COLAB SAN LUIS OBISPO
WEEK OF DECEMBER 9 - 15, 2018

THIS WEEK

JAIL MEDICAL OUTSOURCING CONTRACT & RELATED NEW STAFFING

APPOINTMENT OF BOS MEMBERS TO VARIOUS BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

UPDATED MARIJUANA REGS

LAST WEEK

MAJOR HOUSING INITIATIVES PROGRAM OK'D CONCEPTUALLY

FIRST QUARTER FINANCIAL REPORT OK

BUT REVEALED SOME MURKY LEGAL ISSUES

SPECIAL HEARING ON COUNTY RELATIONS WITH ICE SPURS FUTURE MEETING

MODEST FEE INCREASES FOR 2019 ADOPTED

SLO COLAB IN DEPTH
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The Hammer Of The Witches Redux

By Andy Caldwell

Paris Is Burning Over Climate Change Taxes -- Is America Next?--IS NEW CALIFORNIA NEXT?

By Chuck DeVore

New Data Shows How Much More Californians Pay for Energy

By Ca. Center for Jobs & the Economy

THIS WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

31 - Request to 1) approve a FY 2018-19 through FY 2021-22 contract, with the option to renew for two additional years, with California Forensic Medical Group (now "Wellpath") in the amount of $6,763,491 annually (excluding any CPI increases) to provide Jail health care services, including a Jail Based Competency Treatment Program. 2) Add various Corrections Officer positions and support positions necessary to implement the overall program and a new mental health unit for felons.

Per prior Board direction, the staff has completed a procurement and contract negotiation process and recommends Wellpath as the jail medical contractor. In depth analysis conducted earlier in the year indicated that the elimination of 26 County existing positions responsible for jail medical services are to be reduced as the transition takes place which will provide offsetting savings.

It is not clear if the new corrections and staff support positions required were as clearly forecast in the past as they are requested here. The cost is estimated to start out at $973,000 per year.

Transition Period: The write-up states in part with respect to the last 5 months of the current fiscal year:

The expense of the contract for the remaining five months of FY 2018-19 is estimated at $2,818,121 and the expense for the requested positions for FC 184 - LEHC and FC 136- Sheriff's Office is $135,061 and $255,695, respectively. The FY 2018-19 budget for FC 184- LEHC is estimated to have enough appropriation to cover the contract and positions, and the ongoing expenses will be built into the budget in future fiscal years. If additional appropriation is needed for FC 136 – Sheriff's Office budget for FY 2018-19 for the correctional positions, a request will be made in the third quarter to transfer appropriation from the LEHC budget to the Sheriff's Office budget.

Some cautions here include:

a. It will take a while to layoff the 26 employees who are being phased out. Thus there is likely to be a period of cost overlap.

b. Those employees who are being terminated will be entitled to State Unemployment Insurance payments, the cost of which will be levied against the County in subsequent fiscal quarters.

c. The County may have difficulty filling the new or backfill replacement positions for the additional Corrections officers and Corrections Supervisors, which could beckon overtime costs.

d. Per last week's First Quarter FY 2018-19 Financial Report, it is expected that the Sheriff will need at least $2.3 million in additional appropriations at the 3d quarter. The gap is due primarily because the County did not budget expected or projected raises for Sheriff Deputies and Corrections Officers in the adopted 2018-19 Budget.

All of this could add up to be a big bite in the 3rd quarter of the current fiscal year. Of course it then recurs at higher rates, adding to any issues in the subsequent fiscal year. For example a $4 million problem in year 1 becomes an $8 million dollar problem in year 2 since you are already short $ 4 million in the base, which was never included in your multi- year projections. It is sort of like being blindsided by Chicago's Khalill Mack (Used to be a Raider in the picture above).

Failure to recognize this simple algorithm is one of the key drivers of government budget problems.

Item 38 - Appointment of Board Members to Various Boards and Commissions. The table below depicts the current assignments and individual member preferences for 2019. It would appear that both Lynn Compton and Bruce Gibson have expressed interest in the appointment to be the County's representative to the California State Association of Counties (CSAC). The position is important because CSAC adopts political positions on major legislation and ballot measures such a tax measures.

Do you really want Bruce Gibson up in Sacramento wheeling and dealing and endorsing more taxes, regulations, and globalist policies on environmental doctrine and social equity?

