COLAB San Luis Obispo County

The Coalition of Labor Agriculture and Business

WEEKLY UPDATE
JANUARY 9 - 15, 2022

THIS WEEK

*THE JANUARY 11, 2022 BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEETING WILL BE HELD REMOTELY VIA ZOOM. IN PERSON PUBLIC COMMENT WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE

- **Zoom Meeting Link:** https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87948498508
- **Zoom Meeting ID:** 879 4849 8508

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

APPOINTMENT OF BRUCE GIBSON AS BOARD CHAIRMAN
APPROVAL OF $7.6 MILLION PASO BASIN SGMA GRANT
EXTENSION AND EXPANSION OF ANOTHER STUCK SOFTWARE PROJECT
BIG SPENDING PLANS FOR HUGE FEDERAL DEBT FUNDED COVID SLUSH

PLANNING COMMISSION

CANNABIS APP. DEMONSTRATES SLOW PROCESSING PROBLEM CONTINUES

PAST 3 WEEKS

NO BOS

CHRISTMAS/NEW YEAR'S PUBLIC AGENCY RECESS
NEXT SCHEDULED SUPERVISORS MEETING ON JANUARY 11, 2022

MOST AGENCIES WERE DORMANT EXCEPT THOSE LISTED BELOW

INTEGRATED WASTE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

DECEMBER 23, 2021 SPECIAL MEETING

EXTENSION OF WET GARBAGE RECYCLING CONSULTANT CONTRACT
RETURN OF PAAVO OGREN AS DE FACTO INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SLO COUNTY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

JANUARY 5, 2022 MEETING

EMERGENT ISSUES

COVID STATUS CHAOTIC

CHUMASH HERITAGE MARINE SANCTUARY
FAKERY AND REGULATORY PROBLEMS CONFIRMED

INFLATION DISASTER BUILDING
IT'S LIKE SLEEPING ON THE BEACH AS THE TIDAL WAVE COMES IN

COURT TO TRY DUNES RIDER'S QUIET TITLE SUIT
COASTAL COMMISSION LOSES AGAIN

COLAB IN DEPTH
SEE PAGE 34

IS A PUSHBACK AGAINST SOFT DESPOTISM COMING IN 2022?

The ruling elite are not going to surrender power without a fight.

BY BRUCE THORNTON

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

Board of Supervisors Meeting of Tuesday, January 11, 2022 (Scheduled)

Item 1- Reorganization of the County Board of Supervisors: Election of Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson for the 2022 term. The Board will consider appointing a Chair and Vice-Chair for the 2022 calendar year. Under the Board rules of Procedure the position is rotated. The general principle is that Vice-Chair becomes the Chair. This would be 2nd District Supervisor Bruce Gibson. The relevant clause states:

At the first regular meeting of the calendar year after the swearing-in ceremony, a Chair and Vice Chair shall be elected by majority vote of the Board and such Chair shall preside for one year. The process for nominating the Chair and Vice Chair shall be on a rotation basis. Beginning in 2019, the rotation shall be District 5, District 3, District 4, District 2, District 1; with the Chair for a subsequent year serving as Vice-Chair (e.g. 2019 Chair – District 5, 2019 Vice-Chair – District 3). Once completed, the District rotation will start again with District 5 (2024) and continue using the same sequence for Chair and Vice-Chair (District 5, 3, 4, 2,1). If the person nominated for Chair or Vice Chair declines the nomination, she or he shall be rotated on the list. It is intended, but not mandated, that the Supervisor elected as Vice-Chair will succeed the Chair in the following year. In the absence or inability to attend by the Chair or Vice-Chair, a Chair protem shall selected by the members present."

A Thorny Problem:
In past years there has been opposition by some citizens to appointing Bruce Gibson to the position on the basis of his total commitment to left progressivism, flaunting of community standards, constant support for former Supervisor Hill, and displays of arrogance.

This time he is facing an election for his Supervisorial seat in what may be a more competitive redistricted 2nd District. There is some sentiment to allow him to be appointed, as the chairmanship involves extra work and is highly visible as the Chief elected official of the County. He is smart, focused, and disciplined. He understands that the County's overall derivative policies such as smart growth, climatism, social equity, bureaucratic control, labor and contracting patronage, government expansion, NIMBYISM (in his district), endless fee increases, and tolerance for corruption have largely remained in place even though the left does not have a majority on the Board. These surface policies derive from the underlying fundamental purposes of installation of socialism, destruction of the middle class, control by woke elites, and feudalization of society.

Gibson attempts to disguise his real philosophy by focusing on "practical solutions" to local issues such as homelessness, moving cannabis permits along, supporting the raising of taxes and fees, and refusal to investigate corruption.

In the end, the issue devolves upon the Board majority's belief in its own ability to control Gibson when and if he blunts public comment with which he disagrees, refuses to schedule items on the agenda with which he disagrees or does not want to see surface, and cuts deals in Sacramento without the full prior consideration by the Board.

At this point, there is nothing in the agenda attachments indicating any public opposition to his appointment. However, there is evidence of some community organizing in this regard.

Item 10 - Request to approve a resolution authorizing the Director of Groundwater Sustainability, or designee, to file an application and execute a grant agreement with The California Department of Water Resources for Funding under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Grant Program for implementation of the Paso Robles Sub basin Groundwater Sustainability Plan. The new Director is seeking authorization to apply for $7.6 million in State finding that has been made available for funding State

Groundwater Plan implementation in SLO County (GSP). If the State approves the application, the funding will go a long way to help defray some of the early implementation costs. It would be used to work on the Paso Basin. Eligible activities include:

Through pre-determined grant award formulas developed by DWR, the Paso Basin is eligible to receive up to $7,600,000 in 2021 SGM Grant Program funding. Eligible GSP administration and SGMA compliance activities include the following:
• Preparation of GSP Water Year Annual Reports
• Preparation of the GSP 5-Year Update
• Biannual (or Quarterly) GW Level Measurements

In addition to GSP administration, monitoring and reporting, the following are the data gaps, projects and management actions that are generally identified in the Paso Basin GSP which may be considered for grant funding:

• Expand the monitoring well network by including additional existing wells (Paso Robles Formation and Alluvial) into the monitoring well network
• If appropriate, perform supplemental hydrogeologic investigations to sufficiently improve our understanding of the hydrogeologic conceptual model to support the adaptive management of the Paso Basin. Specific attention could be directed towards assessing surface water - groundwater interconnectivity and the impact on surface water from groundwater pumping.

