of our lives, so why do we open our voting process up for such easy manipulation? The real question is how can we get a reasonable discussion about ballot sanctity going without being dismissed as crazy?

The people studying the issue say the best answer is single day in-person paper balloting. A noble concept challenged by the required manpower and by a society that has become accustomed to accomplishing most of their needs with a couple clicks on a computer.

With fraud becoming such a prominent issue in our culture, verifications and protections are commonplace. When will we do something to protect and preserve our right to vote in a clean election?

## **Sales Tax Vote Workaround?**

There is talk around town that a group of individuals are interested in taking over the SLOCOG half cent sales tax campaign and submitting it as a “citizen initiative”. We do not have names, nor do we know if any organizations are involved. We don’t even know if it’s just a concept being floated around or if it’s a real effort. However, the grapevine is also buzzing with thoughts that the polling for the SLOCOG measure isn’t as strong as many supporters would hope.

The motivation appears to be a loophole in the law that would allow a “citizen initiative” tax measure to pass with a simple majority vote rather than the 2/3 vote required for a “referred” initiative. This loophole is somewhat vague, but several local tax measures have been approved around the state with this process.

The simple majority possibility was created by a measure in San Francisco that passed with 61%. It was challenged, approved by the lower court and appealed to the California Supreme Court who declined to hear the appeal leaving the lower court approval in place.

Other “citizen initiatives” have since passed in Fresno, Oakland and Los Angeles with majorities ranging from 51-58% and have all been upheld.

That a special tax can be imposed by a simple majority vote due to court actions may seem outrageous to supporters of Proposition 13. Frequent readers may recall

an article that we did a few months ago about the Save Prop 13 effort by the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association. This situation is precisely why HJTA is undertaking the effort. Our courts have allowed too many loopholes to form resulting in too many taxpayer protections being lost to litigators.



In the meantime, we are curious about who would provide the financial support required to qualify a citizen initiative in San Luis Obispo County. As we understand it, the number of signatures required amount to 10% of the total county wide votes cast for Governor in the last election. This means that about 12,100 valid signatures would need to be filed by late July. To get that number of valid signatures, it's likely that nearly 20,000 signatures would be needed. The short time frame for gathering those signatures makes it more difficult and expensive. We don't know exactly how much signatures are costing these days, but \$5.00 a signature might be in the ballpark.

At that rate, the signatures would cost \$100,000. There would also be legal services, management costs and additional expenses that could easily double that figure.

This raises many questions. Where will such financial support come from? Would SLOCOG still move forward with their version? What would be the result if two measures were on the ballot? What would it say about the measure if the citizen effort failed to get enough signatures to qualify?

We are hearing varying comments about the idea of a sales tax for transportation. On the support side, many point out the fact that counties with such a sales tax, called "self-help" counties, qualify for hundreds of millions of dollars of state grant money that we cannot access because we don't have such a tax. Many also point

out that our roads are only getting worse and the longer we wait, the more expensive it will be to repair or build them. On the negative side, we hear people saying that if the county doesn't prioritize transportation projects, why should taxpayers be asked to pay extra? We also hear that despite built in safeguards; many don't trust that the funds will go to the right projects. The recent Cecchetti Bridge kerfuffle is commonly cited as an example.

In terms of SLOCOG's next steps, we understand that they will present at the Jan, 27 Board of Supervisors meeting and take any feedback to their board of Directors Feb. 4 meeting, along with reactions from the seven cities that they have presented to in the last month. That board will then incorporate what suggestions they can in a semi-final version for one more round of presentations before making the formal referral with final language.

It all sounds a bit daunting and we wonder if it's being overthought, or if there are too many cooks in the kitchen. Mostly, though, we wonder if SLO County voters have the appetite for additional taxes.

## **Annual COLAB Dinner – March 26**

Our Annual COLAB dinner is a big deal. Details are falling into place for the March 26 event at the Madonna Inn Expo Center. The delicious dinner menu is lined up. The hosted bar will have your favorite cocktails. Fine wine will be on your table. Some really great auction items have already been procured. The guests will include practically every community leader you would want to see.





We are looking forward to announcing the keynote speaker. It is someone we think that you will enjoy immensely.

The most important item on our list, though, is you. Tickets will go on sale soon, and we hope that you will get yours early.

## Important Dates

The next Board of Supervisors meeting takes place on Tuesday, January 27. As a reminder, this will be a long and intense meeting. Two big items on the agenda are the TRUTH Forum presented by the Sheriff and the SLOCOG presentation on the Sales Tax Proposal.

We expect a long and emotional public comment period packed full of ICE protesters. It would be great to see some balance of speakers with supporters of the Sheriff there to convey their confidence in the department.

Also, a forum on Fraud prevention is being put on by the District Attorney's office on January 30, also in the Board of Supervisors chambers. We hope to see you at both important events.