Gibson held the slot for about 10 years until the current Board majority took effect several years ago. He complained bitterly when he was removed. How about a deal – Bruce you can go up there and pontificate all you want but you would agree to support applications for various energy proposals coming before the County such as wind, oil and gas, and restoration of nuclear.

Apparently there are some faint signs of gathering buyer's remorse about the whole nuclear issue around the State with the realization, even among some enviros, that the State may face energy shortages and will be more reliant on greenhouse gas generating gas fired electric generating plants.

New gas generating plant – Huntington Beach. It's in the wetland and across 101 from the beach. Wow!

TITLE	2018 Appointments	2019 Interest
Adult Services Policy Council	Debbie Arnold	Bruce Gibson
Behavioral Health Advisory Board	Debbie Arnold	Adam Hill
Cal ID Advisory Board	John Peschong	John Peschong
Carrizo Plain National Monument Advisory Committee	Debbie Arnold	Debbie Arnold
Cal Poly Campus Planning Committee	Debbie Arnold	Debbie Arnold
California State Association of Counties (CSAC)	Lynn Compton, Debbie Arnold-Alternate	Bruce Gibson, Debbie Arnold-Alternate
Children's Resource Network of the Central Coast	Adam Hill	Adam Hill
Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo (CAPSLO)	Debbie Arnold	Debbie Arnold
Economic Vitality Corporation	Adam Hill, Lynn Compton	Adam Hill, Lynn Compton
Fire Safe Council	Debbie Arnold	Debbie Arnold
First 5 Children & Families Commission	Bruce Gibson	Bruce Gibson
Golden State Finance Authority	N/A	John Peschong
Homeless Services Oversight Council	John Peschong	Adam Hill
Latino Outreach Council	Lynn Compton	Debbie Arnold
Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO)	Debbie Arnold, Lynn Compton	Debbie Arnold, Lynn Compton, John Peschong-Alternate
Model of Care Partnership Oversight Committee (MOCPOC) Martha's Place	Bruce Gibson	Bruce Gibson
Nacimiento Water Project Commission	John Peschong	John Peschong
National Estuary Program Executive Committee	Bruce Gibson	Bruce Gibson
Psychiatric Health Facility Committee	Lynn Compton	Debbie Arnold
Rural Counties Representatives of California (RCRC)	John Peschong, Debbie Arnold	John Peschong, Lynn Compton-Alternate
SB/SLO Regional Health Authority (CenCal)	Adam Hill	Adam Hill
South County Area Transit (SCAT)	Lynn Compton	Lynn Compton
Student-Community Liaison Committee	Debbie Arnold	Debbie Arnold
Visit SLO Advisory Committee	Lynn Compton	Lynn Compton

MATTERS AFTER 1:30 PM

Item 41 -Cannabis Regulatory Ordinance Revisions: Hearing to consider amendments to Title 22 of the County Code (LRP2018-00004), and Title 23 of the County Code, Part I – Framework for Planning and Part II – Area Plans (LRP2018-00005) as applicable to Cannabis Activities. The proposed amendments will clarify terminology and definitions, add two new use types (Cannabis Processing Facilities and Cannabis Transport Facilities), revise the limitation on cannabis cultivation from 141 operations to 141 sites, modify standards for certain cannabis activities including but not limited to, fencing, screening, and outdoor lighting, allow for procedures for modification of certain development standards, and modify noticing requirements for all Cannabis Activities; exempt from CEQA. Also to be considered is extension of the temporary abeyance resolution relating to cannabis. This item, if approved, will amend various regulations pertaining to the cultivation, processing, manufacturing, and distribution of cannabis products. It is the result of both County and industry dissatisfaction with the initial adopted ordinance. While the general tone of the revisions is to add clarity and reasonableness, the Planning Commission seemed to be having some buyer's remorse about some matters that were believed to have been settled previously as it forwarded the recommendations presented here to the Board of Supervisors. For example the County originally adopted a provision that marijuana facilities must be separated by 1000 feet from sensitive areas, such as schools, playgrounds, parks, etc. (defined as sensitive receptors). However, a grow can be located within 100 ft. of a residence.

Because the regulation of marijuana is a whole new and complicated field, it was expected that the original regulations would have to be modified over time as the staff and people in the industry gained practical experience. The staff and Planning Commission parsed through the complex 53-page ordinance one page at a time as it prepared its recommendations to the Board.

