COLAB San Luis Obispo County

The Coalition of Labor Agriculture and Business

WEEKLY UPDATE
OCTOBER 24 - 30, 2021

THIS WEEK

SPECIAL BOS MEETING OCT 26th
SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT REDISTRICTING HEARING - 6:00 PM

LAST WEEK

BOS REJECTS ENVIRO SHAKEDOWN 4/1
CENTER FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY TEAMED UP WITH ECOSLO TO PREVENT DRILLING OF 31 PREVIOUSLY APPROVED OIL WELLS IN EXISTING PRICE CANYON OIL FIELD & LOST
REAL PURPOSE IS TO SUE COUNTY TO GENERATE REVENUE
STAY TUNED FOR THE SHAKEDOWN LAWSUIT

COUNTY JOINS BROADBAND SERVICE GROUP
THEY JOIN NEW JPA TO HELP UNDERSERVED AREAS & GROUPS
IS THIS THE FIRST STEP TOWARD NEW GOVT. PROVIDERS?

BOS TO RECEIVE REPORT ON CAL LEGISLATURE
THE DAMAGE DONE IN 2021 IS STUNNING
BANNNINGYELECTRIC LAWNMOWERS IS THE LEAST OF IT

LAFCO
MAJOR ANNEXATION TO SLO CITY APPROVED
WILL COUNTY FINANCES RECEIVE ANY OF THE FUTURE GROWTH?
DOES THE CITY GET THE COUNTYWIDE SERVICES FOR FREE?

PLANNING COMMISSION
NIPOMO HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AND CAMBRIA CHRISTMAS MARKET BOTH APPROVED

EMERGENT ISSUES

COVID STATUS

STATE ASSEMBLY DISTRICT REDISTRICTING
LEFT SEEKS TO STICK CUNNINGHAM IN WITH COASTAL DEMS

COLAB IN DEPTH
SEE PAGE 12

TRANSITION TO NOWHERE
California's switch to a primarily solar and wind powered grid is a dead end
BY MARK MILLS

TWO 'EXPERT' FAILURES AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES
HOW OUR TECHNOCRATIC ELITES HAVE DISCARDED TRADITIONAL WISDOM
BY BRUCE THORNTON

THIS WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS
ALL MEETINGS ARE 9:00 AM UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

Special Board of Supervisors Meeting of Tuesday, October 26, 2021 (Scheduled) – 6:00 PM

Item 1 - Hearing to consider initial draft maps for the County's 2021 redistricting of Supervisorial districts and give staff formal direction for any modifications, as

Necessary - 6:00 PM. There is a large file of information, including sample maps, population data, analysis of communities of interest, a PowerPoint, Board Letter, and both comments and proposed maps, from citizens and groups. These can all be seen in order at the link https://agenda.slocounty.ca.gov/iip/sanluisobispo/agendaitem/details/13963

The crucial issue at hand is that both the left progressives and the conservatives will struggle to seek the best voter advantage based on how their respective voters are distributed geographically. All this maneuvering will have to conform to the key legal requirements that the districts be as close to equal with each other in population as possible with no more variance than 10% between the least population district and the highest population district.

It is premature for COLAB to comment substantively, as we have not heard the hearings or seen the final plans, of which there will be more per the table below:

Redistricting Timeline			
Official Hearings	**Required Action(s)**	**Date**	**Known/Legal Timelines**
Hearing #2	Board Hearing - Consideration of Initial Draft Maps and Provide Staff Direction	October 26, 2021 (Special Evening Meeting)	
	Last day to submit maps/comment for consideration in revised maps for November 19 hearing	**November 5, 2021**	Allows 1 week for drawing before publication
	Publish revised maps	November 12, 2021	
Hearing #3	Board Hearing - Second consideration of Draft Maps and Provide Staff Direction	November 19, 2021 (Special Meeting)	
	Last day to submit maps/comment for consideration in revised maps for November 30 hearing	**November 21, 2021**	Allows only three days for finalization of maps
	Publish revised maps	November 24	At least 7 days before final adoption (12/14)
Hearing #4	Final hearing to approve redistricting plan	November 30, 2021 (Special Meeting)	
	Legal Metes and Bounds complete and ordinance drafted	December 3, 2021	72 hours agenda publication deadline
	Introduce County ordinance amendment	December 7, 2021	
Hearing #5	Amend County ordinance to reflect Board approved revised redistricting map	December 14, 2021	1 day before legal deadline
	Effective date of ordinance amendment	January 14, 2022	

The biggest threat to conservative and rational values comes from some City of SLO precincts, Cal Poly Precincts, Oceano, and some of the large planned golf communities in Nipomo.

NOTICE OF SPECIAL MEETING OF THE
SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

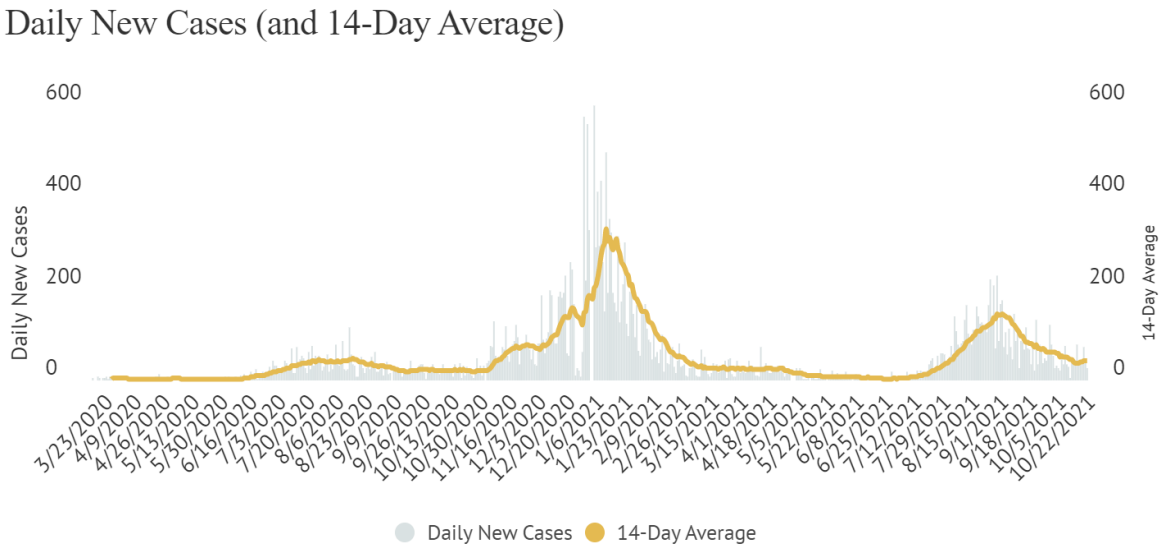
October 22, 2021

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, pursuant to California Government Code Section 54956, that the Chairperson of the Board of Supervisors of the County of San Luis Obispo, State of California, has called a special meeting of said Board of Supervisors, to be held beginning at the following date, time, and place, to consider the following items of business:

Date and Time of Special Meeting:	October 26, 2021, at 6:00 P.M.
Place of Special Meeting:	Board of Supervisors Chambers* 1055 Monterey Street San Luis Obispo, CA 93408
Business to be considered:	See agenda below.

EMERGENT ISSUES

Item 1- COVID Upticks Slightly. Public debate about masks and vaccinations is raging locally and nationwide. This is especially true for the public schools. There does not seem to be any clarity with respect to people who have contracted COVID with respect to vaccinations. Should they get them or not? What if they got the 2 vaccinations and still caught COVID? Should they get the booster?



11 (3 ICU) ** SLO County Residents with COVID-19 in Hospital

Item 2 - State Redistricting. Displayed below is an excerpt from an *LA Times* article on the status of State redistricting of State Assembly districts. The portion reproduced here concerns the central coast. It is clear that leftist groups wish to draw Assemblyman Cunningham into a new leftist district based on environmental and other leftist causes.

CALIFORNIA POLITICS: REDISTRICTING GETS REAL

BY JOHN MYERS

Tough choices: Look at San Luis Obispo

For a glimpse at the tough trade-offs inherent in drawing political maps, it's worth taking a quick look at the challenges the California Citizens Redistricting Commission has in new boundaries in San Luis Obispo County, whose coastal/agricultural voters offer a fascinating cross-section of the state's larger political landscape.

It also, given its spot on the state map, can cause ripple effects hundreds of miles away.

*"San Luis Obispo County makes a huge difference in terms of what districts in the north and districts in the south look like," **Andrew Westall**, a researcher with the Equal Representation Project, told the commission on Thursday.*

Several groups that made mapping suggestions to the state commission envisioned radically different spots for the lines along the Central Coast and rural areas to its east.

One group, the Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy, drew a proposed Assembly map that would place most of San Luis Obispo County in an Assembly district with western Kern County. The group, which describes itself as an advocate for the region's working-class and immigrant communities, argues the counties share "traditionalist values" voters and shouldn't be grouped with "poorer farmworker communities like the Salinas Valley or Santa Maria Valley."

But the California Environmental Voters, one of the state's most prominent environmental advocacy groups, had a completely different viewpoint. Its map drew lines for an Assembly district down the coast from Santa Cruz to the southern border of San Luis Obispo County, separating the area for the agricultural regions to the east in an effort to give priority to the community's record in support of environmental protection policies.

*The two proposals would almost surely result in different partisan outcomes. In the coastal Assembly proposal, a Democrat would be the odds-on favorite to win. In the San Luis Obispo-Kern configuration, the partisan registration would probably favor the incumbent, Assemblyman **Jordan Cunningham** (R-Templeton).*

John Meyers if the Sacramento Bureau Chief of the Los Angeles Times. This article first appeared in the Los Angeles Times of October 21, 2021.

LAST WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

Board of Supervisors Meeting of Tuesday, October 19, 2021 (Completed)

Item 16 - Submittal of a resolution approving A) the July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2023, Memorandum of Understanding between the County of San Luis Obispo and the San Luis Obispo Prosecutors' Association, Bargaining Unit 04; and B) amendments to the San Luis Obispo County Employees Retirement Plan Appendices. This 2-year labor contract for the District Attorneys was approved unanimously on the consent calendar. The costs are pretty much within the County's salary cost and benefit cost parameters to not exceed 2% per year.

The 2.0% wage increase, effective the pay period including July 1, 2021, the new Step 6 effective the pay period following Board approval, and the 1.5% wage increase effective the pay period including July 1, 2022, are estimated to increase County Fiscal Year 2021-22 costs by $252,078, and annual ongoing costs by $418,722. The HSA match of up to $750 per year for employees enrolled in the High Deductible Health Plan is estimated increase County Fiscal Year 2021-22 costs by $750, and annual ongoing costs by $1,500. The increase to the annual deferred compensation match of $500 is estimated to increase County Fiscal Year 2021-22 and annual ongoing costs by $19,450. The 1.95% pension rate increase for Tier 3 members, and corresponding decrease to the County pension rate, effective the pay period including July 1, 2021, is estimated to decrease County Fiscal Year 2021-22 costs by $42,788 and decrease annual ongoing costs by $43,430.

Related to the current framework of mandated government labor union recognition, one might reflect on the ability of public prosecutors to be in a union in the first place.

8.1 Salaries for 2021/22 and 2022/23

8.1.1 Effective the beginning of the pay period that includes July 1, 2021, the County shall increase the salaries of bargaining unit personnel by 2.0%, resulting in the following salary ranges:

Class	Title	Range[1]	Monthly Range
308	DEPUTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY I	3776	$6,545.07- $7,956.00
309	DEPUTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY II	4373	$7,579.87 - $9,214.40
311	DEPUTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY III	5058	$8,767.20 - $10,658.27
314	DEPUTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY IV	6331	$10,973.73 - $13,338.00

8.1.3 Effective the beginning of the pay period that includes July 1, 2022, the County shall increase the salaries of bargaining unit personnel by 1.5%, resulting in the following salary ranges:

Class	Title	Range	Monthly Range
308	DEPUTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY I	3833	$6,643.87 - $8,479.47
309	DEPUTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY II	4438	$7,692.53 - $9,819.33
311	DEPUTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY III	5134	$8,898.93 - $11,358.53
314	DEPUTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY IV	6426	$11,138.40 - $14,215.07

Item 17 - It is recommended that the Board adopt a resolution to approve and authorize execution of the Golden State Connect Authority Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement to expand broadband access and quality in rural communities for the County of San Luis Obispo. The item was approved unanimously and with some positive comment by the Board on the consent calendar. It authorizes the County to join a new Statewide joint powers authority (JPA), the Golden State Connect Authority (GSCA), that is designed to promote better Broadband service in rural counties.