COLAB Note: Perhaps this study could explain how the County determined that the Basin was in a 14,000 acre-feet per year deficit on average in the first place. This has never been cleared up.

• Install new monitoring wells (Paso Robles Formation and Alluvial), stream gages, and climatologic stations, as deemed appropriate, and incorporate these new data sources into the Basin monitoring network to ensure that sufficient data is available to meet monitoring objectives, including Basin groundwater quality, relative to GSP sustainable management criteria (SMC)
• If appropriate, update and recalibrate the GSP hydrogeologic model or replace it with a new open-source model. New data and refinements to the hydrogeologic conceptual model, and possibly the updated numerical model, would be used for the following purposes: • Refining the aquifer parameters and model input values • Updating the estimated sustainable yield of the Basin
• Evaluating benefits of alternative sustainability programs or projects Specific management actions that were identified in the GSP include the following:
• Develop and implement a Basin-wide well verification and registration program.
• Develop and implement a Basin-wide groundwater extraction measurement (i.e., metering / remote sensing) program (subject to the exclusion of de minimis users)
• Develop and implement a Basin-wide pumping fee program (subject to the exclusion of de minimis users) • Develop and implement a location(s) specific well interference mitigation program (Focus on areas of concentrated shallow domestic wells)
• Develop and implement an irrigated lands best management practices (BMP) program
• Develop and implement a multi-benefit land repurposing program
• Develop and implement a groundwater pumping allocation program

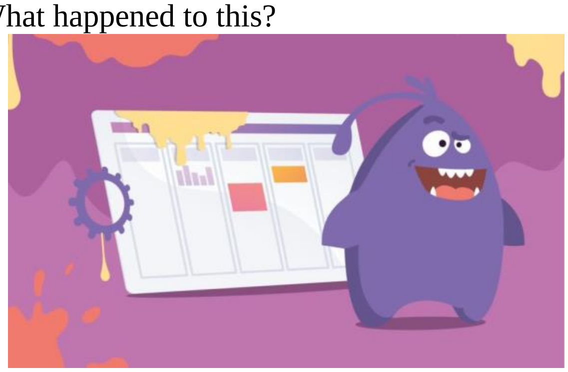
In addition to the programs and management actions listed above, the GSP identified the following projects that could help achieve sustainability throughout the Subbasin. These projects included the following:
• City of Paso Robles recycled water supply in-lieu of groundwater pumping
• San Miguel CSD recycled water supply in-lieu of groundwater pumping
• Projects that use Nacimiento Lake supplies via the Nacimiento Pipeline to be used directly for irrigation in lieu of groundwater pumping or be blended with recycled water supplies and used for irrigation in-lieu of groundwater pumping
• Expansion of the Salinas Dam to increase storage capacity
• Projects that provide for floodplain expansion to provide storage of supplemental water supplies for in-lieu use of groundwater pumping and / or benefit groundwater recharge or habitat (e.g., basin recharge using peak flows from a river, creek, or stream)
• Use of San Luis Obispo County Flood Control and Water Conservation District (SLOFCWCD) State Water Project (SWP) allocations, and other supplemental water supplies, for the benefit of the Paso Basin • Distributed Stormwater Collection and Managed Aquifer Recharge (DSC-MAR) Facilities (Urban, Rural, OnFarm)

Some of the Supervisors are scratching their heads and wondering why no one ever told them about the availability of the grant before. Apparently, it took a new guy to bring it forward.

Item 17 - Request to approve a contract amendment with Sherpa Government Solutions LLC, to provide budgeting software and administrative system support in the amount up to $60,000 from designated project funds in the Countywide Automation Fund - FC 266 Countywide Automation Fund, and authorize the County Administrative Officer, or his designee, to approve future contract amendments up to $200,000 in designated project funds for system support in future budget years. This item, if approved, provides for the extension of a software vendor contract that would provide software and training to enable the County to produce a more refined program performance budget. It would take data from the existing county system and allow its presentation in ways that are more useful to management and the Board.

The original contract was approved in 2015. It appears that actual work did not begin until 2018. This item would extend the contract term to December 31, 2022. It does not include expanded funding at this point, but as the item title states, it would authorize the administration to add up to $200,000 in future budget years.

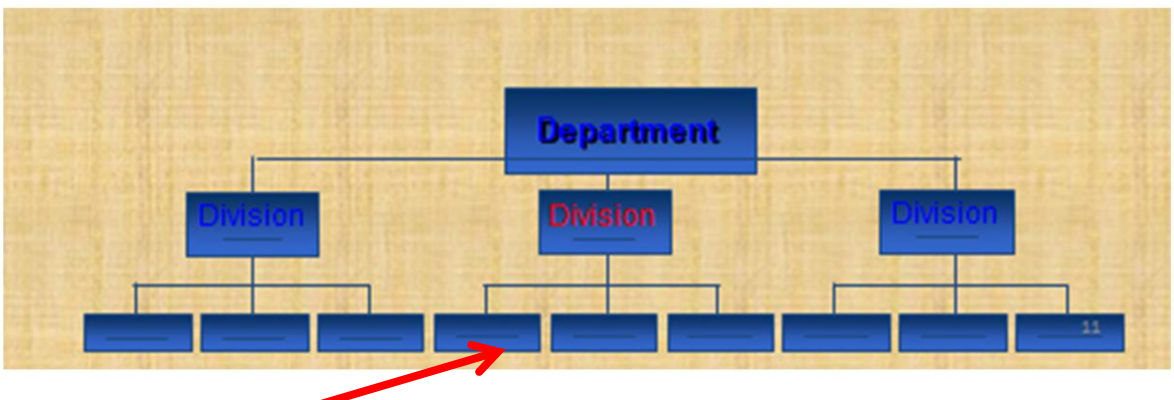
What is the status of the project today? The original contract provided the schedule shown below on the next page. What happened to this?