Some highlights of the changes are depicted in the table below:

CATEGORY:	DESCRIPTION OF PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDED CHANGES:	Attachment 3 Title 22	Attachment 4 Title 23
SITES VS. OPERATIONS	Clarify the Board's intent to allow 141 "sites" and to allow multiple cultivation operations on one site.	Page 14 of 53	Page 14 of 48
TRANSPORT & PROCESSING FACILITIES	Add transport only and processing only facilities to Tables 2-2 and Table O	Pages 2 and 3 of 53	Pages 2 and 3 of 48
	Allow transport, and processing as an ancillary component to cultivation	Pages 14 and 15 of 53	Page 15 of 48
	Proposed regulations for processing only facilities	Pages 27 thru 29 of 53	Page 27 thru 29 of 48
	Proposed regulations for transport only facilities	Pages 37 thru 39 of 53	Pages 37 thru 39 of 48

CATEGORY:	DESCRIPTION OF CHANGES:	Title 22 Page No. Attachment 3	Title 23 Page No. Attachment 4
DEFINITIONS	Clarify language to existing definitions for cultivation, dispensaries, greenhouses, hoop structures, nurseries and topical products	Pages 4 thru 6 of 53	Pages 4 and 6 of 48
	Add definitions for shade cloth structure, nursery canopy, processing, processing facility, transport, transport facility, flowering, immature plant, indoor cultivation, light deprivation, mature plant and outdoor cultivation	Pages 5 thru 7 of 53	Pages 4 thru 7 of 48
	Delete definition of cannabis cultivation operation	Page 4 of 53	Page 5 of 48
VERTICAL INTEGRATION	Clarify the permit requirements for vertical integration	Page 11 of 53	Page 11 of 48
RESIDENCES & CANNABIS ACTIVITIES	Clarify the use of a residence requirements for all cannabis activities	Page 13 of 53	Page 14 of 48
MONITORING PROGRAM	Require all land use permits for cannabis activities to participate in a County-run monitoring program and not just for cultivation permits	Page 13 of 53	Page 13 of 48
SETBACKS	Adding a setback requirement from wetlands to the inland ordinance (consistent with the coastal ordinance);	Page 18 of 53	No change; Page 23 of 48
FENCING / LIGHTING	Clarify language for screening, fencing and outdoor lighting	Pages 19 and 20 of 53	Page 19 and 20 of 48
	Provide for the modification of standards for fencing, screening, and separation between cannabis activities and certain uses such as a park or playground, where justified	Page 21 of 53	Page 21 of 48
NOTICING	Expand noticing requirements to include 1,000-foot pre-notification and 1,000-foot notice requirements	Page 13 of 53	Pages 13 and 14 of 48
COMMUNITY STANDARDS	Amendments to planning area and community standards	Pages 46 thru 53 of 53	Pages 46 thru 48 of 48

It is expected that there will be speakers at the hearing who support stricter regulation and others who wish them to be relaxed.

As we have noted in the past, the whole policy discussion of legalized recreational marijuana over the past 2 years has focused primarily on the land use, odor, and economic impacts. The health, social, and educational impacts are yet to be detected let alone measured. After several years, these will become apparent.

The full text of the ordinance as presented at this stage can be viewed at the link:

http://agenda.slocounty.ca.gov/agenda/sanluisobispo/9448/MDNfUEMgSW5sYW5kIFJlZGxpbmUgVmVyc2lvbiBmb3IgQS5OZXRfMTEtMTkucGRm/12/n/102829.doc

LAST WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

Item 3 - FY 2018-19 First Quarter Financial Report. The report was received on the consent calendar without comment. From the big picture standpoint revenues and expenditures are flowing as expected for the first quarter of the fiscal year. Problem areas are depicted in the table below:

Table 2: Summary of Notable Issues Included in The Attached Report

Department	Issue	Impact to General Fund support	Service Level Impact
County Counsel	Unbudgeted expenditures for legal services	$395,023 (Budget Adjustment requested)	None anticipated
Parks and Recreation	Parks Operational Shortfall – Cost Recovery Policy Update	$560,738 (Potential impact)	None anticipated
Sheriff's Office	Potential to exceed budgeted expenditures by $2.4 million	$2.4 million (Potential impact)	None anticipated

The write-up on the County Counsel's office is interesting:

While overall, County Counsel's budget is within normal parameters for the first quarter, they are reporting that they anticipate a shortfall in their professional services accounts and they will need a budget adjustment in the amount of $395,023 to cover several legal issues. The funds will be used for testing and legal services for the TCE groundwater issue at the San Luis Obispo Regional Airport ($150,000); outside legal counsel to assist in the processing and collecting of the closure of Diablo Canyon settlement funds ($100,000); and outside legal counsel to representative employees being interviewed by the FBI in regard to the deaths at the County Jail ($65,000). In addition, when the Board approved a settlement ($80,023) for the County's liability at the Casmalia Hazardous Waste Disposal Site in August 2018 to be paid out of County Counsel's budget, it was with the understanding those funds would be reimbursed to the department in the first quarter.

