



**WEEKLY UPDATE
APRIL 17 - 23, 2022**

SPECIAL PUBLIC SAFETY EVENT NOTICE: SEE PAGE 27

THIS WEEK

BOS

**MAJOR PLAN TO REDUCE HOMELESSNESS – AGAIN
STAFFING CREEP CONTINUES
POSITIVE PROCESSING IMPROVEMENTS FOR AG PRESERVE APPLICATIONS**

LAFCO - LITE MEETING

NO ANNEXATIONS, DETACHMENTS, OR SPHERE CHANGES

CENTRAL COAST ENERGY

ENERGY COSTS BEGINNING TO EXCEED ENERGY REVENUE

LAST WEEK

NO BOS

**INTEGRATED WASTE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY
NEEDED TO OFFLOAD OBSOLETE PROGRAMS BUT CONTINUES AS USUAL**

EMERGENT ISSUES

**COVID LOW FOR NOW
BUT STATE WANTS TO MANDATE VACCINATIONS FOR EVERYONE
AGAIN WHERE ARE THE THERAPEUTIC PILLS?**

**COLAB IN DEPTH
SEE PAGE 14**

**OBSESSION WITH CLIMATE CHANGE
DISTORTS OUR PRIORITIES
BY BJORN LOMBORG**

**SACRAMENTO DEMOCRATS KILL GAS TAX
RELIEF, TRANSPARENCY
BY JON COUPAL**

APOCALYPSE IS IN THE AIR
Is it too late to restore our civilizational nerve and morale?
BY BRUCE THORNTON

THE END OF PROGRESSIVE INTELLECTUAL LIFE
*How the foundation-NGO complex quashed innovative thinking and open debate, first
on the American right and now on the center left*
BY MICHAEL LIND

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

Board of Supervisors Meeting of Tuesday, April 19, 2022 (Scheduled)

Multiple Items - More Mid-Year Staff Creep. In total, the off-budget additions are the equivalent of 4.5 FTE's. During almost every meeting, new net positions are added the County

roster. Over time, this process grows the organization. For example, there are about 26 board meetings per year. If the County adds an average of 5 FTE per meeting (130 per year).

Item 12 - Request to: 1) approve a resolution amending the Position Allocation List (PAL) for Fund Center (FC) 166-Behavioral Health to add 1.00 FTE Behavioral Health Program Supervisor to lead Spanish-language services, including the Latino Outreach Program, and delete a 0.50 FTE Behavioral Health Clinician and add a 0.75 FTE Behavioral Health Clinician in Prevention and Outreach programs; and 2) approve a corresponding budget adjustment for Fund Center (FC) 166- Behavioral Health in the amount of \$36,977, by 4/5 vote.

Item 15 - Submittal of a resolution amending the Positions Allocation List (PAL) for Fund Center (FC) 427-Golf Courses deleting 1.00 Park Ranger I/II/III position and adding 1.00 FTE Golf Course Supervisor position. This one is a wash. However, the Golf Supervisor position will be more expensive than the Ranger position.

Item 18 - Submittal of a resolution amending the Position Allocation List (PAL) for Fund Center 142 – Planning and Building, by adding a 1.00 FTE Planner I/II/III, and a 0.50 FTE Planner I/II/III.

Item 19 - Submittal of a resolution amending the Position Allocation List (PAL) for Fund Center 405-Public Works, by deleting 1.00 FTE Program Manager I/II - Limited Term and adding 1.00 FTE Program Manager I/II.

Item 33 - Hearing to consider adoption of a resolution amending the Rules of Procedure to Implement the Land Conservation Act of 1965 (Williamson Act) to streamline the application process for agricultural preserves and land conservation contracts to 1) no longer require Planning Commission review of agricultural preserve applications and 2) require lienholders to sign application acknowledgements instead of recorded land conservation contracts. In a very positive step the item, if approved, would reduce processing time and costs for applicants applying for agricultural preserve designations.

The proposed Phase 1 streamlining amendments include two changes:

- *No longer requiring Planning Commission review of agricultural preserve applications; and*
- *Requiring lienholders to sign acknowledgements of applications for land conservation contracts, instead of approvals of recorded land conservation contracts.*

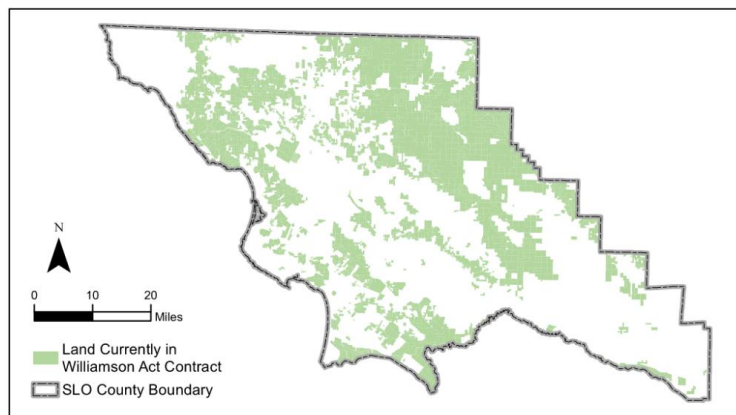


Figure 1: Land Conservation Contracts Countywide

Since there will be less processing by the Planning Department, could the fee be reduced?

MATTER AFTER 1:30 PM

Item 35 - Request to: 1) provide direction to staff regarding the update on the August 10, 2021 Spending Plan on Homeless Initiatives; 2) provide direction to staff regarding the draft San Luis Obispo Countywide Strategic Plan to Address Homelessness; 3) provide approval for staff to evaluate development of a County Homeless Operations/Coordination Center; and 4) provide approval for staff to pursue the establishment of a Homeless Division within the Department of Social Services. As noted in the title, the key issue is part 2, which is yet another attempt to develop and implement a strategy to reduce the number of unsheltered homeless people in the county. There are 4 components to this Board item, per the staff report:



It is recommended that the Board:

1. Provide direction to staff regarding the update on the August 10, 2021 Spending Plan on Homeless Initiatives;
- ✓ 2. Provide direction to staff regarding the draft San Luis Obispo Countywide Strategic Plan to Address Homelessness;
3. Provide approval for staff to evaluate development of a County Homeless Operations/Coordination Center; and
4. Provide approval for staff to pursue the establishment of a Homeless Division within the Department of Social Services.

[San Luis Obispo Regional Strategic Plan to Address Homelessness \(ca.gov\)](https://www.slo.org/strategic-plan-to-address-homelessness)

The Proposed 2022 Plan

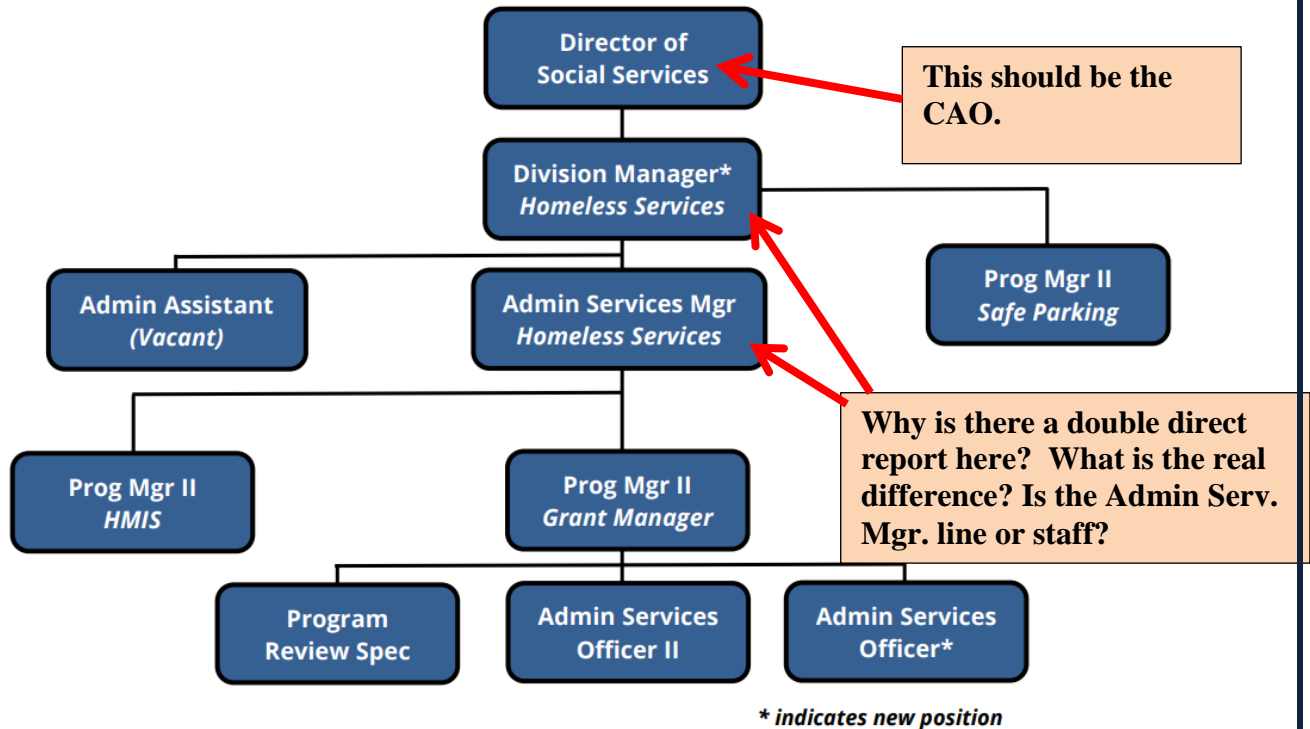
The Plan and the subsidiary requests in this agenda item should be approved by the Board of Supervisors. The CAO has taken a realistic approach by not promising to eliminate homelessness. Instead, the goal is to reduce the incidence by 50% over 5 years. It includes benchmarks and an accountability structure.

