



COLAB SAN LUIS OBISPO WEEK OF JUNE 4 - 10, 2017

THIS WEEK

**FUNDING FOR LOS OSOS AND NIPOMO SGMA PLANS
– WILL GIBSON DEMAND A NEW TAX? –
(ESPECIALLY IN HIS OWN DISTRICT)**

**COUNTY SPENDS MILLIONS ON ABOUT 1,225
HOMELESS PEOPLE
(WILL HILL STILL ASSERT IT'S NOT ENOUGH?)**

SLOCOG WALLEWS IN NEW SB-1 GAS TAX MONEY

**SLOCOG GROWTH FORECAST DEBUNKS LACK OF
RESOURCES FOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT**

LAST WEEK

NO SUPERVISORS MEETING LAST WEEK

SLO COLAB IN DEPTH

(SEE PAGE 13)

**IN CALIFORNIA, AFTER THE STATE ROBS THE
TAXPAYERS OF THEIR LAST PENNIES,
*APPARENTLY MORE MONEY JUST FALLS OUT OF THE
SKY.***

By Samuel Chi

THE REASON WHY CALIFORNIA TAXES CONTINUE TO SKYROCKET

By Jon Coupal and Vince Fong

THIS WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

Board of Supervisors Meeting of Tuesday, June 6, 2017 (Scheduled)

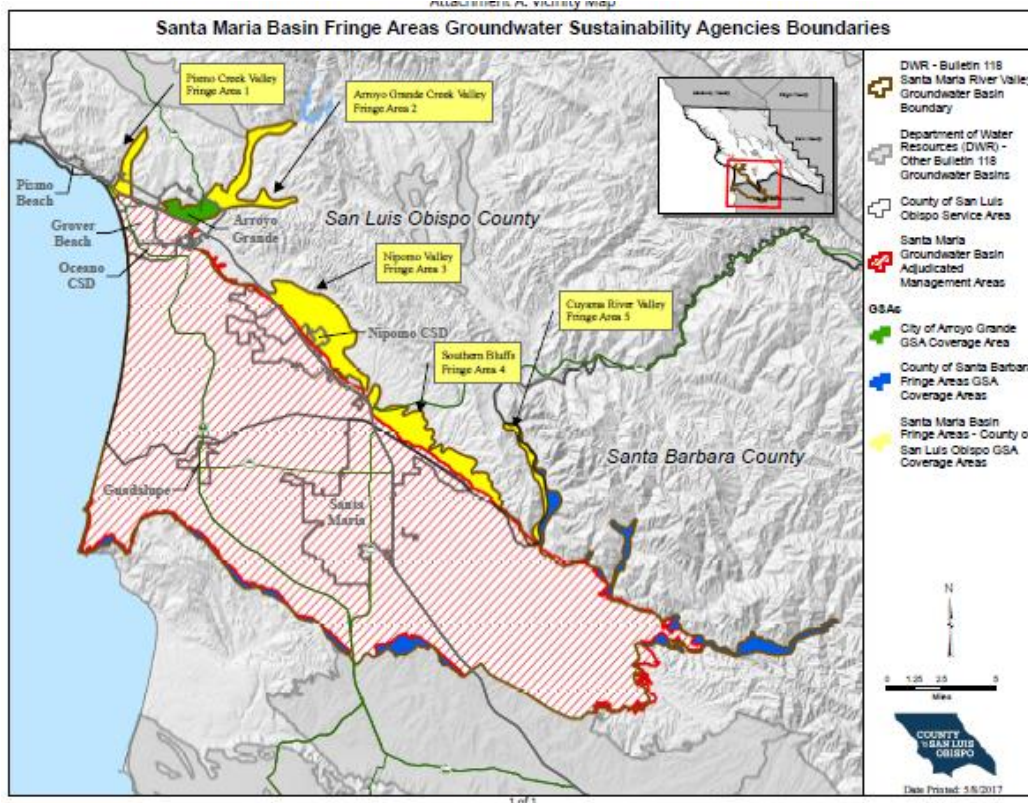
Item 15 - Request to approve a professional consultant services contract with Cleath-Harris Geologists, Inc. in the amount of \$170,000 for Los Osos Groundwater Basic hydrologic services and authorize a budget adjustment in the amount of \$175,780 from Flood Control District Reserves to Fund Center 450 - Professional Services account, by 4/5 vote. The crux issue here is should the County use Flood/Water District funds paid by everyone to pay for work related to planning required as part of the State Groundwater Management Act of 2014 (SGMA). In this case there are some fringe areas of the Los Osos Ground Water Basin, which were not included in the adjudication agreement under which most of that basin is managed, and is thus deemed to be in compliance with SGMA. The County is considering disputing the boundaries set by the State Department of Water Resources decades ago and will assert that the subject areas are not actually within the basin. A sophisticated hydrogeological study is necessary to prove the case.

