



**WEEKLY UPDATE
DECEMBER 19 - 25, 2021**

THIS WEEK

**NO BOS
CHRISTMAS/NEW YEAR'S PUBLIC AGENCY RECESS
NEXT SCHEDULED BOARD MEETING ON JANUARY 11, 2022**

OTHER AGENCIES DORMANT

WEEKLY UPDATE WILL RETURN JANUARY 9, 2022



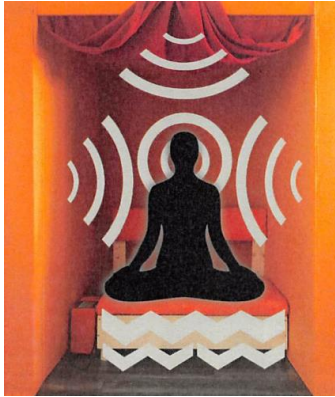
HOLIDAY FESTIVITIES

LAST WEEK

BOS

GROUNDWATER PLAN UPDATE DEADLINES MET/BUDGET OK

SOUNDWOMB PROJECT CONSULTANT CONTRACT APPROVED



**CRIMINALS TO BE DEPROGRAMMED WITH GONG MUSIC/\$576,000
COUNTY STAFF COSTS NOT DISCLOSED**



DROUGHT REPORT – SHORT-TERM ACTIONS, NO STRATEGIC SOLUTIONS

**MAJOR CONSOLIDATION OF PLANNING AND BUILDING FEES + INCREASES
APPROVED**

WORKFORCE HOUSING ORDINANCE MADE PERMANENT

FINAL REDISTRICTING MAP ADOPTED

LAWSUIT PROMISED BY LEFT PROGRESSIVES

PLANNING COMMISSION

MAJOR WINERY EXPANSION EAST OF PASO ROBLES APPROVED

EMERGENT ISSUES

COVID STILL PLATEAUED – WAITING FOR OMICRON

INFLATION IS EATING YOUR BACON

“CHUMASH HERITAGE” MARINE SANCTUARY BACK

**APCD REJECTS SCRIPPS INSTITUTION DUST STUDY
CLAIMS THEY USED BAD METHODOLOGY**

COLAB IN DEPTH

SEE PAGE 24

THE NEW DARK AGES

The woke assault on Western civilization is taking us backwards.

BY JOEL KOTKIN

THE LOGIC OF CALIFORNIA’S LEFTISTS WILL KEEP US ALL CHILDREN FOREVER

There’s a word to describe people who believe that unpleasant ideas can be eliminated by banning the “trigger words” that represent them: Such people are called children.

BY DAN GELERNTER

WHY IS THE LEFT WORRIED SUDDENLY ABOUT THE END OF DEMOCRACY?

They are fearful and angry not because democracy does not work, but because it does despite their own media and political efforts to warp it.

BY VICTOR DAVIS HANSON

THIS WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

ALL MEETINGS ARE 9:00 AM UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

No Board of Supervisors Meetings are scheduled until January 11, 2021

The Board and other regional agencies will be off on a Christmas/New Year's recess. Enjoy the respite.

LAST WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

Board of Supervisors Meeting of Tuesday, December 14, 2021 (Completed)

Item 16 - It is recommended that the Board receive and file a report on the implementation of Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) efforts in eight local groundwater basins. The Board received the report without controversy. The report is updated quarterly and is very complete. It provides an overview and the details of each of the subject basins listed below. The full report can be accessed by clicking on the link: [137991 \(ca.gov\)](#). It is well organized and is clear.

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

Background: The Paso Basin is by far the largest and presents the most challenges. It appears that the State has not yet approved the groundwater sustainability plan (GSP) submitted by the County and partner agencies. The Plan was submitted in January 2020, almost 2 years ago. The State apparently got around to reviewing the plan last June and determined that there are "deficiencies." It then appears that the Paso Basin Coordinating Committee (PBCC) engaged the consulting firm Todd Groundwater to work on the deficiencies. The report does not indicate if the State has responded.

The presentation of the budget table, below, has been updated and refined over the years, and presents a great summary of the revenues and expenditures. Something like this on a 5-year scale would be great for selecting and tracking proposed and ongoing long-range projects in the Planning and Building Department.

Attachment 4
FY 2021-22 Budget Status Update
for SGMA Program
as of 9/30/2021

The table below represents the County's SGMA Program FY 2021-22 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.

Basin ^{(2), (3)}	GSP Development Phase Duration in Fiscal Years ⁽⁴⁾	Current Fiscal Year Budget Status ⁽¹⁾			Total SGMA Costs to Date (7/1/17 - Current)
		FY 2021-22 Budget	FY 2021-22 Costs to Date	Remaining FY 2021-22 Budget	
SGMA Program		1,409,566.49		\$ 1,409,566.49	
<i>Los Osos Basin & Warden Creek Basin</i>	<i>FY 17/18-21/22</i>		\$ 5,806.35	\$ (5,806.35)	\$ 145,626.54
<i>Cuyama Basin</i>	<i>FY 17/18-21/22</i>		\$ 301.65	\$ (301.65)	\$ 70,768.08
<i>Paso Robles Basin</i>	<i>FY 17/18-21/22</i>		\$ 50,134.63	\$ (50,134.63)	\$ 1,170,413.10
<i>San Luis Obispo Basin</i>	<i>FY 17/18-21/22</i>		\$ 62,206.46	\$ (62,206.46)	\$ 1,492,491.57
<i>Santa Maria Basin & Arroyo Grande Basin</i>	<i>FY 17/18-21/22</i>		\$ 102,014.74	\$ (102,014.74)	\$ 455,239.89
<i>Atascadero Basin</i>	<i>FY 17/18-21/22</i>		\$ 392.10	\$ (392.10)	\$ 121,170.70
County General Fund (GF) Contribution Total		\$ 1,409,566.49	\$ 220,855.93	\$ 1,188,710.56	\$ 3,455,709.88
General Fund Revenue					
Grants			\$ 87,241.95		\$ 1,650,134.07
FCZG one-time (\$750,000) & Basin Partners					\$ 964,816.49
Total Revenue			\$ 87,241.95		\$ 2,614,950.56
Net General Fund			\$ 133,613.98		\$ 840,759.32
Flood Control Zone General (FCZ) Contribution Total			\$ 228,775.31		\$ 4,951,126.71
SGMA Program Total (GF + FCZ)			\$ 362,389.29		\$ 5,791,886.03

Item 20 - Request to receive and file a 60-day update on current drought conditions and related management actions for the Board's review of the continuing need for the July 13, 2021, proclamation of local emergency pursuant to Government Code section 8630. The report details the lack of precipitation, low reservoir levels, State water project zero deliveries, and steps that the County and other agencies are taking to encourage people to use less water.

Since the report is a current status report, it does not address long-term strategic solutions. Along with COVID restrictions, water rationing, land rationing, electrical energy rationing, housing rationing, medical care rationing, and motor fuel rationing, the public may wish to reconsider its support for the perpetuation of leftist governments at the National, State, and local levels, which have led society to this debacle.

Item 21 - Request to: 1) approve a FY 2021–22 contract with Soundheal Inc. in the amount not to exceed \$175,320 to test the effectiveness of sound meditation in improving mental health outcomes; and 2) delegate authority to the Health Agency Director or his designee to sign any amendments to the Contract, including Option to Renew for three additional years (through June 30, 2025) for a total cumulative amount not to exceed \$576,180. The Board approved the contract on 3/2 vote with Arnold and Compton dissenting. We believe this is an overpriced and unnecessary experiment and should have been rejected.

COLAB Note: Unless staffers or others with inside knowledge come forward and tell us what is really going on, the Board and the public may never know. In our opinion, the whole situation in our opinion reeks of both a hustle and a potential conflict of interest.

The County has suffered scams in the past. These include water scams, the IWMA corruption and self-serving programming, and former deceased Supervisor Adam Hill's aberrant and harassing behavior. No one would take action until damage was done. At some point the Soundheal scam will leak out. For \$576,000, the County could have examined the feasibility of industrial scale desalination, ending its policy of housing rationing, or actually providing modular homeless housing and measuring its impact on removing mental behaviors which cause homelessness.



Background:

One basic question: Should the County be posing as a medical researcher over 3 or 4 years to test Natrajan's product and methodology? Wouldn't this be a better role for the UCLA Medical School or other entities that are qualified to do clinical research? Another basic question is that when anyone reads the proposed contract, related internal emails, the program description, and other documents, does the program make logical sense from a scientific standpoint?

Control Group: For example, will there be a control group of patients in order to compare those who receive the treatments and those who don't? Since the patients are to be people in the criminal justice system, in jail or on probation, how would such selection process work, given varying crimes and sentence lengths? Both the contract and other documents seem silent on this critical issue.

The question was never answered on the record even though a speaker detailed the correct methodology.

Other issues and questions:

1. Who within the organization is the sponsor of this project? In other words, is it the Behavioral Health Director, a Division Head, a Commission, or someone else?
2. The staff recommends a \$175,320 contract, which can be extended for three successive years for a total of \$576,000. The staff report summarizes the authorization:

It is recommended that the Board:

- 1. Approve a FY 2021–22 contract with Soundheal Inc. in an amount not to exceed \$175,320, to test the effectiveness of sound meditation in improving mental health outcomes; and*

2. Delegate authority to the Health Agency Director or his designee to sign any amendments to the Contract, including Option to Renew for three additional years (through June 30, 2025) for a total cumulative amount not to exceed \$576,180.

Note that the Board is being requested to delegate to the Health Agency Director to reauthorize the second, third, and fourth years of the contract or \$400,860 for what is termed an “innovative program.”

The following table summarizes the annual expenditure and revenue associated with the SoundHeal contract:

	Contract Expenditure for Soul Womb	MHSA Innovation Component Funding	General Fund Impact
FY 2021-22	\$175,320	\$175,320	\$0
FY 2022-23	\$148,680	\$148,680	\$0
FY 2023-24	\$140,240	\$140,240	\$0
FY 2024-25	\$111,940	\$111,940	\$0
Total Contract	\$576,180	\$576,180	\$0

2. Program not Innovative: The program is being justified on the basis that it is “innovative, novel, creative, and ingenious.”