Could this be the first step in the creation of new operational joint powers authorities, such as the community choice energy version, designed to ultimately socialize broadband and successor communications?

It is not clear exactly what problem or problems exist in San Luis Obispo County. The write-up states in part:

The primary goals for the project structure are:
• to ensure that elected County Supervisors retain control of the program, with day-to-day administration provided by RCRC staff,
• to allow for partnership agreements between like-governmental entities for the operation and advancement of the program of work, and,
• to attract public and private investment in the program, as necessary and appropriate.

Initial areas of focus for broadband work on behalf of Member Counties will include:
• Foundational Readiness: Ensure all member counties have broadband strategic plans
• Capacity Building: Equip rural counties with information and resources about innovative models and approaches to broadband deployment
• Demonstration Projects: Implement open-access municipal broadband projects

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Item 29 - It is recommended that the Board receive and file the update on 2021 State Legislative activities. The County's State Legislative lobbyists presented a summary of State budgetary actions and new laws that were adopted during the 2021 Session. This list contains billions of dollars of new programs and expansion of government. As usual, the report was concise and useful.

Item 30 - Hearing to consider an appeal (APPL2020-00001) by Center for Biological Diversity of the Planning Commission's approval of a request by Sentinel Peak Resources California (Sentinel) LLC (formerly Freeport-McMoRan Oil and Gas) for a Conditional Use Permit (DRC2015-00002) to amend a previously approved Conditional Use Permit (D010386D) granting additional time to install the final 31 oil wells of 95 approved wells at the Arroyo Grande Oilfield. The property is located at 1821 Price Canyon Road on both the east and west sides of Price Canyon Road, approximately 2.7 miles north of the City of Pismo Beach. The Board rejected the shakedown appeal 4/1, with Gibson dissenting. Surprisingly, there were only 20 public speakers, who were evenly divided, 10/10 on the issue.

Clearly the appellant Center for Biological Diversity was out of issues and out gas. Their main justification was that the original EIRs for the project are now stale, as State laws have now included CO_2 generation as a subject for review. If jurisdictions applied this sort of post hoc reasoning, nothing could ever be built or mined, as everyone would be subject to the latest trendiology, and intervenors such as the Center would continue to find new reasons to redo EIRs.

Gibson took the same tack. He also waded into energy use. It turned out the oil field is self-sustaining and generates its own electric power.

Background: Sentinel sought a permit to extend the time deadline to drill 31 oil wells which had been previously approved by the County. The Planning Commission approved the permit in

2015. The Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) promptly filed a very detailed and long (244 page) appeal. The CBD opposed the project before the Planning Commission in 2015.

The appeal process was tolled (suspended) while various State agencies studied the impact of reinjected water to the aquifer and creek. The water is used to generate steam, which in turn is injected back into the aquifer to loosen up the viscus oil.

The State agency studies were separate from this application and would have occurred as a matter of course, even without the presentation of this application. In the end, the State concluded that the boundaries of the aquifer are such that any water that is reinjected will not impact any potable sources. Similarly, it was determined that treated water that is made to flow to the creek is not a pollution source. In fact, a number of agricultural firms support the project because the water discharged to the creek becomes recharge water to the Edna Valley aquifer, making it easier to achieve SGMA requirements.

The State determination occurred this spring, and thus the appeal became live and is now before the Board of Supervisors.

The Actual Issue: The appellant Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) is a left-of-center environmental activist and legal advocacy organization based in Tucson, Arizona, and claims to have 1.4 million members. It has 16 additional offices in Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Minnesota, New York, Oregon, Vermont, Washington, the District of Columbia, and the Mexican state of Baja California. Total revenue for 2017 exceeded $20.1 million, and as of March 2019, it had at least 160 employees, including more than 40 attorneys.

CBD policy goals have included population control (including promotion of both abortion access and voluntary male sterilization), opposition to the elevation of Brett Kavanaugh to the U.S. Supreme Court, and blocking construction of President Donald Trump's proposed wall on the southern border of the United States. In January 2019 CBD was a co-signatory on a letter that denounced nuclear power as "dirty energy" (nuclear power plants produce no carbon dioxide or other greenhouse gas emissions).

One university study of the CBD found that its modus operandi is described as:

Here lawsuits are ingeniously filed under the Endangered Species Act to add allegedly endangered species or protect existing ones. In 2001 the Fish and Wildlife Service was contesting some eighty suits on this matter, and an additional ninety were in the works. In short, a Herculean aim – eliminating all economic use of undeveloped land – was being accomplished via shrewd litigation on behalf of plants and animals![1]
CBD uses its litigation and advocacy to advance left-of-center political objectives related to both the environment and other matters. As of March 2019, the masthead of the main page of the website stated: "We've sued Trump 117 times—and we're nowhere near finished."

[1] ***The Limits of Civic Activism*, 2005; University of Illinois-Urbana political science professor Robert Weissberg analyzed the impact of CBD and other organizations like it and found a much broader agenda.**

The CBD raises much of its revenue by filing radical lawsuits and then settling for a little less in exchange for large payments. This is a protection racket which would make the Mafia blush.

OCT 19

Tell SLO Board of Supervisors to Reject New Oil Drilling in Arroyo Grande!