Supervisor Gibson (supported by Hill) has asserted that the County District should not pay the costs of SGMA planning. Instead, the overlies of the areas in question should pay by means of assessments. Gibson is attempting to rally the 7 city councils in the County to oppose proposed budget appropriations contained in the FY 2017-18 Budget for SGMA planning purposes in various basins. The Los Osos Basin is in his supervisorial district. He will no doubt defend this expenditure on the grounds that if the State ultimately concurs with the County's boundary amendment request, money will be saved.

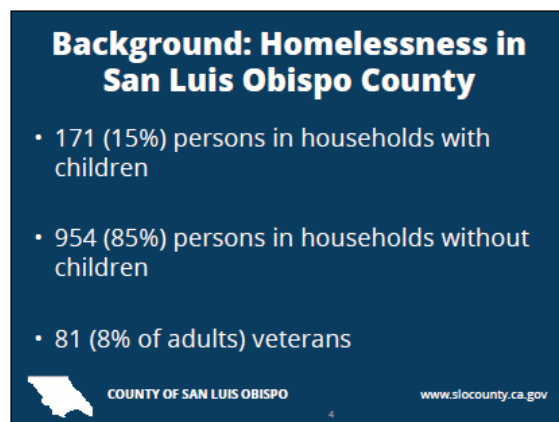
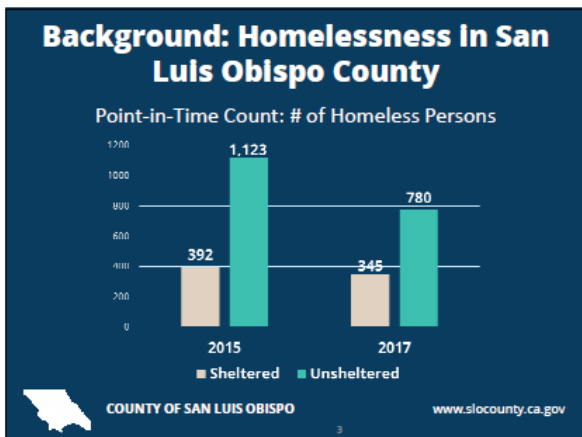
Isn't it all SGMA planning? The hypocrisy is shameless.

Item 16 - Request to approve a professional consultant services contract with GSI Water Solutions, Inc., in an amount not to exceed \$250,992, to conduct a groundwater basin characterization and boundary modification study in portions of the Santa Maria Groundwater Basin within the County of San Luis Obispo; and authorize a budget adjustment in the amount of \$259,526 from Flood Control District Reserves to Fund Center 450 – Professional Services account, by 4/5 vote. Districts 3 and 4. The same issues involved in Item 15 above pertain here. The staff hopes that certain fringe areas in the Santa

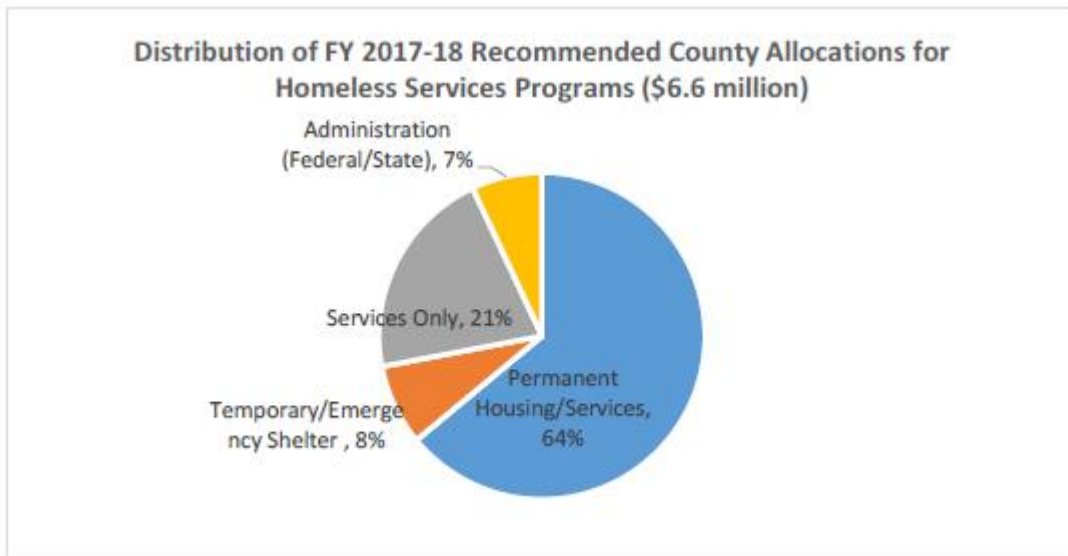
Maria Basin (portions in SLO County), which is deemed to be managed for SGMA purposes, can be proven to not be actually in the basin. In this case, if the hydrogeological study shows that any of them are actually in the basin, the data will be used to develop the required groundwater sustainability plan (GSP). Will Gibson assert in this case that County Flood Control/Water District funds should not be used?