No one asked any questions, at least at the meeting.

Item 25 - 2019 Fee Increases. The fee increases were approved 4/0/0. Supervisor Compton was away attending to an illness in her family. The good news is that there are few fee increases, with several decreases, and the increases are relatively mild. The fee increases in those departments which impact business, agriculture, housing, and development in general are very limited. The key departments are Agriculture Commissioner, Planning and Building, Public Health Department Environmental Division (where most of the increases are concentrated), and Public Works.

See all the details at the link:
http://agenda.slocounty.ca.gov/agenda/sanluisobispo/9326/Mi4gU2NoZWR1bGUgQiBGWSAyMDE5LTIwIFJlY29tbWVuZGVkLnBkZg==/12/n/101248.doc

Item 27 - Hearing to consider a report from the Sheriff's Office interaction and communication in 2017 with the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The hearing went pretty smoothly and the report was received. The Sheriff offered to conduct a special meeting for citizens who have questions or recommendations. This is a new requirement on counties whereby they must hold a public forum on how they work with ICE.

The write-up stated in part:

Government Code Section 7283.1, subdivision (d), contained in Title 1, Division 7, Chapter 17.2 of the Code governing the Standards for Participation in United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Programs, requires the Board of Supervisors to hold a public forum to provide information to the public about ICE's access to individuals and to receive and consider public comment.

Item 33 - Hearing to discuss the outsourcing of medical and behavioral health services at the County of San Luis Obispo Jail. The hearing was a non-event, and there was little public interest. Under the law, the County is required to conduct a hearing on its plan to contract out jail medical services. The idea is to prevent entities from reducing services and to provide the public an opportunity to comment.

Item 35 - Discussion on the County's Housing Initiative Package, Title 29 In Lieu Fee Ordinance, funding alternatives for affordable housing, California Environmental Quality Act Guideline Update, and the Regional Infrastructure and Housing Plan. In a session that oozed kumbaya, the Board unanimously (Compton absent due to a family illness) authorized staff to pursue analysis of a potential set of strategic actions designed to stimulate the production of more housing in the County. The four Board members were pleased with the staff work and the work of an associated Housing Coalition (described below).

The initiative and approach is positive on 2 levels:

1. It is the first time, in 7 years (our observation window) that the Board, staff, the cities, and community groups have partnered to approach an issue strategically rather than piecemeal and/or to simply request more money out of the gate.

2. The strategic approach in this case can serve as a model for solving other regional problems such as:

a. Homelessness

b. Economic development

c. Increase in revenue gaps

d. Exponential pension cost growth

One Caution: A Possible Faustian Bargain: The County and most of the cities have adopted the so called "smart growth" globalist development model into their General Plans, zoning ordinances, and other land use controls. Accordingly, citizens must be vigilant that the solutions proposed do not simply assume that those policies are immutable and cannot be changed. It is possible that left progressives who currently support the effort are going along and assuming (or figuring they can control the outcome) to make sure that the basic tenets of smart growth, including stack-and-pack, automobile restrictions, prejudice against larger single family lots, rationing resources, and all the rest can be infused into whatever package is ultimately developed.

It is important that the analysts and scriveners not be blind to other policy options as they do the work.

A Second Caution: Project Management: The entire Housing Initiative is a large complex analytical project. It is in turn composed of a number of sub-projects. These need to be managed closely within the norms of good standard project management. They of necessity are inter-departmental. There are opportunities for scope creep, delays, lack of cooperation, and withholding of recourses. The entire effort must be classically structured to avoid these pitfalls.

Background: For the first time there is a proposal for a more comprehensive approach to stimulating the production of housing, particularly lower income housing and work force housing. Last year Supervisors Gibson and Peschong volunteered to form a Board Housing Committee to work on the issue.

