

## WEEKLY UPDATE OCT. 27 - NOV. 2, 2019

#### THIS WEEK

#### NO BOS MEETING – OTHER AGENCIES DARK BUT PLENTY OF FALLOUT FROM LAST WEEK

#### LAST WEEK

## PREVIEW OF NEW FACILITIES FEE FORMULA INCLUDES EXEMPTION FOR VERY LOW INCOME HOUSING

#### SGMA WATER PLANS UPDATE

5<sup>th</sup> DISTRICT SUPV CANDIDATE BERAUD PLUS HILL & GIBSON SEEKING TO HIJACK PASO GROUNDWATER PLAN AS CAMPAIGN ISSUE

# DEJA PREVIEW – FY 2020-21 BUDGET ISSUES NO IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS BUT A RECESSION OR STATE CUTBACK ON SOCIAL SERVICES PROGRAMS WOULD FORCE CUTS

LIBRARY SPECIAL ASSESSMENT BOND TAX TO BE PREPARED FOR NOVEMBER 2020

## SLO COLAB IN DEPTH SEE PAGE 11

## ELECTRICITY AND IDEOLOGY – COMPETING PRIORITIES IN CALIFORNIA

**BY EDWARD RING** 

## UNIVERSITIES BREED ANGER, IGNORANCE, AND INGRATITUDE

BY VICTOR DAVIS HANSON

# IS WATER AND POWER RATIONING CALIFORNIA'S FUTURE?

**BY KATY GRIMES** 

## KEEP DIABLO OPEN! CUT CO2, SAVE BILLIONS, AND SAVE OUR JOBS!

### ANIMATED CROWD SPARKS COLAB FALL FORUM ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 24, 2019

Over 140 excited and dedicated citizens participated in this year's COLAB Fall Forum, which featured our State Assemblyman Jordan Cunningham and his brilliant proposals to keep the Diablo Nuclear Power Plant financially viable and open. The event was graciously hosted at the spectacular Thousand Hills Ranch by Alan and Cee Teixeira and the COLAB Board of Directors.

Guests enjoyed barbeque and cold snacks, accompanied by San Luis Obispo County vintage wines and other beverages.

The twilight event took place in the magnificent ranch event barn, which has a tremendous view of the ranch pastures and the hills beyond. Prize Black Angus cattle and a varied parade of wildlife mingled on the hills, as the sunset was replaced by a soft and soothing dusk.

The group was riveted as Assemblyman Cunningham explained how his new effort, Assembly Bill 18 (ACA-18), would have the State redefine nuclear energy as CO<sub>2</sub> free and renewable. This is done in every other state. However, California has refused to accept the scientifically verifiable facts to the great economic disadvantage of its utilities and the economy in general.

The summary of ACA 18 states in part:

This measure would require that the state's programs relating to renewable energy and climate change include nuclear energy as a renewable energy resource and zero-carbon resource. The measure would require that the state's programs relating to renewable energy and climate change include electrical generating facilities that use nuclear energy as renewable electrical generation facilities, eligible renewable energy resources, and zero-carbon resources. The measure would require renewable electrical generation facilities, eligible renewable energy resources, and zero-carbon resources to include, for licensing and certification purposes, electrical generating facilities that use nuclear energy. The measure would also prohibit the Legislature from enacting any law related to energy unless the law is technology neutral, as specified.

Numerous representatives of business, trade unions, economic development associations, and chambers of commerce, as well as engaged citizens, were able to comment and ask questions in general.

Now all that need happen is that the local Chambers of Commerce, economic development associations, business groups, unions, enviro groups seeking to lower CO<sub>2</sub>, and voters help their local officials to get on board. They should form a coalition and pester the Governor and our State Senator and candidates.



ASSEMBLYMAN CUNNINGHAM SHARES THE LIGHT & POWER

#### THIS WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

No Board of Supervisors Meeting on Tuesday, October 29, 2019 (Scheduled)

The Board typically does not meet on the 5<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the month.

### LAST WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

#### Board of Supervisors Meeting of Tuesday, October 22, 2019 (Completed)

**Item 1 - Set a Hearing on Public Facilities Fees for Tuesday, November 5, 2019.** The Board set a hearing for November 5, 2019 to consider amending the ordinance as follows:

- 1. Set the adjustment of the fees on an automatic annual formula, which would increase or decrease based on the existing metric, which uses a combination of the inflation rate in the LA Metro area and Bay area. The new calculation method would adjust the rate as follows:
- (b) The public facilities fees imposed by resolution of the board of supervisors shall be automatically adjusted on January 1 of each year. The adjustment shall be calculated by the Department of Planning and Building, based on modifying the adopted value up or down in conformance with the Engineering News-Record September Construction Cost Index, utilizing the following formula:

$$1 + \left( \begin{array}{c} \textit{Current Index} - \textit{Prior Year Index} \\ \hline \textit{Prior Year Index} \end{array} \right)$$

No samples of how this might affect specific fees, given current inflation rates, were provided. Theoretically the fees could adjust up or down, depending on the inputs to the formula.

2. Qualifying very low-income housing projects would be exempt from paying the County exactions.

SECTION 1: Section 18.03.020 of the Public Facility Fee Ordinance, Title 18 of the San Luis Obispo County Code, is hereby amended to add new subsection 10 as follows: (to exempt residential units which qualify as very low or lower income affordable housing units:

#### 18.03.020 - Exemptions

(10) Affordable housing units meeting the definition of extremely low-income, very low-income, and lower-income, as set forth in Land Use Ordinance Section 22.12.070 and Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinance Section 23.04.094.

It should be noted that road fees, water and sewer fees, school fees, and housing-in-lieu fees are not included.

Item 24 - Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) Basin Projects Progress. The Board received the report after considerable discussion and contention. Representatives of the El Pomar – Creston Water District and the Wine Alliance complained that "agriculture" was not included in the development of the SGMA Plan for the Paso Robles Water Basin. The complaints put an exclamation point on what appears to be a coordinated political campaign effort to hijack the Basin Water Plan and to undermine Supervisor Debbie Arnold's re-election efforts.