FREE 2-Hour Seminars  
Learn How to **Identify, Prevent, & Respond** to Fraud

**FRAUD SCHEMES**  
Prevention & Awareness Forums  
**January 30, 2026**  
Katcho Achadjian Government Center  
Board of Supervisors Chambers  
1055 Monterey Street | San Luis Obispo, CA 93408

**Three Separate Presentations Offered**

Session #1 <u>Open to the Public</u>	Session #2 <u>Real Estate Professionals</u>	Session #3 <u>Small Business Owners</u>
9:00 am - 11:00 am Exposure to current fraud schemes aimed at local residents	12:00 pm - 2:00 pm Identifying fraud schemes targeting real estate sales professionals	3:00 pm - 5:00 pm Learn how to protect your small business assets

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## **Last Week**

The first San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors meeting of 2026 was mercifully brief. Supervisor Paulding was elected Chair at the start and had a quick agenda to navigate. Because almost all agenda items were on the Consent Calendar, the business portion of the meeting was done in less than an hour.



**San Luis Obispo Board of Supervisors Chair Jimmy Paulding**

Then came the Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda. Attendees and the Board were treated to almost 45 minutes of Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) bashing.

A few speakers lectured Board Members about not listening, and many complained about the 3-minute time limit along with the restriction against applauding.

This wasn't exactly a "baptism by fire" for Paulding chairing his first meeting, but it was tense at times. Actually, Paulding held up well and responded appropriately when the ICE haters got out of hand.

The main theme seemed to be a request for the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors to step up and tell the Federal Government how to conduct immigration enforcement. This ranged from enforcement free zones to a citizen oversight committee directing the sheriff in his dealings with the immigrant communities.

Or maybe the theme was simply to ignore the authority of the Federal Government all together. It wasn't quite clear.

Their concerns about due process are well intended, but their anecdotes and emotional stories never seem to include the crimes committed by many of the migrant targets, nor do they acknowledge the victims of those crimes. It appears that they would prefer no ICE activity at all but might tolerate it if ICE made an appointment with anyone, they have a Federal Warrant for, and sat down for a quiet discussion before carrying out an arrest.

This line of 10 or 15 speakers was a small preview of the presentations that will be made at the January 27 Board of Supervisors meeting. Sheriff Parkinson and his staff will be conducting a "TRUTH" meeting, as required by law, where he will report all interactions with ICE over the last two years. This will take place as an agenda item for the Board of Supervisors meeting.

## **Get out and Do Something Important!**

If you have an opinion about ICE activity or about our Sheriff's Department, please plan to attend the January 27 San Luis County Board of Supervisors meeting beginning at 9:00 AM in the Board Chambers at the County Building in downtown San Luis Obispo. Bring a friend. It will be a long meeting in a packed room so get there early and be prepared to stay for a while.

A majority of the speakers during Public Comment will be highly critical of the Sheriff and of the Trump Administration. The local media will love it and highlight the negative commentary. It would be important to have a balance from those who appreciate what is going on. A very brief comment from common sense people would be highly appreciated.

To make a comment, find the yellow slip at the back of the chambers, fill it out and submit it in the box near the front of the chambers. When your name is called, you have up to three minutes to express your feelings at the podium. (The time limit may be shortened if the list is too long)

**BOARD APPEARANCE REQUEST FORM**  
**The San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors Welcomes Your Comments**

In the interest of time, a MAXIMUM of three (3) minutes will be reserved for your presentation.  
Please submit this completed form to the Clerk of the Board prior to the item.

It is requested that you remove your hat in the Board Chambers. Please remember to turn off your cell phone while in the Board Chambers.

Public Comment remarks should be directed to the Chairperson and the Board as a whole and not to any individual thereof. No person will be permitted to make slanderous, profane or personal remarks against any individual.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ (PLEASE PRINT)  
AGENDA ITEM: \_\_\_\_\_  
ISSUE: \_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

--- OPTIONAL ---  
May we have your phone number and/or email in case we have follow up questions? \_\_\_\_\_ (PHONE / EMAIL)

**\*\*Please note: Any materials presented during public comment must be given to the Clerk of the Board and will become part of the official record. This is public information and may be disclosed upon request.**

**The yellow Board Appearance Request Form is easy and quick.**

You are free (and welcome) to keep it very short. A simple “I support the Sheriff and have faith that he is doing the best job possible” or “I appreciate the difficult job that law enforcement is tasked with and support the way that they are carrying it out” would be fine. No need to educate anyone on immigration law (or lawlessness) and no reason to pick on any group of people – just keep it positive and supportive. This will drive the liberals nuts. They are hoping to aggravate conservatives into saying something that will appear unreasonable in the press.

## **An ICE Age of Protest**

We don't usually cover national issues in this publication, but with so much turmoil across our country regarding ICE, it's worth noting some points never discussed in the general media.

The first is that what we are seeing is largely a result of the Biden Administration's non-policy regarding immigration. Their essentially open border practices were an invitation for violent and often organized criminals to come from around the world to conduct their activities here.

Such criminals were able to just walk in unchecked, posing as immigrants looking for a better life. But after being welcomed in, they created havoc. Organized gangs flourished and violent crime incidents increased. At the same time, the cadre of George Soros supported District Attorneys who were practicing their get out of jail free approach to prosecution.

Our "Border Czar" couldn't be bothered to visit the border and the people charged with keeping our borders safe and controlling immigration were told to look the other way. Some were villainized with untrue allegations of mistreatment. People who spoke out on the issue were dismissed as racists. The Woke worked very hard at tampering down any detailed examination of what was really going on. Biden and Harris kept insisting that the border was secure and immigration was under control despite enormous largely ignored evidence to the contrary.