Item 23 - Submittal of an update on homeless programs, services, and funding and provide staff direction as necessary. This is a general report which describes the County’s services to homeless persons. It contains statistical information about the number and status of homeless people. The good news is that the numbers seem to be decreasing. The report also describes the expenditures on the homeless and the funding sources.



As best as can be determined per the pie chart below, the County spends a direct \$6.6 million on the programs. This would be an average of \$5,333 per individual.



Millions more are spent in the form of health care, behavioral health care, income maintenance, and social services, but data does not exist on how much of these County expenditures (largely Federally and State funded) actually go to the homeless. The total expenditures for these services are summarized in the table below. Thus for example, if the homeless received \$10 million out of the costs listed below, they would be receiving a total of \$16.6 million (when the direct known expenditures are added in). This would then amount to about \$14,755 per person per year.


Note that this figure does not contain direct expenditures from the Federal and State governments that some of these individuals are receiving, such as Social Security, Supplemental Social Security, disability payments, veterans' benefits, or Medicare payments to providers on their behalf.

FY 2017-18 Proposed Budget for Other County Related Services

- Other County programs available to homeless individuals (not exclusively):

Health Agency: \$55.3 million

Social Services: \$87.3 million

 COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO www.slocounty.ca.gov

All this information was generated at the request of the Board majority because Supervisor Hill keeps whining that the County isn't doing enough for the homeless. He continuously postures that adding funding for road maintenance or state mandated groundwater management erodes the funding for the homeless.

It would seem not to be the case.

As we have noted in the past, homelessness is a state of not having permanent shelter. With only about 1200 homeless individuals in the whole county, you would think the county could solve this problem by approving homeless vehicle parks, "little houses", small manufactured home parks, and so forth. Of course this would be too dangerous politically because the facilities would have to be located somewhere that would offend neighbors, environmentalists, and various elites.

Moreover, if the problem were actually solved, there would be no need for a variety of homeless serving agencies, County jobs, and endless handwringing. In effect, solving the problem would interfere with an industry.



Matters after 1:30 PM

Item 27 - Request to approve the El Chorro Regional Park (including Dairy Creek Golf Course) Programming Plan and for direction regarding the use of supplemental water to irrigate the golf course. There are 3 parts to the seemingly intractable problem comprising the overall future of the park, of which the golf issue is one.

1. Golf:

The County-owned Dairy Creek Golf Course has been losing money because of lack of play. During the drought, water supplies that the course had been receiving were reallocated, and the course turned brown and play declined further. A key decision facing the Board is whether it will allow the Parks Department to contract for additional water. Some of the choices involve

whether to close the golf course, run it as a smaller 9-hole operation, or run it as full 18-hole course.

Separately from the water issue, capital improvements have been recommended and are needed to make the course work better and help to increase play.

Looming over the decisions is the fact that the County issued debt to build the course and there are @ \$5 million in debt service payments remaining, no matter what happens.

The staff and a golf course management consulting firm have laid out different scenarios essentially based on the amount of water available and how the use of that water makes the course more or less marketable to the customers. There is also some analysis of how the recommended capital improvements would impact play, and hence revenues. Notwithstanding some analysis, there does not seem to be a real proforma (say 20 years) containing all the sources of revenue and all the expenditures (debt, operating expenses, long term maintenance, etc.) which would be escalated over the 20-year period. Thus it cannot be determined if there is break even or profit point or when those would take place. There must be someone on the County staff who is adept at Excel spread sheets and who could take a quick run at this.