Following is a high-level plan and a work plan that will be completed with additional detail working in conjunction with the County team.

What contracted features are in production now? The contract is very explicit about what they are. Are any running? Could the Board see a quick demo?

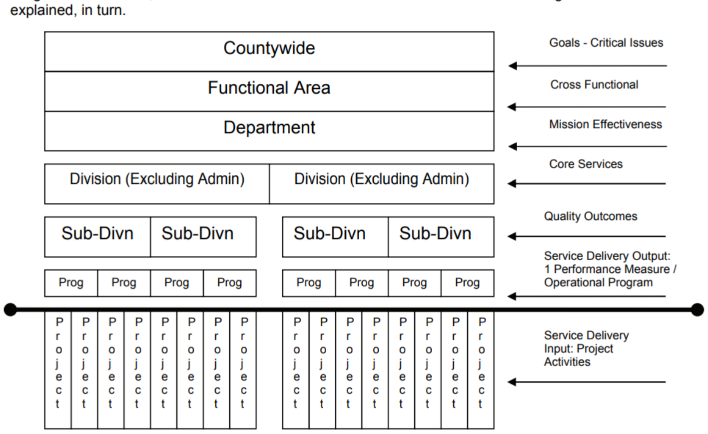
When will the County be able to budget at the program level? You really can't do proper performance measurement unless you are budgeting at the program level.



Program level (sometimes called sub-divisions or program cost centers).

Levels of Performance Reporting

The cascading levels of performance measures in County departments include: Countywide, Functional Area, Program Cost Center, and Individual Measures. These are illustrated in the following chart and each are then explained, in turn.



Items 31 and 32 - Allocation of American Rescue Plan Act funds.

Summary: Item 31 focuses on new and expanded programs that are eligible to be funded under the Federal ARPA program. **Item 32** focuses on "restoring" funds to various County departments that are alleged to have experienced budget reductions and/or revenue shortfalls due to COVID .

The County has received somewhere north of $95 million in COVID relief funds from the Feds and the State. The ARPA is reported as $54.9 million. It is not clear exactly what the sources are for the balance. It would be nice to see a comprehensive spread sheet that displays the big picture prior to having the Board dive into this piecemeal. The format used by Public Works to explain the funding status of the various SIGMA water basin plans would be a good start. What are the other funding sources? Again, how much has been expended in which years, how much in the current year, and how much in the future years. This presentation should not just include ARPA, but also other COVID grants.

Warning: In the Big picture, all this funding is a part of trillions of dollars funded by debt through the Federal Resrve (The Fed). The Board of Supervisors, the County Auditor Controller, the CEO, and other senior managers should carefully warn the public about the consequences. See the excerpt from one of the articles on inflation that are included in the Emergent Issues Section beginning on page 27, below.

The federal government will spend around $413 billion in 2021 on debt interest alone, according to the Congressional Budget Office. Debt service was a comparably reasonable $197 billion in 2010. Even the World Bank knows that's a problem. It figures that a country reaches a negative tipping point when the debt-to-GDP ratio hits 77 percent. The U.S. debt-to-GDP ratio today is around 125 percent and climbing.

But remember that is at about one percent interest. Each one-percent interest-rate increase costs another $413 billion. More precisely, each one-percent interest-rate increase costs American taxpayers another $413 billion (and climbing.) If the Fed was serious and raised rates to five percent—which still may not be enough—that would be close to $2 trillion in interest the federal government would need to pay annually. That's half of the entire federal budget. Americans will be outraged to discover that Social Security, Medicare, defense spending, infrastructure, and everything else will need deep cuts in order to pay interest on money long spent by craven, irresponsible politicians.[1]

Item 31 - Request to receive and file a report and to provide direction to staff on the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) funding for businesses, non-profits, and child care. The Board will consier apllocating ARPA money for new programs designed to mitigate the negative impacts of COVID on buinessess and families. The categories are specifically eligible under the Federal rules. The County write-up summarizes the issue, as follows:

1) Rod Thomson in The Coming Financial Vise No One Will Talk About, See page 30 for this particular article.

Proposed County approach for allocating funds for businesses, non-profits, and child care

This report to the Board provides further detail on a recommended approach to allocating $9 million in funding for businesses, non-profits, and child care. Staff requests direction from the Board regarding this proposed approach and will return to the Board at a later meeting with more specific allocations and contracts for consideration, as noted in each of the three categories below.)

Category	Amount	Purpose	Implementation
Businesses	$500K total ($100K per supervisorial district)	Grants to small businesses to mitigate financial hardships or to implement COVID-19 prevention or mitigation tactics.	The Workforce Development Board (WDB) is proposed to administer the grants using a similar process as the two prior County business assistance grant rounds; business services specialists within the Central Coast Coalition of Chambers, through contracted services with the WDB, are proposed to manage application intake and technical assistance and support.
	$2.5M	Contracts with organizations providing technical assistance to businesses, workforce development, or job training for individuals impacted by COVID-19.	Staff is exploring working with the WDB to assist with allocating the funds and contract management.
Non-profits	$3M	Grants to non-profit organizations to mitigate financial hardships, implement COVID-19 prevention or mitigation tactics, or to provide programs/services to respond to needs created by the COVID-19 public health emergency.	The County Administrative Office is proposed to manage the intake, evaluation, and administration of grants using a similar process as the one for the Community Based Organization grant program.
Child care	$3M	Funding for child care sector organizations to provide child care sector program relief and stabilization, tuition assistance, program expansion (new slots) and quality improvement, and reinvigoration of the child care workforce.	The County Board of Education is proposed to serve as a fiscal lead for a coalition of partners, including First 5 SLO County, the SLO County Child Care Planning Council, and the Community Action Partnership (CAPSLO).