So, frustration among the general public grew. Victims and their families were ignored, treated as statistics – wrong place wrong time - oops, sorry about that now be quiet and go away.

As overbearing as the Woke became, real data was still available. The following statistics track crime numbers over an 8-year period by the US Customs and Border Patrol. The report can be found at:

[Criminal Alien Statistics Fiscal Year 2024 | U.S. Customs and Border Protection](#)

The following are the numbers that they have tracked:



**U.S. Customs and  
Border Protection**

## Arrests of Individuals with Criminal Convictions

The term “criminal aliens” refers to individuals who have been convicted of one or more crimes, whether in the United States or abroad, prior to interdiction by the U.S. Border Patrol; it does not include convictions for conduct that is not deemed criminal by the United States. Arrests of criminal aliens are a subset of total apprehensions by U.S. Border Patrol.

Arrest Type	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24YTD
U.S. Border Patrol Criminal Alien Arrests	8,531	6,698	4,269	2,438	10,763	12,028	15,267	17,048

## Total Criminal Convictions by Type

This table organizes nationwide convictions of criminal aliens by type of criminal conduct. Because some criminal aliens may be convicted of multiple criminal offenses, total convictions listed below exceed the total arrests noted in the table above.

Conviction Type	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24YTD
Assault, Battery, Domestic Violence	692	524	299	208	1,178	1,142	1,254	1,084
Burglary, Robbery, Larceny, Theft, Fraud	595	347	184	143	825	896	864	697
Driving Under the Influence	1,596	1,113	614	364	1,629	1,614	2,493	2,844
Homicide, Manslaughter	3	3	2	3	60	62	29	29
Illegal Drug Possession, Trafficking	1,249	871	449	386	2,138	2,239	2,055	1,566
Illegal Entry, Re-Entry	4,502	3,920	2,663	1,261	6,160	6,797	8,790	10,935
Illegal Weapons Possession, Transport, Trafficking	173	106	66	49	336	309	307	232
Sexual Offenses	137	80	58	156	488	365	284	221
Other <sup>1</sup>	1,851	1,364	814	580	2,691	2,891	3,286	3,276

While crime statistics were going up, budgets were becoming a huge challenge. Every governmental agency, from school boards to the Federal Government, struggled to provide services in an atmosphere of high inflation and growing demand. The influx of millions of migrants – many with needs - just seemed to antagonize overburdened budgets and frustrated the public.

While this is an oversimplification of a very complex issue, it illustrates how the Biden-Harris administration created the expectation among the migrant population and sympathizers that illegal immigration had somehow become quasi legal, and no repercussions should be anticipated.

Now we are dealing with mobs of people believing that ICE enforcement is somehow illegal. Worse, many believe that it's noble to break the law while interfering with ICE enforcement activities.

Thank you, Joe Biden and Kamala Harris.

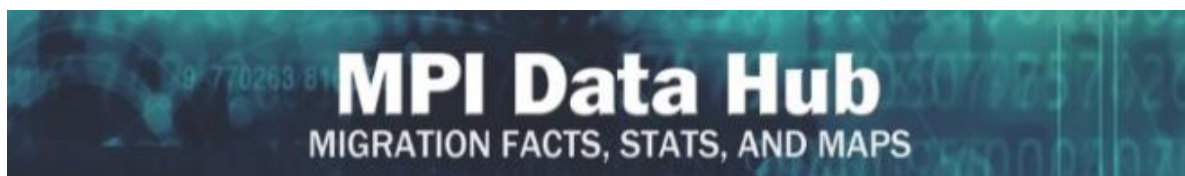
The second factor that is left out of current coverage of immigration issues is that there is an element of our population that enjoys robust protest. In recent times, we can recall national movements such as the 1999 World Trade Organization protests, the 2011 Occupy Movement, the 2013 Black Lives Matter protests. But we have a long history of "unrest" starting with the Boston Tea Party, Women's Suffrage, Civil Rights, the Vietnam War, etc.

One difference between the more current protests and the historic ones is the use of professional agitators. From professional firms like Crowds on Demand to militant agitators, there is an unorganic element to many contemporary protests. There are organizers that know how to turn up the heat and get people to push the limit. And they know how to get attention.

Our media loves protests, even more so when violence and rioting are included. Nothing makes for better click bait than an act of violence. Does the media's appetite for extremism drive people to more violence? Does the news cover what is happening or contribute to it?

Whatever the answer, our society is becoming more accustomed to overreaching protest which just adds to the polarization of the issue at hand. Currently, any discussion about common sense solutions to immigration is rudely dismissed. It's either let them all in or ship them all out. Full amnesty or full expulsion.