MHSA Innovation funding was created for the purpose of developing a new mental health practice or model, testing the model, evaluating the model, and sharing the results with the statewide mental health system. As per the Department of Health Care Services Guidelines for the Innovation Component: Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC), section 5830 provides for the use of Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funds for innovative programs. INN projects are novel, creative and/or ingenious mental health practices/approaches that contribute to learning, and that are developed within communities through a process that is inclusive and representative, especially of unserved, underserved and inappropriately served individuals.

The project is described in the Board letter as:

One of the projects outlined in the Innovation Plan is SoulWomb, a program provided through Soundheal, Inc. The SoulWomb project intends to use a sound meditation pod for a holistic, mindfulness-based treatment of Behavioral Health clients. A Non-Competitively Bid (NCB) Contract Justification for this contract was completed August 19, 2021 and approved by the County Purchasing Department. Soundheal Inc. is uniquely suited to carry out the implementation of this test project as it is the inventor and sole proprietor of the device required to complete the approved innovation project. The key goal of this project is to learn whether this sound meditation technique will be effective for increasing court and diversion clients’ wellness, participation and ultimately, improving mental health outcomes.

Why should the taxpayers fund “learning” for its staff and contract (locum tenens) professionals, many of whom are licensed psychologists, psychiatrists, or psychiatric social workers, and whose salaries and benefits exceed \$150,000 in many cases and \$200,000 in some cases. Are any educated in sound therapy already?

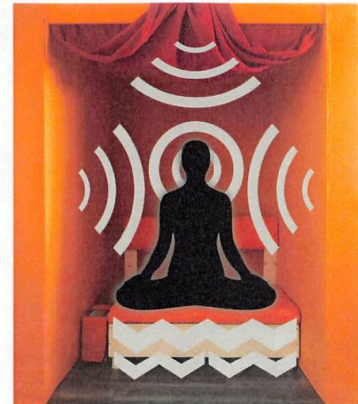
In fact, sound therapy is not innovative and has been widely practiced since the 1940's. There is extensive literature describing the success of and or lack of success of sound therapy. The County does not need to spend \$576,180 of taxpayer money to determine if sound therapy is effective. See the annotated article at the link below:

[Psychiatry and music v.2 \(2\).pdf](#)

3. The Program: Documents state in part:

*The proposed project is to deploy sound meditation/healing spaces, called “the SoulWomb” across various mental health facilities in the county within the county jail/justice system. Sound meditation sessions will be prescribed & scheduled by a clinician or therapist to augment patient’s usual treatment plan. The patients sit inside the SoulWomb which plays short 12-15 min audio pre-recorded orchestrated sequence of **ancient therapeutic** sounds all INN*

*. These sounds envelope’s the patient in the soothing music, getting them to a stress free, happy and comfortable state of mind almost immediately - much like a baby experiences inside the womb of their mother. This **private & sacred environment** facilitates patients to get focused quickly and deeply for the entire time they are in the SoulWomb and even after, when they exit the SoulWomb and continue on with their day.*



ounds and Vibro-acoustics played inside the Heal pod

COLAB Note: Just exactly what is “sacred” about the orange-colored pod with a cheesy futon inside?

If the County experts believe that these patients would benefit from a “sacred” environment, why not take them to religious services of the various faiths that are available in the community? Literally billions of humans have benefited from participation over the centuries. Many religions also teach accountability and responsibility for one’s actions. Many liturgies, especially those with music (some of it from history’s greatest composers) are emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually transformative. Many participants also enjoy fellowship, forgiveness, calmness, and cleansing. If the County will pay \$576,000 for Soundheal’s “sacred services,” what about free services from the community’s spiritual institutions?

List of alleged Benefits: The write-up below sounds like a tonic from a 19th century medicine show.

These sessions can be used by those in recovery, in prevention of relapse after recovery and even help family members of those in recovery to succumb to behavioral health issues themselves. The SoulWomb is aimed at relieving stress, irritability, anxiety, physical pain and can be used to address and treat a range of other mental health symptoms and concerns.

The goal of the SoulWomb session is to prevent burnout, perform optimally at work/home, enhance overall mental health and improve quality of life that is associated with recovery. Sound

meditation has been successfully used for 1000's of years to improve one's wellbeing with gongs, crystal bowls, tingshaws, drums, didgeridoos, chanting etc.

There is a precise science of how sound frequencies from these instruments work on our body and overall wellbeing. It's this same science that is used in recording these sounds from the instruments & then used in the SoulWomb. We have curated a set of sound meditation tracks that are intent based and provide very specific benefits over time. The idea is to use what has worked in the non-mental health context to the mental health system.

Each SoulWomb session lasts anywhere from 12-20 mins. In our trials done with over a 100 people, we have seen that a typical 15 minute session provides the same benefits as a 1 hour silent meditation session or a 1 hour sound meditation session. Part of the reason for this is how the SoulWomb envelopes you in the sound and the other part is because the you are devoid of the typical distractions in a room full of people.

With the assumption that in a given day, a SoulWomb can be available and used for a total of 6 hours a day. This means 12 sessions/patients in a day (or 60 sessions a week or 300 sessions a month). Typically the clinician/therapist can schedule the SoulWomb sessions before or after their regularly scheduled visits/meetings.

We have a curriculum and sequence of intent based meditation sessions the therapists/clinicians will review with the clients when they start and use questionnaires and journals as a means to indicate how they are doing along with taking vital biometrics for a more scientific assessment of health. These data points will give us a clearer picture of current mental health status as well as be able to track progress week over week.

The actual Program Plan document lists a somewhat different set of benefits:

The key learning goal of this project is to learn whether this sound meditation technique will be effective for increasing forensic mental health court and diversion clients' wellness participation and, ultimately, improving their mental health outcomes. The learning goals align with the direct intervention and assess the impact in various factors associated with coping, decreasing depression and anxiety symptoms, better medication management, and overall health and mental improvement. The intervention process assessment and results are based on non-invasive biofeedback devices to measure improvement related to mental health experiences over time, as well as the completion of short assessments on a weekly basis, which will allow the fine tuning of the frequency use of the intervention and the time spent for the meditation sessions.

What is a non-invasive biofeedback device? A thermometer, a blood pressure cuff, – probably not in this case. What is the meaning in the context of this program?

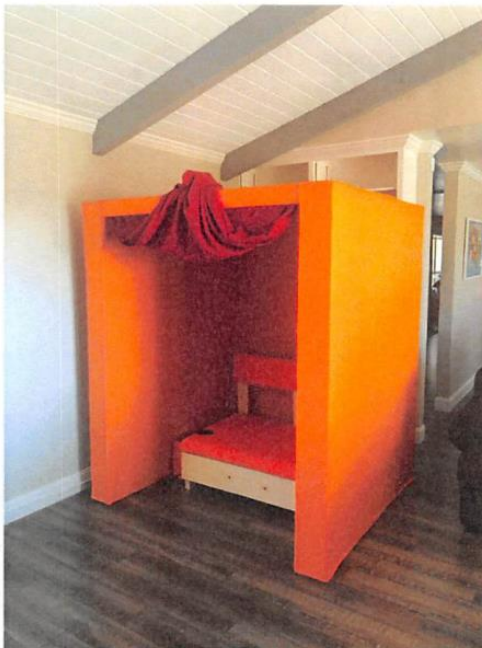
The measures for the program are entirely subjective:

SoundHeal SoulWomb Project		
Outcome Measures	FY 2021-2022	FY 2022-2023
Percent increase of participants reporting they have the foundation for their own self-meditation or wellness practice, as measured by retrospective surveys.	30%	30%
Percent increase of participants reporting they are more optimistic about their self, as measured by retrospective surveys.	30%	30%
Percent improvement in participant self-awareness, as measured by retrospective surveys.	30%	30%
Percent decrease in participant anxiety, stress, or feelings of detachment, as measured by retrospective surveys.	25%	25%
Percent increase in participant ability to stay calm, relieve stress, and focus, as measured by retrospective surveys.	25%	25%

Do the patients self-report on a survey on the “outcome measures” above, or does a clinician evaluate them? What would be the measures of an objective clinical evaluation by diagnosis: more self-control, staying off drugs, ability to cooperate, need for less medication, or what?

4. Sole Source Vendor: The County states that Soundheal, the proposed vendor, is unique and should be selected as a sole source vendor without bid or comparative/competitive requests for proposals.

COLAB Note: Incomprehensibly, Mr. Natrajan designed the project for the County, and then the County gives him a \$576,000 no-bid contract to implement it. This looks like a blatant conflict of interest. How much was he paid to design the project? Didn't the County follow some of the same process with respect to the design, construction, and project management of the Los Osos Sewer Treatment Plant?



Soundheal's Pod: An orange-colored foam crate with a cheesy futon? How does the curtain keep out extraneous sounds? What happens when a fire truck goes by or the phone rings?

A \$3,500 Pod on the market.

There are many pods on the market. These run anywhere from \$1,500 to \$15,000, depending on the quality, design, and sound reproduction features.

According to another email, the Soundheal pod and program operates as follows:

Technology: *The sound inside the pod: the speakers, subwoofer concealed inside the pod & the touch screen interface for participants to select meditations. b. The heart rate monitor (optional for the user) - to be able to track heart rate and heart rate variability during each of their sessions using a smart phone.*

The Board should have asked staff to play some sample meditations as part of its assessment of the prudence of approving the contract. The public could have also judged the likelihood of success.