Arnold has consistently opposed formation of independent water management districts in the Paso basin on the grounds that they will only represent a tiny fraction of the overliers because their voting is based on acres of land ownership and/or assessed value. Arnold, although she has never said it, somehow channels the pre democratic aspect and lack of overall public policy accountability of such arrangements. California special districts are historically notorious for benefitting landed money interests, particularly in relation to water, urban redevelopment, conservation, and boutique community colleges in affluent areas.

It is not a coincidence that the State Board of Food and Agriculture rebuked the County, and particularly Supervisor Arnold. This was followed up by a slanted multi-column article on the issue in the SLO New Times, a proudly leftist weekly. This was further followed up by the appearance of Paso water district advocates during the Board meeting, who made the same complaints. Of course and on que, Supervisors Hill and Gibson chimed with full sympathy and indignation.

**Hill:** "I am concerned about the letter from the State; it's indicative of favoring some to the exclusion of others." "We need to address this."

**Gibson:** "The Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) has serious shortcomings – there are no specific plans or fees for implementation."

Readers can assess the accuracy of Gibson's assertion by looking at the link: <a href="http://pasogcp.com/service/document/download/190">http://pasogcp.com/service/document/download/190</a>

When it opens, scroll down to the detailed table of contents and click on Chapter 9. See what you think.

In terms of alleged lack of opportunities to engage on the Plan, Supervisor Peschong pointed that he has had 100 personal meetings (in addition to a rigorous schedule of public plan coordinating meetings) with agriculturalists involved in the basin. He also pointed out that he had 3 meetings with Patricia Wilmore of the Paso Robles Wine Alliance on the subject and had one more which was scheduled for this week. Ironically, she was one of the public speakers critical of the process if not the Plan.

Hill and Gibson tried to write this off as "just checking the boxes."

Relatedly and as part of the orchestration, Arnold's opponent, Ellen Beraud's, campaign website states in part:

#### Sustainable Groundwater Management

North County's groundwater management is in crisis. With no plan or meaningful oversight in place, water levels continue to drop and threaten the health of the aquifer. Instead of approving a thoroughly researched management plan in 2013, the incumbent led the Board of Supervisors to approve the use of millions of General Fund taxpayer dollars to subsidize the water needs of a few politically well-connected land owners. As our North County groundwater basins continue to decline, we can't afford another term of inaction. We desperately need a transparent groundwater management plan that fairly and sustainably protects our county's most precious resource. By implementing carefully considered,

reasonable, and equitable water policy, we can both promote economic growth, and preserve our water supply for generations to come.

In fairness, Beraud should lay out the specific changes she would make in the Plan, which is ready for Board of Supervisors' consideration and shipment to the State Department of Water Resources by the January 2020 deadline. Just what parts of the current Plan constitute a "no plan," and "how does that Plan default on "providing meaningful oversight"?

Similarly, just who are the politically well-connected landowners who are being subsidized by the current planning process? Perhaps it's most of the 8,000 voters who rejected the AB 2432 plan several years ago. Could Beraud name three who overlie the basin?

It appears that certain birds of a feather are all lined up on this one.



#### **Background:**

The basins subject to SGMA include:

- 1. Cuyama Valley (DWR No. 3-013, "Cuyama")
- 2. Salinas Valley Paso Robles Area (DWR No. 3-004.06, "Paso")
- 3. Salinas Valley Atascadero Area (DWR No. 3-004.11, "Atascadero")
- 4. San Luis Obispo Valley (DWR No. 3-009, "San Luis Obispo")
- 5. Los Osos Valley Los Osos Area (DWR No. 3-008.1, "Los Osos")
- 6. Los Osos Valley Warden Creek (DWR No. 3-008.2, "Warden Creek")
- 7. Santa Maria River Valley Santa Maria (DWR No. 3-012.01, "Santa Maria")
- 8. Santa Maria River Valley Arroyo Grande (DWR No. 3-012.02, "Arroyo Grande")

An extensive report concerning the progress to date in formulating plans for each of the subject water basins is available at the link:

https://agenda.slocounty.ca.gov/iip/sanluisobispo/agendaitem/details/10958

When it opens, click on the tab: County Groundwater Basin Summaries and Key Updates.

#### Costs to date:

## Budget Status Update for SGMA Program

as of 8/31/2019

The table below represents the County's SGMA Program FY 2019-20 budget and expenditures by basin. Given the complexity of each basin's approach to funding the GSP development, this table does not attempt to depict the multi-year program costs or cost sharing/in-kind services contributed by partner agencies. See footnotes for other key elements of basin funding approaches.

		Current Fiscal Year Budget Status (1)							
Basin <sup>(2), (3)</sup>	GSP Development Phase Duration in Fiscal Years <sup>(4)</sup>	FY 2019-20 Budget		FY 2019-20 Costs to Date	FY	Remaining 7 2019-20 Budget		Total SGMA Costs to Date (7/1/17 - Current)	
SGMA Program		2,745,425.80			\$	2,745,425.80			
Los Osos Basin	FY 17/18-19/20		\$	1,504.56	\$	(1,504.56)		\$ 72,641.81	
Cuyama Basin	FY 17/18-19/20		\$	1,938.56	\$	(1,938.56)		\$ 67,019.91	
Paso Basin	FY 17/18-19/20		\$	33,058.60	\$	(33,058.60)		\$ 919,921.71	
San Luis Obispo Basin	FY 17/18-21/22		\$	85,422.82	\$	(85,422.82)		\$ 199,693.72	
Santa Maria Basin	FY 17/18-21/22		\$	781.21	\$	(781.21)		\$ 45,322.97	
Atascadero Basin	FY 17/18-21/22		\$	868.02	\$	(868.02)		\$ 6,140.71	

County General Fund (GF) Contribution Total
Flood Control Zone General (FCZ) Contribution Total

SGMA Program Total (GF + FCZ)