Public · Hosted by **ECOSLO** and **Center for Biological Diversity**

Tuesday, October 19, 2021 at 9:00 AM PDT
Next Week · 8–20°C Partly Cloudy

1055 Monterey St, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401, United States Show Map

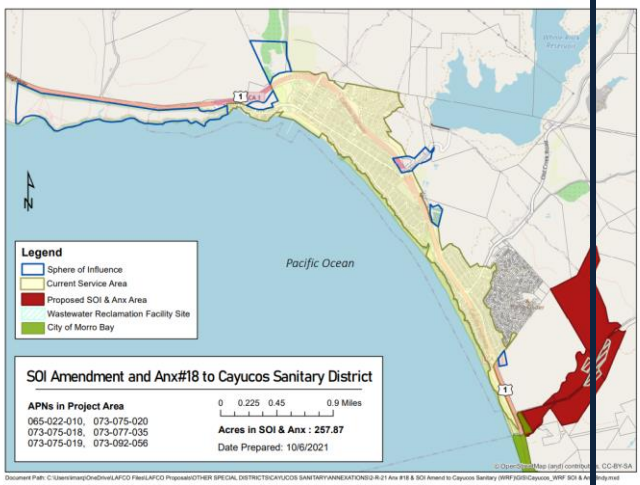
Details

On October 19, the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors will be deciding whether to approve or reject Sentinel Peak Resources' application to resurrect an expired permit to drill an additional 31 oil wells in the Arroyo Grande Oil Field. Those permits were issued in 2005 and expired in 2015. Yet, since then, the County has allowed Sentinel to drill new wells in the oil field without renewing its permits--by allowing Sentinel to deem them "replacement" wells.

Why is ECOSLO fronting for out-of-town shakedown thugs?

This long-term local environmental advocacy group has fallen into the clutches of the Center for Biological Diversity. Worse yet, ECOSLO is supported by and/or partners with government entities, not-for-profit foundations, private donors, and for-profit businesses. Do these entities support banning the 31 oil wells? The County itself is listed as an ECOSLO partner, if not a donor. The incestusness of the enviro movement in SLO County is on full display here.

San Luis Obispo County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) Meeting of Thursday, October 21, 2021(Scheduled)



Item A-3: Annexation No. 18 and Sphere of Influence Amendment to the Cayucos Sanitary District (Water Reclamation Facility) LAFCO 2-R-21 (Recommend Review and Approval). The annexation was approved unanimously. Approval allows the District to include a reclamation site within its boundaries. The write-up states in part:

Summary: The purpose of this proposal is to amend the SOI and annex the project area into the CSD for the district's new WRF and Solar Farm that have been constructed on the property. The CSD provides sewage, solid waste, and recycling services.

Item A-4: Annexation No. 82 to the City of San Luis Obispo (Froom Ranch Area) LAFCO File No. 1-R-21 (Recommend Review and Approval). This major annexation to the City was approved unanimously. The write-up stated in part:

Development Potential within Annexation Area: The subject site is located within the City's Sphere of Influence, as per the Municipal Service Review approved by LAFCO on October 20, 2016. Should the subject site be annexed into the City, the City-approved Froom Ranch Specific Plan would allow for the construction of up to 578 residential units, including 174 multi-family

housing units and 404 senior housing units within a Life Plan Community known as Villaggio that includes assisted living and health care facilities. The plan would also allow for up to 100,000 square feet (sf) of commercial retail space, including approximately 70,000 sf of hotel use with up to 120 rooms and 30,000 sf of proposed retail and restaurant uses. Approximately 54 percent of the annexation area would be retained as open space and include a 2.9-acre public park that would connect to the existing trail network within the adjacent Irish Hills Natural Reserve

Approval required LAFCO to impose mitigation of a number of CEQA Class I impacts, including views (conversion from rural to urban), displacement of animals and plants, disturbance of native American anthropological resources, greenhouse gas generation, etc. In fact, the migration report and list is 143 pages long.

Of course, just down the road in the unincorporated County, a pioneer family was denied 12 antique lot clearance certificates for lots that ranged from 3 to 12 acres and preserved the rural character. Of course, this proposal is next to an existing TJ Max and Home Depot. We've stayed at the adjacent Hampton Inn and can certify that the place is full of frogs and ducks.

We couldn't see readily in all the documents how much property tax the County was keeping, nor could we see a forecast of the property tax, sales tax, and TOT, which should be quite large at build out. Will the County receive any share of that growth to cover the Countywide services which it will still be providing as the added population uses the DA, Courts, Elections, Health, Jail, Child Support Services, regional road network, Public Defender, Behavioral Health, In-Home Support Services, Homeless Services, etc. There was no discussion of this issue by the County members – Compton and Arnold.

How will the new retail impact the stability of downtown San Luis Obispo?

Make the large drainage basin a real water feature. Why not put a grand and beautiful illuminated fountain in the large drainage basin as an entrance feature to the City? Everyone on 101 would see it.

Special Meeting of the Planning Commission of Friday, October 22, 2021 (Recently Scheduled)

In General: The audio system was not working for the October 7th meeting, when the 2 items below were scheduled. For this reason they had to be continued.

Item 6 - Application for 12 Small Houses and 24 Apartments behind Mechanics Bank Off Teft Street in Nipomo. The project was continued from the October 7, 2021 meeting. This time the project was approved unanimously.

The write-up stated in part that the project will include:

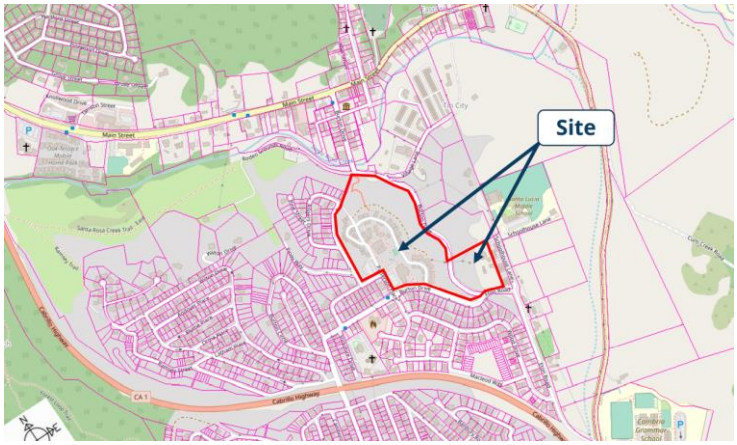
The project site consists of two existing legal parcels. The Conditional Use Permit (covered under SUB2019-00092) will authorize smaller lot sizes as a planned development and allow for the construction of twelve detached single-family residences of 1,654 square feet each on the south side of Flint Place (APN 092-575-001). The Conditional Use Permit (covered under DRC2021-00140) will authorize 24 one-bedroom apartment units of 651 square feet each on the north side of Flint Place (APN 092-576-005).

Item 7 - Cambria Christmas Market. The item was continued from the October 7, 2021 meeting. It was again approved unanimously, but with some caution from the Commissioners about fixing some of the issues that bother the neighbors. Apparently, the staff and Commission are pretty certain that opponents will appeal it to the Board of Supervisors and, if that appeal is denied, to the Coastal Commission. This sequence will have to be fast, as December is less than a month and one half away.