This Strategic Plan presented today is being built to identify and achieve 12-month, 3-year and 5-year objectives to reduce the number of homeless persons in the County of San Luis Obispo to 50% of the current level over the five year period following its approval for implementation by this Board.

Our Recommendations

1) The Board should approve the overall project scope for the five-year effort, as well as the structural reforms and financing. The Board should approve the new structure in sub-item 4 but should not assign the function to the Department of Social Services.

Figure 3. Possible structure for a Homeless Division to be formalized within the Dept of Social Service:



In Social Services the initiative will immediately become mired in the day-to-day mission of the large line Department, which is processing oriented. The Department's main missions are to determine eligibility for tens of thousands of clients in the safety net programs, protect abused children, and transition people to jobs. These are line functions, and the new effort should not be subordinate to an executive who is responsible for running a large ongoing service operation. The new division should report to the CAO, at least until it is shown to be working and ready to be routinized. The CAO is a proven project manager and can oversee the new Division Manager with ease, as well as judge the progress.

2) Approval should be contingent on the use of formal structured project management. Project charters should be developed for the overall effort, as well as each of the sub-projects as they are established.

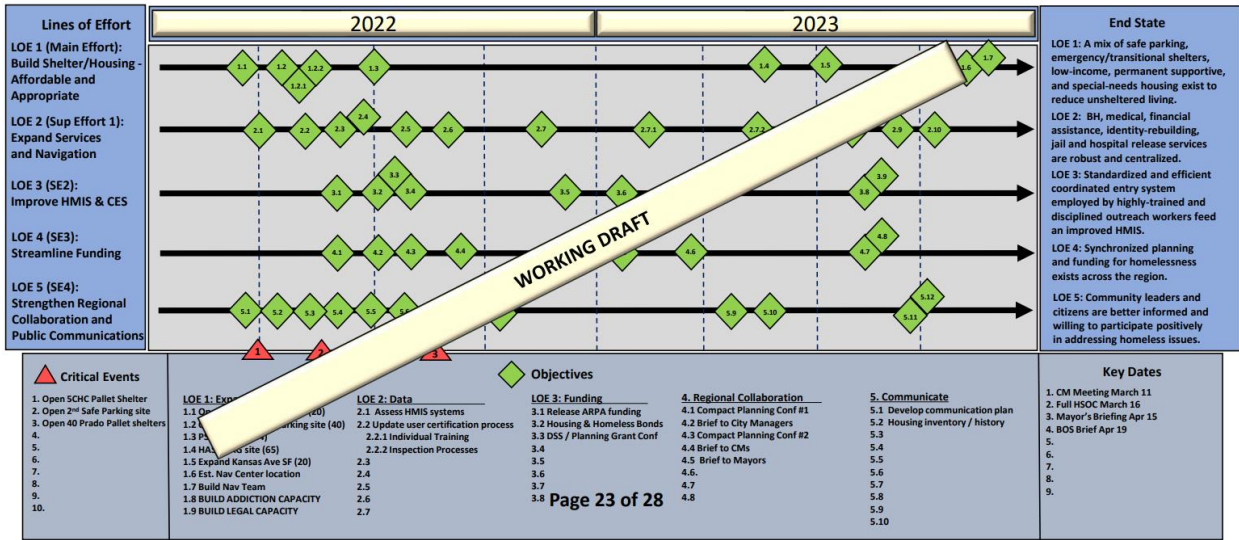
The project charters should conform to accepted project management standards, such as Anton Dekom or other reliable experts. The overall project should be reviewed in a formal session by the CAO and the usual dependencies on a rolling 6-week cadence. Dependencies include the County Counsel, HR Director, Auditor-Controller, Deputy County Administrator, Social Services Director, and Behavioral Health Director, as they all control choke points which could interfere with the project.

3) The project should be housed in a separate space where all the members can interact as a unit and not be bothered with other tasks. The group should come to work each day and interact in person.



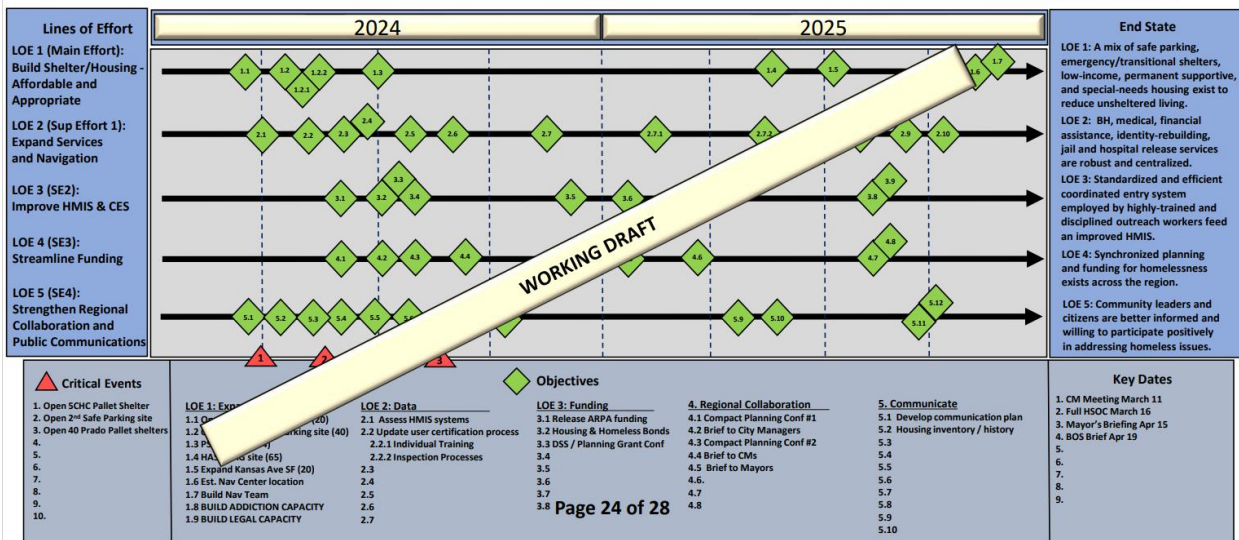
5-Year Operational Approach - Draft

Intent: Develop Countywide Regional Collaboration that: guides rapidly-expanding shelter, service, navigation and housing capacity; improves data and outreach systems; creates, identifies and streamlines funding while generating support from citizens through communication, education and accessible venues of action.



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Needed Project Refinements:

1. Better Definition of the Problem

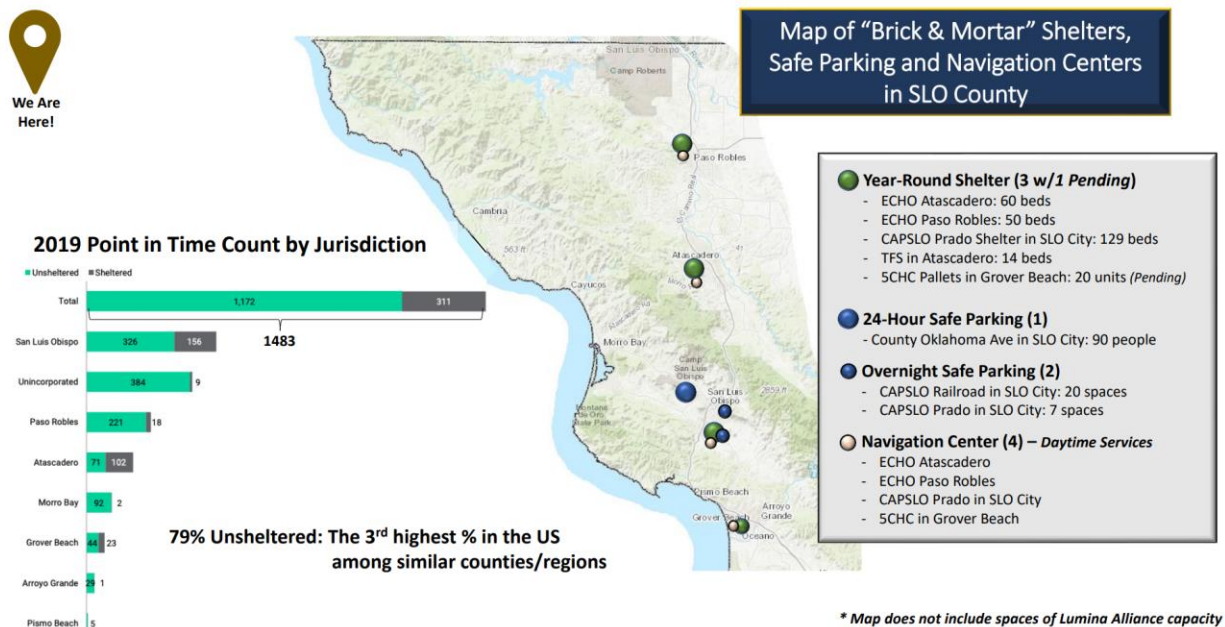
The data indicate that there are about 1500 homeless people in the County at any given time, for which there is sheltering capacity that ranges from 20% to 30%, based on the seasonal availability of shelter beds.