\$ 2,745,425.80	\$ 123,573.77	\$ 2,621,852.03	\$ 1,310,740.83
	\$ 148,898.73		\$ 2,127,306.73
	\$ 272,472.50		\$ 3,438,047.56

Plan implementation schedules, water balancing techniques, and costs are included in Chapter 9 and can be seen in detail at the link <a href="http://pasogcp.com/">http://pasogcp.com/</a>. When it opens, click on the tab, which is at the top of the list on the right side of the page. There are many good maps illustrating potential new pipelines as well as calculations about how many acre-feet per year could be produced and delivered to specific locations.

http://pasogcp.com/service/document/download/190

**Item 27 - Deja Preview - County FY 2020 - 21 Budget Forecast.** The Board perfunctorily heard the presentation and had few questions. Supervisor Hill is pushing to make remediating homelessness one of the top priorities along with debt service, meeting State mandates, and public safety. Roads seems to be in limbo, since the new SB-1 gas tax revenue has replaced recent year general fund increased contributions. In effect they are partially balancing the budget with your increased gas tax payments.

**Background:** This one is pretty much the same story each year. "We are conservative but might have a small deficit of \$2 million." Of course this won't happen in a \$580 million budget. A few tweaks here and there can eliminate \$2 million in a Nano second. The staff report went on to list the potential problems which could be created by the State messing with formulas for various health and social service programs to the detriment of counties. The report also speculated on a possible national recession, perhaps caused by trade problems.

**Local Non Departmental - General Revenue Chart Money not Earmarked for Specific State Mandated Programs:** 

Revenue	2017-18 Actual	2018-19 Actual	2019-20 Budget	2019-20 Projection	2020-21 Forecast	% Diff: 19-20 Bud & 20-21 Forecast
Secured Prop Tax	\$112,642,651	\$119,082,798	\$124,727,507	\$125,393,838	\$131,662,764	5.6%
Unitary Tax	\$8,141,508	\$7,901,274	\$7,101,320	\$6,379,750	\$5,741,775	-19.1%
Supplemental Prop Tax	\$2,686,178	\$3,245,480	\$2,169,000	\$2,169,000	\$2,169,000	0.0%
Prop Tax in lieu of VLF	\$34,553,839	\$36,555,197	\$38,382,957	\$39,107,615	\$41,062,996	7.0%
Prop Transfer Tax	\$3,030,991	\$2,860,128	\$3,497,500	\$3,003,000	\$3,153,000	-9.8%
Sales Tax	\$11,202,504	\$11,833,604	\$11,780,000	\$13,720,000	\$13,874,000	17.8%
TOT	\$10,539,765	\$11,664,348	\$11,181,886	\$12,000,000	\$12,400,000	10.9%
All Other	\$15,567,934	\$16,360,522	\$14,310,214	\$26,020,790	\$21,362,659	49.3%
Total (Non-Dept. Rev.)	\$198,365,370	\$209,503,351	\$213,150,384	\$227,793,993	\$231,426,194	8.57%

Just this revenue alone has grown from \$198 million in FY 2017-18 to a projected \$231 million in FY 2020-21, a \$33 million (17%) increase in new dollars in just 3 years rolling in every year. Of course the County staff is forecasting a small deficit for FY 2021, but that is based on fully funding all their 2800 staff positions. The cost of fully funding the positions is never realized because of an average 7.5% staff vacancy rate, which has persisted over the years.

Perhaps the most important paragraph in the report relates to the closure of the Diablo Plant, which has been a foregone conclusion. It is important to note that the language describes the full impact, which some politicians and apologists have attempted to diminish in the last 8 months on the basis of a very specious UC Berkeley Economic Institute Study.

#### Diablo Canyon Power Plant

Over the longer term, the closure of Diablo Canyon Power Plant will have significant ramifications. The plant produces approximately 18,000 gigawatt-hours of electricity annually and accounts for roughly 20% of PG&E's electricity portfolio and 9% of California's electricity consumption. According to a 2013 study by Cal Poly, Diablo Canyon is one of the largest employers in the county and its annual local economic impact is estimated at \$1 billion. Additionally, the total economic impact of Diablo Canyon is approximately \$2 billion per year pays over \$30 million per year in unitary taxes (property taxes for a public utility), which is allocated to over 80 governmental agencies or jurisdictions within the County.

Now that Assemblyman Cunningham has officially raised the issue, where are the Board of Supervisors, City Councils, Chambers of Commerce, our Congressman, State Senator, and the leadership of both political parties? For that matter, why wouldn't our "Climatist" Governor, who cares so much about CO<sub>2</sub>, not intervene to forestall the generation of 8 million metric tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year?

Item 30 - Discussion of the Library's capital needs and explore the feasibility of seeking capital funding through a countywide parcel tax assessment with a November 2020 ballot initiative. The Board enthusiastically approved preparing the formal materials for placing an item on the November 2020 ballot for voter approval of a countywide special property tax assessment. No one batted an

eyelash. It is not known yet if SLOCOG will be proposing another one-half cent sales tax for transportation.

**Background:** This item was a preliminary discussion to determine if the Board would approve a staff project to work up a \$25 million library bond which would provide funds for improvement of local branches in both the cities and unincorporated areas of the county. The public service fee assessments on new development for this purpose raise very little funding. This is particularly true in the unincorporated areas, because there is so little development to tax.

Bond issues for physical facilities such as libraries, schools, and firehouses are generally popular, because the taxpayers can see what they are getting for their money. Children who benefit from libraries and schools constitute a preferred service group.

The current County budget states in part:

The Library provides materials and services countywide through 14 branch libraries and one main library. The Library operates as a Special Revenue Fund outside the County General Fund and is funded primarily by tax revenue and user fees.