1. What happens to these programs, their employees, and clients when the one-time money runs out? The County will be under severe pressure to continue them. Was everyone banking on the approval of President Biden's Human "Infrastructure" bill, which now seems stalled?

2. Are the problems which are proposed to be solved documented? For example, if thousands of people do not wish to return to work, and unemployment is low and decreasing, how does spending $2.5 million of job training help? What does "reinvigoration" of the child care workforce mean? Perhaps they will put them in the sound pods.

Item 32 - Request to 1) approve a FY 2021-22 though FY 2024-25 Restoration of Government Services spending plan funded by a combination of American Rescue Plan Act funding and the General Fund COVD-19 Designation; 2) adopt a resolution amending the Position Allocation List as outlined in the recommendation; 3) approve a corresponding budget for the FY 2021-22 components of the spending plan totaling $7,147,161 as outlined in the recommendation by 4/5 vote; and 4) approve an additional corresponding budget adjustment to include $25,500 of other revenue and appropriations to Fund Center - 160 Public Health and $11,244 of state aid and

appropriations to Fund Center – 141 Ag Commissioner by 4/5 vote. The write-up states in part:

A total of $55 million of ARPA funding has been allocated to the County, one half received in June 2021 and the second half anticipated to be received in June of 2022. Per prior BOS direction, this item recommends a spending plan covering FY 2021-22 through FY 2023-24 for $11M of the County's ARPA allocation towards Restoration of Government Services. Additionally, $6,514,745 of Excess FY 2020-21 FBA residing in the General Fund COVID-19 Designation is recommended to partially restore FY 2020-21 budget cuts. Finally, $2.3M is recommended to provide relief to the Department of Parks and Recreation from the General Fund COVID-19 Designation.

The expenditure list is called the "Restoration of Government Services Funding Plan." Rather than a real Plan, it seems to be a list of expenditures, which departments did make or could not make due to alleged COVID related cutbacks. Our recollection is that the Board actually made cuts of only around $9 million and made up most of the rest using transfers from fund balances. Moreover, the second table displayed below, "ARPA RGSA and FBA Recommendations," contains restorations of $7.1 million for the current fiscal year and then projects forward for 3 additional fiscal years to 2025.

Questions include:

1) Did the County budget $7.1 million in service cuts for this fiscal year of $7.1 million? We don't recall such reductions being included in the Proposed FY 2021-22 Budget. Some reductions were made in the FY 2020-21 Budget, but many have already been restored, and there were no visible deleterious service cuts in any case.

In fact, the FY 2021-22 Budget message states in part:

The following is recommended in order to close the General Fund gap for FY 2021-22: Trimming General Fund support by $1.7 million compared to departments' Status Quo submittals. These reductions do not represent cuts to any programs or services but are the result of an intensive effort to reduce expenditures that do not qualify as "Status Quo", and realistically increase revenues;

Funding $3.1 million of the total recommended $11.9 million of capital and maintenance expense with General Government Building Replacement reserves;

Increasing FY 2020-21 estimates for Fund Balance Available (FBA) by $9.1 million, based on revised year-end projections provided by departments as of the end of the second quarter of the current Fiscal Year.

Note: In fact the Fund Balance Available (FBA) was $9.1 million higher than originally projected.
The estimated FBA of $34.5 million which is included in the Recommended Budget is more in line with what FBA has been in prior years and as such, this balancing strategy is appropriately characterized as being long-term in nature;

Use of $6.1 million from the COVID-19 designation.

2) For the sake of conversation and assuming that expenditures would have to be curtailed in FY 2021-22, how can the funding be logically applied to future fiscal years, where no revenue shortfalls due to COVID may occur? The ARPA simply requires that all expenditures must be made prior to the end 2024. But why would this mean that they would be legally eligible if there are no COVID related causes in those future years?

The primary cause of the problem was not COVID itself, but government-imposed lookdowns, which harmed the economy and resulted in revenue losses, destruction of businesses, and unemployment. At this point, there does not seem to be any appetite to repeat that mistake.

3) Ultimately, in 3 or 4 years the Feds will audit these expenditures. Will the County be able to prove that they were eligible? If not, the County will have to pay the money back from its general funds.

4) Since these are extra-ordinary revenues which will end, how will the County sustain the recurring expenditure programs which are being funded here?

EXHIBIT A: RESTORATION OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES FUNDING PLAN

Fund Center	Department	Short Description of funding request	Funding recommended by fiscal year ending: June 30, 2022	Funding recommended by fiscal year ending: June 30, 2023	Funding recommended by fiscal year ending: June 30, 2024	Funding recommended by fiscal year ending: June 30, 2025 (December 31, 2024)	TOTAL RECOMMENDED
119	Admin - Comm & Outreach	Technology requests for communications equipment/services.	15,000	-	-	-	15,000
109	Assessor	1.0 Limited Term FTE GIS Analyst through December 31, 2024.	66,560	133,182	133,182	66,591	399,515
100	BOS	Equipment - monitors and BOS conf room tv/monitor	-	7,500	-	-	7,500
116	Central Services	1.0 FTE Limited Term Assistant Real Property Agent through December 31, 2024.	53,200	110,413	115,051	60,052	338,717
116	Central Services	Surplus Warehouse Space impacted COVID-19	4,811	9,621	17,411	12,600	44,442
116	Central Services	Real property funding request for a weed abatement/fuel reduction/fire safety project.	37,500	25,000	25,000	12,500	100,000
116	Central Services	1.00 Limited Term FTE ASO I/II through December 31, 2024 .	89,271	134,581	134,581	67,560	425,993
111	County Counsel	Equipment and cubicle space one-time cost for greyed out positions.	23,000	-	-	-	23,000
132	District Attorney	1.0 FTE (doublefilled) DDA III through December 31, 2024.	82,140	168,096	175,771	98,895	524,902
138	Emergency Services	OES Equipment -trailer and evacuee suply kit	43,000	-	-	-	43,000
112	Human Resources	Clear To Go software for COVID-19 tracking.	36,094	44,100	14,700	-	94,894
112	Human Resources	1.0 Limited Term FTE HR Analyst I and 1.0 Limited Term FTE HR Technician I-Confidential through Dec 31, 2024.	131,227	202,855	212,422	108,385	654,889
112	Human Resources	COVID-19 Related Workers Comp Claims.	210,000	125,000	37,500	12,500	385,000
114	IT	Microsoft 365 software update for all county users.	274,635	450,000	450,000	218,761	1,393,396
114	IT	Purchase of 50 laptops for Software Engineers.	50,000	-	-	-	50,000
222	Parks	Funding for revenue loss and repayment of loan.	500,000	-	-	-	500,000
180	Social Services	Training and large conference rooms modernization for equipping each with a virtual video solution.	-	40,500	-	-	40,500
181	Social Services	Contract with community partner agency to add emergency shelter option for foster youth.	-	150,000	-	-	150,000
	SUB TOTAL		1,616,438	1,600,848	1,315,618	657,844	5,190,748