An issue that is not dealt within the project design concerns the elasticity of the occurrence of homelessness. If the County were able to provide for the current 1500, would more arrive either from natural processes within the county or from the outside? In other words, is there any way to anticipate the number of new homeless cases arising from within the County each year? Is there any way to estimate the number of cases arriving from outside each year? For example, would the Social Services Department have data on how many new General Relief cases it experiences each year from these sources? Similarly, would Social Security know how many new homeless SSI cases it receives from these sources each year?

It seems that the situation would not be static and that the Plan must anticipate for additions beyond the current population. Similarly, do any of the cases permanently leave the County over time?

A scenario that might be considered as a separate part of the Plan is: what happens if there is a general economic depression as a result of a combination of inflation and high interest rates on the national debt? What would happen to the Federal Budget if the current 1% became 8%, and energy costs and blackouts decimate employment?

It's like a water basin – instead of acre-feet of water, how many are coming into the “system”, how many are recycles, how many are leaving, and how many are graduating from homelessness?



2. Civil Rights and Accountability

A major practical problem is that under our Constitutional system, an individual is allowed to be drunk, addicted to drugs, and mentally ill, and is allowed to lay about the community as long as he doesn't block public access or interfere with the security or the freedom of others. It is only when he steals, defecates on public or private property, blocks a door, or otherwise violates

particular laws or ordinances that he can be compelled to cooperate. Vagrancy is no longer a crime. This situation has led to a revolving door where the homeless suffer no consequences for their behavior. The State's \$950 dollar free stealing threshold has not helped the situation.

This represents a huge problem for program designers in that even when housing, counseling, psychiatric care, medications, and other services are provided, about 70 % of the individuals resist treatment and continue their underlying behavioral problems.

They are unaccountable. Is there a way to compel them to live in a shelter or housing, take their medications (which can often be complex in dosage and timing), quit drinking, and quit drugs? If not, the entire project could fail just as past efforts have failed.

If governments cannot compel the homeless to remain in shelters or housing and receive treatment, could the County and cities require them to be licensed to sleep outside in the parks, creeks, and other spaces? Could they be required to wear a tracking device?

This issue needs to be dealt with up front in the project design before millions more are spent and resources are diverted from other public priorities. The judges, Public Defender, DA, County Bar, and homeless advocacy lawyers need to be bought in quickly on program design. These were missing from the Steering Committee that advised County staff on development of the program.

Unless a system of accountability is built into the program, it will most likely fail.



San Luis Obispo Countywide Strategy to Address Homelessness

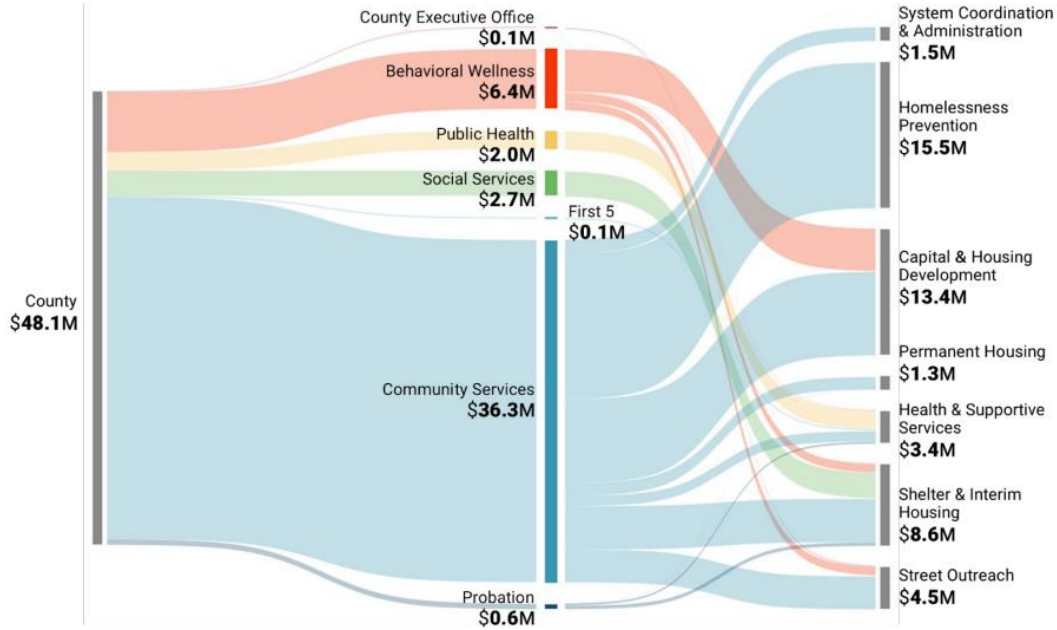
Steering Committee Members

- Elaine Archer
Dir of Housing Management, HASLO
- Janna Nichols
Executive Director, 5 Cities Homeless Coalition
- Brenda Mack
Lived Experience, Atascadero Resident
- Anne Robin
Behavioral Health Administrator
- Kelsey Nocket
Homeless Manager, City of SLO
- John Peters
Police Chief, Grover Beach
- Scott Collins
City Manager, Morro Bay
- Susan Funk
*Council Member, Atascadero
Chair of HSOC*

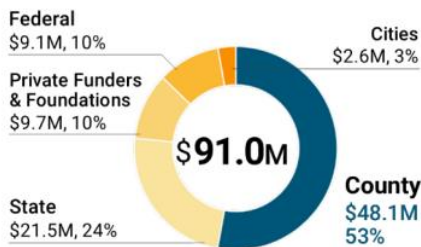
3. What is the 1-year and 5-year funding situation appear to be? (The life of the project). Can the staff generate an analysis such as the sample charts below and then build from them?

How the County's homelessness funding has been distributed

Totals reflect funding dedicated to addressing and preventing homelessness and include both one-time and ongoing sources.

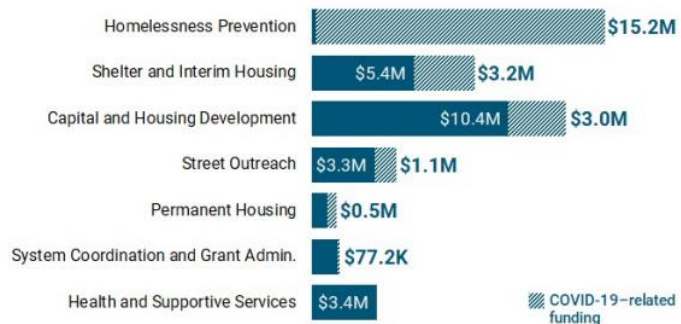


Regional Investment in Homelessness 2020-21



COVID-19 Homelessness Assistance and Prevention Funding

Coronavirus Relief Funds and Emergency Rental Assistance Programs allocated to the County significantly increased financial resources available for homelessness response efforts.



4. Many nations use the barracks format, below, to house refugees. The sample facility, in the foreground, could house about 400 single males. It would be relatively inexpensive, particularly on county land in California Valley. The problem lies in Item 2, above (accountability vs. Constructional rights). Can the government compel people to participate against their will separately from criminal adjudication? If not, will the Courts, DA, and Public Defender agree to a system of adjudication that does not clog up the jail and break the County Budget?



Two of the facilities could house 800 of the County’s homeless people. Counseling, psychiatric care, medications, and other rehab would be provided. There are European and Middle Eastern companies that build so many of these facilities, that they can deliver them as modules and at very good prices due to economies of scale.

A Little History

Since the decade of the 2000’s, it has been trendy for many cities and counties to develop “ten-year plans “to end homelessness.” For example, Santa Barbara County has developed at least 2 and is working on a 3rd, none of which ended or will end homelessness. SLO County adopted a Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness in June of 2009.