#### Planning Commission Meeting of Thursday, October 24, 2019 (Completed)

#### **Cannabis Headwinds Growing:**

Item 5 - A continued hearing (from September 26, 2019) to consider a request by Henry Mancini/Darren Shetler for a Conditional Use Permit (DRC2019-00142 – formerly DRC2018-00171) to establish 21,600 square feet of indoor mixed-light cannabis cultivation within five greenhouses, 3,643 square feet of indoor nursery within one greenhouse, seven cargo containers for material storage, and related site improvements. A modification from the parking standards is requested to reduce the required number of parking spaces onsite from 50 to 12. The project would result in the disturbance roughly 3 acres of a 16.21-acre parcel. The proposed project site is within the Agricultural land use category and is located at 457 Green Gate Road, approximately 2 miles southeast of the City of San Luis Obispo. The Commission unanimously rejected the application on the grounds that there have been so many prior zoning code violations, including repeat violations. The applicant disputed these assertions and pled that the County is misapplying the Code and has violated due process in some cases. The issue could be appealed to the Board of Supervisors.

**At the Meeting:** There were a number of long time local people involved in the community who spoke against the project. These included George Donnati, Judy Darway, Bill Shiblehut, and others. These folks are not thrilled about cannabis or hemp.

**Planning Commission Cannabis Concern Evolving:** Separately from this item, four of the Commissioners expressed concern about cannabis in general and especially about odors. In several

cases Commissioners themselves have encountered odor issues, and one Commissioner reported that his wife has experienced illness and allergies requiring medical treatment. The Commission also received an oral report on the status of various cannabis permit appeals and requested to be kept up to date.

Item 6 - A continued hearing (from October 10, 2019) to consider a request by CB Farms for a Conditional Use Permit (DRC2017-00123) to establish outdoor and indoor cannabis cultivations, outdoor and indoor commercial cannabis nurseries, cannabis manufacturing, non-storefront dispensary, ancillary processing and transport activities. The project includes construction of a 37,350-square-foot greenhouse, and 8,000- square-foot metal building. The project will result in the disturbance of approximately 10-acres of a 25- acre parcel. A modification from the setback standards is requested to reduce the required setback to the eastern property line from 300 feet to 100 feet. The proposed project

is within the Agriculture land use category and is located at 4225 South El Pomar Road, approximately 4 miles northeast of the community of Atascadero. The site is in the El Pomar-Estrella Area Sub Area of the North County Planning Area. The hearing was continued at the request of the applicant. As previously reported, there is considerable opposition, which has increased over the intervening weeks.

As Our Background Stated 3 Weeks Ago: The Templeton Community Advisory Group Committee has prepared an extensive and detailed critique. A group named Californians for Sustainable Communities is challenging the adequacy of the CEQA review and demanding a full environmental impact report (EIR). They have retained the San Francisco law firm, Adams Broadwell Joseph & Cardozo (ABJC). The firm specializes in land use, zoning codes, CEQA, natural resources, and related matters. The firm has filed a number of letters, one of which presents extensive assertions with citations about how the County failed to follow CEQA properly in evaluating the proposed project.

ABJC's main compliant letter indicates Californians for Sustainable Communities is "Californians for Sustainable Communities is an unincorporated association of individuals and labor organizations that may be adversely affected by the potential public and worker health and safety hazards, and the environmental and public service impacts of the Project. The coalition includes International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 639, Southern California Pipe Trades District Council 16, and District Council of Iron Workers of the State of California, along with their members, their families, and other individuals who live, recreate and work in the County.

It is puzzling that a group of private sector labor unions would be bringing in heavy artillery to attempt to stop this application. One might think that it would be the wine industry, which often objects to odors that can bother visitors and disturb winery events such as weddings. Unions usually become involved when jobs and/or an industry are at risk, in instances such as the City of SLO gas appliance ban ordinance or the Phillips 66 rail spur application. Is there a connection we don't understand between the El Pomar area and the unions? They may certainly be a force when the County is considering the CEQA aspects of Diablo property reuse.

### **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

# ELECTRICITY AND IDEOLOGY – COMPETING PRIORITIES IN CALIFORNIA BY EDWARD RING

"If I wanted the power shut off for days by bloated, corrupt utilities enabled by bloated, corrupt one-party politicians," <u>quipped</u> Harmeet Dhillon, a San Francisco attorney and prominent conservative political activist, "I would have stayed in India."

Dhillon's observation pretty much sums up the frustration felt by millions of Californians last week. In Northern California, <u>nearly 800,000 homes and businesses</u> went without power. Some of them had power shut off for five days. In Southern California, even as the <u>Saddleridge fire</u> raged through neighborhoods in the San Fernando Valley, another 25,000 homes had their power shut off.

But while it's tempting to accept Dhillon's statement at face value, the causes of California's wildfire challenges are many and complex.

For example, while any public utility as massive as Pacific Gas and Electric is bound to have pockets of bloat and corruption within, that isn't the reason Californians experienced devastating wildfires in the summer of 2018. And while California's one-party politicians have arguably enabled PG&E and other utilities by relieving them of a <u>portion of their liability</u> for wildfires, these same politicians have saddled PG&E with renewables mandates that diverted billions of dollars which could have been spent on wildfire mitigation.

Bureaucrats and politicians have used a shopworn phrase, "the new normal," to describe California's supposed future of endless and devastating wildfires. Last week we heard it again, this time in reference to massive power outages deliberately imposed to prevent these wildfires. But neither of these have to become normal. While none of the causes of devastating wildfires can be mitigated overnight, there are many steps that can reduce their frequency and intensity within a few years.

#### Why Were California's Wildfires So Devastating?

During the 2018 wildfires, Californians repeatedly were told that "climate change" was the primary cause, and that as a consequence, these fires would become a fact of life from then on. It's true that fire danger is elevated during droughts and heatwaves—and therefore "climate change" can be connected to more severe wildfires. But there are other, bigger factors. The most significant of these is decades of aggressive fire suppression.