How Heal/SoulWomb works: *Heal is a schedulable, on-demand sound meditation pod used either separately or in conjunction with current services provided by the county to help enable long term lifestyle changes with the following benefits: No need to learn meditation, sounds put you in meditation. Guided meditations in multiple languages to serve a wider population's needs. Available throughout the working day at the participant's convenience before and after their therapy/counselor sessions. Sounds & vibrations help in coping with anxiety, depression, addiction and stress facilitate deeper therapist/client relationship with the Heal curriculum integration (attached) Outcomes-based meditation, where participants will be able to track progress over time. Voluntary bio-metric feedback data to record heart rate variability using tools like Heartmath to show that Heal/SoulWomb sessions work.*

5. is the contract retro-active? Has the pod already been delivered, and are staff being trained and services rendered prior to Board approval of the contract? The contract states in part:

Service Date. *a. Services shall commence on or after October 1, 2021 and shall end upon the end of the duration date, as outlined in section 3 of this Exhibit, below.*

COLAB Note: **The contract was not submitted to the Board until the November 1, 2021 meeting and was then continued to December 14. Is the County liable for any costs that have been incurred so far without Board approval?**

b. County specifically acknowledges that in anticipation of execution of this Contract, services within the scope of this Contract may have been provided in reliance on assurances that this Contract would be executed by the Parties by October 1, 2021. Services may have been rendered from October 1, 2021 to the date the Parties are executing this Contract, and which were intended in the best interest of the public health and welfare. County expressly authorizes the retroactive effective date under this Contract to be October 1, 2021. County also expressly authorizes payment for those services accepted by County at the same rates and under the same terms and conditions as stated in this Contract, even though this Contract is being signed after October 1, 2021.

c. If any services from October 1, 2021 until the date of execution of this Contract have been paid by a purchase order via County Purchasing Agent, that amount shall be deducted from the maximum allowed expenditure under Exhibit B of this Contract.

Per the email below, staff was talking to Soulheal about delivery of the pod back in July.

On Wed, Jul 21, 2021, 2:45 PM Timothy Siler wrote: Hi Mahesh! I have a quick question: will the pod be coming assembled and we just place and plug it in? Or will a little bit of assembly be required? Feel free to call, if you're free! Timothy Siler, M.P.P. Administrative Services Officer II Prevention & Outreach Behavioral Health Department County of San Luis Obispo Health Agency P: (805) 781-4064

Hi Tim - The pod will require a bit of assembly and setup. Everything will take about 1-2 hours. Once installed it's plug and play. Best. Mahesh

For a “plug and play” system, it is pretty expensive over the 4 years. Most of the contract is for technical IT type services, including:

- **Project Manager (PM) \$256,800 (full-time)** – The PM will manage end client needs, assist with scheduling, incident tracking, incident prioritization, enable communication with stakeholders, provide regular scheduled project status readouts to update team and stakeholders. Work with the project director and help schedule meetings with clinicians to assist in documenting and building out curriculum, planning scheduled updates/upgrades and overall asset and resource management.
- **Project Data Analyst \$218,400 (full-time)** – The Project Data Analyst will assess, manage, and evaluate usage and generate project status reports to the PM and the Project Director. This person will analyze usage trends for forecasting and provide reports to the PM, report on curriculum efficacy, report on adherence to curriculum, and help the project manager optimize operations and scheduling based on historical usage data and trends.
- **Accounting \$29,120 (part-time)** – Accounting contractor to manage financial record keeping of the project.
- **Technical support \$24,960 (part-time/as needed)** – Tech Support to help with physical space upkeep, upgrade of physical space, parts upgrade, electronics upgrade, and overall maintenance.
- **Sound Meditation Consultant \$5,760** – This person will help with providing voice overs and sound meditation instruments for recording sounds.

The agreement states that the contractor will work with the County Innovation Evaluator team throughout the program to provide program data, information, and documentation on SoulWomb. What is the cost of the County evaluator team?

Staffing:

- 1) 0.40 FTE Project Manager
- 2) 0.58 FTE Project Data Analyst
- 3) 0.10 FTE Accountant
- 4) 0.05 Technical Support

5) 0.01 Sound Meditation Consultant

How does this deployment of the consultant staff jive with the annual budget amounts over the 4 years?

What are the staff and overhead costs for the County to fund its operation of the program?

The consultant cost is \$576,000, but there must be someone from the County internally responsible for the project, scheduling the training, scheduling the patients, etc. The write-up is silent on this cost. Thus, the total cost for the project over 1 or 4 years has not been presented.

Cost benefit:

The Plan states that the County expects to serve from 160 to 240 individuals per year. This would be an average of 200 per year. The average cost per year per patient over the 4-year \$576,000 version of the contract would then be \$2,880 per year. This does not include whatever costs will be incurred for the County operation of its side of the program. It is not clear if these are unduplicated individuals or individuals who remain in the program for more than one year. The sessions are from 12-20 minutes long.

It further states that the process includes 3 sessions per week, but it does not indicate how many weeks will be provided to a typical patient.

The section goes on to say:

The SoulWomb experience is designed to be used with a curriculum created and curated after SoulWomb creator team interviews of several clinical psychologists and therapists in the medical field and recovery centers. SoulWomb therapists will work with participants and use journals, questionnaires, and group discussion to assess the participant's engagement and results from the SoulWomb session.

But the County response to our records request states in part:

No therapeutic services are being provided by SoulHeal. SoulHeal staff will operate the pod but County Justice Division clinical staff provide all therapy. 'SoulWomb' is not a therapy, but an ancillary self-care activity.

The Plan, Board letter, internal documents, justification form for a sole source contract, and other related writings are rife with such inconsistencies and filled with jargon designed to, perhaps, impress and/or confuse upper County management, the Board, and the general public into believing that this Board item should be approved.

Overall, the Program appears to be a jumble of half-baked ideas, and further, claims to justify spending \$576,000 of State MHSA-funded taxpayer money before some deadline expires. The Board should not have approved it.

Item 22 - Hearing to consider adoption of an ordinance amending Land Use Ordinance Section 22.30.470, Residential – Workforce Housing Subdivision Ordinance, to eliminate the December 22, 2021 expiration date of the ordinance. The Board voted unanimously to make the workforce housing ordinance permanent. It is a small step.

On November 22, 2016, the Board adopted Land Use Ordinance Section 22.30.470 (Residential – Workforce Housing Subdivision Ordinance) to incentivize the construction of small single family detached dwellings on individual lots. This ordinance, which was developed with significant input from the local building community, eases development and subdivision standards and provides other incentives in exchange incorporating new dwellings that are affordable to households earning up to 160 percent of the median income (“workforce housing”). The ordinance was initially adopted as a pilot program with an expiration date of December 22, 2021.

The ordinance has not been used very often, but it has potential. Staff reports:

While the pilot ordinance has not been widely used by developers, it’s another tool in the “tool kit” that gives builders more flexibility and helps to facilitate the construction of affordable housing. The ordinance was successfully used by Peoples Self Help Housing (PSHH) to subdivide a 1.68-acre parcel in Nipomo into 10 lots ranging from 4,151 to 12,324 Page 3 of 3 square-feet and the development of 10 workforce housing residences. Now that the first project has successfully gone through the process, more projects are likely to follow. One local Realtor informed staff that they have clients who are actively preparing applications for workforce housing subdivisions.

Item 23 - Hearing to consider amendments to the Building and Construction Ordinance, Title 19 of the San Luis Obispo County Code which will allow the County to enforce State regulations California Green Building Standards Code, 24 CCR, Part 11, known as CALGreen. Exempt from CEQA. The ordinance integrates the provisions of the wet garbage recycling ordinance with the Building Ordinance by requiring new development to provide container facilities for storage of the wet garbage. The Board approved the ordinance unanimously. It is a state mandate. It is easier for applicants and the public if the provision of the state requirements are incorporated into the local ordinance. Thus they don’t have to contend with 2 separate documents.

It is not known how much this increased cost is likely to impact permit applicants in the future.

(2) For projects covered by CALGreen or more stringent requirements of the County of San Luis Obispo, the applicants must, as a condition of the County of San Luis Obispo’s permit approval, comply with the following: a. Where five (5) or more Multi-Family dwelling units are constructed on a building site, provide readily accessible areas that serve Occupants of all buildings on the site and are identified for the storage and collection of Recyclable Materials Container and Organic Materials Container materials, consistent with the three or more-container collection program offered by the County of San Luis Obispo, or comply with provision of adequate space for recycling for Multi-Family Premises and Commercial Premises pursuant to Sections 4.408.1, 4.410.2, 5.408.1, and 5.410.1 of the California Green Building Standards Code, 24 CCR, Part 11 as amended provided amended requirements are more

stringent than the CALGreen requirements for adequate recycling space effective January 1, 2020.

b. New Commercial or Multi-Family construction or additions resulting in more than 30% of the floor area shall provide readily accessible areas identified for the storage and collection of Recyclable Materials Container and Organic Materials Container materials, consistent with the three or more-container collection program offered by the County of San Luis Obispo, or shall comply with provision of adequate space for recycling for Multi-Family Premises and Commercial Premises pursuant to Sections 4.408.1, 4.410.2, 5.408.1, and 5.410.1 of the California Green Building Standards Code, 24 CCR, Part 11 as amended provided amended requirements are more stringent than the CALGreen requirements for adequate recycling space effective January 1, 2020.

Item 24 - Hearing to consider 1) an ordinance amending Planning and Building Fees in the County Fee Schedule “A” and County Fee Schedule “B” for Fiscal Year 2022-23; and amending the Position Allocation List (PAL) for Fund Center (FC) 142 – Department of Planning and Building by adding the following positions: 1.00 FTE Department IT Manager, 1.00 FTE IT Supervisor, 3.00 FTE Business Systems Analyst I-III, 2.00 FTE Software Engineer I-III; and deleting the following positions, 1.00 FTE Supervising Planner, 1.00 FTE Department Automation Specialist II, 1.00 FTE Administrative Services Manager, 1.00 FTE Planner II, 1.00 FTE Supervising Admin Clerk II. The Board approved the fee consolidation and increases on a split vote, with Compton and Arnold dissenting. They approved the expansion of the Departmental Information Technology staff unanimously.