ARPA RGSA & FBA RECOMMENDATIONS

Fund Center	Department	Short Description of funding request	Funding recommended by fiscal year ending: June 30, 2022	Funding recommended by fiscal year ending: June 30, 2023	Funding recommended by fiscal year ending: June 30, 2024	Funding recommended by fiscal year ending: June 30, 2025	TOTAL RECOMMENDED
100	Board of Supervisors	See Exhibit B	11,625	11,625	11,625		34,875
104	Administrative Office	See Exhibit B	72,069	129,503	129,503		331,075
109	Assessor	See Exhibit B	324,452	445,826	445,826		1,216,104
110	Clerk-Recorder	See Exhibit B	-	39,532	39,532		79,064
111	County Counsel	See Exhibit B	134,179	208,277	208,277		550,733
112	Human Resources	See Exhibit B	186,754	268,462	268,462		723,678
113	Facilities Management	See Exhibit B	157,903	210,536	210,536		578,975
114	Information Technology	See Exhibit B	257,250	435,000	435,000		1,127,250
116	Central Services	See Exhibit B	38,499	38,499	38,499		115,497
117	ACTTC	See Exhibit B	167,333	296,233	296,233		759,798
118	Talent Development	See Exhibit B	36,000	-	36,000		72,000
119	Communications and Outreach	See Exhibit B	5,951	5,951	5,951		17,853
130	Waste Management	See Exhibit B	54,258	54,258	54,258		162,774
131	Grand Jury	See Exhibit B	4,328	4,328	4,328		12,984
132	District Attorney	See Exhibit B	140,857	207,816	207,816		556,489
136	Sheriff-Coroner	See Exhibit B	407,480	602,089	602,089		1,611,658
138	Emergency Services	See Exhibit B	16,504	16,504	16,504		49,512
139	Probation	See Exhibit B	75,857	124,596	124,596		325,049
141	Ag Commissioner	See Exhibit B	46,837	113,446	113,446		273,729
142	Planning & Building	See Exhibit B	181,284	310,723	310,723		802,730
160	Public Health	See Exhibit B	32,858	142,250	142,250		317,358
166	Behavioral Health	See Exhibit B	109,000	109,000	109,000		327,000
180	Social Services - Administration	See Exhibit B	192,467	313,515	313,515		819,498
181	Foster Care	See Exhibit B	120,106	120,106	120,106		360,318
184	LEHC	See Exhibit B	66,198	66,198	66,198		198,594
186	Veteran Services	See Exhibit B	27,225	27,225	27,225		81,675
200	Maintenance Projects	N/A	127,636	-	-		127,636
215	UC Cooperative Extension	See Exhibit B	23,371	38,371	38,371		100,113
222	Parks & Recreation, Community Parks	See Exhibit B	-	160,000	160,000		320,000
230	Capital Projects	N/A	185,280	-	-		185,280
290	Community Development	See Exhibit B	-	1,606	1,606		3,212
377	Libraries	See Exhibit B	26,662	26,662	26,662		79,986
427	Golf	See Exhibit B	500	500	500		1,500
	SUB TOTAL		3,230,723	4,528,637	4,564,637	-	12,323,997
	TOTAL RESTORATION RECOMMENDATIONS		4,847,161	6,129,485	5,880,255	657,844	17,514,745
	ADDITIONAL PARKS RECOMMENDATIONS						
222	Parks & Recreation, Community Parks	Revenue Loss	2,300,000	-	-	-	2,300,000
	TOTAL RESTORATION RECOMMENDATIONS (INCLUDING PARKS)		7,147,161	6,129,485	5,880,255	657,844	19,814,745

The detailed lists, referred to as Exhibit B in the table above, are too extensive to include here. They can be seen at the link: 139427 (ca.gov) . It is a big file and may take some seconds to open.

Planning Commission of Thursday, January 13, 2022 (Scheduled)

Item 8 - Hearing to consider a request by Bigfoot Valley, LLC for a Conditional Use Permit (DRC2018-00234) for the phased development of outdoor cannabis cultivation canopy, outdoor ancillary nursery, ancillary processing activities, and ancillary transport. Phase 1 includes up to one acre of outdoor cultivation canopy within two separate cultivation areas; up to 3,000 square feet of outdoor ancillary nursery canopy in existing hoop structures; ancillary transport; portable restrooms; a compost area; installation of security fencing and equipment; installation of a new driveway entrance; relocation of six existing 190-watt solar panels; revegetation of a previous as-built driveway; and use of existing parking, water storage tanks, and storage sheds.

Phase 2 includes ancillary processing within an existing 2,403 square foot barn; realignment of an existing driveway; additional parking; and installation of a 10,000-gallon water tank. The project includes a request to modify the fencing standards set forth in Section 22.10.080 of the County Code to allow deer fencing around the perimeter of each outdoor cultivation area and no fencing around the processing building.