An immediate decision by the Board is important, so they might tell staff to run it for this year but do the proforma and come back in 2 weeks.

2. The SLO Botanic Garden:

The Botanic Garden, a tenant of the County, is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit public benefit institution that propagates plants and runs educational programs. It appears to be quite popular and is considered a valuable community asset. This notwithstanding, it has budget issues and has proposed adding a zip line attraction to enhance its revenues. Several zip line companies are ready to bid. The Board indicated that it was not ready to authorize a zip line or any other new attractions in the park until a comprehensive park strategic plan has been completed.

3. The Long Range Park Plan:

Now there is a plan and it presents a variety of alternative future attractions that could be incorporated into the park, as well as lists of future capital improvements necessary to make them happen and make the park more attractive and functional. There is some financial analysis, but again no real 20-year rigorous pro forma laying out the expected revenues and expenditures escalated over the long haul. This limitation makes it hard for management and the Board of Supervisors to make decisions from a business standpoint.

The Board, elected policy leaders, may properly consider the desires of various client groups – i.e. golfers, the Botanic Garden, soft ball leagues, Frisbee leagues, campers, nature groups, or whatever. Nevertheless they should have rigorous analysis to inform their ultimate choices.

What about out of the box attractions like a water park, music venue (not necessarily rock and roll or Katy Perry, but something like a summer visiting world class symphony orchestras

series), or 5-star resort hotel with golf? Or all 3 with the Botanic Garden? You stroll through the Botanic Garden to the symphony facility and have your picnic dinner. Control click the link below for a look at a sample venue in action:

<https://youtu.be/gXgTkSYi0GA>

Ultimately and in the big picture of the total County and the State, huge negative self-inflicted financial forces will combine to drive out services and even eliminate some local governments entirely. Pension costs; unfunded capital maintenance for roads, buildings, schools and universities, and parks; a growing dependent population; unfunded unemployment insurance costs; various forms of debt other than pensions; and rapidly rising energy costs will all begin to force grim decisions. In San Luis Obispo County, the closure of the Diablo Nuclear Power Plant, a job killing housing shortage, and a draconian scheme of land use regulation will also combine to erode and eventually kill off public services. Ultimately the upcoming generations will have to make terrible decisions about their ability to have jobs, a decent home, and a place to raise their families.

The golf issue and the County's inability to plow millions of dollars of general fund over a decade is a faint hint of the troubles to come. County assets should be leveraged strategically to fund services, promote the economy, and strengthen the County's ability to survive the coming storm.

San Luis Obispo County Council of Governments (SLOCOG) Meeting of Wednesday, June 7, 2017, 8:30 AM (Scheduled)

Item B-1: State Legislation: SB 1 (Beall), Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017.

This item consists of a staff update on the funding that will be received by the county and various cities under the new SB 1 fuel tax increase. COLAB had reported on this earlier in the year after the tax increases were approved by the Legislature.

TABLE A

Streets & Roads Maintenance FY 16/17		Streets & Roads Maintenance FY 17/18 (partial yr. of new funds)			Streets & Roads Maintenance FY 18/19 (first full yr. of new funds)		
Jurisdiction	*Pre SB 1 HUTA \$ (Existing)	**Loan Repayment	SB 1 (Year 1)	Total	**Loan Repayment	SB 1 (Year 2)	Total
Arroyo Grande	\$347,866	\$20,288	\$102,250	\$122,538	\$20,288	\$304,585	\$324,873
Atascadero	\$578,291	\$35,331	\$178,071	\$213,402	\$35,331	\$530,443	\$565,774
Grover Beach	\$263,754	\$15,329	\$77,257	\$92,586	\$15,329	\$230,135	\$245,464
Morro Bay	\$207,878	\$12,268	\$61,831	\$74,099	\$12,268	\$184,184	\$196,452
Paso Robles	\$604,614	\$35,925	\$181,064	\$216,989	\$35,925	\$539,359	\$575,284
Pismo Beach	\$156,820	\$9,361	\$47,178	\$56,539	\$9,361	\$140,534	\$149,895
San Luis Obispo	\$901,890	\$52,767	\$265,944	\$318,711	\$52,767	\$792,204	\$844,971
SLO County	\$6,831,235	\$446,837	\$2,252,060	\$2,698,897	\$446,837	\$6,708,517	\$7,155,354
Annual Total	\$9,892,348	\$628,106	\$3,165,655	\$3,793,761	\$628,106	\$9,429,961	\$10,058,067

Source: Department of Finance and League of California Cities.