Background: The material contained the annual cycle of fee increases for the Planning and Building Department. This year’s version is more significant in that it includes a major restructuring and consolidation of the fees. Separately, it includes creation of an expanded organic information technology unit within the Planning and Building Department. The two subjects, while tangentially related, seem to be a great amount for the Board to choke down at one sitting.

The Department has attempted to provide an apples-to-apples comparison of the impact. It is difficult, because the total revenue received depends on the number of permits processed, which in turn is a function of building volume, which in turn is a function of the economy. Thus, it is difficult to predict.

In this regard, the write-up states:

Change in Fee Revenue For purposes of this fee submission, the Department is assuming no decline or increase in the use of Land Use and Cannabis fees from the FY 2021-22 Adopted Budget. For Building fees, there is a significant change in the number of fees and the calculation of fees. The Department has prepared its best estimate for calculating the impact of the changes to how current fees are budgeted, however, these are only estimates. The Department (in partnership with the consultant) carefully prepared the proposed fees to capture the budgeted appropriation and to create neither shortfall nor surplus. The Department will continue to monitor and evaluate the actual fee usage for impact on forecasted revenue.

The table below would suggest that at current volumes, the cost would go down and then increase substantially next year in FY 2022-23.

Fee Revenue Comparison Chart

Budget to Budget Fee Revenue Comparison			
	\$ Amount	Year to Year \$ Difference	Year to Year % difference
19-20 Budget	7,147,344		
20-21 Budget	6,581,190	(\$566,154)	(8%)
21-22 Budget	\$6,123,499	(457,691)	(7%)
22-23 Projected *	\$7,705,031	\$1,581,532	26%

*Calculation based on 21-22 Budgeted activity at the 22-23 Proposed Fee amounts.

Actual to Actual Fee revenue Comparison			
	\$ Amount	Year to Year \$ Difference	Year to Year % difference
19-20 Actual	\$5,890,298		
20-21 Actual	\$5,466,716	(\$423,582)	(7%)

Background:

1. There are no indicia in the Board letter or supporting materials that the County staff or the fee consulting firm used by the County included or conferred with any major impacted community groups in the design or setting of the proposed fee structure of fee amounts. Accordingly, the input of home builders, land developers, commercial developers, building trades, housing not-for-profits, and other constituents seems totally absent. The timing to study and respond includes the Thanksgiving Holiday and the run-up to the Christmas /New Year’s holiday season.

The hearing should have been set in late January. If there were a few Schedule A items, the Board could have limited the December hearing to those and adopt them in time for the new year.

Secondly, the Board should have directed staff to meet with impacted industry groups to understand any concerns or recommendations. These would include homebuilders, developers, utilities, general contractors, repair contractors, electricians, plumbers, and many others. Again, the holiday season is not the time to impose such a missed step on these entities.

2. Most businesses in the county, including those that are regulated by Planning and Development, have suffered along with everyone else due to COVID 19’s economic damage. The County itself lost sales tax and TOT revenue and suffered extraordinary expenses. Federal and State aid has been provided to assist in the County’s restoration and recovery from these impacts. As a result, the County is awash in cash.

Recommended Action: Why didn't the Board defer fee increases until 2023 as a way of providing parallel assistance to the those involved in agriculture, land development, home development, affordable housing efforts, construction, building repair, and so forth?

3. There has been a major consolidation of almost 1,000 P&D fees down to 250. No more a la carte menu. You will have to get the chef's special, which includes a number of reviews and inspections. Tracing the impact of the changes would require analysis of the 144-page report, which lists the new and abolished fees, and then going back and looking at the old fee codes.

Recommended action: The staff did present some sample comparisons of what common types of projects cost under the existing system with the current fees. Then they presented the cost under the new system with the consolidated fees.

4. What are the apples-to-apples total aggregate fee rates when the increases and decreases are totaled and then compared from the current schedule to the new schedule? The write-up is confusing:

The consultant's review of the Department's fees determined that the Department is currently under-charging for its services. This includes a cost recovery shortfall of \$890,857 (\$2,381,591 in current fee revenue versus calculated costs of \$3,272,448) for Planning/Land Use/Code Enforcement/Operations fees and a cost recovery shortfall of \$1,716,173 (\$4,224,611 in current fee revenue versus calculated costs of \$5,940,784) for Building permit fees. In addition, there was a calculated surplus of \$81,889 for cannabis fees (\$770,180 in current fee revenue versus calculated costs of \$688,291), which would indicate that deposits for certain cannabis fees should be reduced. However, for deposit based fees, the actual cost of the permitting is applied against the deposit. When project costs are more than the deposit, the applicant is invoiced for the additional cost. However, if there any remaining surplus at the end of the project, it is refunded to the applicant.

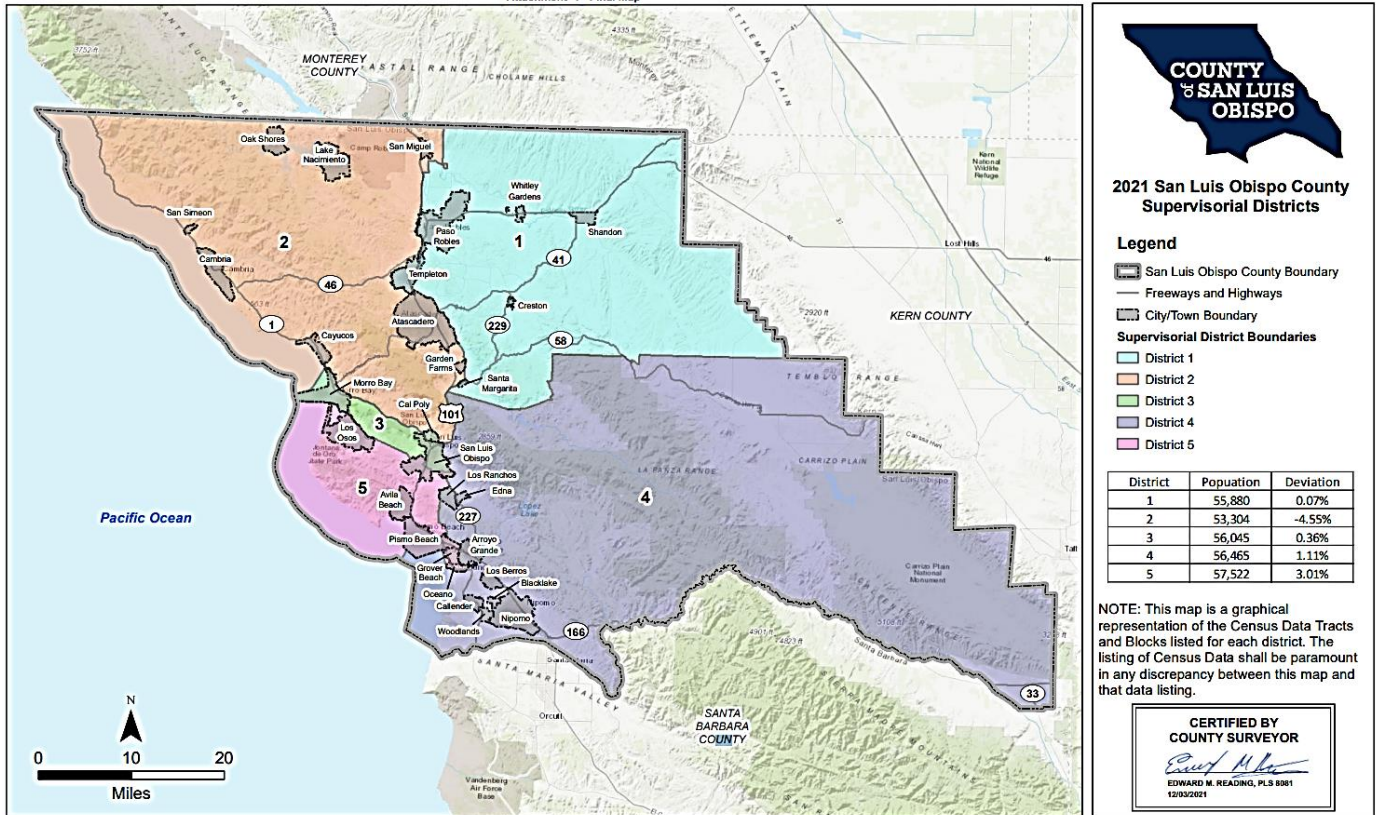
Item 26 - Hearing to Amend Chapter 2.60 of the County Code to change Supervisorial District boundaries and submittal of a resolution confirming the Board's findings in support of the new district boundaries. The ordinance was adopted 3/2 with Gibson and Ortiz-Legg dissenting. This was the final required action to adopt the new district map. The legal deadline was the following day - December 15th. If the Deadline had not been met, the Superior Court would choose a map.

A new group (made up of the old leftists), San Luis Obispo County Citizens for Good Government, has been formed and has stated that it will sue the County on the grounds that the Map violates the State Fair Map Act by benefiting a political party, the Republicans in this case. They may also claim that it violates Federal and State civil rights requirements by allegedly splitting a Hispanic community of interest, which they assert exists in Nipomo and Oceano, which are now separated in the redrawn map. A number of Hispanics testified during various hearings, that there was never a community of interest and that such a charge is racist in that it lumps all Hispanics together, even though they have very different communities of interest in this case.

Background: The San Luis Obispo Tribune, the League of Women Voters, some retired former public officials, the Democratic Party, and the usual clique of leftists all assert that the map is illegal because it was drawn by the Board majority to benefit the Republican Party candidates. One thing is sure. The left in its various manifestations is absolutely apoplectic about the map. Of course, this phenomenon suggests that it is the absolutely correct map to adopt. \$5 gas, million-dollar housing, \$11 bacon, closure of the Dunes, and the closure of Diablo should convince people that the time for passivity has passed.