The last point rarely covered is how our legal immigration program works. The following list of annual new Legal Permanent Residents per fiscal year from 2010 to 2023 is from the Migration Policy Institute ( <https://www.migrationpolicy.org> ):



2010	1,042,630
2011	1,062,040
2012	1,031,630
2013	990,550
2014	1,016,520
2015	1,051,030
2016	1,183,510
2017	1,127,170
2018	1,096,610
2019	1,031,770
2020	707,360
2021	740,000
2022	1,018,350
2023	1,172,910

The following graph illustrates immigration patterns by presidential administration over the last 25 years using Congressional Budget Office figures:



# U.S. Immigration by Status

## NET IMMIGRATION 2001-2024

The Congressional Budget Office categorizes U.S. immigrants into three main categories:

### LPR+

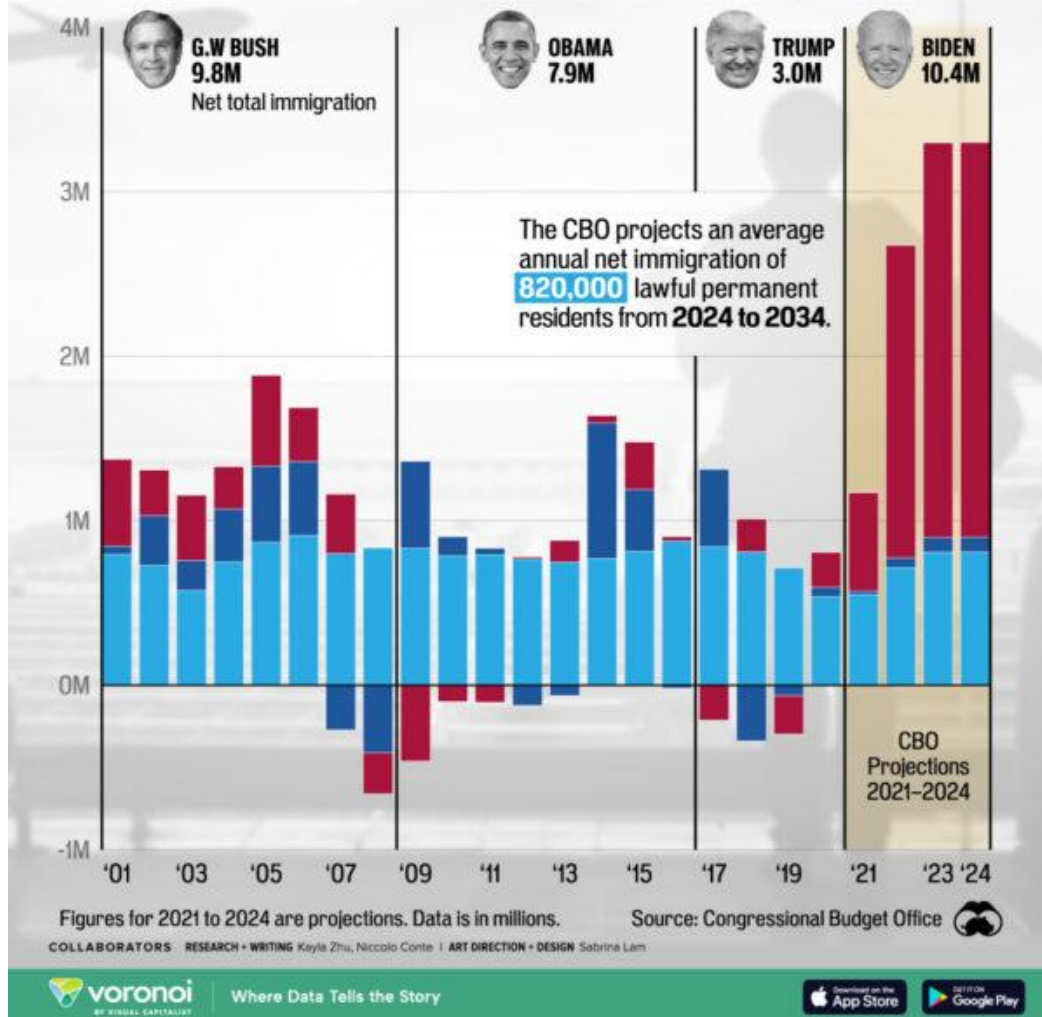
Lawful permanent residents and those eligible to apply for LPR status.

### INA NONIMMIGRANT

Those admitted temporarily for specific purposes, e.g. temporary workers, students, and foreign officials.

### OTHER FOREIGN NATIONAL

Those without legal permanent status, e.g. entered illegally or overstayed temporary visas.



What both of these graphics illustrate is that the United States has a fully functioning legal pathway for immigrants to come to this country. Critics will claim that the process is too complicated and lengthy, and that it is biased against poor people. However, the latest figures available from the US Department of Homeland Security illustrate how our refugee program is functioning. Their figures are as follows:

The United States admitted 100,060 refugees in 2024:

- 37,050 as principal refugees<sup>[3]</sup>
- 63,000 as derivative refugees<sup>[4]</sup>

The leading countries of nationality for refugees admitted during this period were:

- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Afghanistan
- Venezuela
- Syria

One interesting source for data about immigration is the US Citizenship and Immigration Service: [Naturalization Statistics | USCIS](#)



**U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services**

According to their database, 818,500 new citizens were sworn in in 2024. The top five countries of origin for our new citizens sworn in in 2024 are illustrated here:



What does all of this information mean? It's clear that we have a national movement brought on by the outrageously poor management of our immigration system by the Biden Harris administration, yet nobody is holding them accountable.