Simultaneously, a group called the Housing Coalition has been working with staff and the business community to prepare a set of recommendations for consideration by the County. It should be noted that some were adopted earlier this year and more are presented in the item. The Coalition is composed of Central Coast Home Builders Association, Economic Vitality Corporation, San Luis Obispo Chamber of Commerce, Housing Trust Fund, San Luis Obispo and Paso Robles Housing Authorities, and Peoples' Self-Help Housing.

In summary the proposal relies on a combination of regulatory reform, fee modifications, and ultimately a potential vote of the people to fund housing leveraging funds and infrastructure necessary to support additional housing. This is in contrast to the current approach, which has relied on a combination of exactions, fees, and taxes levied on developers and homebuilders alone.

Table 1: Status and Completion Date of each County Housing Initiative

Item	Status	Estimated Completion Date
1. Regional Plan for Infrastructure and Housing in the County	Initial stages, in progress	Present scope, resource requirements, and timeline Spring 2019
2. Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Ordinance	Ordinance framework approved with Board direction. Public workshop held on October 24, 2018.	October 2019
3. Farmworker Housing Ordinance	Ordinance framework approved with Board direction. Public workshop held on October 16, 2018.	October 2019
4. Tiny Home Ordinance	Staff is meeting with stakeholders to scope an ordinance framework.	February 2020
5. County CEQA Guidelines	Draft guideline update in progress	Winter 2019
6. Matrix for Ministerial vs. Discretionary Projects	Complete	Complete
7. Reduce, Waive, and Defer Fees for Affordable Housing	On August 21, 2018, Board approved a resolution authorizing Director to waive permit processing fees and amended the Public Facilities Fees Ordinance to allow for payment of public facilities fees at building permit final.	At a later date, the Board will consider waiving public facility fees for affordable housing projects.
8. First-time Homebuyer Program	Complete.	Complete
9. Golden State Finance Authority (GSFA)	Complete. The Department assigns share of private activity bonds to GSFA.	Complete

The overall strategy proposed by the Housing Coalition recommends:

1. Achieve at least $2 million to be available to fund affordable housing projects

2. Improve administrative procedures and processes to increase efficiencies so as to facilitate housing

3. Support regional collaboration to develop integrated infrastructure and housing plan

More specifically the 3 year pilot as proposed by the Housing Coalition includes:

Housing Coalition Plan

The Three Year Affordable Housing Pilot Program 2019-2021.

• *Revise Title 29 Per Nexus Study Recommendations*. *(This is the housing in lieu fee – really a tax.*

• *Apply fee to range of 1,800 to 2,200 square feet.*

• *Commit $2 million mixture of County funds.*

• *Evaluate vacation rental impact fee.*

• *Implement additional funding sources (TOT, etc.)*

• *Evaluate the program at year 3 to determine effectiveness*

• *Potentially sunset county contributions and Title 29.* This would end the so-called housing in lieu fees (really a tax).

A key component is rearranging the fee scale for the In Lieu Tax per the table below:

Table 2 Cost Per Square Foot and Potential Annual Revenue

Amount Per Square Foot (SF) in Tiered Rate Structure *		Estimated Annual Revenue Generated if Fee is Applied at 1,800 SF and Above	Estimated Annual Revenue Generated if Fee is Applied at 2,000 SF and Above	Estimated Annual Revenue Generated if Fee is Applied at 2,200 SF and Above
First 1,800 SF per Unit	Exempt	$1.4 Million	$1.3 Million	$1.1 Million
Square footage from 1,800 to 2,000 SF	$4 / SF			
Square footage from 2,000 to 2,500 SF	$8 / SF			
Square footage from 2,500 to 3,500 SF	$12/ SF			
Square footage above 3,500 SF	$16 / SF			

*The fee only applies to the amount of square footage within the applicable tier. See example below.

As an example, a 2,000 square foot home would need to pay the following under the tiered rate structure:

- The first 1,800 square feet of unit would be exempt, and no fee would be applied.
- The next 200 square feet would pay a $4/SF for a total of $800 (200 SF X $4/SF = $800).

Larger homes will pay more. COLAB has vigorously opposed the In Lieu tax in the past. At this point and by using multiple sources to provide key local housing leveraging funds, there is the possibility that the tax could be phased out. Note that the bullet above says, "potentially sunset county contributions and Title 29" (the section of the zoning ordinance that imposes the tax). This would constitute a more fair solution. If the Board adopts the overall program, it is worth a try – especially since the home builders and business community specifically support it.