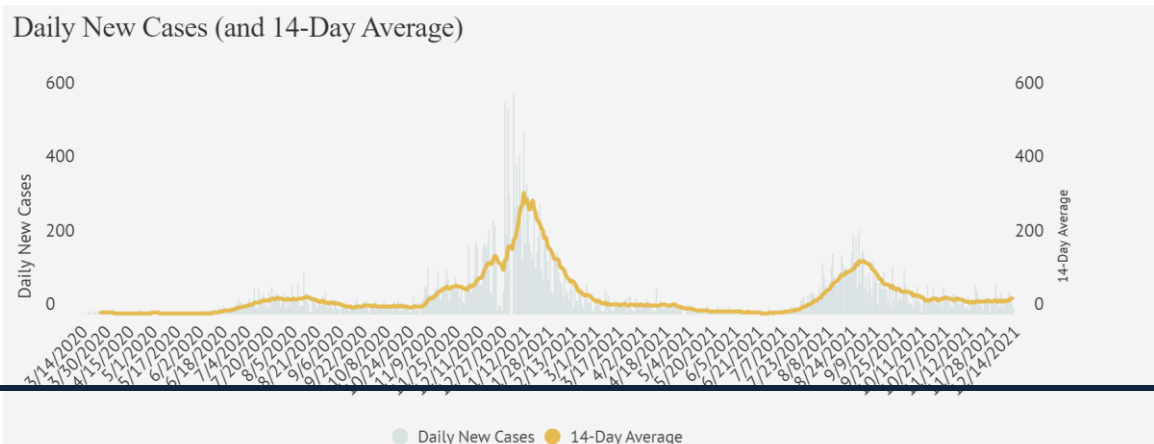
As has been often stated, left progressivism is a form of mental disturbance. Let them use the Soundwomb to calm themselves, reduce their anxiety, and learn to meditate.

Attachment 1 - Final Map



EMERGENT ISSUES

Item 1 - COVID. Not much changed last week at the local level. National and international news media are reporting a rapidly spreading new variant (Type O for Omicron). At this point some health officials are reporting that the Omicron variant is less nasty than the Delta, but the jury is still out. Locally the infection rate seems to be remaining on a plateau.

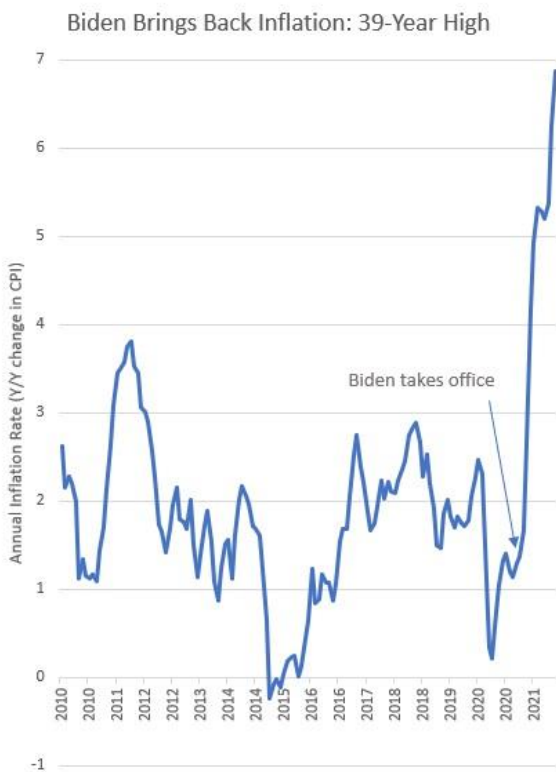
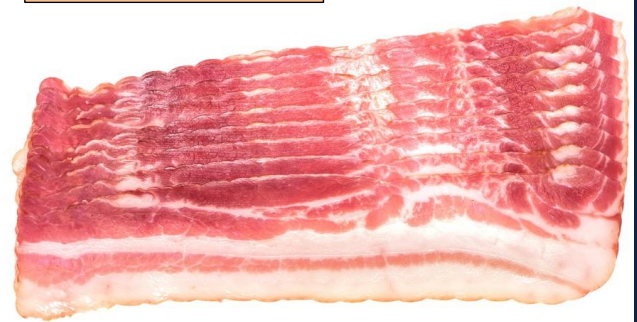


Item 2 - Inflation: The large tranches of Federal COVID relief money, the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA), rent relief schemes, enriched unemployment compensation, and other programs have generated excess economic demand. These trillions of dollars have been funded by pure deficit spending, which has driven up the national debt by trillions.

This in turn has driven up prices; has undermined the willingness of people to return to work; and has interfered with industrial, commercial, agricultural, and consumer supply chains. As a result, inflation has exploded and continues to grow. In the end, and when the party is over, the interest from debt will explode, savaging the Federal Budget.

See the Wall Street Journal Editorial for more detailed information below

\$11.00 Bacon?



THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

DOW JONES | News Corp *****

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2021 - VOL. CCLXXVIII NO. 142

WSJ.com

***** \$5.00

The Price of the Fed's Delay

The Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) is meeting this week, and its members were greeted Tuesday with the rude welcome of surging wholesale prices. This is more evidence that Chairman Jerome Powell and the Federal Reserve have made a historic mistake that they now have to fix without sending the economy into recession.

Prices for final goods increased 9.6% year-on-year in November, up from 8.8% in October. The nearby chart shows how wholesale prices have risen every month but one this year on an annual basis, and across most major goods and services. Producer prices tend to flow into consumer prices, which were up 6.8% year-on-year in November.

This is the result of fiscal and monetary mistakes. Congress and the White House spurred a supply-demand economic mismatch with a needless \$1.9 trillion spending bill in March, which followed record spending in 2020. The Fed's blunder was to maintain emergency monetary policies long after the Covid economic crisis had passed. This has also spurred excess demand and an asset-price surge as investors hunt for yield amid near-zero interest rates.

This inflation is also a monumental rebuke to the Fed's new policy framework announced in August 2020. The Fed abandoned its previous 2% inflation target and instead shifted to a "flexible average inflation target." The Fed would allow or even encourage inflation to run above the 2% target to make up for periods when it was below 2%. In practical terms, this meant that the Fed wouldn't move to pre-empt inflation but would wait until it appeared and was sustained before tightening money. Well, it has got that inflation, and more.

The policy was supposed to enhance the Fed's credibility. Instead the Fed has lost credibility as Mr. Powell failed to offer meaningful guidance on how the central bank will apply the

new policy. Absent better guidance, it looks to all the world as if the plan is to allow inflation to run until Mr. Powell decides for his own inscrutable reasons to act.

He's taken a long time to make up his mind. Price data have pointed upward since the spring, and the Fed had ample warning by summer that more than "temporary supply-chain disruptions" or a computer-chip shortage

Powell said he'd wait to see inflation before acting to stop it. He got that, and more.

was at work.

Prices kept rising across a wide range of goods and services, rather than merely for used cars or toys trapped in the Suez Canal. Companies have now baked price rises into their business plans, and unions are bargaining up wages. The central bank is belatedly rediscovering how inflation takes on a life of its own the longer it persists.

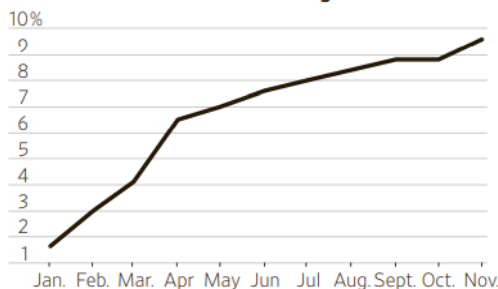
This leaves the FOMC in a tough spot of its own making. Despite admitting, sort of, that inflation is a problem, Mr. Powell has seemed committed to slow-rolling the policy response. Accelerating the taper of asset purchases under quantitative easing is not the hawkishness Wall Street claims, since it still means expanding the balance sheet through March when inflation is already here. Interest-rate increases appear to be off the table until the taper is done.

Interest-rate increases appear to be off the table until the taper is done.

Mr. Powell will probably sound a tougher rhetorical tone in his Wednesday post-FOMC press conference. But he also knows that the Fed will get the blame if it raises rates and the economy slows. If Congressional tax increases and White House regulation also reduce growth, the Fed will still be blamed.

Mr. Powell no doubt hopes that inflation will ease next year, and that he can then raise rates more slowly. But the longer he waits before he acts, the more he runs the risk that he'll have to slam on the brakes even harder. This is what happens when the Fed takes its eye off its inflation mandate and prices take off.

Producer Price Index Percentage Change in Final Demand from 12 Months Ago



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Item 3 - “Chumash” Heritage Federal Marine Sanctuary Nomination process back.

The proposed area stretches along 156 miles of coastline, encompassing approximately 7,000-square miles from Santa Rosa Creek near the town of Cambria, San Luis Obispo County, south to Gaviota Creek in Santa Barbara County, and extends offshore to include Santa Lucia Bank, Rodriguez Seamount, and Arguello Canyon.

Numerous threats have been identified to resources within the proposed area. The NCTC believes a national marine sanctuary offers solutions in guiding coordinated and comprehensive ecosystem-based management, including organizing and stimulating marine research, education, stewardship, tourism, and recreation, as well as providing protection for important native cultural sites.

To address the climate change crisis, the Biden-Harris Administration is committed to advancing in tandem the complementary goals of marine conservation and clean renewable energy per [Executive Order 14008](#). NOAA’s proposed sanctuary designation is based on the nomination submitted by the Northern Chumash Tribal Council in July 2015, excluding any geographical overlap with the proposed [Morro Bay 399 Area](#) for offshore wind development.

The actual nomination is based on a lie. There is no such Federally recognized entity as the Northern Chumash Tribe.¹ The matter has been litigated. Per the Appeals Court decision below, it is highly doubtful that Fred Collins,² representing the so called Northern Chumash Tribe, is a descendent of native Americans. Collins sued the Sallinian Tribe Heritage Society because it opposed the nomination and asserted that Collins was not a Native American and that he and the so-called Northern Chumash had no standing to make such a nomination. The Sierra club and the California Coastal Commission were enlisted by Collins to support the nomination.