The issue is exasperated by unrealistic expectations created by such mismanagement and is spinning out of control driven by misinformation. Our media appears to be fanning the flames and ignoring the criminal aspect of some migrants as well as ignoring their victims. The media ignores the fact that we have a legal system for those wishing to be part of our American society using legal methods.

## Verdin vs. Paulding Forum

We generally have little interest in the left leaning and embarrassingly biased San Luis Obispo Tribune “newspaper”, but we will be watching on January 15 as their Editorial Board presents a forum with candidates for the 4<sup>th</sup> Supervisorial District – incumbent Jimmy Paulding and challenger Adam Verdin.

This live on-line debate will be the first forum in what is shaping up to be a highly competitive race. We hope that both candidates are treated fairly and are given the opportunity to express themselves thoroughly. We also hope that each candidate is held accountable for nonsensical or insufficient answers.

According to The Tribune, viewers can watch live on Thursday, Jan. 15, at 5 p.m. To RSVP and receive reminders about the event copy the following and paste it in your search window: [Meet the candidates for SLO County District 4 supervisor Tickets, Thu, Jan 15, 2026 at 5:00 PM | Eventbrite](#). There is no cost to watch online.

The link can also be found on the Tribune's website. They invite you to submit questions in advance. **PLEASE ENGAGE AND ASK THE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS.** The right questions will draw a clear distinction between the two candidates.

This might be a great excuse to have a few people over for a watch party.

The banner features a dark blue background with white text. At the top, the title 'Meet the candidates for District 4 supervisor' is written in a large, bold, sans-serif font. Below the title, the event details '5 p.m. • Jan. 15 • Live at SanLuisObispo.com' and 'Streaming on Facebook, YouTube and Instagram' are listed in a smaller font. The bottom half of the banner displays four circular headshots of the participants, arranged in a 2x2 grid. To the right of each headshot is the person's name and title in white text.

Name	Title
Stephanie Finucane	Opinion Editor, The SLO Tribune
Joe Tarica	Editor, The SLO Tribune
Jimmy Paulding	District 4 Supervisor
Adam Verdin	Business owner

Whether you are already an adamant supporter, or if you have never met the candidates, this will be a great kick off to the highest visibility race of the season for SLO County. We urge you to watch.

## **The COLAB Annual Dinner will take place on March 26 at the Madonna Inn**

We will have an exciting speaker (to be announced shortly), great food, an open bar and an opportunity to mix and mingle with practically all of the movers and shakers in our community. Mark your calendars so that you don't miss one of the biggest events of the year. We hope to see you there.

### **Emergent Trends Page 23**

## **LA County Supervisors Approve 'ICE-Free Zones' on County Property, Defying Federal Enforcement**

## **Bye Bye Billionaires: Gavin Newsom's California Exodus**

### **COLAB In Depth Page 28**

## **The Dominators of our Prosperity – Energy and Water**

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## Bye Bye Billionaires: Gavin Newsom's California Exodus

*The total wealth that has left California is now \$1T – we had \$2T of billionaire wealth just a few weeks ago*

By Katy Grimes, January 12, 2026

California billionaires are leaving the state in record numbers, and taking their billions with them. According to one billionaire, more than \$1 Trillion has already left.

Governor Gavin Newsom is pushing a **retroactive billionaire tax** targeting the roughly 220 billionaires residing in California in 2025, ignoring that these individuals are the most financially mobile and can live anywhere. Expecting them to remain in the state as if they will happily and willingly hand over even more of their wealth surely must be facetious.

SEIU is sponsoring the “**2026 Billionaires Tax Act.**” The measure will impose a one-time 5% tax on individual wealth exceeding \$1 billion, Marc Joffe wrote for the Globe.

One-time tax... right.

Chamath Palihapitiya posted to X yesterday:

Unfortunate update as of today: More calls from friends. The total wealth that has left California is now \$1T. We had \$2T of billionaire wealth just a few weeks ago. Now, 50% of that wealth has left – taking their income tax revenue, sales tax revenue, real estate tax revenue and all their staffs (and their salaries and income taxes) with them. In other words, by starting this ill conceived attempt at an asset tax, the California budget deficit will explode. And we still don't know if the tax will even make the ballot. California billionaires were reliable tax payers – 13.3% every year. They were the sheep you could shear forever. Now California will lose this revenue source FOREVER. Unless this ballot initiative is pulled, we will not stop the billionaire exodus. With no rich people left in California, the middle class will have to foot the bill.

Palihapitiya is a Canadian-American venture capitalist and entrepreneur, and one of the All-In podcasters with Jason Calacanis, David Sacks, and David



Friedberg. Palihapitiya founded and leads Social Capital, which he launched in 2011 after serving as a senior executive at Facebook from 2007 to 2011. He followed up the X post with:

State income taxes on the middle class would need to go to 20% to make up for no/minimal income tax revenue from Billionaires. That's the math. If folks want this, then so be it.

and:

The proposed tax starts with billionaires but is allowed to apply to others as the legislature sees fit. So eventually "rich" will include everyone.