Note: HUTA = Highway Users Tax Account

* Year by year fluctuation based on Streets & Highways Code 2103 (this is the price-based fuel tax rate adjusted annually until 2019).

** The state general fund will repay loans from transportation funds over 3 years and in monthly installments beginning FY 17/18.

Highlighted columns indicate new SB 1 funding to the region.

In addition to the formulaic distribution in the table above, there are a number of competitive pots for congested highways, transit routes, trade corridors, and climate change planning.

Of course these funds don't come for free. The new law increases a number of transportation-related taxes and fees on the general public, business, and agriculture as follows:

- Gasoline excise tax: \$0.12/gallon
- Diesel excise tax: \$0.20/gallon
- Diesel sales tax: 4%/gallon
- Road Improvement Fee for zero-emission vehicles, as defined: \$100/year
- Transportation Improvement Fee (TIF): the fee will be based on the market value of the vehicle with the fee range described below:
 - \$25 per year for vehicles with a market value \$0- \$4,999
 - \$50 per year for vehicles with a market value \$5,000 -- \$24,999
 - \$100 per year for vehicles with a market value \$25,000 -- \$34,999
 - \$150 per year for vehicles with a market value \$35,000 -- \$59,999
 - \$175 per year for vehicles with a market value \$60,000 and higher

The wording requires that the tax rates and fees specified in this SB 1 be adjusted annually based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Thus the tax increase is endless and on automatic pilot.

Keep in mind that prior to SB 1's approval, California already had some of the highest taxes and fees in the nation related to transportation:

GAS TAX: California already had the nation's 7th highest "gas pump" tax at 56.6 cents/gallon (November, 2016). But add in the unique 10-12 cent CA "cap and trade" cost per gallon, and CA is in the top 3 states (with PA and WA). National average is 48.9 cents. Yet CA has the 9th worst highways.

CAP AND TRADE TAX: CA has now instituted the highest "cap and trade" tax in the nation – indeed, the ONLY such U.S. tax. Even proponents concede that it will have zero impact on global warming.

FINES AND FEES: CA driving tickets are incredibly high. For example, the fine for a red-light camera ticket is \$490. In the next highest state (Washington) the fine is \$124 - \$250. In most states it is around \$100.

TRANSPORTATION COSTS: CA has 2nd highest annual cost for owning a car – \$4,112, or \$370 higher than the other 49 states' average.

SALES TAX: CA has the highest state sales tax rate in the nation, at 7.5% (does not include local sales taxes).

We haven't heard from the local transportation ½ cent sales tax Measure J supporters for a while about whether they intend to come back and try again in 2018.

The SLOCOG Board should not count its chickens before they are hatched. There is an effort to launch a statewide voter initiative to repeal SB 1 in 2018.

For perspectives on the State SB 1 and new proposed taxes, see the COLAB IN DEPTH section on page 13 below.

Item C-2: Final 2050 Regional Growth Forecast. The Forecast, which will be presented to the SLOCOG Board, is a useful strategic document that details population, housing, job, water use projections, and other data elements for the next 50 years. It slices and dices the data geographically (by city, unincorporated village, etc.) and historically. It also comments on the known problems such as insufficient housing, the regulatory environment, jobs/housing imbalance, etc.

Key themes and findings that emerged in the 2050 Regional Growth Forecast include the following:

- 1. Shifting demographics are leading to more seniors, more college-age adults, fewer early- to mid-career adults, and fewer children; the 70 and older population is projected to double from 2015 to 2035 – from 31,500 persons to 63,200 persons.*
- 2. Natural increase (births minus deaths) is diminishing and nearing natural decrease.*
- 3. San Luis Obispo County's housing market is the tenth-least affordable market in the country, and fourth-least affordable small market in the country.*
- 4. Population projections do not exceed jurisdictions' growth caps; based on these population projections, 2035 water demand is not expected to exceed 2035 water supply. COLAB NOTE: SO WHY ALL THE BANS AND MORATORIA?*
- 5. The region has experienced a 16.6 percent increase in total employment from 2010 to 2015.*
- 6. This forecast has a lower projected growth rate when compared to previous growth forecasts.*
- 7. The region has had much lower population growth rates compared to Santa Maria and California.*
- 8. Net migration – a key driver of population growth – is diminishing.*
- 9. The region has a higher vacancy rate and smaller household size compared to other regions.*
- 10. Median age in San Luis Obispo County (39.3) is higher than statewide average (35.8).*

11. Four planning areas in San Luis Obispo could accommodate over 3,000 housing units in the next 10 to 20 years (pending entitlements), which would be a relative building boom for the city; San Luis Obispo has experienced just 0.27 percent average annual population growth since 2000.