In the end, Collins lost both in the Superior Court and subsequently in the Court of Appeals.

Some highlights of the Appellate Court Decision are highlighted in excerpts below. The full decision can be seen at the link:

<https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/review?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:98d14c36-5477-4197-b70a-eba3bc0b8f11#pageNum=1>

IN THE COURT OF APPEAL OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA SECOND APPELLATE DISTRICT DIVISION SIX

¹ The Santa Ynez Band of Mission Indians are a Federally recognized Tribe, have no relationship to this issue, and have not supported the creation of the Sanctuary.

² Collins died several years ago.

FRED HARVEY COLLINS,

Plaintiff and Appellant,

v.

SALINAN HERITAGE
PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION
et al.,

Defendants and Respondents.

2d Civil No. B267301
(Super. Ct. No. 15CV-0154)
(San Luis Obispo County)

COURT OF APPEAL – SECOND DIST.

FILED

Aug 03, 2017

JOSEPH A. LANE, Clerk

Sherry Claborn Deputy Clerk

Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary In 2014, Collins nominated a local marine environment to be designated as the “Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary.” In connection with this nomination to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA), Collins solicited support from the Sierra Club, the California Coastal Commission, and local political representatives, among others. Collins’s nomination alarmed Salinan officers and members who believed the proposed sanctuary included a significant portion of Salinan ancestral territory. On February 27, 2015, Pierce, Burch, and 5 Krieger sent a letter to the Sierra Club, the Coastal Commission, and local political representatives objecting to the boundary lines proposed by Collins and questioning his standing to represent the Chumash Indian Tribe because “he is not even of California Indian descent.” Salinan referred to the conclusions of a certified genealogist whom it retained to research Collins’s ancestry. On March 6, 2015, NOAA wrote Collins and rejected his proposed sanctuary, but suggested that he resubmit his nomination with additional information.

In 2013, the Salinan Tribe had retained a certified genealogist, Lorraine Escobar, to research Collins's ancestry. Escobar prepared a written report that concluded that Collins was not of Native American ancestry and that his maternal lineage was from Mexico. On May 15, 2013, the Salinan Tribe submitted the genealogist's report to the NAHC.

Collins’s Most Likely Descended (MLD) Status Public Resource Code section 5097.94, subdivision (a) requires the NAHC to identify persons “most likely descended“ from Native Americans interred on California land. At times, the NAHC has designated Collins as MLD, appointing him to perform monitoring activities on excavation sites for which he is compensated. Members of the Salinan Tribe have also been designated as MLD and compensated. Over the years, Salinan members have questioned Collins's MLD status regarding areas within claimed Salinan ancestral territory.

Collins's Declaration of Chumash Ancestry In response to the motion to strike, Collins declared that his mother's cousin, Chumash Elder Mary Trejo, revealed his Chumash ancestry to him many years ago. Trejo did not provide a declaration and Collins did not state that she was unavailable.

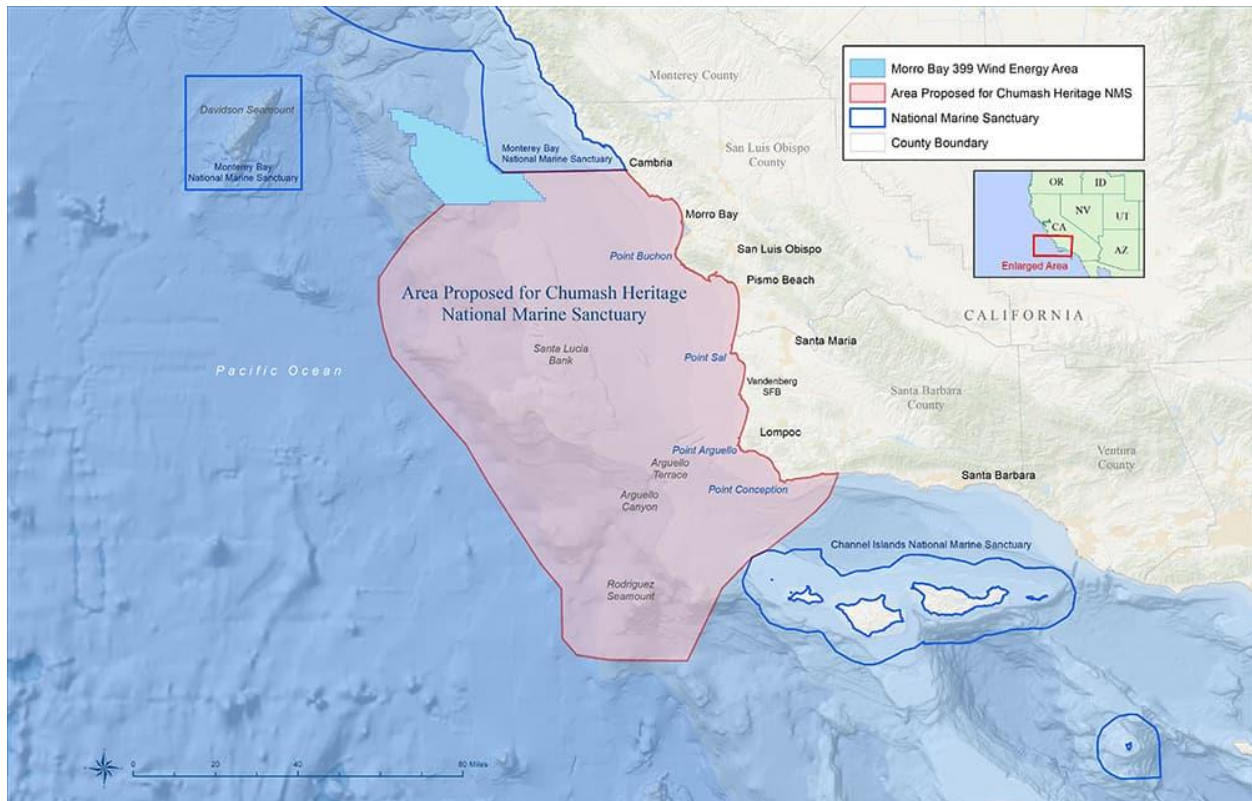
Collins's remaining claims have no merit. Trejo's statements are hearsay and Collins did not establish their admissibility pursuant to Evidence Code sections 1310 and 1311 because he did not establish Trejo's unavailability. We review the trial court's ruling on an evidentiary objection in connection with a special motion to strike for an abuse of discretion. (Hall v. Time Warner, Inc. (2007) 153 Cal.App.4th 1337, 1348, fn. 3.) In any event, Trejo's statements have no bearing on application of the litigation privilege and we need not decide the nature of Collins's ancestry.

It turns out Collins also had a criminal history:

Cocaine-related conviction:

<https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/review?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:2f5dfc4e-5db0-445d-af0c-b469b492fe88#pageNum=1>

Both COLAB of Santa Barbara County and COLAB OF San Luis Obispo County studied the proposed Sanctuary back in 2014. We examined the impact of the existing Monterey Bay Marine Sanctuary. It imposes regulations that threaten the fishing industry, harbor operations, energy development, shipping, communications, and agriculture. Since rivers, streams, and creeks flow into the Ocean, the Sanctuary claims the ability to regulate upstream agricultural operations. The map of the proposed Sanctuary is displayed below.



Item 4 - APCD Rejects Scripps's Institution Oceano Dunes Dust Study. A recent news article in the SLO Tribune reports that Oceano Dunes dust may only be 14% dunes particulate matter. The APCD has insisted for years that it is up to 90% dunes particulate matter. The new study by the Scripps Institute of Oceanography will result in serious questions about the validity of the APCD's Dust Regulation Rule. Stay tuned for more lawsuits to be defended at taxpayer and fee payer expense.

The APCD staff has posted an extensive rebuttal. It is probable that the Board of the APCD did not authorize the rebuttal.

The most recent Scripps report discusses the results of PM10 and PM2.5 sampling from earlier this year at CDF. Like last year, the District has serious concerns about the sampling methodology employed by the researchers. Previously we criticized the researchers for not collecting PM10 samples and for using an SCC size separator to collect PM2.5 samples. This year, Scripps collected both PM10 and PM2.5 samples, and they used a VSCC size separator for PM2.5. We view these changes as improvements. However, the Scripps samplers also incorporated flow splitters between their size separators and filter holders. The District believes these flow splitters likely resulted in biased sample collection at the filter, since they do not appear to have been engineered to ensure laminar, isokinetic flow. The report provides no data and cites no references to demonstrate that these novel devices perform as assumed. In contrast to the Scripps devices, EPA-approved particulate samplers—including those used by the District—either direct their entire flow to the filter/detector or use flow splitters that are engineered to ensure isokinetic flow.

Scripps's Speciation Data Should Be Interpreted Cautiously Given the problems with sample collection noted above, the District is hesitant to interpret Scripps's speciation results. Without representative sampling of the ambient air, it cannot be assumed that the speciation results are representative of particulates impacting the sampling site. Regarding the speciation results, the District notes the following unusual findings: • The fraction of mineral dust reported in the PM2.5 samples is higher than the fraction in the PM10 samples. Typically, crustal materials are more enriched in PM10 versus PM2.5. • For PM2.5, mineral dust is enriched on high PM10 days, as expected for wind-blown dust, but for PM10, the fraction mineral dust is the same on high versus low PM10 days. It is the opinion of the District that these results are artifacts resulting from non-representative sampling caused by the flow splitters.

[APCD Comments Scripps 2021 Interim Report Final typosfixed.pdf \(storage.googleapis.com\)](https://storage.googleapis.com/apcd-comments/Scripps_2021_Interim_Report_Final_typosfixed.pdf)

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

THE NEW DARK AGES

The woke assault on Western civilization is taking us backwards.