Board of Supervisors	Jun 23, 2009	Agenda	Minutes	Item Documents	Video
Item:	D-1 Request to establish the Homeless Services Oversight Council as a new advisory committee.				
Item:	Motion to the Board establishes the new advisory body named the Homeless Services Oversight Council to guide and provide oversight for the implementation of the 10 Year Plan and approves the attached By-Laws; directs the County Clerk to post a notice inviting applications by persons wishing to become members of the Homeless Oversight Council and return with recommendations for consideration by the Board; and directs staff to prepare and issue a Request for Proposals to identify organizations from which a fiscal agent can be selected. Moved by James R. Patterson, seconded by Adam Hill.				
Document:	6-23-09				

That plan stated as its goals:

The 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness

The draft Plan represents a collection of strategies and implementing actions that will improve the effectiveness of local programs, even if additional public funding is not available.

The strategies set forth in the Plan can be summarized as follows:

1. Provide interim, transitional, and permanent housing;
2. Prevent persons from becoming homeless through eviction prevention and discharge planning for persons leaving institutions;
3. Provide appropriate support services to those in need, such as case management services; and
4. Exercise comprehensive oversight through a ‘governing body’.

By 2016, the plan was recognized by everyone to be a failure and was essentially abandoned. Even former Supervisor Hill, one its prime sponsors, recognized the failure. As both a policy and management failure, there was no executive assigned to be accountable for its implementation: no project team, no project charter, no project review, and no project structure for its subcomponents. Critical projects need to be reviewed every 6 weeks by top management.

Subsequently and to great fanfare, the County, the City of San Luis Obispo, and the residual war on poverty agency - Community Action Plan of SLO (CAPSLO) developed a \$5 million Homeless Service Center on Prado Lane in the City. It appears that its impact has been negligible. In fact, it now has a chain link fence around it to prevent the homeless from camping on its grounds. Ironically, there is a pop-up homeless camp that appears from time to time across the street. Despite repeated efforts to remove it, a larger camp persists to the east in the creek and park area down the block. Camp fires, open drug use, and trash typify the camp.

A July 2014 agenda item stated:

If approved, the \$500,000 grant will assist CAPSLO in developing a new homeless service center to replace the aging Prado Day Center and Maxine Lewis Memorial Shelter, consistent with the goals outlined in the County's 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness. As noted previously, the planned new center will have 100 beds with the capacity to accommodate an additional 75 individuals on an emergency basis. The center will also be designed to incorporate services such as a working kitchen with job training opportunities for clients, as well as space to accommodate coordinated activities with partner agencies including but not limited to Veterans Services, the Department of Social Services, Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol, Probation, Community Health Centers, and Transitions Mental Health Association.

Local Agency Formation Commission Meeting of Thursday, April 21, 2022 (Scheduled)

The agenda is limited to administrative matters. There are no applications for annexations, detachments, or other policy matters.

LAST WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

No Board of Supervisors Meeting on Tuesday, April 12, 2022 (Not Scheduled)

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 19, 2022.

SLO County Integrated Waste Management Authority (IWMA) meeting of Wednesday, April 13, 2022 (Completed)

Info Item: Current members of the IWMA

Arroyo Grande	Avila Beach CSD
Atascadero	California Valley CSD
El Paso de Robles	Cambria CSD
Grover Beach	Cayucos Sanitary District
Morro Bay	Ground Squirrel Hollow CSD
Pismo Beach	Heritage Ranch CSD
San Luis Obispo	Los Osos CSD
	Nipomo CSD
	Oceano CSD
	San Miguel CSD
	San Simeon CSD
	Templeton CSD

Item 9 - Status Update on The Ratification for The Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) Amendment and Consideration of Proposed Edits. Since the County departed the agency, the Board and staff have been working on a revised JPA (the governing document).

The City of Pismo Beach seems to be concerned about the Authority’s record of expanding into new realms of action. This was one reason the County left. The City also appears to be concerned that the agency expands tasks and work beyond what is actually legally required or prudent. Its proposed language includes the revisions in blue:

SECTION 7. Expressed Limitation of Powers. The Authority’s power to adopt, impose, implement, and/or comply with regulations and ordinances is expressly limited to state-mandated legislation and regulations related to solid waste, recycling, organic waste, and waste diversion. When adopting, imposing, implementing or complying with said regulations and ordinances, only the minimum work required to be in compliance shall be completed in the most demonstrably cost-effective way possible. An exception to this minimum may be approved by a unanimous vote of the board. Notwithstanding the foregoing, all existing IWMA ordinances, rules, and regulations, whether or not mandated by the State, shall remain in full force and effect and not subject to otherwise determined by the Board.

Item 10 - Preliminary Budget Discussion. The primary thrust of this item was to set the schedule for presentation, consideration, and adoption of the FY 2022-23 Budget. Included in the item is an informational list of IWMA contracts.

The IWMA expends considerable funding on “education,” presumably to convince people to recycle. Why is this necessary now? People have been doing it for decades.

<u>VENDOR</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>Contract Termination Date</u>	<u>per Fiscal Year unless Noted</u>	<u>Notes</u>	<u>Completed, or Upcoming</u>
EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SERVICES					
Science Discovery	School Outreach Programs	6/30/2022	\$176,683		Upcoming
Science Discovery	Business / Multi-Family Monitoring & Education	6/30/2022	\$328,126		Upcoming
Andrea B.	Social Media Consultant	8/11/2023	\$28,000		Upcoming
ECO-SLO	Public Outreach Services	8/8/2025	\$34,000		TBD

The agency’s largest cost, other than for staff, is for contract recyclers to dispose of hazardous waste. Presumably, bids are being solicited for these, particularly in view of the County’s

departure from the Authority. Where does it go? What is the price per ton? How much is offset by revenue from the recycled materials, or is this the net? If so, what is the full cost?

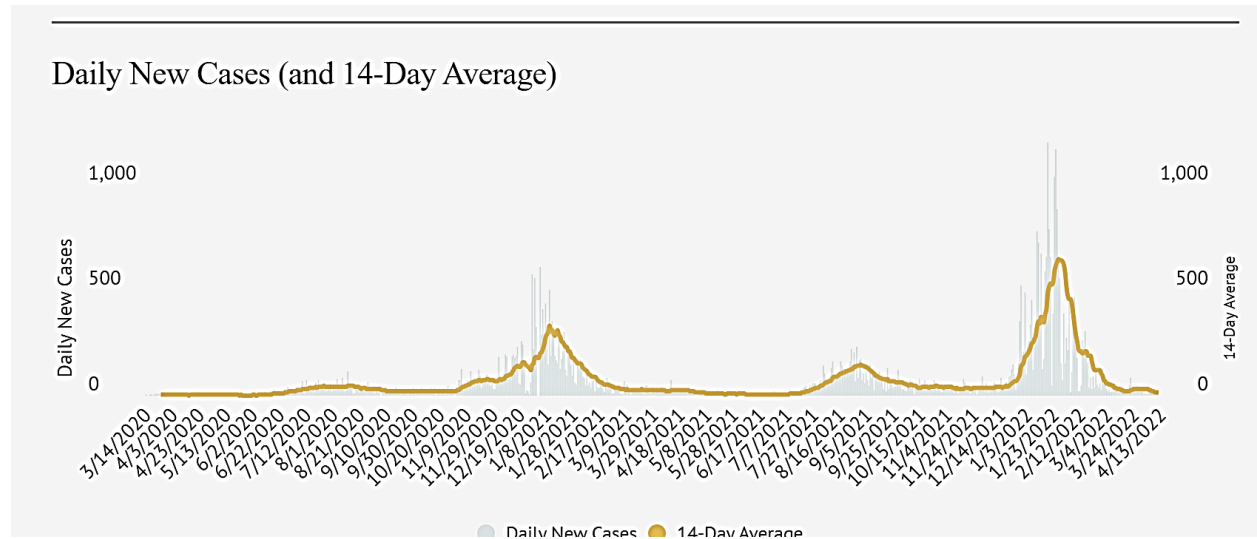
SPECIAL CONTRACT SERVICES				
CEC ECO Solutions/Stericycle	Hazardous Waste Agreement	6/30/2023	\$580,000	Upcoming
CEWS	E-waste Disposal	6/18/2022	\$10,000	TBD
Call2Recycle	Battery Recycling	11/30/2022	\$50,000	Upcoming

Central Coast Community Energy Authority Meeting of Wednesday, April 13, 2022 (Completed)

The Agency’s Operations Board agenda contained updates on various programs and legislative matters impacting itself and CAA’s in general. While too soon to determine if there is a trend, the 3CE’s expenditures for energy exceed its revenues from customers during the month of February. Overall, the month was in the back due to savings from staff vacancies, less billings from consultants, and less pork for green energy projects being distributed to the member cities and counties.