12. Most communities in the unincorporated area are projected to have capacity for future population growth for many years; only 4 of 24 county communities are projected to be built-out by 2050.

13. Jobs-housing ratio is balanced at the regional scale but not community-by-community.

14. San Luis Obispo County has the highest share of vacant housing units that are vacation homes (63.4%) of all coastal California counties; Santa Cruz County is second highest (55.6%).

15. Agricultural economy is highlighted by wine production, but farm employment is a small share of the region's total employment.

There are 130 charts, tables, and graphs containing valuable information. The bottom line is that there is plenty of room for housing expansion in terms of population caps and water supply if the various jurisdictions would simply reform the regulatory environment. Fears of overpopulation, uncontrolled sprawl, lack of water, and destruction of the quality of life are myths designed to attack private property and/or preserve the status of privileged elites.

Table 1. Population, Housing, and Employment Projections: 2010 to 2050 (Medium Scenario)

Year	Population	Housing Units	Households	Employment
2010	269,637	117,315	102,016	99,964
2015	276,375	119,697	103,964	114,304
2020	286,657	124,850	108,169	115,842
2025	297,095	129,168	112,611	120,605
2030	305,692	132,460	116,112	125,054
2035	312,346	135,129	118,788	128,512
2040	315,922	136,657	120,215	130,837
2045	318,025	137,664	121,049	132,511
2050	320,482	138,640	121,826	134,375
Total Change	50,845	21,325	19,810	34,411

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (Decennial Census 2010), State of California Department of Finance, Demographic Research Unit (2015), Beacon Economics (future years)

Download the report summary at the link:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/xgu32bcu3nn41c7/AAAzpBVAG5tcIF6wJRr7KHFMa/June%202017?dl=0&preview=C-2+Final_2050RegionalGrowthForecast_wAttA.pdf

WARNING: SLOCOG used to have a nice clean web site that was easy to use. It then went out and hired a consultant for tens of thousands of dollars who loaded up

the site with a lot of moving parts, drill downs to access the agenda materials, and unnecessary overhead. Then to make matters worse, they put the agenda materials on a product called “Dropbox,” which slows everything down and adds confusion. For example the actual items are displayed as file folders with abbreviated names. If you want to copy a chart or a quote contained in a particular report, you can’t just take it off screen but must download it to either a PDF file or a “Dropbox”. Using the thing can modify your own computer screen display so that critical command bars are hidden, control features such as task manager will not function, and your computer will not shut down.

Why can’t you just click on the agenda item (on the actual agenda) and have it open as nice clean PDF? Until it’s fixed the SLOCOG Board members should not be given printed agenda materials but should be required to use only the website as if they were members of the public.

Of all the agencies, SLOCOG’s reports (along with those of the County Public Works Department) are the most complete and understandable.

It’s too bad they screwed up the website and technology.

Item D-6: California Employers’ Retirement Benefits Trust (CERBT). The staff recommends that the SLOCOG join an IRS approved trust to make post-retirement medical payments legally. In this case the SLOCOG gives its retired employees an amount to help with their medical insurance costs. A question: If the SLOCOG did not have an approved IRS retiree medical plan, could it be liable for hundreds of thousands in tax payments and penalties that it made in the past? If SLOCOG did not have an IRS approved plan, and has been making the payments, has it disclosed that fact to the IRS?

Relatedly, they also need to begin amortizing their unfunded Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) liability. At this point they are paying as they go and not amortizing the long-term unfunded accumulated actuarial liability (UAAL). The cost is growing and they are now required to show that liability on their balance sheet. The write-up says that they will come back next year with a plan to start amortizing the unfunded liability.

The write-up is confusing in this regard because the chart below on the next page seems to show the liability as \$252,000 but the text says that in 2014 it was \$376,000. Later on the write-up says that they will come back next year with an updated actuarial valuation.