When some attempted to mock the billionaire entrepreneur, Palihapitiya explained more deeply about the exodus and what it means for everyone else in California: It's about 40 people/families. I suspect more will move in Q1. Whatever you believe about wealth and inequality, the math ain't mathin' anymore because of this exodus. However much in "extra" taxes they were targeting with this ballot initiative isn't valid anymore and they need to update their assumptions before continuing to push for it. And anyone that signs the petition should understand this new math. Current course and speed will create a huge new budget deficit that was entirely avoidable. Sadly and historically, taxes always have a way of coming for the middle class because, collectively, they are the largest source of potential tax revenue for the government.

The damage California Governor Gavin Newsom has inflicted on the state is irreparable at this point, and should be a disqualifier for any future political aspirations. Many believe he should be prosecuted, but it won't be by California's Attorney General, who has been on Newsom's side, hurting the people of the state the way tin pot dictators do. A "tin-pot dictator" refers to an autocratic ruler who lacks political credibility and often has delusions of grandeur, typically characterized by their insignificant or petty nature... thy name be Gavin Newsom.

Attorney General Rob Bonta, who wants to run for re-election and keep his job, issued a ludicrous official title and summary for the **California Billionaire Tax Act** – and you won't be disappointed in the laughable language attempting to hide the corruption:



IMPOSES ONE-TIME TAX ON CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS AND TRUSTS.  
INITIATIVE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT AND STATUTE.

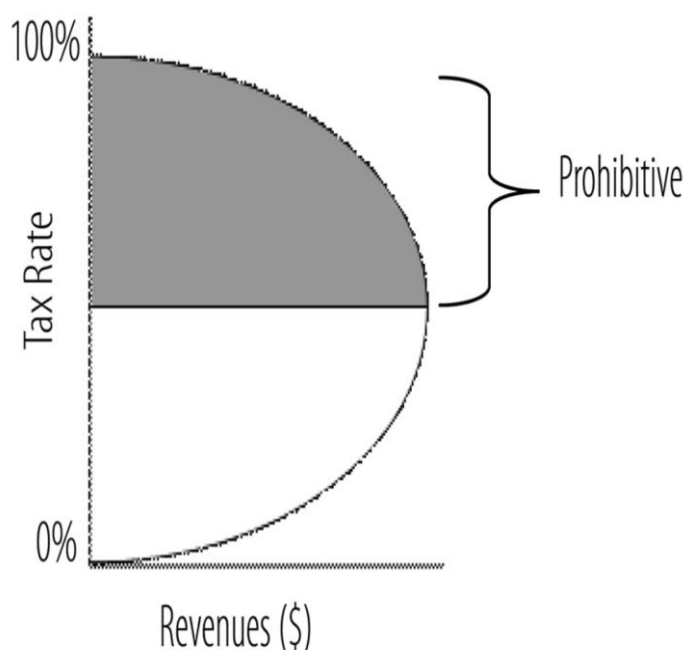
As the Globe recently reported, those “certain individuals and trusts” are the state’s billionaires, also known as employers, job creators, innovators and entrepreneurs. The 2026 Billionaire Tax Act is expected to generate \$100 billion in revenue... plenty to cover Governor Gavin Newsom’s current \$18 billion budget deficit and anticipated deficits of more than \$30 billion... and the \$76 billion in fraud recently exposed by the State Auditor...

With \$100 billion coming in to the state’s coffers, does anyone really believe this is a “one-time tax” on billionaires.

As we reported, entrepreneur David Sacks weighed in explaining, “To be clear, the Billionaire Tax Act in California is not (just) an unrealized gains tax. It’s a 5% across-the-board confiscation of net worth. It applies even if one has already realized and paid taxes on the entire amount.”

This is double taxation and unconstitutional, and California’s billionaires know it.

Newsom might find that lowering tax rates results in higher rather than lower tax revenues, as the Laffer Curve has shown time and time again.



Art Laffer, who created the Laffer curve, an economic hypothesis that shows the relationship between tax rates and the amount of tax revenue collected by governments, left California more than two decades ago for Tennessee. The Laffer curve shows that there is a certain point between 0% and 100% where tax revenues are maximized. He saw it coming and tried to warn us.

## **LA County Supervisors Approve ‘ICE-Free Zones’ on County Property, Defying Federal Enforcement**

*This latest escalation fits squarely into California’s long pattern of obstructing federal immigration law*

By Megan Barth, January 14, 2026

In yet another display of California’s entrenched sanctuary policies and the Democrats’ penchant to engage in political theater, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved a motion on Tuesday to designate all county-owned and controlled properties as “ICE-Free Zones.” With this approval, LA County’s supervisors appear more interested in political posturing than in upholding the law or protecting American citizens.

Sponsored by Supervisors Lindsey Horvath and Hilda Solis, the directive instructs county attorneys to draft an ordinance within 30 days that would prohibit U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) from using these public spaces as staging areas, processing locations, or operational bases for civil immigration enforcement without explicit authorization. The proposal also calls for posting prominent signage declaring these zones off-limits to federal agents and potentially establishing reporting protocols for county employees who witness unauthorized activity.

Horvath framed the move as necessary to prevent county property from becoming “a staging ground for violence caused by the Trump administration,” while Solis emphasized protecting individuals from warrantless “harassment.” This comes amid ongoing federal immigration operations under President Trump’s renewed

enforcement priorities, including reported incidents in Southern California communities that have heightened tensions.