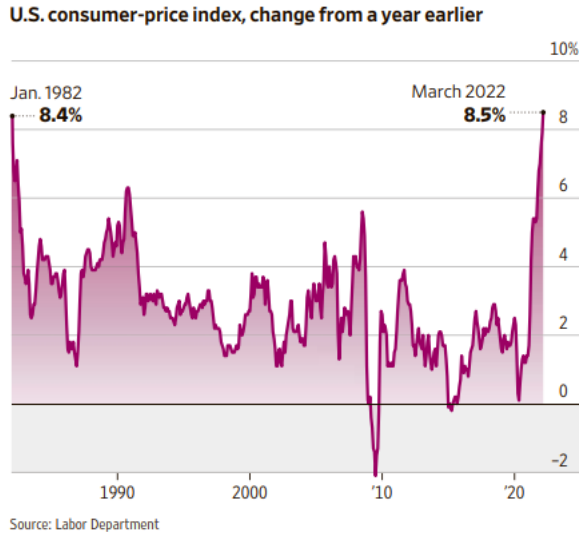
EMERGENT ISSUES

Item 1 - COVID. Cases and hospitalizations are now the lowest since the pandemic first arrived in SLO County.



3 Hospitalized (0 in ICU)

Item 2 - Inflation.



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

OBSESSION WITH CLIMATE CHANGE DISTORTS OUR PRIORITIES BY BJORN LOMBORG

Over the past decade, the global elite's obsession with climate change has taken away from the many other major problems facing the planet—shown most dramatically by the invasion of Ukraine. Western European leaders should have spent the past decade diversifying energy sources and expanding shale gas instead of shutting down nuclear plants and becoming scarily reliant on Russia. But the war there is far from the only thing they have managed to ignore.

The biggest task facing humanity today remains lifting most of the world out of abject poverty. This can only happen by providing poor countries with comprehensive, reliable energy sources. That is how the rich world became prosperous and it is how China lifted almost a billion out of poverty. Yet, while the world's rich countries are overwhelmingly powered by fossil fuels, the elite worked hard to make those energy sources both more expensive and less available for the world's poorest.

Right now, we are still recovering from the worst pandemic in a century. Inflation, supply shortages, and possibly even recession looms over the global economy. Autocracies are

reasserting themselves while food crises are already being experienced by the most vulnerable. Tuberculosis, malaria, and malnutrition—each effectively handled in the rich world—still claim millions of lives each year across poor countries.

Yet major donors and development organizations have become increasingly focused on climate solutions instead. One month after Ukraine was invaded, the head of the United Nations—an organization focused on ensuring world peace—was instead [warning](#) about “[climate catastrophe](#),” and the “[mutually assured destruction](#)” that fossil fuel ‘addiction’ could cause. It would be an exaggeration to say that while real threats were mounting, the world’s rich were tinkering with solar panels and banning plastic straws. But only a small exaggeration.

So, how have the elites managed to get things so wrong? One reason is that for years, the media have portrayed climate change impacts as horrendous. Today, almost every natural disaster routinely gets blamed on the climate crisis, with every new hurricane held up as another exhibit of man’s folly. Yet, hurricanes killed [many more](#) people in the past. A major [scientific paper](#) from last month documents “decreasing trends” in global hurricane frequency and strength. The data show that last year the world experienced fewer hurricanes than [ever before](#) in the satellite era, and their combined strength was one of the [lowest](#).

The real impact of climate change is much more nuanced. The UN climate panel of scientists [finds](#) a warmer world will mean fewer (good) but stronger (worse) hurricanes. In total, that will increase damages (bad), but because the world will also get richer and more resilient, [relative damages will keep declining](#), just slightly more slowly. This is a problem that we must not ignore. But it is far from a catastrophe. Global climate damage in percent of GDP keeps declining and climate disaster deaths have [dropped 99 percent](#) in a century.

For the best sense of what to really expect from a warming planet, we should turn to the damage estimates from the models used by President Joe Biden’s administration, and President Obama’s before that to set climate policy. This research reveals that the entire global cost of climate change—not just to economies, but in every sense—will be equivalent to [less than a 4 percent hit to GDP](#) by the end of the century.

Remember, by the [UN’s own estimates](#) the average person in 2100 will be 450 percent richer than today. Global warming means he will ‘only’ [be 434 percent as rich](#). That is a problem, but—contrary to the histrionics—far from catastrophic.

For wealthy countries, the narrow focus on climate objectives undermines future prosperity. The world already spends more than [half a trillion dollars](#) annually on climate policies while rich-world government spending on innovation in areas such as healthcare, space, defense, agriculture, and science has been [declining as a percentage of GDP over recent decades](#). That investment underpins our future growth. Together with a [stagnant or declining education performance](#), rich world income has [almost stalled](#) this century. Compare this to China, where innovation spending is up 50 percent, education is rapidly improving, and average incomes have increased five-fold since 2000.

Alarmingly, despite the extraordinary focus, we are failing even to solve climate change itself. Last year saw the [largest](#) CO₂ emissions ever.

Earlier this year, the world's elite gathered for the [World Economic Forum](#) and were asked to name "the most severe risks on a global scale over the next ten years." They absurdly chose "climate action failure"—right before Russia started bombing Chernobyl and Kyiv.

The world has [many challenges](#), not just the ones that get the most media attention. Climate should be tackled more effectively by [funding R&D in green energy](#) sources, so they eventually outcompete fossil fuels. We need to confront authoritarian expansionism in Ukraine and elsewhere. And to ensure long-term prosperity, the world needs more and cheaper energy, better education, and more innovation. We need our perspective back to overcome the elitist hyperbole on climate change.

Bjorn Lomborg is president of the Copenhagen Consensus and a visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University. His new book is "False Alarm — How Climate Change Panic Costs Us Trillions, Hurts the Poor, and Fails to Fix the Planet." He wrote this for InsideSources.com. This article first appeared in the American Greatness of April 11, 2022.

SACRAMENTO DEMOCRATS KILL GAS TAX RELIEF, TRANSPARENCY

BY JON COUPAL

As a participant in capital politics for more than 30 years, I've observed many abuses of power. Corruption, pettiness, gross narcissism, and dirty tricks have all increased in recent years both in terms of frequency and shock value. The latest incident, and honestly one of the more disturbing I have seen, occurred in the Assembly Transportation Committee last week.

Californians are reeling at the pump as our gas prices are the highest in the nation. The working poor and middle class are begging the Legislature for relief, which is why Assemblyman Kevin Kiley, R-Rocklin, introduced AB 1638. The bill would simply suspend the gas tax for six months.

Democrats are loath to return money to those who earned it, which is why they planned to ambush Kiley's proposal. But their plan, much like Putin's ill-advised invasion of Ukraine, backfired badly.

Although the bill hadn't appeared on the agenda for the day's hearing, Kiley was told it would be heard in committee on just a couple of hours' notice. When he arrived, he noticed an Assembly parliamentarian was in the room, strong evidence that some procedural scheme was being cooked up.

Following the legislative formalities, the first member of the committee to speak on the bill was Alex Lee, D-San Jose. After railing on the oil companies, he immediately moved to strike all the contents of Kiley's bill and replace it with a new tax on gas suppliers. Revenue from that tax would supposedly be sent out to people in the form of a rebate. So, in a matter of minutes, Kiley's gas tax cut had somehow turned into a gas tax increase.

This was a gross abuse of power. No one had been supplied with a copy of the new amendments for review. When lawmakers finally received more information, it came not as bill language, but as a single piece of paper with eight bullet points on it. Kiley and the Republican members of the committee were rightfully stunned.

That's when the chair of the committee herself expressed faux outrage. "I'm a little appalled and shocked that you all are so appalled and shocked by this," Assemblywoman Laura Friedman, D-Glendale, said. "This is exactly our process. That we debate a problem and what the solution is going to be."

But there had been no debate. This was all a set-up. Whether you agree or disagree with the merits of Kiley's bill, what transpired was a total farce of the deliberative process. So much so that no one was willing to take ownership of what had just happened.

Kiley's name was now on a bill he opposed. He asked for it to be removed. Since the amendments had come out of the Assembly Transportation Committee, he offered the chair the pleasure of putting her name on the bill instead.

"No," Friedman replied. "I have not had the opportunity to dive in depth into this."

"The bill you're about to vote on?" Kiley questioned incredulously.

The bill passed out of committee on an 8-4 vote, with Friedman voting yes. But to no one's surprise, as of this writing, the bill's language hasn't been updated on the Legislature's website, nor has a vote been recorded. It's almost as if they are embarrassed about what occurred. And if they aren't, they should be.

Democrats in the state Legislature have no one to blame but themselves. They control the process. This isn't a bug; it is now a feature. The chilling of debate in this way is just another example of the toxic effects of one-party rule. These committee hearings have largely become just a formality, as the real decisions are being made in the Democratic caucus chambers and behind closed doors.