Another important feature of the proposed program is to explore alternative means to generate from $2 to $4 million per year, which would be dedicated to providing the local match to leverage State, Federal, and private sector funds to stimulate specific housing projects. The table below summarizes some of the ideas to be studied.

Table 3: Funding Options for Affordable Housing

Funding Option	Potential Revenue	Approval Process	Timing
REQUIRES BOARD OF SUPERVISORS APPROVAL ONLY (Board may direct staff to initiate, but will require further research, public outreach, coordination with the Assessor's Office, and other Departments)			
Vacation Rental Impact Fee	$675,000 to $920,000 annually assuming a $2.73 per night impact fee (San Diego City's vacation rental impact fee) applied to each of the unincorporated County's 1,377 licensed vacation rentals	The Board could approve a new impact fee with a 3/5 vote.	Given the time required to prepare a nexus study, staff estimates a vacation rental impact fee could be established in June 2019, with the first year of funding available in FY 2020/2021
REQUIRES BOARD OF SUPERVISORS APPROVAL AND ELECTORATE VOTER APPROVAL (Board may direct staff to initiate, but will require further research, public outreach, coordination with the Assessor's Office, and other Departments)			
Increase Transient Occupancy Tax rate by 1%	$1.06M annually	General Tax: • 4/5 BOS vote to place on ballot • 2/3 electorate vote OR Special Tax: • 3/5 BOS vote to place on ballot • Majority (50% plus 1) electorate vote	If approved by voters in March 2020, funds could be available in FY 2021/2022
Increase sales tax rate by 0.25% in unincorporated areas only	$2.5M annually		
Increase sales tax rates by 0.25% countywide (including cities)	$12.5M annually		
$7,000 Property tax surcharge for second homes	$648,000 annually		
Affordable Housing Bond	Up to $140M annually, assuming a property tax increase of $16.77 for every $100,000 in assessed value	Special Tax: • 3/5 BOS vote to place on ballot • Majority (50% plus	If approved by voters in March 2020, funds could be available in FY 2021/2022

Beyond and instead of the idea of adding new taxes and fees, Supervisor Peschong requested that staff study setting aside a percentage of the natural growth in the existing property tax, sales tax, and transient occupancy tax accumulatively each year until the $2 to $4 million metric is achieved. In aggregate these taxes seem to be growing by about $6 million per year. Thus for example, a set-aside of 15% in year one would yield $900,000. This would become the base for the next year so that $900,000+$900,000 would be $1.8 million in year two, $2.7 in year three, $3.6 in year four, and so on. This method could also be used to develop funding for the infrastructure needed to support housing.

Supervisor Gibson said he would go along with studying it now, but added that the idea made the CEO react with "steely eyes." We retort that the first approach to improving programs and services should not be a resort to more taxes and fees.

COLAB proposed that this option be studied along with the others. It ultimately was included.

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

The Hammer Of The Witches Redux

By Andy Caldwell

Gregory Wrightstone, the author of the book "Inconvenient Facts: The Science that Al Gore Doesn't Want You to Know" recently shared that the Salem Witch trials were the work of bush league amateurs! The professional witch hunters, led by the papal inquisitor Heinrich Kramer (author of "The Hammer of the Witches"), ended up killing tens of thousands of people, most of whom were living on the fringe of society. What scourge of death and destruction were these church and state sanctioned killers saving society from? Climate change!

Between the 15th and 17th centuries, Europe was in the midst of epidemics, crop failures, famine and the like because temperatures significantly declined due to the onset of a mini-ice age. The consensus opinion of the day was that weather-changing witches were to blame. Some "witches" actually confessed that they had in fact changed the weather by flying through the air spreading an ointment made of children's fat in order to cause killer frost!

Of course, that means that Al Gore and friends are mere copy cats of the original climate change pogromists! Those inquisitors of our day have called for the death of the fossil-fuel industry and the imprisonment of climate change deniers. Ironically, they blame carbon for our ills, the miracle-grow gas that along with oxygen helps give our planet life, as if it is the product of a witch's cauldron. The truth is, Al Gore is promulgating even worse bad theology and junk science than did Kramer back in the day. At least back then, they were trying to save people from the elements whereas, today, the campaign to keep oil and gas in the ground is promoting both food and energy insecurity, "heat or eat" as they say, for those living on the margins of society and progress.