Violent rioters and graffiti plagues Los Angeles (Photo: DHS.gov)

This latest escalation fits squarely into California's long pattern of obstructing federal immigration law. Los Angeles County has operated as a de facto sanctuary jurisdiction for years, refusing routine cooperation with ICE and prioritizing the protection of illegal immigrants over public safety and the rule of law. Such policies have contributed to repeated crises, including the violent riots that erupted across Los Angeles in June 2025 following large-scale ICE actions targeting criminal illegal aliens.

At the time, the Globe **reported**:

Los Angeles Police reported 338–370 arrests for crimes including vandalism, looting, and attempted murder with Molotov cocktails. The Department of Homeland Security documented over 1,000 rioters attacking a federal building, while few news outlets apart from Fox News broadcast images and live video of burning vehicles and shattered storefronts across downtown Los Angeles, Paramount, and Compton.

During the violent riots, **California Democrats** downplayed the violence against federal law enforcement. Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass claimed “no violence or vandalism” occurred, a statement that crumbles under scrutiny. Yet Bass herself imposed a citywide curfew on June 10, 2025, to address widespread looting and vandalism, contradicting her own rhetoric.

Violent riots against ICE, June 2025 (Photo credit: @bgonthescene)

From an honest perspective, these denials and the related actions of the LA County Board of Supervisors, could be interpreted as a deliberate attempt to mislead the public to protect sanctuary city policies, deflect blame from local and state governance, and oppose President Trump's immigration enforcement. These are not mere missteps, but calculated lies to rewrite reality.

First Assistant U.S. Attorney Bill Essayli swiftly condemned the supervisors' action on X, delivering a stern warning that underscores the federal government's role in enforcing federal immigration law. In his post, Essayli stated: “Stop misleading the public. Local jurisdictions cannot target and exclude federal agents from public spaces. Your county counsel should have explained that to you. We will use any public spaces necessary to enforce federal law. Anyone who attempts to impede our

agents will be arrested and charged, including county employees. We have already charged more than 100 individuals for similar conduct.”

The reality is that local governments lack the power to bar federal agents from public spaces or interfere with lawful enforcement operations. The Department of Justice has previously pressed California sheriffs—including LA County’s Robert Luna—for information on noncitizen inmates, only to face resistance in sanctuary strongholds. Violating federal law risks not only legal challenges but also jeopardizes billions in federal funding that California counties heavily rely on.

On Wednesday, President Trump affirmed on Truth Social that sanctuary jurisdictions will be stripped of federal funding

“EFFECTIVE FEBRUARY FIRST, NO MORE PAYMENTS WILL BE MADE BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO STATES FOR THEIR CORRUPT CRIMINAL PROTECTION CENTERS KNOWN AS SANCTUARY CITIES,” the president wrote.

The LA County Board of Supervisors’ proposal echoes similar measures in other liberal jurisdictions, like Chicago’s ICE-free declarations and the City of Los Angeles’ own strengthened protocols last year barring ICE from city property. Yet, these symbolic gestures do little to address root issues and instead signal to illegal immigrants that California remains a haven, potentially encouraging further illegal crossings and straining local resources.

## **The Dominators of our Prosperity – Energy and Water**

**EDWARD RING**

Director, Water and Energy Policy



Californians for Energy and Water Abundance

January 14, 2026

The premise of this newsletter is that abundant and affordable energy and water are prerequisites to solving every other challenge standing in the way of lowering California's overall cost-of-living.

Not only because the cost for energy and water directly impacts the cost to build homes, or pay household utility bills, or engage in industrial production, transportation, agriculture, and everything else, but because if the regulatory environment that has created shortages and high prices for energy and water in California was reduced, it could come with regulatory relief in every other sector. For example, a broad restructuring and streamlining of CEQA and CESA enforcement would also help homebuilders, public utilities, manufacturers, and farmers – and everyone else – to get permits, expand, comply with mandates, and complete required reporting to the many agencies overseeing their operations.

With this as an underlying premise, our mission has been to provide numbers to help measure our progress or our folly. Our reporting on projects and policies examines how much will be produced, or how much will be saved, while adding one important additional bit of information. We strive to consistently view any specific project and policy as a numerator, as only one half of a defining fraction. How much energy a project will deliver must be evaluated against how much total energy we need. How much water a project will deliver must be evaluated against how much water we need.

So as we begin a new year, let's recap how much energy and water Californians need per year. These are the denominators of our prosperity.

With respect to energy, we have to recognize two macro units of measurement. TBTUs, which stands for "trillion British Thermal Units," and the somewhat more familiar GWh, which stands for gigawatt-hours. California's annual raw energy inputs, including those used to generate electricity imported from other states, are roughly 7,500 TBTUs, which in electrical terms is roughly equal to 2.2 million GWh. California's energy services that come out the other end are roughly 2,500 TBTUs, which in electrical terms is roughly 750,000 GWh. The rest is lost as "waste energy." The fact that we still waste about two-thirds of our raw energy

makes a compelling case for innovation to improve efficiency. This is one of the main arguments for electrification, because for most applications, definitely including EVs, electricity is more efficient than combustibles.