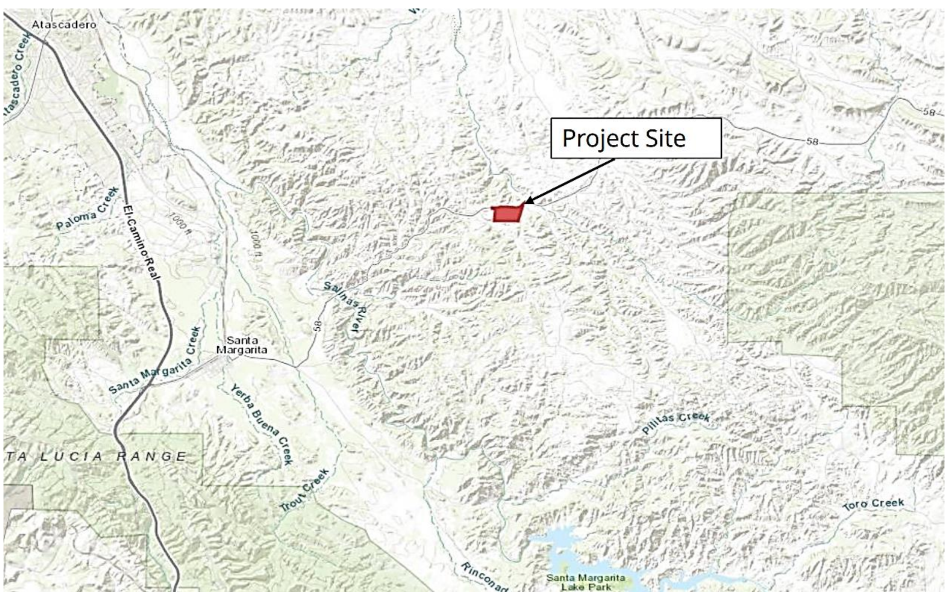
The project is located at 5145 Calf Canyon Hwy, approximately 6 miles northeast of the community of Santa Margarita.

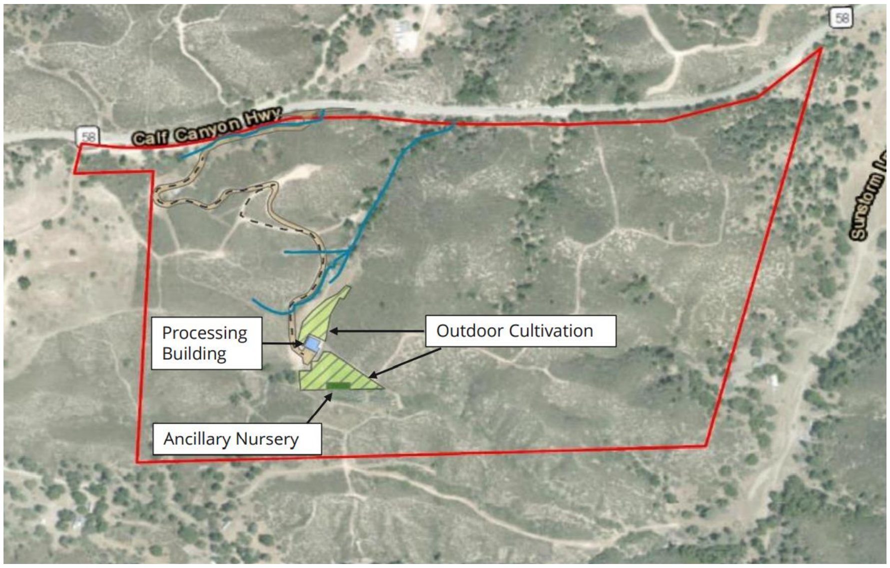
Regulatory Efficiency? Note that the Planning Department control number for this application, highlighted in yellow above, is DRC2018-000234. This indicates that the application was filed in 2018**.** Now, four years later, it is pending before the Planning Commission. Does the Commission care about the length of time and cost of permitting? What took so long? The Commission should require that all staff presentations of applications contain a Regulatory Efficiency analysis box, which includes:

- **Length of time from filing (not acceptance of the application)**
- **List of all County permitting fees for all Departments paid to date and/or pending**
- **Aggregate cost for attorneys, architects, engineers, geologists, hydrologists, engineers, and others whom the applicant engaged to prepare the application and revisions (names of the consultants need not be divulged, just the type)**

By expending four years to review the application, how much in foregone estimated revenue in Cannabis Taxes did the County lose?

Although the staff recommends approval of the permit, it points out that the owners have been cited for violations under their interim permit. This may elicit concerns by the Planning Commission. There was no public comment in the record as of this writing. In the past, Santa Margarita area residents have been opposed to cannabis operations.





PAST 3 WEEKS' HIGHLIGHTS

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

The Board and some other regional agencies were off on a Christmas/New Year's recess. We hope you enjoyed the respite.

In General: There were no meetings of any of the County or other regional agencies except for the SLO County Integrated Waste Management Authority (IWMA), SLOCOG, and the Central Coast Community Energy Authority (3CE).

Meanwhile, the Federal Government is ramming the creation of the so-called Chumash Heritage Marine Sanctuary down our throats. See **Emergent Issues Item 3** below on page 17 for a full analysis of the scam.

SLO Integrated Waste Management Authority (IWMA) Meeting of Wednesday, December 23, 2021. Special Called Meeting (Completed)

Item 6 - Amendment One - Independent Contractor Agreement For Special Services. The item contained the extension of a contract for consulting services, which the IWMA had previously hired to assist it with implementation of the State-mandated wet garbage recycling mandate.