In the natural forest and chaparral that defines most of California's fire-prone regions, natural fires sparked by lightning had been a part of the ecosystem for millennia. In mature forests, these fires periodically would sweep through to burn out the smaller trees and vegetation. This not only would reduce tinder that otherwise would accumulate, but the removal of these smaller trees and shrubs that competed with mature trees for water and nutrients would ensure the health of the larger trees. When ecologists claim California's trees are stressed, they're right, but when California's politicians echo these concerns, they opportunistically focus on climate change, instead of telling the truth about the role that aggressive fire suppression has played in undermining the health of these trees.

Opinions vary regarding how much of the conflagrations of 2018 could have been avoided, but nobody disputes that more could have been done. Everyone agrees, for example, that <u>aggressive fire suppression</u> has been a mistake. Most everyone agrees that <u>good prevention measures include</u> forest thinning (especially around power lines), selective logging, controlled burns, and <u>power line upgrades</u>. And everyone agrees that residents in fire-prone areas need to create defensible space and fire-harden their homes.

Opinions also vary as to whether or not environmentalists stood in the way of these prevention measures. In a <u>blistering critique</u> published in the aftermath of the fires of 2018, investigative journalist Katy Grimes cataloged the negligence resulting from environmentalist overreach.

"For decades," Grimes wrote, "traditional forest management was scientific and successful—that is until ideological, preservationist zealots wormed their way into government and began the overhaul of sound federal forest management through abuse of the Endangered Species Act and the 're-wilding, no-use movement."

U.S. Representative Tom McClintock, whose Northern California district includes the Yosemite Valley and the Tahoe National Forest, told Grimes that the U.S. Forest Service 40 years ago departed from "well-established and time-tested forest management practices."

"We replaced these sound management practices with what can only be described as a doctrine of benign neglect," McClintock explained. "Ponderous, byzantine laws and regulations administered by a growing

cadre of ideological zealots in our land management agencies promised to 'save the environment.' The advocates of this doctrine have dominated our law, our policies, our courts, and our federal agencies ever since."

Grimes went on to outline <u>the specific missteps</u> by federal authorities that led to America's forests turning into tinderboxes, starting in the Clinton Administration, made worse by activist judges who thwarted Bush Administration reforms, and accelerating during the complicit Obama presidency.

California's 2018 wildfires were unusually severe, but they were <u>not historic firsts</u>. And while <u>the four-year drought that ended in 2016</u> left a legacy of dead trees and brush, it was forest mismanagement that left those forests overly vulnerable to droughts in the first place.

#### Reducing the Destructive Impact of Wildfires Won't Be Easy

When the destruction caused by fires is measured, explanations typically include the reality of more people living in forested areas. Clearly, the human and financial harm from a wildfire is greater when people are living in its path. But another, less-heralded consequence of more people living in the so-called "wildland-urban interface" is that compared to trees in the forest, wind driven wildfires actually combust and spread faster when encountering homes, and the infrastructure associated with homes.

This is why, for example, in the devastating Paradise fire, there were photographs of the aftermath showing homes burned down to their foundations, while <u>adjacent trees remained standing</u> relatively intact. None of the potential solutions to this reality are easy. Hardening homes to resist ignition works best when wind-driven embers hitting roofs and eaves are the cause of the spread. But when a so-called <u>fire tornado</u> whips into homes at temperatures up to 2,000 degrees and at speeds in excess of 100 miles per hour, it is almost impossible to make a home fire-resistant.

Creating defensible space, along with <u>hardening homes</u>, is an effective defense against wildfires when they don't become cataclysmic super fires such as were seen in the summer of 2018. Even then, natural fires have to be allowed to burn, regularly reducing excess tinder, or teams have to go into the forest and remove all of it. Alternatively, controlled burns regularly have to be set to in the hope that they will remove tinder in a safer and more cost-effective manner.

An encouraging example of how a consensus is slowly forming to revise forest management came a few years ago from a spokesperson for the Environmental Defense Fund, who advocated for <u>more salvage logging</u> to reduce the intensity of future fires. Arguing that years of fire suppression made it impossible to "let nature heal itself," the writer proposed the Forest Service authorize "merchantable dead tree removal [which] will contribute revenue that then can be used for recovery efforts including tree planting."

This approach can work not only with dead trees but with healthy live trees. Expediting permits for property owners and logging companies to remove a percentage of commercially valuable mature trees in exchange for them also removing dead trees and dense undergrowth is a financially viable way to quickly restore forests to the state they were in prior to decades of aggressive fire suppression. If this were done, natural fires no longer would be as likely to become super fires. Salvage logging would also make it easier to manage "controlled burns" since the quantity of undergrowth already would be reduced.

#### **Preventing Fires Sparked by Transmission Lines**

Some of the most devastating fires of the past few years were caused by sparks from transmission lines. Directing public funds and a portion of ratepayer revenue to hardening transmission lines is an important priority, but should be subject to cost/benefit analysis. Burying high voltage lines, for example, costs \$3 million per mile. With more than 25,000 miles of high voltage transmission lines in California, burying all of them would cost \$75 billion.

That's just scratching the surface. California also has 160,000 miles of overhead distribution lines which, while carrying lower voltages, are still capable of sparking fires. To bury them all? Over a *half-trillion* dollars.

And burying power lines underground brings its own set of problems. Maintenance of underground power conduits is much more costly. They are susceptible to flooding, damage from rodents, earthquakes, and inadvertent disruption caused by new construction or maintenance of other conduits such as telecommunications fiber or water and gas mains.

Another way to <u>reduce the potential</u> for overhead power lines to spark wildfires is to wrap the wires with insulation, replace wood poles with composite ones, and install <u>covered conductors</u>. <u>Additional steps</u> include installing "fast-acting fuses, advanced lightning arrestors, and other devices that can react more quickly to minimize fire risks."

Finally, cutting off power when high winds and high temperatures greatly elevate fire risk should remain an option for utilities, but the process needs to be refined. The headline of an <u>article just published</u> by the *Los Angeles Times* says it all: "PG&E's blackouts were 'not surgical by any stretch.'" The story explains the distinction between "networked" distribution systems, where power can be routed over several paths of distribution lines and circuits, and "radial" systems, where lone power lines carry power into service areas.