BY JOEL KOTKIN

If ignorance is bliss, the Western world should be ecstatic. Even as colleges churn out degrees and collect fees, and technology makes information instantly accessible, the basic level of literacy, as measured by such things as reading books and acquainting oneself with the past, is in a precipitous decline. Rather than building a vital world with our technological culture, we are repeating the memes of feudal times, driven by [illiteracy](#), bias and a rejection of the West's past.

[Over half of American adults](#) have a reading level below the equivalent of sixth-grade level (11- to 12-year-olds), and book reading outside of school or work among the young in particular has declined markedly. A survey conducted in 2014 found [slightly over half](#) of American children saying they liked to read books 'for fun', down from 60 per cent in 2010. This is not just an American trend. A landmark study by [University College London](#) tracked 11,000 children born in 2000 up to age 14 and found that only one in 10 ever did any reading in their spare time as teenagers. The Covid-related lockdowns, notes one recent [UN study](#), raised the number of children experiencing reading difficulties from 460million to 584million.

Even before the pandemic, people's cognitive skills were weakening. Many employers in the US report difficulty finding workers capable of having a serious conversation. Over [60 per cent](#) of applicants are found to be lacking in basic social skills. [Today's teens'](#) experiences are increasingly limited to what they access on their phones and social media. Rather than opening minds, social media seem to be creating a generation with little ability to communicate in person.

Sites like Facebook and Instagram have been linked to reduced attention spans: research indicates that the average attention span has fallen [50 per cent](#) since 2000, mainly due to social-media use. This loss of literacy comes at a time when much of our education and literary establishment has embraced censorship, while on the right there's an increasingly Pavlovian embrace of [book-banning](#). Even in defending the common culture, the right forgets the necessity of diverse opinions in a democracy.

Right now, the most influential advocates for banning classical literature from curricula, or removing books non-compliant on issues like gender, are not disgruntled conservatives. No, the assault on studying '[great books](#)' and Western culture largely comes from progressive professors with PhDs, and the [ever-expanding university bureaucracies](#) and their recent graduates.

The embrace of these cultural trends, as former *Mother Jones* writer [Kevin Drum](#) suggests, has emerged as Democrats have moved far more to the left than Republicans have gone further to the right. This is sometimes enforced with mandatory indoctrination sessions and even requirements to sign the woke version of McCarthy-era '[loyalty oaths](#)'.

In the new schema, the past is seen as racist, ugly and simply too complex for young minds. At many US colleges, [books written before 1990](#) are considered 'inaccessible' to students. [University policies](#) increasingly marginalize Homer, Confucius, Shakespeare, Milton, Tocqueville or the Founding Fathers. Some books are scorned for having been written by dead

white males, who as a group are linked to such horrors as slavery, the subjugation of women and mass poverty. America's cultural arbiters, such as the [National Archives](#), now consider it necessary to flag up the nation's founding documents for 'harmful language'. Ultimately, many of those things that drove Western ascendancy since 1500 – reason, work ethic, family and [even science](#) – are being cashiered to create some kind of woke brave new world. And our society seems all the poorer for the loss.

So in today's academy [Chaucer and even Shakespeare](#) can now be avoided by Ivy League English students, while knowledge of [Latin or Greek](#) is not required to enter a classics programme. Given the high-level commitment to deconstructing our culture in Western societies, it isn't surprising that we are seeing [lower levels](#) of cultural literacy and a [greatly reduced interest in history](#) among the young.

The [misanthropic hostility](#) to America's legacy – which often extends to [grade schools](#) – could have grave political consequences. It could lead to the rejection of the most basic principles of a functioning democracy. [Young people](#), for example, are far more likely than their elders to accept limits on freedom of speech. Some 40 per cent of millennials, notes the [Pew Research Center](#), favour suppressing speech deemed offensive to minorities – far more than earlier generations.

Europe is, if anything, moving faster toward [marginalising](#) its own heritage. European millennials also display far less faith in democracy and less objection to autocratic government than previous generations, who lived either under dictatorships or in their aftermath. [Young Europeans](#) are almost three times as likely as their elders to believe that democracy is failing. Rather than embrace the continent's storied if often tragic past, noted a recent statement [by European scholars](#), the EU is engaged in an 'ersatz religious enterprise' based on post-nationalism, and a rejection of a distinct, historical culture in favour of multiculturalism.

The assault on our political and cultural heritage increasingly defines political conflict. On the left there is an almost nihilistic desire to wipe away the idea that Western cultures leave us anything to embrace. This elite disdain for traditions of country, religion and family has polarised society. It has sparked a predictable right-wing reaction, ranging from Trumpian fulminators to more sophisticated exponents like France's presidential aspirant *terrible*, Éric Zemmour.

To date, opposition to the progressive assault on traditional culture has all too often morphed into [disdain](#) for minorities who are blamed for undermining national heritage. It's perhaps a reach to call unpleasant people like Zemmour (an Algerian Jew) 'a racist', as the [New York Times](#) predictably did, or the current unpleasant rulers in Hungary or Poland [fascists](#) in the Mussolini mode. But they exhibit clear authoritarian tendencies. The fact that some on the right see Putin's [Russia](#), orthodox and socially conservative, as a role model should give some pause.

But class may be more critical to defining the current cultural conflict. The dominant cultural arbiters in the EU, [Canada](#) or US occupy the 'commanding heights' of media and politics, but their rejection of traditional culture does not resonate with adults who confront the daily struggle to make a decent living and find usable values for their offspring. This is reflected in the decline of [public trust](#) in [media](#), academia, governments and, in the US, even in the now woke [military](#).

Throughout the West, the [working](#) and traditional middle class – shopkeepers, small property owners, artisans – are moving towards conservative and even reactionary candidates. In contrast, the old parties of the left in the US, Australia, the UK and across Europe, have embraced the postmodern cultural agenda and lost their old constituencies. Overall, [eastern Europe](#), and its conservative working and middle classes, are now the right's bulwark against the cultural influence of progressives.

As the retreat from our Western heritage and the collapse of literacy continues, we are reprising the cultural behaviours of the Middle Ages. As late as the mid-15th century, [literacy rates](#) in Europe were quite low – five per cent overall in England, though substantially higher in cities and in the more urbanised societies of the Netherlands and Italy. Few women were literate. This changed dramatically after the introduction of the printing press, especially in the cities of northern Europe. By 1650, about half the British population could read. Literacy in the Netherlands soared to about 85 per cent by 1750.

This more literate populace, able to read the Bible, the classics and even scientific studies for themselves, was better equipped to demand rights and oppose injustice and to organise effectively around a common programme. Indeed, a few literate peasants may have had a leading part in the rebellions of the later Middle Ages. High rates of literacy in colonial America allowed traders and mechanics to spread the revolutionary message against the monarchy and helped them organise their resistance, as Benjamin Franklin noted (1).

Although far from perfect in its content, postwar culture was widely shared between cultural arbiters and the middle class. Average Americans in the 1950s were purchasing large numbers of classical works and books by contemporary authors such as Ruth Benedict and Saul Bellow. Many enjoyed watching Shakespeare plays on television, with one production attracting a remarkable 50million viewers (2). There was a rapid growth in the public's appreciation of [museums](#) and [classical music](#), which are both now under unrelenting assault by progressive activists.

Today's cultural creators sharing and expressing the concerns of the clerisy, have lost touch with much of the mass market. Television audiences for shows like the [Academy Awards](#) have been declining. Increasingly [prizes](#) rarely go to quality films with broad popularity, such as *West Side Story*, *The Sound of Music*, or even *The Lord of the Rings* film trilogy. Instead, [award-winning films](#), sometimes fine movies in themselves, are largely chosen for their appeal to insiders. At the same time, Hollywood makes most of its money from [cartoonish superhero movies](#), suited to a post-literate audience.

This loss of a common culture and the sense of the past undermines the coherence of society. The idea that someone from another time, conditioned in a separate set of values, might have something to say seems increasingly rare. To be sure British people need to understand the cruelties of empire, but also to celebrate their enormous historic achievements.

Cancelling the genius of an island civilisation is a crime against common culture. The enslavement or genocides committed in the settling of North America or Australia should be

taught, but so too should the fact that these places provided better lives for settlers and their offspring who number in the hundreds of millions.

We are in danger of returning to a new Dark Ages, when ‘the very mind of man was going through degeneration’, as Henri Pirenne put it, cut off from the traditions and values of our civilisational past (3). If one doesn’t know the foundational principles of our democracy, including individual freedom and open discussion, one is not likely to recognise when they are lost.

Regaining a sense of pride in Western culture and its achievements – while remaining open to newcomers and influences from elsewhere – is essential to recovering the ambition and self-confidence that drove the West’s ascent, from the Age of Exploration to the Space Age. A civilisation can survive only if its members, particularly those with the greatest influence, believe in its basic values.

But if restoring the classical canon is critical, so too is providing a broader vision that accommodates our changing populations. Given the demographic trends not only in Europe but also in North America and Oceania, a xenophobic agenda is likely to be counterproductive, as well as incompatible with a liberal society. Newcomers need to be integrated into the national culture while being free to add their unique characteristics to the host societies.

Such successful societies are by nature expansive, not closed in. Rome became great, Gibbon suggested, in part because it permitted religious heterodoxy and provided outsiders, including former slaves, a chance to rise above their station. In contrast to Athens, where citizenship was restricted, Rome extended citizenship to the farthest boundaries of its empire – by 212, all free people were eligible to be citizens. ‘The grandsons of Gauls, who besieged Julius Caesar at Alesia, commanded legions, governed provinces and were admitted into the Senate of Rome’, wrote Gibbon (4).

Just as diverse peoples found much to emulate in Roman civilisation, the liberal institutions that developed in the West can still appeal to people from radically diverse backgrounds. Chinese, Muslims and Latin Americans migrate mostly to countries that have embraced the liberal values of citizenship, tolerance and the rule of law (5). China under the autocratic Xi Jinping may offer ‘the Chinese dream’, but the number of immigrants from China living in the [United States](#) more than doubled between 2000 and 2018, reaching nearly 2.5million. Similar patterns have been seen in both Canada and Australia. There is little such movement to [China](#) or most other Asian countries.