In February of 2021, this agency received Board approval via Resolution NO. 2020-2-1 to contract with HF&F Consultants, Inc. for a not to exceed amount of $339,040 for project management and implementation support for the IWMA and its member agencies in-order-to *comply with SB 1383 mandates, including but not limited to, amending 22 member agency franchise agreements and drafting 19 SB 1383 mandated ordinances and code updates. This special services agreement ends December 31, 2021, but HF&F are still assisting cities and special districts with franchise agreement negotiations and an in-depth SB 1383 fee increase analysis. During the December 8, 2021, IWMA Board meeting, the Board directed legal counsel to draft an amendment to the original agreement for special services extending the end date to June 1, 2022, unless terminated sooner in-order-to continue working with member agencies.*

Item 7 - Paavo Ogren is Back Again. He was hired last year but left after less than a month with no explanation. The write-up stated in part:

On June 9, 2021, the former Executive Director resigned with an effective date of July 2, 2021. On July 14, 2021, your Board appointed Paavo Ogren as the Interim Executive Director who worked in that role until he stepped down on August 11, 2021. The County of San Luis Obispo ("County") withdrew from the IWMA on November 15, 2021, and subsequently entered a Transitional Memorandum of Understanding with the IWMA to ensure uninterrupted service to all County residents. On September 1, 2021, your Board appointed Patti Toews as Interim Executive Director and Ms. Toews continues to serve in this capacity.

The Executive Committee therefore recommends, based upon the time-sensitive projects identified herein, that Mr. Ogren be engaged as a professional services consultant until the next regular IWMA Board meeting on January 12, 2022, wherein the Board may consider appointing Mr. Ogren as Interim Executive Director.

The left progressives are keeping him in the wings and ready to take over all the SGMA water districts if and when the left becomes able to seize control of the Board of Supervisors at some time in the future and they can sing "Happy Days are Here Again."

San Luis Obispo County Council of Governments (SLOCOG) Meeting of Wednesday, January 5, 2022 (Completed)

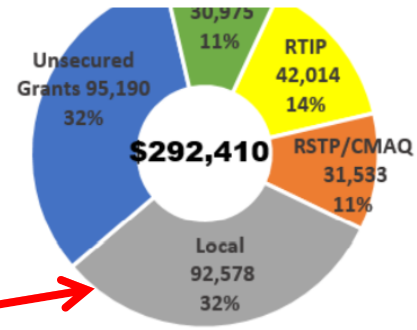
Item C-1: Adoption of the 2022 Regional Transportation Plan. The SLOCOG Board adopted the plan. One important item which has been pended is the funding for the proposed State Highway 227 roundabouts. There is considerable opposition. The write up, in this regard, stated:

In response to the comments focused on the planned improvements for the SR 227 corridor south of the San Luis Obispo Regional Airport, staff has deferred the funding action specific to any planned corridor improvements to February 2nd, 2022. Pending this final action, the 2022 RTIP reserves $7.7M of federal and state funding toward corridor improvements along SR 227.

The Overall Program
The overall program, as outlined in the graphic below, is contingent on a considerable amount of State funding, which has not been received.

Note the sentence highlighted in yellow below, which lists the need for local funding commitments which have not been secured. Is this yet another prelude to SLOCOG's scheduling a ballot measure for a Countywide sales tax increase?

2022 Regional Transportation Improvement Program Investment Summary SLOCOG's five year regional program of surface transportation investments captures $292M of prior, existing, and new investments. The program relies heavily on local investment commitments and state grants yet to be secured. The 2022 RTIP recommends the following near-term and mid-term investments.



Is this prefatory to requesting a sales tax increase?

A. **Reaffirm prior capital funding commitments for five (5) fully funded projects**
- In AG, US 101/Brisco Rd/Camino Mercado ($6.6M)
- In SLO, US 101 Prado Rd. Overpass Ph1 ($6.0M)
- SR 46 Corridor Improvements "Wye" ($2.5M)
- Bob Jones City to Sea ($900K)
- Templeton to Atascadero Critical Gap Closure ($2M)

B. **Reaffirm prior funding, commit new funding, and reserve funding four (3) projects**
- Near Avila Beach, US 101/Avila Beach Dr. Roundabout ($12.7M)
- In Morro Bay, SR 1/41 Operational Improvements ($5.9M)
- In rural SLO, SR 227 Corridor Improvements (Reserve 7.7M)

C. **Provide match funding (CON & R/W) to leverage state/federal grants to fully fund three (2) projects**
- In the Pismo Beach area, US 101 South Bound Managed Lane ($5.5M CON, $2.8M R/W)
- In Paso Robles, SR 46 Union Rd. Overpass – Ph1 ($3.9M)

D. **Support preconstruction investments for five (5) projects** (Enviro and/or Design)
- In the Pismo Beach area, US 101 South Bound Managed Lane ($6.8M)
- In Paso Robles, Union Rd. Overpass Ph1 ($1.55M)
- In Paso Robles, SR46E/US101 I/C ($2M)
- In Paso Robles, SR46W/101 I/C ($1.3M)
- SR 227 Edna Valley Trail ($300k)

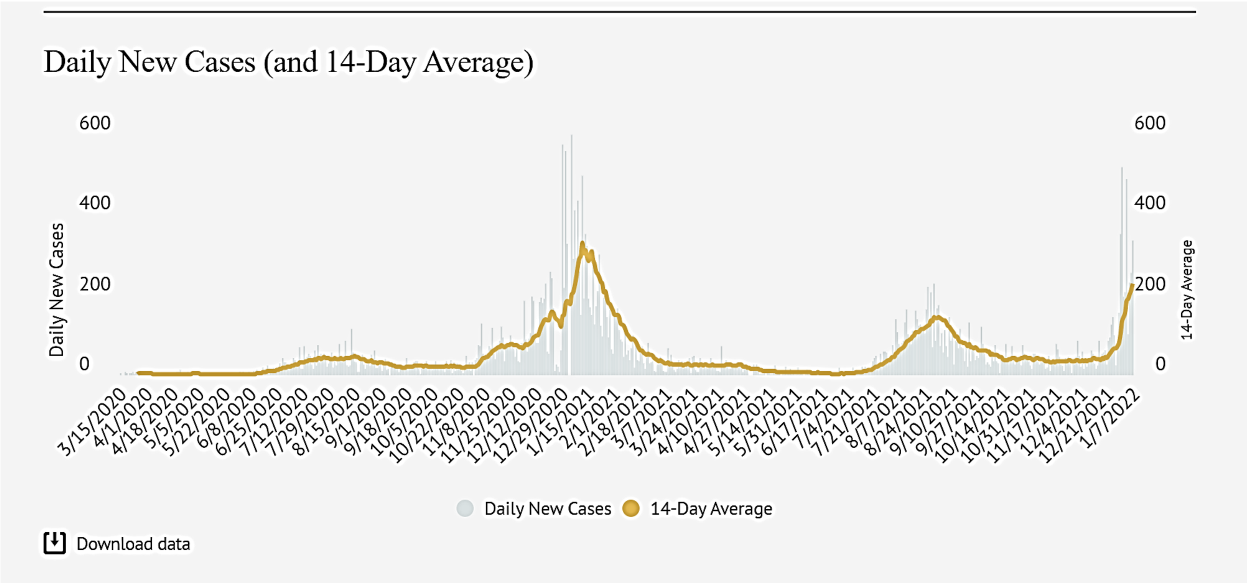
E. **Encourage project sponsors** to pursue funding from state and federal grant programs:
- Morro Bay to Cayucos Connector ($650k) - ATP Cycle 6
- Oceano Front St. Complete Streets ($267K) – Caltrans D5 Cali Clean Cities grant.