To elaborate just a bit on this endless topic, the California Energy Commission reported in-state electricity production at 216,181 GWh in 2024. California also imported 62,157 GWh from other states. Data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration (only current through 2022) indicates 52 percent of California's energy inputs used to produce electricity were lost as waste heat – mostly due to the inefficiency of our aging fleet of natural gas powered generating plants which still generate 40 percent of the electricity produced in-state. These plants are inefficient because they are only allowed to operate as backup to solar and wind, and because no investment has gone into upgrades because the state is trying to eliminate them. With modern upgrades, natural gas powerplants could achieve efficiencies of up to 70 percent.

To summarize energy use, and these numbers are rounded for clarity:

Total energy inputs into California (including to generate imported electricity) is about 7,500 TBTUs, which is equal to 2.2 million GWh.

Estimated total energy inputs to generate annual electricity consumption in the state is 2,000 TBTUs, not quite 600,000 GWh, but the net amount of electricity generated was just under 280,000 GWh in 2024, approximately a 50 percent efficiency.

This leaves a remaining energy input of about 5,500 TBTUs, equal to 1.6 million GWh (but *not* converted into electricity). Only about 1,500 TBTUs, an efficiency of just under 30 percent, was realized as actual energy services. The rest was waste energy, mostly lost to heat and friction.

These 5,500 TBTUs of combustible fuel inputs were burned to deliver direct space heating and water heating, cooking, industrial processes, and more than half, nearly 3,000 TBTUs, were used for transportation. And of the estimated 3,000 TBTU input

to power our vehicles and airplanes, only a bit more than 600 TBTUs, or 20 percent of inputs, were converted into engine horsepower and aircraft thrust.

When it comes to water, the macro unit of measurement is MAF, which is the abbreviation for million acre feet. Californians get anywhere between 100 and 300 MAF/year in rainfall, with the average a bit under 200 MAF/year. We divert between 7-8 MAF/year for cities, and around 30 MAF/year for farms. Diversions for the environment vary between 30-60 MAF depending on if it is a wet year or a dry year.

These denominators that define water use in California put a 2025 press release from Governor Newsom into a revealing context. It proclaimed a Water Board investment of \$2 billion into water supply projects will “add about 2.9 billion gallons annually to the state’s water supplies.” That sounds like a lot, but it isn’t. 2.9 billion gallons is equal to 8,900 acre feet. Which is to say this investment of \$2 billion contributed another two one-hundredths-of-one-percent to our 38 million acre foot annual statewide demand for water. Put another way, projects at this level of cost-effectiveness would require \$225 billion to produce another million acre feet of water per year.

Denominators matter. When you see a project or policy that claims to increase our statewide supply of energy or water, carefully note how much energy or water it’s going to deliver, and compare that to how much energy or water we actually use.

There are proposals that have extraordinary potential to cost-effectively deliver more energy and water to Californians. We will cover them repeatedly as 2026 progresses, and welcome new ideas and news of new innovations. And there are proposals – perhaps Newsom’s \$2 billion investment is one of them – that offer qualitative benefits that go beyond the quantity of water they’ll produce.

Quality matters. Sometimes we have to spend much more than the most practical option in order to provide access to all communities, and in order to protect the environment. That’s ok. But we should always evaluate and prioritize the most practical ways to produce as much energy and as much water as we possibly can.

We must expand the denominators. More energy. More water. Only with that mindset will we ensure resilience and sustainability in all things, and further our goals of equity and upward mobility, abundance, affordability, and prosperity.

Edward Ring is the Director of Water and Energy Policy at the California Policy Center, which he co-founded in 2013. Ring is the author of *Fixing California: Abundance, Pragmatism, Optimism* (2021) and *The Abundance Choice: Our Fight for More Water in California* (2022).

###





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**AUTHOR & NATIONALLY  
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APPEARED AT A COLAB ANNUAL  
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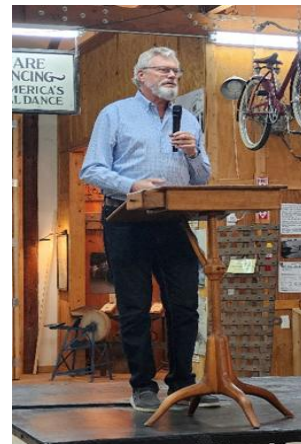
**NATIONAL RADIO AND TV  
COMMENTATOR HUGH HEWITT AT  
COLAB DINNER**



**EXPERTS DISCUSS ENERGY  
ISSUES AT THE  
FALL FORUM**



**BOARD MEMBER BEN HIGGINS  
WITH SUPERVISORS ARNOLD  
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**KEEP HANDY \* CONTACT YOUR ELECTEDS**

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**Elected Officials Representing San Luis Obispo County**

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**916-445-2841 Sacramento**  
<https://www.gov.ca.gov/contact/>

**Senator Alex Padilla**  
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<https://www.padilla.senate.gov/contact/>

**Senator Adam Schiff**  
**202-224-3841 DC**  
<https://www.schiff.senate.gov/contact/>

**Representative Salud Carbal**  
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**805-546-6348 District**  
[carbajal.house.gov/contact](http://carbajal.house.gov/contact)

**Representative Jimmy Panetta**  
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**831-424-2229 District**  
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