SLOCOG’s annual OPEB cost, the percentage of annual OPEB cost contributed to the Plan, and the net OPEB obligation for 2016, were:

For Fiscal Year Ended June 30	Annual OPEB Cost	% of Annual OPEB Cost Contributed	Net OPEB Obligation
2014	\$47,420	7.1%	\$170,460
2015	\$49,182	11.5%	\$213,980
2016	\$50,923	25.2%	\$252,091

The unfunded net OPEB Obligation at the end of FY 15/16 was \$252,091. Net OPEB Obligation is defined as the cumulative difference between annual OPEB cost and the employer's contributions to a plan.

Looking ahead to the implementation of GASB 75 (OPEB expense reporting requirements) in 2018, agencies will be required to report total unfunded liability in their financials, rather than Net OPEB Obligation. SLOCOG's total unfunded liability as of July 1, 2014 was \$375,892, per an actuarial study completed by Demsey, Filliger & Associates. This figure has likely grown, since SLOCOG has been funding a set-aside account, rather than a qualifying trust. Pre-funding through the CERBT is expected to decrease the impact of the GASB required changes, since having funded a qualifying trust, SLOCOG can report its net OPEB liability, rather than total OPEB liability, in the financials.

Well, why wouldn't they disclose the total OPEB liability?

Have they cut off the growth of the problem by not extending the post-retirement health insurance benefit to new employees?

LAST WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

No Board of Supervisors Meeting on Tuesday, May 30, 2017

May 30th was the day after a national holiday (Memorial Day), and the Board did not meet. The holiday was observed on Monday, May 29th, which means that the County was closed and the staff was not around to brief the Board on agenda items. Hope you enjoyed the brief respite.

COLAB IN DEPTH

IN FIGHTING THE TROUBLESOME, LOCAL DAY-TO-DAY ASSAULTS ON OUR FREEDOM AND PROPERTY, IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO KEEP IN MIND THE LARGER UNDERLYING IDEOLOGICAL, POLITICAL, AND ECONOMIC CAUSES AND FORCES

IN CALIFORNIA, AFTER THE STATE ROBS THE TAXPAYERS OF THEIR LAST PENNIES, APPARENTLY MORE MONEY JUST FALLS OUT OF THE SKY.

By Samuel Chi

That must be the conclusion reached by a California state senate committee that passed a \$400 billion universal healthcare proposal Thursday with no funding plan. Yes, that's 400 billion with a B, which is more than twice the annual budget for the entire state.

Sen. Ricardo Lara (D-Bell Gardens) introduced SB 562, which calls for a sweeping overhaul of the state's health insurance market. His committee passed the bill with a 5-2 vote, clearing the way for it to be taken up on the Senate floor next week. But Lara has yet to reveal a plan about how the state would come up with the money to provide health care to California's nearly 40 million residents, including illegal immigrants.

But in California, who cares about funding mechanisms? There's still that \$68 billion "bullet train" out there going nowhere. The state doubled down on increasing services for illegals after President Donald Trump pledged to tighten the nation's borders. And just last month, the state legislature decided to levy even more taxes on gasoline purchases, as Californians will be paying \$1 in taxes for every gallon of gas.

And Democratic Gov. Jerry "Moonbeam" Brown had the audacity to lecture the taxpayers who complained about the added burden as "freeloaders."

But this latest single-payer whopper might be a bit too much for even Brown and California's Democrats, who own a supermajority in both the state senate and assembly, to swallow. Then again, maybe they believe in unicorns.

Lara told the *Sacramento Bee* that he thinks it's possible to come up with a sustainable funding mechanism that doesn't overtax people and guarantees coverage for all. He never mentioned how. Lara said in a statement:

Republicans in Congress voted to strip healthcare from 23 million people without a hearing or a fiscal analysis. We have already held two hearings and had an analysis, and I will be introducing a plan to pay for this program and cover every Californian. With Republicans determined to take away people's healthcare, we can't afford to wait.

Part of Lara's rush is to appease a progressive base that's never shy about spending other people's money. RoseAnn DeMoro, executive director of the California Nurses Association, offered a foul-mouthed tirade at a rally for SB562 that ridiculed those who wanted a fiscal analysis as engaging in "chicken-s*** talk."

California's Republican legislators — what's left of them — wondered out loud if their Democratic colleagues would eventually come to their senses.

"We're thinking about it as a concept that we're going to pass without any detail," Patricia Bates (R-Laguna Niguel) told the *Bee*. "I hope at some point rational thinking kicks in and we're not just driven by this lobbying effort. Good policy doesn't come out of intimidation."

Don't hold your breath.

This article first appeared in the Breitbart News Letter of May 27, 2017. Samuel Chi is a Senior News Editor at the Breitbart News Channel.