Background: The event has been permitted under a 5-year permit. The proposal is to extend it for 2021. There were a number of citizen complaints in the file as well as a violation notice from the County, citing several violations left over from last year. Neighbors assert that the attendance has been far above the approved 3,000. It will be interesting to see how the Commission deals with this one.

God forbid you drill an oil well in a remote location, attempt to get your antiquated subdivision certified, or build a boutique hotel in Cayucos. But you can bring a ton of tourists into Cambria each night for several weeks during the holiday season. The public loves it, so it seems to get extended each year.

We have no objection, as it's a great place to go and it's a seasonal festival, but we marvel at how some things glide along while others with no real impact at all get murdered.



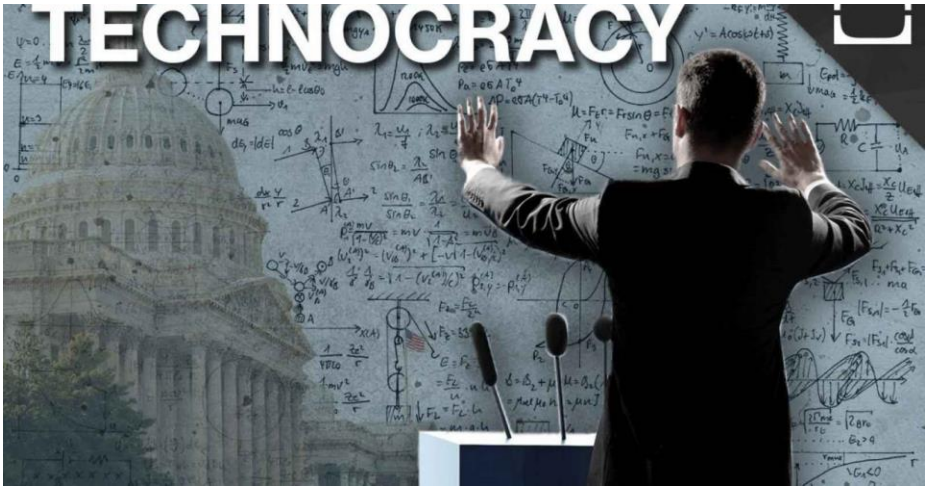
COLAB IN DEPTH

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

TWO 'EXPERT' FAILURES AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES

HOW OUR TECHNOCRATIC ELITES HAVE DISCARDED TRADITIONAL WISDOM

BY BRUCE THORNTON



The most consequential change in the history of our political order has been the shift from a Democratic Republic to a Technocratic Oligarchy. In the former, the Federal government is limited, and its powers checked and balanced by the Bill of Rights, Congress, the Supreme Court, and the sovereignty powers of the states. In the latter, power is expanded and concentrated in the Federal government and executive agencies staffed by "experts" whose knowledge and judgement are supposedly superior to the practical wisdom, common sense, unalienable rights, and traditional self-government of the sovereign people and their representatives.

After nearly a century of the ever-expanding concentration and reach of federal power, with the Biden administration we have reached the inflection point where that power is becoming the very tyranny the Founders sought to prevent. What else do you call it when, to advance the interests of a partisan faction, the National School Boards Association, the Attorney General marshals the FBI, along with several other federal agencies, to investigate parents who are exercising their Constitutional rights to question and demand accountability from locally elected state school boards that lie beyond the Constitutional authority of the federal government?

This transformation from Republic to technocracy has been going on for over a century.

Early in progressivism's rise there were explicit calls for technocratic control housed in the executive branch's bureaus and agencies. Professor Woodrow Wilson in 1887 counseled the country to "open for the public a bureau of skilled, economical administration" comprising the "hundreds who are wise" empowered to guide the thousands of American citizens who are "selfish, ignorant, timid, stubborn, or foolish."

Progressives like Herbert Croly in 1909 argued that to achieve this rule by experts "does demand an increased amount of centralized action and responsibility," which in turn requires, Croly continued, that we "discard the strong, almost dominant tendency to regard the existing Constitution with superstitious awe, and to shrink with horror from modifying it in even the smallest detail"—even though when Croly wrote, there had already been 18 Amendments "modifying" the Constitution. And Walter Lippman in 1914 linked the argument for technocracy to professional training in the "human sciences," for "the great triumph of modern psychology is its growing capacity for penetrating to the desires that govern men's thoughts."

These early progressives describe the foundations of today's Technocratic Leviathan: a "living Constitution" needing to be adapted to the rise of new "human sciences" such as psychology, sociology, economic, and political science (NB); and the transfer the power to govern from the sovereign people and their representatives, to self-selected, unaccountable bureaucrats.

For nearly a century the "managerial elite" of federal technocrats have increasingly colonized our federal institutions, and left a record of serial failure. The Biden administration, and its knee-jerk rejection of Donald Trump's efforts to rein in federal regulatory hubris, in less than a year has recorded even more failures at home and abroad by the "hundreds who are wise."

At Home

Economic policy, dealing as it does with numerical data and statistics, creates the illusion of scientific certainty and objectivity. But as with everything involving human beings and their passions, interests, and irrational motivations, there is no "science" of economics, no matter how useful its data can be as empirical evidence.

Remember when Barack Obama's economic brain trust proclaimed that GDP growth would not rise above 2%? Except for the pandemic year of 2020, every year of Trump's presidency saw growth above that alleged limit. Instead of economic science, then, there are competing political factions that use the federal fisc and manipulated statistics to advance their ideological preferences no matter the costs and dangers to the nation's economy as a whole.

Take, for example, the Democrats' latest proposed spending binge. This bill to allocate over $5 trillion comes after about $5 trillion already spent so far on COVID relief. The national debt has ballooned to $30 trillion, 128% of GDP, a ratio more typical of failing economies. This clear and present danger to our economy is rationalized by pseudo-scientific and dishonest "theory." Modern Monetary Theory, for example, asserts,

Monetarily sovereign countries like the U.S., U.K., Japan, and Canada, which spend, tax, and borrow in a fiat currency that they fully control, are not operationally constrained by revenues when it comes to federal government spending.