Those with the good fortune to live in pluralistic Western-style democracies, rooted in classical culture, should recognise how rare such open societies have been through history, and how much the vitality of these societies is threatened today. [Historically](#), democracy has been like a flame that shines bright for a while – as in Greece and Rome – and then succumbs to autocracy or ossifies into hierarchy.

A future shaped by the best Western values is still possible, if we are willing to embrace it, and teach it to future generations. Such a broad vision will be resisted by the woke, and some nationalists on the right may see inclusivity as too tolerant of change and difference. Books and

open discussion are decisive weapons against the rise of post-literate intolerance. This is what helped overwhelm feudalism and could fend off its repeat appearance in our era.

Joel Kotkin is a Spiked Magazine columnist, the presidential fellow in urban futures at Chapman University and executive director of the Urban Reform Institute. His latest book, [The Coming of Neo-Feudalism](#), is out now. Follow him on Twitter: [@joelkotkin](#) This article first appeared in the December 15, 2021 edition of Flash Report

THE LOGIC OF CALIFORNIA'S LEFTISTS WILL KEEP US ALL CHILDREN FOREVER

There's a word to describe people who believe that unpleasant ideas can be eliminated by banning the "trigger words" that represent them: Such people are called children.

BY DAN GELERNTER

The Los Angeles, Oakland, Sacramento City, and San Diego Unified school districts have found a novel way to improve academic results—they're getting rid of D and F grades. One imagines this will improve results immediately. On paper.

Reporting from San Francisco, KRON 4 News, writing in semi-literate English, [informs us](#), "If a student fails a test or doesn't complete their homework, they'll be able to retake the test and get more time to turn in assignments."

The assistant principal at Fremont High School in Oakland, speaking in semi-literate English, told KRON, "Right now, we have a system where we give a million points for a million pieces of paper that students turn in, without much attention to what they're actually learning."

I don't think anyone will dispute that schools are not paying much attention to what kids are learning. But banning Ds and Fs won't help students as much as it will help teachers and principals in these districts look less awful by comparison, or else make comparisons with schools that retain a full grading system impossible. The real goal is to rescue teachers' unions and professional administrators from what they're doing to the kids.

To take a random example from the English readers on my desk, a seventh grader of a century ago, learning, no doubt, in a one-room schoolhouse with just enough funding for these text books, would have read Shakespeare, Lord Byron, Keats, Poe, Ruskin, Sir Walter Scott, Longfellow, Kipling, Thoreau, Whitman, Washington, Lincoln and Marcus Aurelius, to cite just a small subsection of the included authors. Selections range from stories and poems to nature study, science, and history. These authors have long since gone the way of the D and F grades: Better to eliminate challenging material than create the impression students are failing. Which really means—better to eliminate material than create the impression that teachers are failing to teach their students.

For all their supposed erudition, leftists have always had trouble with symbolism. That is, they tend not to understand that a concept may represent another concept, rather than being the thing itself. They think that by getting rid of bad grades, they can get rid of what the bad grades represent—failure, ignorance, and laziness, on the part of students and teachers both.

Just as they think that by getting rid of terms like “fat,” they can make people healthier and more “body-positive.” Or that by replacing “fireman” and “policeman” with “firefighter” and “police officer” they can end male dominance in these dangerous professions. Or that they can make a man into a woman just by changing what he calls himself—and that it’s a triumph when one of these “women” joins a girl’s swim team and smashes all previous records by a gigantic margin.

This fundamental flaw in leftist thinking goes all the way back to its French revolutionary origins. The revolutionary council, finding that bread shortages did not disappear after the collapse of the monarchy but instead got dramatically worse, came upon a brilliant solution: They would simply decree that bread should be less expensive. Why didn’t the king think of that? With all the economic sophistication of a group of spoiled children, they announced “*le maximum*,” a stated maximum price that bakers were permitted to charge for a loaf. This had the effect of closing down most of the bakers in Paris and unleashing inflation on a scale never before seen in the history of government-issued money—and not to be seen again until the Soviet Revolution.

But the French revolutionaries had confused the concept of money with what money represents: value. They didn’t realize that, whether you charge one franc or 10 kopeks or 1,000 zlotys, the value represented by the loaf of bread—the cost of ingredients, the difficulty in obtaining them, plus the labor of the baker—is unaffected. Identical thinking drives leftist demand to raise the minimum wage. They fail to realize that you can’t make someone’s labor more valuable by decree. You can only make it more expensive.

If you think that people with such a shallow understanding of the world can’t be trusted to run our schools, you’re obviously correct. There’s a word to describe people who believe that unpleasant ideas can be eliminated by banning the “trigger words” that represent them: Such people are called children. They might force me to refer to them as “adults,” but that won’t make them grow up. And if you let a child teach a child, all you end up with is a child. So here’s a toast to the California school system: Children forever!

Dan Gelernter is a columnist for American Greatness living in Connecticut. This article first appeared in the American Greatness of December 14, 2021

WHY IS THE LEFT WORRIED SUDDENLY ABOUT THE END OF DEMOCRACY?

They are fearful and angry not because democracy does not work, but because it does despite their own media and political efforts to warp it.

BY VICTOR DAVIS HANSON

What is behind recent pessimistic appraisals of democracy’s future, from Hillary Clinton, Adam Schiff, Brian Williams and other elite intellectuals, media personalities, and politicians on the Left? Some are warning about its possible erosion in 2024. Others predict the democracy downturn as early 2022, with scary scenarios of “autocracy” and Trump “coups.”

To answer that question, understand first what is *not* behind these shrill forecasts.

They are not worried about 2 million foreign nationals crashing the border in a single year, without vaccinations during a pandemic. Yet it seems insurrectionary for a government simply to nullify its own immigration laws.

They are not worried that some 800,000 foreign nationals, some residing illegally, will now vote in New York City elections.

They are not worried that there are formal efforts to dismantle the U.S. Constitution by junking the 233-year-old Electoral College or the preeminence of the states in establishing ballot laws in national elections.

They are not worried that we are witnessing an unprecedented left-wing effort to scrap the 180-year-old filibuster, the 150-year-old nine-person Supreme Court, and the 60-year tradition of 50 states, for naked political advantage.

They are not worried that the Senate this year put on trial an impeached ex-president and private citizen, without the chief justice in attendance, without a special prosecutor or witnesses, and without a formal commission report of presidential high crimes and misdemeanors.

They are not worried that the FBI, Justice Department, CIA, Hillary Clinton, and members of the Obama Administration systematically sought to use U.S. government agencies to sabotage a presidential campaign, transition, and presidency, via the use of a foreign national and ex-spy Christopher Steele and his coterie of discredited Russian sources.

They are not worried that the Pentagon suddenly has lost the majority support of the American people. Top current and retired officers have flagrantly violated the chain-of-command, the Uniform Code of Military Justice, and without data or evidence have announced a hunt in the ranks for anyone suspected of “white rage” or “white supremacy.”

They are not worried that in 2020, a record 64 percent of the electorate did not cast their ballots on Election Day.

Nor are they worried that the usual error rate in most states of non-Election Day ballots plunged—even as an unprecedented 101 million ballots were cast by mail or early voting.

And they are certainly not worried that partisan billionaires of Silicon Valley poured well over \$400 million into selected precincts in swing states to “help” public agencies conduct the election.

What then is behind this new left-wing hysteria about the supposed looming end of democracy?

It is quite simple. The Left expects to lose power over the next two years—both because of the way it gained and used it, and because of its radical, top-down agendas that never had any public support.

After gaining control of both houses of Congress and the presidency—with an obsequious media and the support of Wall Street, Silicon Valley, higher education, popular culture, entertainment and professional sports—the Left has managed in just 11 months to alienate a majority of voters.

The nation has been wracked by unprecedented crime and nonenforcement of the borders. Leftist district attorneys either won’t indict criminals or let them out of jails or both.

Illegal immigration and inflation are soaring. Deliberate cuts in gas and oil production helped to spike fuel prices.

All this bad news is on top of the Afghanistan disaster, worsening racial relations, and an enfeebled president.

Democrats are running 10 points behind the Republicans in generic polls—with the midterms less than a year away.

Joe Biden’s negatives run between 50 and 57 percent—in Donald Trump’s own former underwater territory.

Less than a third of the country wishes Biden to run for reelection. In many head-to-head polls, Trump now defeats Biden.

In other words, leftist elites are terrified that democracy will work *too robustly*.

After the Russian collusion hoax, the two impeachments, the Hunter Biden laptop stories, the staged melodramas of the Kavanaugh hearings, the Jussie Smollett con, the Covington kids smear, and the Rittenhouse trial race frenzy, the people are not just worn out by leftist hysterias, but also weary of how the Left gains power and administers it.

If Joe Biden were polling 70 percent approval, and his policies 60 percent, the current doomsayers would be reassuring us of the “health of the system.”

They are fearful and angry not because democracy does not work, but because it does despite their own media and political efforts to warp it.

When a party becomes hijacked by radicals and uses almost any means necessary to gain and use power for agendas that few Americans support, then average voters express their disapproval

That reality apparently terrifies an elite—which then claims any system that allows the people to vote against the Left is not people power at all.

Victor Davis Hanson is a distinguished fellow of the Center for American Greatness and the Martin and Illie Anderson Senior Fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution. He is an American military historian, columnist, a former classics professor, and scholar of ancient warfare. He has been a visiting professor at Hillsdale College since 2004. Hanson was awarded the National Humanities Medal in 2007 by President George W. Bush. Hanson is also a farmer (growing raisin grapes on a family farm in Selma, California) and a critic of social trends related to farming and agrarianism. He is the author most recently of The Second World Wars: How the First Global Conflict Was Fought and Won, The Case for Trump and the newly released The Dying Citizen This article first appeared in the December 15, 2021 of the Stanford University Hoover Institution Daily Update.



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