This is not what democracy should look like. The concentration of power in one party without any meaningful check has perverted our political institutions in ways that will prove difficult to reverse until voters act. California desperately needs legislative reforms that enhance transparency, and that permit all citizens and their elected representatives to participate meaningfully in the process of solving the state's problems.

But I won't hold my breath.

Jon Coupal is president of the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association. This article first appeared in the California Political Review of April 4, 2022

APOCALYPSE IS IN THE AIR

Is it too late to restore our civilizational nerve and morale?

BY BRUCE THORNTON



Ukraine's scenes of urban rubble, streams of refugees, and piles of slaughtered civilians redolent of World War II. Continuing masks and lethal lockdown protocols of the Covid plague. Record levels of inflation and gasoline nearly \$6 a gallon. Unchecked hordes of illegal immigrants and criminals penetrating our southern border. Mayhem, murder, and brazen theft stalking and defacing our cities.

Amidst these portents of apocalypse, it's instructive to think of W.B. Yeats' prescient poem "The Second Coming," and its lines "Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,/The blood-dimmed tide is loosed," and to wonder with the poet, "What rough beast, its time come round at last,/ Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?"

Such intimations of doom, of course, have been regular episodes in the last hundred years, the "rough beasts" ending up as pretenders. But we can't rely on the cycles of history to prevent devastating changes in our way of life that will make the previous decades seem like the golden age.

Yeats published his poem in November 1920, when the flawed Versailles settlement of the Great War made optimism for the future difficult. Some knew, moreover, that none of the dysfunctions that had led to war had been corrected. Supreme Allied Commander Marshall Foch prophesized about the Versailles Treaty, "This is not peace. It is an armistice for twenty years." Communism, Nazism, and Fascism arose, and the Great Depression was the crisis these three vicious political religions did not let go to waste.

Throughout the interwar period, the portents of doom appeared in popular novels and "next war" theorists. "Trench reminiscences" proliferated, keeping alive the novel horrors of the war like poison gas, machine-guns, and artillery lobbing monstrous shells as heavy as a ton. The aerial bombing of the war's last years inspired numerous warnings about the even more devastating possibilities of destruction from the air in the next war. Theorists wrote of a "knockout blow" on a nation's capital that would decapitate the government and turn the streets into "one vast raving bedlam," as historian J.F.C. Fuller put it.

This obsession with the "next war" created a "never again" mentality that contributed to the anxiety and low morale of the period, stoked by Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin who famously said, "The bomber will always get through." Years later Prime Minister Harold Macmillan would write, "We thought of air warfare in 1938 rather as people think of nuclear warfare"

during the Cold War. All this fear contributed to the mentality of appeasement manifested in Munich.

But the end of times didn't come. The war that followed was won because the steadfast opponent of appeasement Winston Churchill managed the war, and with his rousing patriotic rhetoric restored confidence and morale by rejecting what he called the "unwarrantable self-abasement" that defined the Thirties.

Another apocalyptic moment occurred in the Seventies. The squandering of the lives of nearly 60,000 American soldiers that followed Congress's denial of aid to South Vietnam, and the cruel abandonment of our Vietnamese allies, damaged American prestige abroad and emboldened its nuclear rivals like the U.S.S.R. The ginned-up Watergate affair led to Richard Nixon's resignation, and in a few years the election of Jimmy Carter. Carter's sermons about America's "recent mistakes," his counsel that Americans should not "dwell on remembered glory" but should "recognize its limits," and his confession that the nation should "simply do its best" and get over its "inordinate fear of communism" all eroded moral and patriotic confidence. Foreign policy now focused on human rights and disarmament, rather than maintaining the country's deterrent power and military superiority.

Starting in the Fifties, there appeared apocalyptic books and movies, from Jonathon Schell's *The Fate of the Earth* and Nevil Shute's *On the Beach*, to *Dr. Strangelove* and the televised *The Day After Tomorrow*. Dystopian post-apocalyptic novels and films proliferated and still permeate movies and science fiction writing. Popular culture fed the anti-nuclear weapons movement, which was also abetted by financial support from the Soviet Union, in an attempt to weaken our military in its containment of a nuclear-armed power.

As the Soviet Union and its proxies boldly rampaged in Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East, in 1979 Carter was helpless in the face of Khomeini's Islamic Iranian Revolution. Fifty-one American diplomatic personnel were kidnapped and held hostage for 444 days, just the beginning of Iran's subsequent 43 years of jihadist assaults and murders of Americans. Stagflation—high inflation and sluggish economic growth—along with expensive and rationed gasoline created apocalyptic scenes of long lines and fistfights at gas stations.

Once more, a change of leadership cleared away the smog of apocalypse. Ronald Reagan's campaign theme was "Morning in America," and he restored the country's military and deterrent power, along with economic health. This recovery of nerve, epitomized in Reagan's laconic, "We win, they lose," culminated in the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Today, a weak and feckless President and his administration have brought on another failure of nerve. A disastrous retreat from Afghanistan damaged our prestige abroad, and surrendered that country and billions of dollars' worth of armaments to the enemy that had helped execute the terrorist attacks of 9/11. In the current conflict, clumsy and confused diplomacy has combined braggadocios threats with less than adequate military support for Ukraine. And an insane policy of banishing cheap, abundant fossil fuels from our energy resources has made much of Europe a hostage to Russian oil products, making them financiers of Putin's savage war.

So the war grinds on, and the spectacle of brutal carnage dominates our media. No one can say how or when it will end, and what will be the long-term fallout. But one thing is obvious: Putin's threat to use tactical nuclear weapons has contributed to the West's reticence to provide air

power, anti-missile batteries, or heavy artillery to the Ukrainians, ensuring that the war will remain a meat-grinder for months to come.

This state of affairs raises some questions: Can or will there arise a leader like Churchill and Reagan to restore our civilizational nerve and morale? Or, as the presidency of Donald Trump showed, will rabid partisanship, deep-state corruption, and the cognitive elite's irrational class resentment undermine an effective president who could turn things around? Has our culture deteriorated so deep into boutique fads like transgenderism, "systemic racism," Critical Race Theory, pronoun etiquette, and apocalyptic "climate change," and have we the people become so addicted to handouts from the Leviathan Fed, that even a Churchill or a Reagan could not rouse us from our Twitter, Netflix, and Facebook torpor?

Worse yet, the task of recovery from the current crisis is much harder given Putin's reckless threat to use nuclear weapons. Putin's signs of mental deterioration and paranoia, and his isolation make such threats more plausible. And neglect of our military budget and nuclear weapon research and development have given Putin an edge. No wonder there's an air of apocalypse coming from this war.

We may be too far gone, and the cycle back to sanity may never come. Iran and China, emboldened by our timidity in helping Ukraine, will likely indulge in their own aggression, confronting the West with the same dilemma. Yeats' poem teaches us why: "The best lack all conviction, while the worst/Are full of passionate intensity."

Bruce Thornton is a Shillman Journalism Fellow at the Freedom Center, a Research Fellow at Stanford's Hoover Institution, and a Professor of Classics and Humanities at the California State University. He is the author of nine books and numerous essays on classical culture and its influence on Western Civilization. His most recent book, Democracy's Dangers and Discontents (Hoover Institution Press), is now available for purchase. This article first appeared in the Frontpage Magazine of April 15, 2022.

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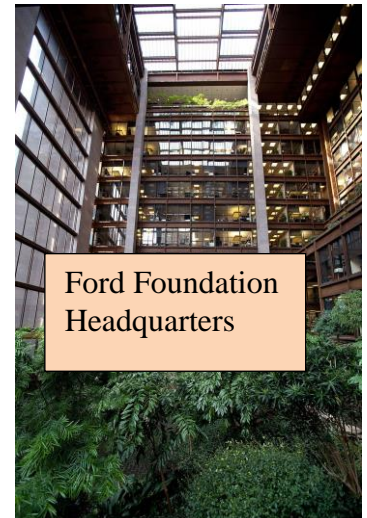
THE END OF PROGRESSIVE INTELLECTUAL LIFE

How the foundation-NGO complex quashed innovative thinking and open debate, first on the American right and now on the center left

BY MICHAEL LIND

I have never liked the term "public intellectual," but like its 19th-century predecessor, "publicist," it describes a social type that plays a useful role in liberal democracies in which at least some government decision-making is influenced by open debate rather than secret discussions behind closed doors. To influence voters, public intellectuals write for a general educated public (not necessarily the less-educated majority) in ordinary language, not jargon.

Like the policymakers whom they also seek to influence, they are necessarily generalists. In the service of what the Brazilian American public intellectual Roberto Unger calls a strategic “program,” public intellectuals ponder connections among different policy realms—economic, foreign, and cultural—if only to ensure that one policy does not contradict another. Public intellectuals tend to annoy their own side by probing its internal weaknesses, while trying to convert members of the other team rather than simply denounce them.