The advantage of a networked system is that if high winds and hot weather are threatening to spark a fire around one section of the system, that line can be shut down but power can still reach all service areas using other routes, maintaining service everywhere.

While reducing or even eliminating wildfires sparked by transmission lines is a worthy goal, that focus must not distract policymakers from more comprehensive solutions. Even if all risks from power lines were eliminated, wildfires will still be sparked by lightning strikes as well as by other types of human-caused accidents. Forest thinning and controlled burns are necessary to ensure that when fires do start, they are lower-intensity fires. At the same time, homes in the urban-wildland interface need to be hardened against combustion, with defensible space around them, so low-intensity fires are a survivable threat.

#### **Energy Policy and Wildfire Management Are Interlinked**

PG&E deserves much criticism, but it is important to recognize that no other utility in California is responsible for providing service to nearly as much territory. It is relatively easy for municipal power utilities to maintain their service areas, since their customer base is in a densely populated area. PG&E, on the other hand, is responsible for providing service to customers spread out over 70,000 square miles. Converting a grid from a radial configuration to a networked configuration over territory that vast is far more difficult.

No discussion of how utilities should cope with wildfire risk is complete without considering the impact of renewables mandates. The expense that utilities incur to extend their distribution lines to far-flung solar and wind farms across the state is money that could be used to upgrade transmission lines, pay for networked distribution systems, and where most necessary, bury transmission lines. And the increased mileage of transmission lines necessitated by connecting to disbursed solar and wind farms not only means more potential fire hazards but because these intermittent power sources have to be balanced continuously, it means more electrical traffic on the grid.

The only potential upside of renewables mandates is the possibility that if cost-effective power storage is developed at scale—i.e., cheap and affordable battery systems with capacities measured in hundreds of megawatt-hours per unit, then grid electricity can be distributed and stored. This would permit uninterrupted power whenever transmission lines delivering power into an area is cut off, since the power stored in these batteries would pick up the slack.

In general, however, renewables mandates in California redirect utility resources away from safety, and into technologies that may soon be obsolete. Do we really want to construct a 2.3 gigawatt-hour electricity storage facility at Moss Landing, on California's Central Coast, using lithium-ion technology, when solid-state batteries may be a reality within the next 10 years? Should we really carpet the Mojave Desert with photovoltaic panels, when safe and cost-effective fission reactors are being constructed all over the world, and commercially viable <u>fusion power</u> could be here within the next 20 to 30 years?

It would be a tremendous setback if the consequence of devastating wildfires in recent years would be <u>prohibitions on new housing</u> in the urban-wildland interface. Using "climate change" as their rallying cry,

that is the solution according to some policymakers and activists. But denying to all but the wealthiest Californians a chance to live in rural areas is a cruel and regressive solution. It is particularly unwarranted if one recognizes that "climate change" has little to do with elevated fire risks and more intense fires.

Instead, Californians need to pursue an interlinked set of solutions to minimize risk. Property owners need to harden their structures against fires and create defensible space. Forest management practices need to embrace selective logging conditional on the removal of undergrowth. Utilities need to invest in transmission line upgrades and networked systems. And California's determination to pour hundreds of billions into implementing renewables needs to be examined not only against the obvious pitfall of likely obsolescence but against the costs and benefits of that course versus building a safe and reliable power grid that can meet the needs and expectations of residents in the 21st century.

\* \* \*

Edward Ring is a co-founder of the California Policy Center and served as its first president. This article originally appeared on the website <u>American Greatness</u>.

## UNIVERSITIES BREED ANGER, IGNORANCE, AND INGRATITUDE

#### BY VICTOR DAVIS HANSON

In turning out woke and broke graduates, they have a lot to answer for.

What do widely diverse crises such as declining demography, increasing indebtedness, Generation Z's indifference to religion and patriotism, static rates of home ownership, and a national epidemic of ignorance about American history and traditions all have in common?

In a word, 21st-century higher education.

A pernicious cycle begins even before a student enrolls. A typical college-admission application is loaded with questions to the high-school applicant about gender, equality, and bias rather than about math, language, or science achievements. How have you suffered rather than what you know and wish to learn seems more important for admission. The therapeutic mindset preps the student to consider himself a victim of cosmic forces, past and present, despite belonging to the richest, most leisured, and most technologically advanced generation in history. Without a shred of gratitude, the young student learns to blame his ancestors for what he is told is wrong in his life, without noticing how the dead made sure that almost everything around him would be an improvement over 2,500 years of Western history.

Once admitted, students take classes from faculty who, polls reveal, are roughly 90 percent liberal. According to one recent survey, Democrat professors on average outnumber Republican faculty by a 12-to-1 ratio on the nation's supposedly diverse campuses. But such political asymmetries are magnified by a certain progressive messianic self-righteousness that turns the lectern into the pulpit, the captive class into a congregation. The rare conservative professor is more resigned to the tragedy of the universe and, in live-and-let-live fashion, vacates the campus arena to the left-wing gladiators who wish to slay any perceived heterodoxy.

Campus activism has replaced the old university creed of disinterested inquiry. Students are starting to resemble military recruits in boot camp, prepping to become hardened social-justice warriors on the frontlines of America's new wars over climate change, gun control, abortion, and identity politics. In Camp Yale or Duke Social Warrior Base, they learn just enough about purported historical oppression to make them dangerous, as they topple statues, demand the renaming of streets and buildings, and swarm professors deemed politically incorrect.

No wonder that certain issues — abortion, global warming, illegal immigration — are mostly off-limits to campus disagreement. Safe spaces, racial theme houses, and censorship have replaced the 1960s ideals of unfettered free speech and racial and ethnic integration and assimilation. Today's students often combine the worst traits of bullying and cowardice. They are quite ready as a mob to dish it out against unorthodox individuals, and yet they're suddenly quite vulnerable and childlike when warned to lighten up about Halloween costumes or a passage in *Huckleberry Finn*. The 19-year-old student is suddenly sexually mature, a Bohemian, a *cosmopolitês* when appetites call — only to revert to Victorian prudery and furor upon discovering that callousness, hurt, and rejection are tragically integral to crude promiscuity and sexual congress without love.