Put simply, such governments do not rely on taxes or borrowing for spending since they can print as much as they need and are the monopoly issuers of the currency. Since their budgets aren't like a regular household's, their policies should not be shaped by fears of rising national debt.

All you need is common sense to see that this "theory" is a specious rationale for increasing progressive spending on its "social justice" agenda, a grift for redistributing other people's money, including that of the unborn, for partisan power. Even Dickens' spendthrift Mr. Micawber knew better: "Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure nineteen and six, result happiness. Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure twenty pounds ought and six, result misery."

Then there are the false claims used to sell these reckless policies to the voters. One of the most frequent is the appeal to people's envy and resentment by asserting that the "rich" need "to pay their fair share." This canard has been exposed multiple times, most recently in this recent *Wall*

Street Journal column by Phil Gramm and Mike Solon. "In no other country," they write, "do the rich bear a greater share of the income-tax burden than they do in the U.S.":

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development data show that the top 10% of American households earn about 33.5% of all earned income but pay 45.1% of all income taxes, including Social Security and Medicare payroll taxes. That progressivity ratio of 1.35 is far higher than in any other country. The ratio in France is 1.10. In Germany it's 1.07, and in Sweden an even 1. In the last OECD study, in 2015, the top 10% of earners in the U.S. paid 45% of all income taxes. In France, the top 10% only paid 28%. In Germany they paid 31% and in Sweden 27%. Conversely, the bottom 90% of earners in the U.S. paid 55%. The bottom 90% of earners in France paid 72%. In Germany it was 69% and in Sweden 73%.

Similarly, the Democrat talking-point that the Trump 2017 tax-cuts favored the rich also ignores the data: "The Joint Committee on Taxation and the Congressional Budget Office found that the 2017 tax cuts made the American tax system more progressive and, according to the CBO, the 'highest quintile's share of federal taxes was 0.5 percentage points higher in 2018 than in 2017.'" It's not numerical data per se that is the problem, but its misuse and distortion, as when data on consumption are ignored when defining "income inequality."

Science and expertise have nothing to do with these partisan policies. But human nature does. As far back as ancient Athens the idea of political equality had degenerated into radical egalitarianism, the "equality of result," or what today's "woke" call "equity." And since, as James Madison observed, "The most common and durable source of faction, has been the various and unequal distribution of property," the party of centralized power seeks to redistribute other people's money to leverage the resentment that follows the "unequal distribution of property," which reflects individual differences in talent, virtue, hard work, and sheer luck.

Abroad

Abroad, our "rules-based international order" similarly reflects pseudo-science and partisan prejudices. One feature of this "postmodern" foreign policy is the fetish of "diplomatic engagement." Ignoring the inherent conflicts among sovereign nations pursuing their diverse interests and visions of the good, the globalist foreign policy establishments assert that "diplomatic engagement" through multinational agreements and treaties, and supranational institutions, can maintain peace and order without force. Such faith ignores the great diversity, and often zero-sum conflicts that arise from radically different cultures, traditions, faiths, histories, values, and mores.

The serial failures of this peculiar idealism have been numerous just since World War II: wars in Korea and Vietnam, ethnic cleansing and massacres in Africa and the Balkans, the rise of Islamic jihadist terror, and the geopolitical adventurism of Russia and China—none were prevented or even mitigated by "diplomatic engagement" or supranational institutions reliant on American military power. Indeed, these "postmodern" shibboleths, especially in the case of China, have furthered and facilitated the ambitions of illiberal and totalitarian regimes.

Recently the debacle in Afghanistan has become the poster child for feckless diplomacy. Our diplomats and other representatives have been meeting with spokesmen for the Taliban in Doha, Qatar, to coordinate efforts to neutralize terrorist groups like ISIS. But at the same time, the

Taliban leadership announced that there will be no cooperation with the Americans. That arrogant dismissal was met with the State Department's weaselly diplo-speak calling the Taliban spokesmen "candid and professional."

Worse yet, the Taliban continue to play our State Department for fools, using soothing rhetoric to misdirect us from their brutal deeds. As CNN reports, "Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid told CNN: "We have not decided about women's affairs or rights yet, but we are discussing." Meanwhile,

So complete was the Taliban's military victory that they have little incentive to compromise, nor bargain with Afghanistan's warlords. They have moved quickly to snuff out dissent, whether from social activists, rebels in the Panjshir valley or Salafists who practice Islam differently from the Taliban.

As the West, particularly the U.S., tries to leverage foreign aid and international recognition in order to change the Taliban's behavior, these traditionalist Muslims are returning to enforcement of brutal sharia laws, as Jim Geraghty reports: "*Foreign Policy* magazine confirms that, 'The Taliban's Sharia is the most brutal of all. The Afghan government is imposing punishments that have no comparison elsewhere in the Islamic world.' Summary executions, stoning of women, and beheading and cutting off the hands of accused thieves have returned; court cases and juries are no longer part of the legal system."

The diplomatic delusion propagated by our national security and foreign policy "experts" has seriously compromised our war against jihad over the last twenty years. Slaves to failed paradigms based on questionable assumptions about human nature, they have squandered opportunities to decisively confront our enemies, especially the Iranian theocracy that for 40 years waged war against us and our allies in the Middle East.

Yet here we are, with the Biden administration desperately seeking to renew the craven Iran nuclear deal, even as the mullahs, sensing our civilizational failure of nerve, reject contemptuously our "diplomatic outreach," even as their proxies abroad wreak terrorist mayhem, and their centrifuges at home keep spinning their way to nuclear weapons capability.

These are just two examples of how our technocratic elites and "experts" have discarded traditional wisdom about human nature that has been confirmed for millennia; and perpetuated dubious ideas contrary to common sense and empirical evidence. As a result, our prestige and clout abroad has been diminished, and our economy at home is facing a fiscal armaggedon—a double blow to our superpower status, and a further erosion of our political freedoms.

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TRANSITION TO NOWHERE

California's switch to a primarily solar and wind powered grid is a dead end

BY MARK MILLS

The leaders of California and China have at least one thing in common: fear of blackouts. In late September, following widespread and economically debilitating losses of power, China's vice premier Han Zheng ordered the country's energy companies to ensure sufficient supplies before winter "at all costs" and added, ominously, that blackouts "won't be tolerated." A month earlier, California governor Gavin Newsom issued emergency orders to procure more natural gas-fired electrical capacity to avoid blackouts. And in a possible sign of more such moves to come, earlier in the summer, California's electric grid operator "stole" electricity that Arizona utilities had purchased and that was in transit from Oregon.