THE REASON WHY CALIFORNIA TAXES CONTINUE TO SKYROCKET

By Jon Coupal and Vince Fong



Before the ink on the governor's signature has dried on the largest gas tax increase in California history, Sacramento Democrats are fully intending to break their promise to dedicate the new revenue to fixing our crumbling roads. In the upcoming budget, there is a proposal to divert 30 percent of this gas tax increase to items and programs completely unrelated to repairing our roads and highways, such as park maintenance and job training for felons.

Regrettably, these bait-and-switch tactics are now so commonplace in Sacramento that few notice. For many years, billions in transportation dollars have been diverted from road building and maintenance to the general fund, which has created the crisis we are currently facing. Why would anyone think things will be different now with the new \$52 billion car and gas tax hikes?

There are many other examples of lawmakers misleading the public when promoting new taxes. Sacramento sold the recent tobacco tax increase on the November 2016 ballot to voters as a way to fund Medicaid. After the proposition passed, the revenues were simply swept into the general fund and, as a result, doctors and millions of Californians on Medicaid are not receiving the funds which they were anticipating.

Just last week, we witnessed the annual practice of passing 40 “shell” budget bills that are virtually devoid of written content. The blanks will be filled in as the majority party rams through all the deals it makes behind closed doors. Even with the passage of a new constitutional amendment — Proposition 54, discussed below — requiring bills to be in print for 72 hours, the sheer volume of budgetary language makes it difficult for the public and media to truly know how taxpayer dollars are to be spent.

Sacramento may not know how to manage money and prioritize spending, but legislative leaders do know how to dissemble and divert public attention from the reality of the budget process. They prefer to keep average folks in the dark because they know the public would never approve these budget diversions.

Voters clearly stated they prefer transparency and public participation when they approved Proposition 54 last year. The proposition requires that legislation be in print and available for public view for three days before being voted on. Majority lawmakers opposed this reasonable measure because it blocked them from introducing legislation and immediately passing it, without public comment, often in the dead of night. For Sacramento insiders, secrecy and deception are a way of life.

Californians deserve real budget transparency in order to change this broken process and to reform the bait-and-switch culture that has led to a state that has become simply unaffordable. Ultimately, it is middle class and working class families that are harmed the most by the bad policies coming out of Sacramento. Affordability is one of the biggest and most important issues facing this state, but we are moving in the wrong direction because new taxes and fees continue to be imposed in the false belief that more government and higher taxes are the answer.

It should surprise no one that California ranks dead last in the nation on budget transparency. This needs to change if we want the Legislature to change its focus to promoting the wellbeing of average Californians.

Jon Coupal is president of the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association. Vince Fong represents California’s 34th State Assembly district, which includes portions of Bakersfield and the communities of Bear Valley Springs, Oildale, Maricopa, Ridgecrest, Taft and Tehachapi. This article first appeared in the May 30, California Political Review.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

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San Luis Obispo County
"Your Property – Your Taxes – Our Future"
PO Box 13601 – San Luis Obispo, CA 93406 / Phone: 805.548-0340
Email: colabslo@gmail.com / Website: colabslo.org

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

MEMBERSHIP OPTIONS:

General Member: \$100 – \$249 \$ _____ Voting Member: \$250 - \$5,000 \$ _____

Sustaining Member: \$5,000 + \$ _____

(Sustaining Membership includes a table of 10 at the Annual Fundraiser Dinner)

General members will receive all COLAB updates and newsletters. Voting privileges are limited to Voting Members and Sustainable Members with one vote per membership.

MEMBER INFORMATION:

Name: _____

Company: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____ Email: _____

How Did You Hear About COLAB?

Radio Internet Public Hearing Friend

COLAB Member(s) / Sponsor(s): _____

NON MEMBER DONATION/CONTRIBUTION OPTION:

For those who choose not to join as a member but would like to support COLAB via a contribution/donation. I would like to contribute \$ _____ to COLAB and my check or credit card information is enclosed/provided.

Donations/Contributions do not require membership though it is encouraged in order to provide updates and information.
Memberships and donation will be kept confidential if that is your preference.
Confidential Donation/Contribution/Membership

PAYMENT METHOD:

Check Visa MasterCard Discover Amex NOT accepted.

Cardholder Name: _____ Signature: _____

Card Number: _____ Exp Date: ___/___ Billing Zip Code: _____ CVV: _____

TODAY'S DATE: _____

(Revised 2/2017)