The curricula in the social sciences and humanities are largely politicized. Culture, history, and literature are often taught through the binary lenses of victims and victimizers, as a deductive zero-sum melodrama. There is little allowance for tragedy, irony, and paradox or simply the complexities of the human experience. That preexisting slavery, imperialism, and atrocity were as common in the New World, Asia, and Africa as in Europe is rarely mentioned in the boilerplate campus indictment of the West. The reason that the Aztecs were in Mexico and Central America rather than Madrid was not that they were morally superior. Nor was it that they lacked imperial impulse. Rather, they lacked oceangoing technology, sophisticated maritime navigation, gunpowder, horses, steel, and a military tradition dating back to Rome. So they confined their genocidal sacrifices and imperial conquests to their neighbors on the Mexican peninsula.

Stranger still, the actual structure of the university is as reactionary as its governing ideology is radical.

In a society where almost no one has lifetime job security, professors take for granted archaic ideas of tenure as a modern career birthright. Yet they seem reluctant to extend such costly indulgences to other part-time instructors who are less fortunate.

The dirty little secret on campuses is that a legion of exploited, temporary lecturers, usually without multiyear contracts, are paid far less than tenured professors — often to teach the same classes. In short, an entire caste of low-paid faculty who lack the perks and benefits of their liberal permanent superiors subsidize thousands of colleges and their supposedly liberal agendas. The academic mentality

is to feel angst about the distant plight of the would-be illegal immigrant waiting to cross the border; the angst is a sort of medieval penance for ignoring the exploited lecturer under one's nose who indirectly supports the perks of the tenured.

Progressive college administrators, in the abstract, love unions and collective bargainers as long as they stay off campus and far away from their own exploited teachers. Tenure was originally designed to protect the sometimes unorthodox and even heretical views of the faculty. Today, however, professors who preach "diversity" in lockstep do not want to hear diverse ideas and values, among either students or faculty. Tenure has become not protection for against-the-grain expression but a merit badge for the party faithful coming up through the ranks. Try giving a public lecture on campus about the ill effects of abortion, the inconsistencies of global-warming advocacy, respect for the Second Amendment, or skepticism over identity politics. The result would be a student version of the Jacobin Reign of Terror.

The federal government guarantees student loans to pay skyrocketing tuition and room and board. That guarantee has empowered crony-capitalist universities to hike their annual costs far above the rate of inflation — without much worry over what happens to their customers when and if they graduate.

Elsewhere in the real world, buyers receive guarantees when they pay for services. Consumers are appraised of the risks of taking out high-risk loans. But most colleges and universities are exempt from such oversight. At first, students don't seem to object — at least when they are in school and still mesmerized by luxury apartments, latte bars, Club Med fitness centers, and dreams of six-figure salaries upon graduation as payback for their progressive fides. Apparently, campuses have adopted the logic of car dealers who jack up the prices of their autos at buying time with all sorts of hip, extra accessories that hypnotize consumers into taking out multiyear loans to purchase luxury models beyond their means.

Eighteen-year-olds entering college are seldom warned by campus financial officers exactly how long their debt obligations will last — or which majors are likely to lead to better salaries after graduation. None are given itemized bills that are broken down to show where their money is going. Many who will remain in debt for years might have wished to know how much they paid for the vast swamp of non-teaching facilitators and high-paid administrators.

Colleges today can never assure students that after graduation they will at least test higher on the standardized tests than when they entered. If colleges could do that, they'd long ago have required exit examinations to boast of their success. Instead, the higher-education industry insists that almost any baccalaureate degree is a good deal, without worrying about how much it costs or whether their brand certifies any real knowledge. Again, the logic is that of consumer branding — as we see with Coca-Cola, Nike, and Google — in which status rather than cost-benefit efficacy is purchased. Does anyone believe that a graduating senior of tony Harvard, Yale, or Stanford knows more than a counterpart at Hillsdale or St. John's?

The net result is a current generation that owes \$1.6 trillion in college loans to the federal government. And that debt is now affecting the entire country, including those who never went to college, who as taxpayers eventually may be asked to forgive some if not all the debt. An entire generation of Americans has costly degrees; many cannot use them to find well-paying jobs, and they increasingly forgo or delay marriage, child-rearing, and buying a car or home until their mid-twenties or thirties. All

that pretty much sums up the profile of Antifa, Black Lives Matter, and Occupy Wall Street adherents — or the environmental-studies major who is shocked that a skilled electrician makes three times more than he does.

## IS WATER AND POWER RATIONING CALIFORNIA'S FUTURE? BY KATY GRIMES

The Golden State is feeling more like an emerging market economy in a developing nation

Tuesday, another text message warning came in from Pacific Gas & Electric that power outages are imminent. Again. Couple that with a same-day heads-up message from the El Dorado Irrigation District that when the power is out, they cannot pump water to homes and businesses, and California is feeling more like an emerging market economy in a developing nation.

Californians have recently been treated to <u>power shut-downs</u> on windy days by the Investor Owned Utilities in both Northern and Southern regions. Claiming the power blackouts are for public safety and are needed to reduce any chance of electricity transmission lines again sparking wildfires on dry, windy days, as many as 2 million people were without power during the most recent power shutdown. And now we are looking at another, and another, for "ten years."

California is also facing legislated water rationing in 2020.

Drug-addicted and mentally-ill vagrants living and defecating on city streets, water and power rationing and outages, and many parts of California are resembling the worst results of a universal government corruption.

Without abundant water and electricity, will the Golden State be able to keep up with the demand and plans for building affordable housing, a high speed train, as well as the constant influx of illegal immigrants?

#### Power Outages, Rolling Blackouts, Zombie Apocalypse

"Weather conditions can change quickly," PG&E <u>said</u>. "Out of an abundance of caution, PG&E began providing notice to customers in advance of this safety event through automated phone calls, texts, social media and emails."