Another topic Mr. Wrightstone studied has to do with the history of forest fires in our hemisphere. Data indicates that we are actually experiencing a long-term decline in the number of forest fires, but that the intensity and damage from the same has doubled!

There are two reasons for this. First, the number of homes at risk has risen from 607,000 in the 1940's to 6.7 million by 2010. Second, the number of trees per acre in a healthy forest is 50 to 80 but we have 300 to 400 trees per acre. These trees, as a result of this competition for water and sunlight, are thereby prone to pests, disease and drought, just waiting to go up in flames. Of course, the inordinate number of trees per acre is courtesy of federal and state policies that have precluded trimming, logging, and control burns.

To help society understand what is really going on here, I propose a name change and a paradigm shift. Let's no longer use the word "preserve" to describe an area dedicated to habitat preservation. Instead, let’s call these places “wildfire fuel storage area” as that is a more honest and apt description of the same.

This article first appeared on the editorial page of the Santa Barbara News Press. Andy Caldwell is the Executive Director of COLAB of Santa Barbara County and host of the Andy Caldwell Radio Show on AM KUHL 1440.

Paris Is Burning Over Climate Change Taxes -- Is America Next?--IS NEW CALIFORNIA NEXT?

By Chuck DeVore

The City of Lights, Paris, has been illuminated in recent days by cars set alight by thousands of protesting “Yellow Vests”—largely middle class people who earn their living by driving or who commute to get to work. The cause of their ire is a scheduled 25 cents-per-gallon increase in gas taxes, and about 10 cents on diesel, to fight climate change.

French President Macron, deeply unpopular, just reversed course on the new green tax—Parisians are already paying about $7.06 per gallon for gasoline, almost half of that in taxes.

If Paris streets burned over a proposed 25 cents per gallon climate change tax, imagine the global conflagration over a $49 per gallon tax.

That’s what a United Nations special climate report calls for in 12 years, with a carbon tax of $5,500 per ton—equal to $49 per gallon of gasoline or diesel. That’s about 100 times today’s average state and federal motor fuels tax.

By 2100, the U.N. estimates that a carbon tax of $27,000 per ton is needed—$240 per gallon—to limit global warming to no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Of course, that isn’t going to happen. The economic wreckage of such a punitive tax would plunge the global economy into a permanent depression—and that’s assuming politicians could enact such huge tax increases over the will of their voters.

Keep in mind that the unrest in France was triggered by a looming 25-cent hike, which is a little less than 10% more in taxes than French drivers already pay. To meet the $49 per gallon tax hike recommended by the U.N., fuel taxes in France would have to go up 17-fold.

The violent protests in France were fueled by intense frustration felt by a middle class that sees itself squeezed. They don't earn enough to be part of the elite unconcerned with fuel taxes, but they work hard enough that they don't qualify for the generous welfare benefits handed out to the nation's poor and to newly arrived immigrants from Africa and the Middle East.

Here in America, Republicans in Congress passed a resolution against carbon taxes over the summer while Democrats embraced the concept in their party platform. Some incoming members of the new Democratic majority in the House are calling to create a select committee to map out a "Green New Deal" that would move the U.S. toward using 100% renewable energy for the electric grid while guaranteeing jobs for everyone.

In the meantime, opinion polls indicate that 54% of Americans do not believe global warming will cause major problems within their lifetimes.

AFP | Protesters wearing yellow vests take part in a demonstration by the Yellow Vest movement on the Champs-Élysées in Paris, France, December

So how do climate activists get their way? Some openly talk of imposing authoritarian governance to override democratic institutions. Former NASA climate researcher James Hansen suggested in 2007 that "the democratic process does not work." Other scientists have called the threat of global warming the equivalent of war while calling for the crushing of dissent and the jailing of "deniers."

Those who see climate change as a dire and urgent threat have some work to do to convince voters in the Western democracies to give up their way of life in exchange for unspecified benefits of a slightly less warm world—and that's assuming China, India and over a billion people in Africa can be convinced not to try to pull themselves out of poverty—something that may only be done with greater use of fossil fuels.

Thus, one well-worn tactic employed by those who would presume to tell the rest of us how to live, where to live, and how to work—all of the good of the planet, of course—is the alarmist study, making copious use of lies of omission and commission.