In recent weeks, the European continent has also suffered blackouts, near-blackouts, and skyrocketing electricity prices triggered by a massive lull in nature's windiness. Grid operators across Europe rushed to buy fuel and fire up old gas- and coal-fired plants. Europe petitioned Russia for more natural gas, and German coal plants ran out of fuel, causing a scramble (including in China) to get more (doubling global prices). Even long-forgotten oil-fired powerplants were pressed into emergency service on grids from Sweden to Asia.

The issue that's now front and center is whether all these disruptions to electricity supply and price are, to use Silicon Valley language, a "feature" or a temporary "bug" of the new energy infrastructure favored by advocates of renewables: one dominated by power from the wind and sun. Proponents of this so-called energy transition admit that the road to a post-hydrocarbon world might be rough. But the solution, they say, is to accelerate construction of far more wind and solar machines. Thus, the key question now is not whether we need such a transition, or even what it would cost, but whether it's even possible in the time frames now being bandied about ("carbon free by 2035").

We can thank California for leading the way in helping us answer that question. In late August, in pursuit of that "transition" vision and while skirting the edge of widespread blackouts, California brought online the world's biggest-ever grid-scale battery, located at Moss Landing, just 60 miles south of Silicon Valley. Proponents of an all-wind/solar grid seem to be saying that all we need to do to get past the volatility of conventional fuels for electricity is to build enough such batteries—the sooner, the better.

The Moss Landing battery is about ten times the size of the previous world-record-holder: the grid-scale battery that Elon Musk built, to global fanfare, for the South Australia grid in 2017. States and countries everywhere are in hot pursuit of grid-scale storage, including New York City, where the state Public Service Commission recently approved construction of a battery "plant" in Queens roughly the size of Tesla's Australian project.

Three basic constraints work against building enough batteries to solve the intermittency of wind and solar power, however. First, there's the time it takes to conquer the inevitable engineering challenges in building anything new at industrial scales. Second, there's the scale issue itself and the deeply naïve reluctance to consider the utterly staggering quantity of batteries that would be required to keep society powered if most electricity is supplied at nature's convenience. And finally, directly derived from the scale issues, are the difficulties involved in obtaining sufficient primary minerals to build as many batteries as the green dreamers want.

Let's start with the engineering realities. Mere days after its ribbon-cutting, the Moss Landing mega-battery went offline. Heat and fire-detection systems automatically shut the battery down, activated sprinklers, and called local fire departments. Fortunately, nothing happened this time, but engineers have to take seriously fires with large lithium batteries because they are self-fueling and can be difficult, if not borderline impossible, to suppress. The technical issues resemble the ones plaguing several electric-car manufacturers, but the scale of grid-scale batteries adds to the challenge. The Moss Landing beast has an array of 100,000 lithium battery modules containing as much lithium as some 20,000 Teslas. The last thing anyone wants is for Moss Landing to light up like a Roman Candle visible from space.

This past summer, the Tesla Megapack in South Australia did catch fire and burn out a number of its tractor-trailer-sized "packs." Two years earlier, a similar fire at a smaller but still utility-scale battery plant in Arizona caused an explosion and injured several firefighters. The state paused its grid-scale battery rollout while it investigated. As of this writing, some 75 percent of Moss Landing's total capacity remains offline with, as one headline put it, "no timeline on return."

Such challenges are part of the proper and normal course of engineering progress. Batteries at such scale have never been built. Engineers will doubtless find the causes of these problems and make appropriate fixes. That process may not happen as fast as enthusiasts would like, but operators everywhere will want to get it right before building hundreds and even thousands more such installations.
This brings us to the scale question: just how many facilities like the $400 million Moss Landing battery will California, the U.S., and ostensibly the world need? Answering the question requires simple arithmetic, yielding a substantial reality check.

Building grids that can supply electricity whenever people and businesses need it for decades on end requires more than meeting episodic peaks in demand; we must also understand and prepare for the frequency and duration of the inevitable power-plant outages. The eight grids in the U.S. today collectively possess hundreds of thousands of megawatts of "excess" generation. That backup or "peaking" capacity can be called upon whenever needed, and it can run indefinitely. Since sunlight and wind are by definition impossible to dispatch at will, the critical question for planners is just how much electricity storage is required for a grid whose primary sources of energy are the sun and wind. Keep in mind that Moss Landing's four hours of storage at 400 megawatts is worthless just one minute after the fourth hour.

The big issue at grid-scale isn't the oft-noted diurnal variability of sunlight and wind. Rather, it's the seasonal variabilities, along with the episodic nature of long, even multiday weather events of, say, continent-wide wind lulls (as Europe recently experienced) or total continental cloud cover. Multi-decade meteorological data shows that while it's impossible to predict precisely when such episodes will occur, it is entirely predictable that they *will* occur, and frequently, over decades. The adage that it's always sunny or windy somewhere in the country is simply not true over a span of such time. And, not incidentally, it is this reality that makes it clear that building more transmission lines can't solve that problem.

Consider the implications just for California. If the rest of the nation switches to a solar/wind grid, California won't be able to count on neighboring power plants to make up for losses during regional dips in wind and sunlight availability. (Imports currently supply one-fourth of the

Golden State's annual electricity.) An easy arithmetical approximation shows that a transitioned California would need about 100 Moss Landings, costing about $40 billion, to make it through a power drought of several days.

In these days of profligate government spending, $40 billion might not seem like too much—except, of course, if the sunlight/wind drought lasted just one more day. In that case, California would need to have another $10 billion in batteries on hand. And since none of the batteries being built or planned today will last for the several-decade lifespan of normal grid equipment, those batteries will need replacement, raising the total investment well above $100 billion. The alternative would be to just turn everything off whenever such multiday episodes occur. Another alternative? A California-scale conventional grid can be reliably operated for decades with about $10 billion worth of excess conventional generation.