The centralized and authoritarian control of American progressivism by major foundations and the nonprofits that they fund, and the large media institutions, universities, corporations, and banks that disseminate the progressive party line, has made it impossible for there to be public intellectuals on the American center left. This is not to say that progressives are not intelligent and/or well-educated. It is merely to say that being a progressive public intellectual is no longer an option, in an era in which progressivism is anti-intellectual.

If you are an intelligent and thoughtful young American, you cannot be a progressive public intellectual today, any more than you can be a cavalry officer or a silent movie star. That’s because, in the third decade of the 21st century, intellectual life on the American center left is dead. Debate has been replaced by compulsory assent and ideas have been replaced by slogans that can be recited but not questioned: Black Lives Matter, Green Transition, Trans Women Are Women, 1619, Defund the Police.

The space to the left-of-center that was once filled with magazines and organizations devoted to what Diana Trilling called the “life of significant contention” is now filled by the ritualized gobbledygook of foundation-funded, single-issue nonprofits like a pond choked by weeds. Having crowded out dissent and debate, the nonprofit industrial complex—Progressivism Inc.—taints the Democratic Party by association with its bizarre obsessions and contributes to Democratic electoral defeats, like the one that appears to be imminent this fall.

Consider center-left journals of opinion. In the 1990s, **The New Yorker**, **The Nation**, **Dissent**, **The New Republic**, **The Atlantic**, and **Washington Monthly** all represented distinctive flavors of the center left, from the technocratic neoliberalism of **Washington Monthly** to the New Left countercultural ethos of **The Nation** and the snobbish gentry liberalism of **The New Yorker**. Today, they are bare Xeroxes of each other, promoting and rewriting the output of single-issue environmental, identitarian, and gender radical nonprofits, which all tend to be funded by the same set of progressive foundations and individual donors.

You cannot be a progressive public intellectual today, any more than you can be a cavalry officer or a silent movie star.

It is not surprising that the written output of this billionaire-funded bureaucratic apparatus tends to read like an NGO word salad with crunchy croutons in the form of acronyms that stud post-

intellectual progressive discourse: DEI, CRT, AAPI, BIPOC, LGBTQ+. Wokespeak is Grantspeak.

Meanwhile, in one area of public policy or politics after another, Progressivism Inc. has shut down debate on the center left through its interlocking networks of program officers, nonprofit functionaries, and editors and writers, all of whom can move with more or less ease between these roles during their careers as bureaucratic functionaries whose salaries are ultimately paid by America's richest families and individuals. The result is a spectacularly well-funded NGO-sphere whose intellectual depth and breadth are contracting all the time.

In the 1990s, you could be a progressive in good standing and argue against race-based affirmative action, in favor of race-neutral, universal social programs that would help African Americans disproportionately but not exclusively. Around 2000, however, multiple progressive outlets at the same time announced that “the debate about affirmative action is over.” Today race-neutral economic reform, of the kind championed by the democratic socialist and Black civil rights leader Bayard Rustin and the Marxist Adolph Reed, is stigmatized on the center left as “colorblind racism,” and progressives in the name of “equity” are required to support blatant and arguably illegal racial discrimination against non-Hispanic white Americans and “white-adjacent” Asian-Americans, for fear of being purged as heretics.

Immigration policy provides an even more striking example of the power of Progressivism Inc. to stifle debate on the center left. Up until around 2000, libertarians and employer-class Republicans wanted to weaken laws against illegal immigration and expand low-wage legal immigration, against the opposition of organized labor and many African Americans, who for generations have tended to view immigrants of all races as competitors. The Hesburgh Commission on immigration reform, appointed by President Jimmy Carter, and the Jordan Commission, appointed by President Bill Clinton and led by Texas Rep. Barbara Jordan, the pioneering civil rights leader who was left-liberal, Black, and lesbian, both proposed cracking down on illegal immigration—by requiring a national ID card, punishing employers of illegal immigrants, and cutting back on low-skilled, low-wage legal immigrants. As late as 2006, then-Sens. Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton both voted for 200 miles of border fencing in the Southwest.

Then, virtually overnight, the progressive movement flipped and adopted the former talking points of the Chamber of Commerce cheap-labor lobby. While Democratic politicians deny that they oppose enforcing immigration laws, center-left journals and journalists keep pushing the idea of open borders, in alliance with crackpot free market fundamentalists. On April 12, 2022, David Dayen in the **American Prospect** [wrote](#) that “declining immigration rates since the pandemic have contributed to labor shortages in key industries and harmed Americans who rely on those services.” Dayen linked to an article in the libertarian **Wall Street Journal** bemoaning rising wages as a result of lower immigration. On Feb. 20 of this year, **The New Yorker** published a long essay by Zoey Poll, “[The Case for Open Borders](#),” a fawning profile of the libertarian ideologue Bryan Caplan, author of **Open Borders: The Science and Ethics of Immigration**, which, appropriately, takes the form of a graphic novel—that is to say, a comic book.

Back in 2015, Ezra Klein, then editor of the “progressive” outlet Vox, [asked](#) Sen. Bernie Sanders about the idea of “sharply raising the level of immigration we permit, even up to a level of open borders.” Sanders replied in alarm: “Open borders? No, that’s a Koch brothers proposal.” The

lobby FWD.us, funded by Facebook and other large tech corporations that prefer hiring indentured servants (H-1Bs) bound to their employers instead of free American citizen-workers and legal immigrants, denounced Sanders for holding “the totally-debunked notion that immigrants coming to the U.S. are taking jobs and hurting Americans.” Vox then published an article by Dylan Matthews titled “Bernie Sanders’s fear of immigrant labor is ugly—and wrong-headed.” “If I could add one amendment to the Constitution,” Matthews declared, “it would be the one **Wall Street Journal** editorial page editor Robert Bartley once proposed: ‘There shall be open borders.’”

In 2018, the progressive author Angela Nagle was canceled by Progressivism Inc. when she published an essay in **American Affairs**, “The Left Case Against Open Borders.” By 2020, when Matthew Yglesias, a co-founder of Vox, published **One Billion Americans**, the purging of dissidents and the fusion of the Progressivism Inc. party line on immigration with the anti-union, cheap-labor policies favored by **The Wall Street Journal** and Silicon Valley was complete.

The energy debate provides another example of the closing of the progressive mind. As recently as the early 2000s, some environmentalists favored reducing atmosphere-heating carbon emissions by expanding nuclear power, replacing coal with lower-carbon natural gas, or both. By 2010 these positions had been thoroughly anathematized by Progressivism Inc. Not only all fossil fuels but all nuclear energy—which provides 20% of utility electric generation in the United States, roughly the same as all renewable energy sources put together—must be completely eliminated from the energy mix, according to the green commissars. Insofar as only around 11% of global primary energy, and only around a quarter of global electricity, comes from renewable energy (chiefly hydropower, which has limited potential for expansion), the green fatwah against nuclear energy seems self-defeating—as well as certain to shovel American money to China, which holds near-monopolies on the rare earth metals and production facilities used to make things like solar panels and lithium batteries. China also happens to be a major source of the fortunes of some of the billionaires who fund progressive media and NGOs.

At this point in history, the foundations and advocacy nonprofits of Progressivism Inc. do not even bother to go through the charade of public debate and discussion before imposing a new party line. Half a century of debate, discussion, and activism gradually led to a majority consensus among American voters in favor of “negative liberty” for gay men and lesbian women, whose right to be free as individuals from discrimination in employment, housing, and military service need not require other Americans to change either their actions or their views.

In striking contrast, in a few years the ideology of gender fluidity went from being an obscure strain of thinking on the academic left to becoming the centerpiece of a radical program of social engineering from above carried out simultaneously by progressive, corporate, and academic bureaucracies. During President Obama’s second term, the federal government reinterpreted Title IX, a civil rights law passed as part of the Education Amendments of 1972, and suddenly threatened federal lawsuits and the cut-off of federal funding for public schools that did not allow boys and girls to use the bathrooms of the opposite (biological) sex, and demanded that boys and young men with gender dysphoria be allowed to join girls’ sports teams and use female locker rooms and showers. States that resisted this bizarre misreading of Title IX, which eliminated legal distinctions grounded in biological sex that the statute was written to protect, found themselves boycotted by multinational corporations and sports leagues. Corporate employees and university personnel who questioned the new party line now did so at risk of being fired or punished.

All of this happened just between 2012 and 2016, with no public debate or discussion within the progressive camp, and no attempts to persuade conservatives, libertarians, liberals, or even pre-2012 progressives—only a sudden diktat from above, accompanied by contemptuous threats of punishment. In 2012, progressives were allowed to agree with Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton at the time that, while lesbian women and gay men should have access to civil unions, marriage should be between a biological man and a biological woman. By 2020, you were a hateful reactionary conservative bigot if you did not agree that some men can be pregnant and some women have penises.