Former California Governor Jerry Brown called this California's "new normal," and told anyone critical to get used to it.

However, Gov. Gavin Newsom has decided to fight back, or appears to be putting up a front so as not to be compared to Governor Gray Davis, recalled for mismanagement of rolling power outages and blackouts in 2000.

"Following utility-directed power shutoffs that impacted nearly two million Californians and ahead of another Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) decision by Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E), Governor Gavin Newsom today demanded that PG&E do more to provide information for customers and take action to reduce the number of customers impacted," his press statement said Tuesday.

"While the immediate goal should be to better manage the current anticipated PSPS event, PG&E's short-term objectives should include steps to ensure that as few people as possible are impacted by any future PSPS decision,' wrote Governor Newsom in his letter to PG&E CEO William Johnson today."

Newsom can deflect and blame PG&E, but the buck always stops with the guy at the top.

Last week, PG&E Chief Bill Johnson told the <u>California Public Utilities Commission</u> to expect blackouts for another 10 years.

This did not resonate with the governor. In his <u>letter to PG&E CEO Bill Johnson</u>, Gov. Newsom demanded \$100 in either rebates or credit for each residence affected by the blackout, as well as \$250 for each small business, the Globe reported.

"The scope, scale, complexity, and overall impact to people's lives, businesses, and the economy of this action cannot be understated," said Marybel Batjer, CPUC president, in a letter to PG&E CEO William Johnson that issued a seven-point directive ordering PG&E to immediately address failures," Engineering News Record <u>reported</u>.

It appears the governor and CPUC Chairwoman are barking loudly, but are toothless dogs. There is very little sincerity emanating from either statement.

The California Public Utilities Commission "regulates investor-owned electric and natural gas utilities operating in California," says the CPUC on its <u>website</u>. "Through its oversight over utilities, the CPUC has played a key role in making California a national and international leader on a number of energy-related initiatives designed to benefit consumers, the environment, and the economy."

Yet through its oversight over utilities since the rolling blackouts of 2000, the CPUC hasn't put the hammer down on the Investor Owned Utilities to make the necessary infrastructure upgrades and repairs.

Shareholders were happy.

While shareholders were well compensated, this could come to an abrupt halt in PG&E's bankruptcy.

"Meanwhile, PG&E faces criticism over bankruptcy claimant compensation," Engineering News Record <u>reported</u>. <u>The utility's reorganization and repayment plan estimates debt over \$20 billion</u>, with \$12 billion for claimants and \$8.4 billion for fire victims."

California's electricity power grid has been <u>legislated</u> into fragility by the California Legislature and recent governors by mandating 33 percent renewable energy (2011) in the mix by 2020, then 50 percent (2015) by 2030, and 100 percent renewable energy (2018) by 2045, relegating nuclear, natural gas and coal to the back room. Combine that with the electric car subsidies and hundreds of charging stations installed up and down the state, and California's electricity grid is not able to handle the demand in 2019 – or beyond.

#### Water Shortages and Rationing

Is the future of the once great innovative Golden State homeless zombies, and water rationing and power outages, controlled by the state government?

Just last year Gov. Jerry Brown signed a pair of bills creating permanent residential water rationing standards throughout the state of California, despite that the drought had ended and two winters brought abundant rains.

<u>Senate Bill 606</u> by Sen. Bob Hertzberg (D-Los Angeles), and <u>AB 1668</u> by Assemblywoman Laura Friedman (D-Glendale), impose a mandatory limit of 55 gallons per person per day on indoor water consumption beginning in 2020, the Globe <u>reported</u>.

Rather than build much needed, already approved water infrastructure projects for less than the cost of implementing AB 1668 and SB 606, California's political class prefers to impose controls through water scarcity.

Since year 2000, California voters have approved <u>eight water bonds</u> totaling more than \$30 billion, according the Legislative Analyst's Office, and approved the construction of two more dams.

On May 9, 2016, Gov. Jerry Brown signed an Executive Order to "make water conservation a way of life" in California, which opened the floodgates for future water rationing legislation.

When the Oroville dam break in 2017 revealed incompetent and corrupt water management practices, it also shone a spotlight on California's political water decisions.

Since year 2000, with voters approving the eight water bonds totaling more than \$30 billion, not a penny has been spent on promised water storage projects. Yet the Legislature and Governor(s) only talk in terms of higher taxes and more water bonds, leaving voters to reason that these monies are really pension taxes, and are not going to the promises of more water.

Is this an "emerging market economy" of a third world country? A friend commented, "emerging market economies are headed upward, not spiraling downward at increased velocity." Countries whose governments orchestrate power shortages and ration water and food are usually run by totalitarian regimes.



#### Katy Grimes

Katy Grimes, the Editor of the California Globe, is a long-time Investigative Journalist covering the California State Capitol, and the co-author of California's War Against Donald Trump: Who Wins? Who Loses? This article was first published in the California Globe of October 23, 2019.









## SUPPORT COLAB! PLEASE COMPLETE THE

## MEMBERSHIP/DONATION FORM ON THE LAST PAGE BELOW



## MIKE BROWN ADVOCATES BEFORE THE BOS



VICTOR DAVIS HANSON ADDRESSES A COLAB FORUM



DAN WALTERS EXPLAINS SACTO MACHINATIONS AT A COLAB FORUM See the presentation at the link: <a href="https://youtu.be/eEdP4cvf-zA">https://youtu.be/eEdP4cvf-zA</a>



## AUTHOR & NATIONALLY SYNDICATED COMMENTATOR BEN SHAPIRO APPEARED AT A COLAB ANNUAL DINNER



NATIONAL RADIO AND TV COMMENTATOR HIGH HEWITT AT COLAB DINNER

# Coalition of Labor, Agriculture and Business 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: Company: Address: City: \_\_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_ Email: How Did You Hear About COLAB? ☐ Internet ☐ Public Hearing ☐ Friend ☐ Radio 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)