An example of the former can be seen in the new National Climate Assessment. The report's first chapter lists recent natural disasters, citing this summer's deadly Carr Fire in California as an example. But while the report seeks to link wildfire to climate change, it glosses over the real reason fires have grown in intensity and size: the 30 years of increased environmental restrictions on logging, brush clearance and preventive burns that caused a massive and dangerous fuel buildup—a problem that was predicted years ago and has nothing to do with global warming.

The sin of commission in the service of scaring middle class voters into doing that they're supposed to can be seen in an economic modeling study paid for by our federal tax dollars as well as underwritten by two billionaires who would be president: Tom Steyer and Michael Bloomberg. Here we're told that the U.S. economy will take a 10% hit by 2100 unless we reduce our carbon emissions. Two problems, though: the authors assume the worst-case and least likely scenario, with average temperatures more than 14 degrees Fahrenheit hotter by 2100; and they derive two-thirds of their economic losses estimate by claiming a large amount of premature deaths due to the hotter temperatures.

The latter claim is highly problematic as death rates in regions far hotter than in the U.S. aren't meaningfully different, when accounting for the standard of living. Why? People adapt rather easily.

This makes for scary headlines in the New York Times or CNN, but it is far from sound science or even good economics.

The bottom line is this: economic freedom—the kind you get with a large middle class—leads to prosperity, economic growth, and technological innovation. And it's these three things: wealth, growth and technology, which allows humans to thrive on planet Earth, not $240 per gallon fuel taxes imposed by an elite that cares not for the masses.

Chuck DeVore is Vice President of National Initiatives at the Texas Public Policy Foundation. He was a California Assemblyman and is a Lt. Colonel in the U.S. Army Retired Reserve. This article first appeared in the New California News of December 8, 2018.

New Data Shows How Much More Californians Pay for Energy

By Ca. Center for Jobs & the Economy

California voters last week protected funding for infrastructure projects by rejecting a proposal that would have lowered gas taxes by 12 cents a gallon. New data shows that California consumers and businesses will continue to pay some of the highest energy costs in the nation.

The California Center for Jobs & the Economy analyzed energy costs nationally for the month of October and found:

- The October average price per gallon of regular gasoline in California rose 14 cents from September to $3.81 while prices in the other states as a whole eased in line with falling crude prices. The California premium above the average for the US other than California ($2.78) jumped to $1.02, a 36.9% difference.
- In October, California had the second highest gasoline price among the states and DC, behind only Hawaii. Californians paid $1.25 a gallon more than consumers in South Carolina, the state with the lowest price.
- The October average price per gallon of diesel in California rose 11 cents from September to $4.11. The California premium above the average for the US other than California ($3.23) rose to 88.2 cents, a 27.3% difference.
- In October, California had the second highest diesel price among the states and DC, behind only Hawaii.
- The cost premium above the US (other than California) average price for regular gasoline ranged from $0.94 in the Central Valley Region (average October price of $3.72), to $1.10 in Central Sierra Region (average October price of $3.88). The cost premium in Los Angeles region was $1.08, and in Bay Area $1.05.
- California average Residential Price for the 12 months ended August 2018 was 18.87 cents/kWh, 50.8% higher than the US average of 12.51 cents/kWh for all states other than California. California's residential prices remained the seventh highest in the nation.
- For the 12 months ended August 2018, the average annual Residential electricity bill in California was $1,251, or 25.9% higher ($257) than the comparable bill in 2010 (the year the AB 32 implementation began with the Early Action items). In this same period, the average US (less CA) electricity bill for all the other states grew only 3.5% ($48).
- For the 12 months ended August 2018, California's higher electricity prices translated into Residential ratepayers paying $5.8 billion more than the average ratepayers elsewhere in the US using the same amount of energy.
- California average Commercial Price for the 12 months ended August 2018 was 16.35 cents/kWh, 61.1% higher than the US average of 10.15 cents/kWh for all states other than California. California's commercial prices remained the 5th highest in the nation.

- California average Industrial Price for the 12 months ended August 2018 was 13.24 cents/kWh, 101.2% higher than the US average of 6.58 cents/kWh for all states other than California. California's industrial prices remained the 6th highest in the nation.
- For the 12 months ended August 2018, California's higher electricity prices translated into Commercial & Industrial ratepayers paying $10.2 billion more than ratepayers elsewhere in the US using the same amount of energy.

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