Who decides what is and is not permissible for American progressives to think or discuss or support? The answer is the Ford Foundation, the Open Society Foundation, the Omidyar Network, and other donor foundations, an increasing number of which are funded by fortunes rooted in Silicon Valley. It is this donor elite, bound together by a set of common class prejudices and economic interests, on which most progressive media, think tanks, and advocacy groups depend for funding.

The center-left donor network uses its financial clout, exercised through its swarms of NGO bureaucrats, to impose common orthodoxy and common messaging on their grantees. The methods by which they enforce this discipline can be described as *chain-ganging* and *shoe-horning*.

Chain-ganging (a term I have borrowed from international relations theory) in this context means implicitly or explicitly banning any grantee from publicly criticizing the positions of any other grantee. At a conference sponsored by the Ford Foundation that I attended more than a decade ago, an African American community activist complained to me privately: “Immigration is hurting the people in the neighborhoods we work in. The employers prefer illegal immigrants to young Black workers. But if we say anything about it, Ford will cut off our money.”

Shoe-horning is what I call the progressive donor practice of requiring all grantees to assert their fealty to environmentalist orthodoxy and support for race and gender quotas, even if those topics have nothing to do with the subject of the grant. It is not necessary for the donors to make this explicit; their grantees understand without being told, like the favor-seeking knights of Henry II: “Will no one rid me of this turbulent priest?” In the last few years, even the most technocratic center-left policy programs—advocating slightly higher earned income tax credits or whatever—have often rewritten their mission statements to refer to “climate justice” and “diversity” and routinely sprinkle grantspeak like “the racial reckoning” and “the climate emergency” throughout their policy briefs in the hope of pleasing program officers at big progressive foundations.

Thanks to the buy-out of the American center left by Progressivism Inc., there is literally nothing for a progressive public intellectual to do. To be sure, there are plenty of other kinds of mental work that you can perform as a member of the rising generation of young progressives even in the absence of a functioning public intellectual sphere. You can keep your head down and doubts to yourself, as you work on the technocratic policy that appeals to you the most: raising the minimum wage or free school lunches, perhaps. Or you can write endless variants of the same screed denouncing Republicans and conservatives as rabid white nationalists threatening to create a fascist dictatorship right here in America. Or you can join mobs on Twitter and social media to take part in Two-Minute Hate campaigns against individuals or groups singled out for

denunciation that day by Progressivism Inc. Or you can try to obtain fame and bestseller status and wealth and tenure by getting the attention of the MacArthur Prize committee and editors at *The Atlantic* by auditioning for the role of designated spokesperson for this or that “protected class” or minority identity group—nonbinary Middle East or North African MENA), for example, not low-income Scots Irish Appalachian heterosexual Pentecostalist.

You can even be a professor. High-profile American progressive academics like Paul Krugman and Jill Lepore and Adam Tooze who moonlight as public affairs commentators are not public intellectuals, because they have the pre-approved left-liberal opinions on all topics that are shared by nine-tenths of the U.S. academic bureaucracy, from the richest Ivy League superstars to the lowliest adjunct at a commuter college. Back in the early 1990s, when as a young neoconservative Democrat I worked for *The National Interest*, our publisher, Irving Kristol, exploded in comic exasperation one day: “People are calling professors intellectuals! Professors aren’t intellectuals. Intellectuals argue with each other in cafes and write for little magazines. Professors are boring people who take out their dusty 20-year-old notes and give the same lecture over and over again.”

Unlike academics who recite the approved current center-left positions on all issues, genuine intellectuals, even if they happen to be employed by universities, are unpredictable. Often they are unpopular, because they criticize their own allies and appreciate what other schools of thought get right. They do not indulge in contrarianism for its own sake but tend to be controversial, because they put loyalty to what they consider to be truth above party or faction. Needless to say, such intellectual mavericks tend to perform quite poorly when it comes to the boot-licking, rote repetition of political slogans, acronym-juggling, groupthink, and “donor servicing” that constitute the forms of intellectual activity favored by big foundations and NGOs, whether of the right or of the left.

Young progressives who prefer a life of significant contention to a career of lucrative grant-mongering may take some solace from the fact that we have lived through this kind of foundation-driven, extinction-level event in our nation’s intellectual life before. In “[Why Intellectual Conservatism Died](#),” published in *Dissent* back in 1995, I wrote that “instead of boldly attacking falsehoods wherever they are found, conservative editors tend to print only what they believe will confirm the prejudices of the program officers. The addiction to foundation dollars has reinforced the disastrous ‘no enemies to the right’ policy. The last thing the foundations want is for one set of grantees to criticize the policy views or intellectual standards of other grantees.”

Sound familiar? In hindsight, the end of the Cold War under Ronald Reagan and George Herbert Walker Bush witnessed a golden age of discussion and controversy on the American right, as neoconservatives debated paleoconservatives and religious-right thinkers, and national security hawks debated isolationists and foreign policy realists. Around 1992 that window suddenly closed, as right-wing foundations like Bradley and Olin made it clear that the only nonprofit organizations and journals that would receive funding would be those that espoused a new version of “fusionism”—uniting neoconservative fantasies of American world domination in foreign policy, libertarian fantasies about privatizing Social Security, and religious-right wishful thinking about a Christian or Judeo-Christian revival.

Thanks to blacklisting and censorship, foundation-imposed groupthink triumphed on the right, consolidating Conservatism Inc. and driving away those of us who sought to put the life of the

mind above the life of the party. A decade later, President George W. Bush attempted to implement fusionist conservatism with a rigor that Reagan never attempted. In foreign policy, the Bush administration used 9/11 as an excuse to invade Iraq and attempted to realize the conservative fantasy of an American global empire, plunging the Middle East into chaos and bringing Iraq War critics Barack Obama and Donald Trump to power. In domestic policy, Bush tried to partly privatize Social Security, creating a voter backlash. The 2004 Bush-Rove campaign against gay marriage, calculated to bribe working-class evangelicals into voting for the party of tax cuts for the rich, backfired and led to majority acceptance of gay men and lesbians and the defection of many younger Protestant evangelicals.

On today's center left, as on the bygone center right, the groupthink imposed by behind-the-scenes donors and their favored nonprofits and media allies is resulting in electoral disaster—this time, for Democrats. The progressive foundations, billionaires, and woke corporations backed a California [initiative](#) to legalize anti-white and anti-Asian discrimination; it lost, in part because so many Black and Hispanic Americans support the ideal of a colorblind American society. Democrats underperformed dramatically in 2020, even after COVID killed the economy and terrified most Americans, because the slogans of foundation-backed nonprofits—like Defund the Police and comparisons of the U.S. border patrol to the Gestapo—alienated many Democratic voters as well as swing voters. Black Democrats have favored candidates like Joe Biden and New York City Mayor Eric Adams who oppose anti-police radicalism. And a major reason for the political shift of Hispanic voters in Texas border counties is their opposition to the Democratic Party's toleration of mass illegal immigration, summed up in the fatuous slogan “No human being is illegal.”

Conservatism Inc., including flagship journals like the *National Review* and flagship think tanks like the Heritage Foundation, remains a museum of mummies. Today, Progressivism Inc. is equally brain-dead. What survives of intellectual politics in the United States today consists of a growing number of exiles from establishment wokeness on Substack and an assortment of dissident leftists, conservatives, and populists, some of whom have come together in new publications like *American Affairs*, *Compact*, and *The Bellows*, and in quirkier couture shops like *Tablet*.

Having watched from up close over the past four decades as cliques of foundation program officers, individual billionaires, and their nonprofit retainers lobotomized first the American right and then the American left, I hope that I may live to see the American center left free itself from top-down orthodoxy and welcome dissension, discussion, and debate once again. But I doubt I will live that long.

Michael Lind is a Professor of Practice at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, a columnist for Tablet, and a fellow at New America. He has a master's degree from Yale and has taught at Harvard. His most recent book is [The New Class War: Saving Democracy from the Managerial Elite](#). This article first appeared in the Arts and Letters Daily of April 16, 2022.



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NATIONAL RADIO AND TV COMMENTATOR HIGH HEWITT AT COLAB DINNER



MIKE BROWN RALLIES THE FORCES OUTDOORS DURING COVID LOCKDOWN

JOIN OR CONTRIBUTE TO COLAB ON THE NEXT PAGE
Join COLAB or contribute by control clicking at: [COLAB San Luis Obispo County \(colabslo.org\)](https://colabslo.org) or use the form below:

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

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

MEMBERSHIP OPTIONS:

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

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

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

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

MEMBER INFORMATION:

Name: _____

Company: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____ Email: _____

How Did You Hear About COLAB?

Radio Internet Public Hearing Friend

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

NON MEMBER DONATION/CONTRIBUTION OPTION:

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

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

PAYMENT METHOD:

Check Visa MasterCard Discover Amex NOT accepted.

Cardholder Name: _____ Signature: _____

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

TODAY'S DATE: _____