Such disparities are even more sobering at the national level. One detailed analysis based on national meteorological data concluded that an all solar/wind grid could keep America's lights on 99.97 percent of the time using just 12 hours of storage. That sounds good until you do the math. On average, that statistical level of reliability means there would be a few hours of zero power every year. But that doesn't include the unpredictable but inevitable episodes—even as few as every couple of years—of continent-wide blackouts due to extended sunlight/wind droughts. Such a grid sounds "Third World," not "high tech." And we'd pay more for it. The same analysis finds that an all solar/wind grid requires at least twice today's installed generating capacity. That's because far more than the normal peak generation would be needed, not only to supply peak demand when sunlight and wind are available but also to generate surplus to store electricity in batteries.

Such realities expose the silliness of the oft-repeated claim that solar or wind power have achieved "grid parity," meaning that they can produce electricity for about the same cost per kilowatt-hour as a conventional machine—*when* they're running. To match the energy produced by one conventional machine each year, and for years on end, you need at least two solar/wind machines, plus the batteries. That combination puts the sun/wind/battery option at roughly triple the capital cost of grid-scale conventional power. Even so, the cost for 12 hours of storage at U.S. grid-level alone would be about $1.5 trillion, and that would still leave the nation episodically in the dark. The alternative? A conventional grid with about $100 billion worth of conventional backup/peakers.

Nonetheless, because of existing and expected subsidies and mandates, the Energy Information Administration forecasts a 7,000 percent increase in the quantity of grid-scale batteries on the nation's grids over the coming decades. That would bring storage to a total of less than a half-hour of national demand.

One alternative is to follow Germany's lead: keep a roughly equal-size shadow grid of conventional generation on hand as backup. The expense of such a solution would be borne not by the builders of solar/wind machines but by ratepayers. That solution is the main reason that the average German residential customer pays about 300 percent more for electricity than the average American. Worse, as Europe has discovered as its winter of discontent approaches, that dual-grid option is exposed to episodic and radical fuel-price spikes arising from the inevitable supply-chain interruptions. Price spikes happen when there's a widespread jump in demand for

any commodity, but especially when fuel buyers choose (in this case under government mandates) to avoid engaging in long-term, low-cost supplier agreements.

The other option is to claim that batteries will soon see "revolutionary" declines in cost. It's hard to keep track of all the media reports about new "game-changing" battery technologies. The batteries that will be built today are those that exist now, not some fanciful new product of the future. Of course it's reasonable to expect researchers to discover superior chemical concoctions, but it takes many years to go from discovery to industrial-scale production. The first Tesla sedan, circa 2012, didn't show up for more than three decades after the Nobel-winning lithium discovery in the mid-1970s (by an Exxon researcher). And yes, lithium batteries will become cheaper over time, perhaps dropping in cost by half, as enthusiasts claim. But for systemic grid-scale storage to be affordable, as one detailed analysis observed, we need to see nearly 100-fold cost reductions, which are nowhere on the horizon.

This brings us to the physical roadblock impeding a magical transition to a battery-infused grid enabling sunlight and wind as primary energy. Batteries are an extremely expensive way to store energy in the main because they're so material-intensive. It requires about 50 pounds of batteries to hold the amount of energy contained in one pound of oil. Obtaining the minerals needed to fabricate one 50-pound battery requires mining and processing roughly 25,000 pounds of materials. This kind of physical disparity really adds up at grid scales.

Building enough Moss Landing-class systems for 12 hours of storage for the U.S. alone would entail mining materials equal to what would be needed for two centuries' worth of production of batteries for all the world's smartphones. That doesn't count the additional minerals needed for the transition to electric cars or the "energy minerals" needed to build the wind and solar machines themselves. It's a little-noted fact that using wind/solar/battery machines to deliver the same amount of energy as conventional hydrocarbon machines requires about 1,000 percent more primary materials for fabrication.

The world isn't now mining, nor is it planning to mine, a quantity of minerals and metals sufficient to build as many batteries as the transition roadmap requires. About this fact there is no dispute, even if it's being ignored. In a surreal disconnect, the International Energy Agency's own analysis of the astonishing, even impossible mineral demands required for the wind/solar/battery path was quickly followed by a different report proposing an even more aggressive pursuit of the energy transition.

Meantime, another recent study from the Geological Survey of Finland totaled up the overall demand that the transition will create just for common minerals—for example, copper, nickel, graphite, and lithium—never mind the more exotic ones. They concluded that demand would exceed known global reserves of those minerals.
Just starting down the transition path will soon put unprecedented pressures on global mineral supply chains. In the real world of commodities, that will translate into higher prices. It's puzzling to see so many analysts believing that batteries will become a lot cheaper given the fact that, as the IEA noted, raw materials alone make up from 50 percent to 70 percent of battery costs.

The mineral-intensive transition path has some troubling geopolitical implications as well. China is the largest source for most of the needed critical materials; by most accounts, Beijing controls

nearly half that supply chain. The United States is a minor player. The rush to build battery assembly plants here in America is the equivalent of building cars here but importing all the gasoline.

The retort from transition advocates is invariably that "clean tech" is getting better at a putative "exponential" rate, just as we've seen happen in computing and communications. But physical infrastructures like roads, bridges, power plants, and big batteries simply cannot improve at the rate that information systems do. These are realities anchored in physics, not policies or subsidies. It's true that grid-scale wind, solar, and battery machines are fabulously better than they were three decades ago, and that we should expect many more of them to be built even without subsidies and mandates. But it's just as naïve today to think that wind/solar/battery machines could entirely replace conventional power systems as it was in the 1950s to think that nuclear energy would power not only all our grids but also our ships and cars. Nuclear energy at scale was a lot harder than many thought.

History may mark the summer of 2021—from Europe's approaching cold and expensive winter to California's teetering on systemic blackouts—as the point when the world began to test the limits of supply chains for providing and storing electricity. California is on track to see its cost of electricity blow past Germany's sky-high levels. Even the California Public Utility Commission has observed that the path now charted will mean that "energy bills will become less affordable over time."

If one were taking bets on the outcome of the race to zero carbon, odds are that consumer patience with soaring costs—in tandem with decreasing reliability—will be exhausted long before we have the opportunity to deplete the supply of critical energy minerals. Here, too, California is leading the way.

Mark P. Mills, a Manhattan Institute senior fellow, is a strategic partner in Montrose Lane, an energy-tech venture fund, and author of The Cloud Revolution: How the Convergence of New Technologies Will Unleash the Next Economic Boom and a Roaring 2020s.

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