EMERGENT ISSUES

Item 1 - COVID. As expected, the number of new cases has jumped significantly. It has reached the same level as was occurring at this time last year. The Board of Supervisors just announced that it is going back to remote meetings using ZOOM. In the big picture, the Feds, States, and localities have changed their rules, explanations, and advice so many times that the American people have largely given up listening to government authorities with respect to

COVID. At this point they might as well open up society, treat it like flu or AIDS, and let us get on with life or death, as the case may be.

The larger danger is that the entire mishandling of the issue from beginning to end may have seriously undermined American's current lack of confidence in government, which in turn could cause disaffection toward acceptance of laws, regulations, and the legitimacy of government in general.



38 Hospitalized (7 in ICU)

Item 2 - Impending Nomination of the so called "Chumash Heritage" Marine Sanctuary by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The full court press by the Federal Government is on.

The proposed sanctuary is billed by its proponents as benign, but one need only visit the website for the existing Monterrey Bay Marine Sanctuary to understand the vast array of restrictions which can be imposed on fishing, marine businesses, agriculture, and the general public. Even Vandenberg Air Force Base operations could ultimately be impacted.

PROPOSED CHUMASH SANCTUARY

Purpose: The purpose of the proposed Chumash Marine Heritage Sanctuary is to restrict and/or foreclose the public use of ocean resources (and impact adjacent land uses) within a vast area offshore, running from Cambria to Santa Barbara. Onshore activities may also be curtailed.

As the analogous existing Monterey Sanctuary's website makes clear: *Resource Protection Overview: There are a variety of resource protection issues within the Sanctuary region due to the sensitivity of habitats and species in the region, the long stretch of adjacent populated coastline, and the multiple uses of the marine environment. The Sanctuary addresses these issues through a variety of means to reduce or prevent detrimental human impacts. Note: It's those problem humans again.*

Note the emphasis on "detrimental human impacts."

Should we just deport them east of the Sierra Mountains?

The Monterey Sanctuary Website states:

Approaches include collaborative multi-stakeholder management efforts to identify and reduce impacts, reviewing and commenting on projects which may impact the Sanctuary, regulations on prohibited activities, issuing of permits with conditions to minimize impacts, and where necessary, enforcement.

Note: You can be in a Delphi group and plead for your business, property rights, and fish while the leftist apparatchiks make demands and threaten you.

Resource protection issues are also addressed through response to emergency events such as spills, through educational outreach to assist the public and businesses in minimizing impacts, and by monitoring to more closely target management efforts.

The Latest Pitch: NOAA has set up a special website to promote the nomination and ultimate approval of the Marine Sanctuary. The NOAA Director can ultimately make the nomination. The President must then sign off. Congressman Salud Carbajal has endorsed the nomination. The website text states in part:

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

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

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

Northern Chumash Not a Federally Recognized Tribe and "Members," If Any, May Not Be Genetically Native American. Why isn't the nomination, which is a front for the Sierra Club, invalid?

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

In the end, Collins lost both in the Superior Court and subsequently in the Court of Appeals. The Court found in part:

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

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

[2] Collins died several years ago.

The full decision can be seen at the link:
https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/review?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:98d14c36-5477-4197-b70a-ebe3bc0b8f11#pageNum=1

Several of our readers have asserted that NOAA is in violation of Federal law for consorting with Collins on the issue, as he was a convicted felon involved in drug dealing. One consisely emailed :

I looked at the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary yesterday. On a page with the new dates for comments on the proposed CHMMS, I found the dates but also a reference to Northern Chumash Chief Fred Collins. It is my understanding NOAA agents are not to communicate with convicted felons. In addition, Fred sued the Salinan Tribe, twice and lost both cases, The judge said to him in court: "You're not an Indian you're a Mexican. Does NOAA not know or doesn't care?

The Phenomenon of Setting up fake tribes: Excerpt from Daniel Greenfield's [3] Front Page Magazine article America's Millions of Fake Indians Outnumber Real Indians *quoting a study by Circe Strum of the University of Texas Anthropology Department:*

Strum writes, "The number of these new self-identified tribes is startling. Over the course of my research, I discovered 253 groups scattered across the U.S. that identify as some sort of Cherokee tribe. This is a huge number considering that there are only 573 federally recognized tribes, three of which are Cherokee."

American Indian tribes have been fighting a rearguard campaign against fake Indians, but it's one that they are likely to lose as the Left embraces fake Indian activists who are happy to put their fake identities at the service of their political causes.

The fake Indian problem is not unique to America.

The exposure of Carrie Bourassa in Canada, after she appeared in Indian garb and blamed systemic racism, was a major scandal in that country. Even more absurdly, Australia's "white aborigines", leftist academics, often blonde and blue-eyed, who claim special status and privileges because of their alleged aboriginal status, are a longstanding problem.

But the rapid growth of America's fake Indian problem suggests we're heading for a crisis.

Indian tribes enjoy a unique legal status that has conferred significant economic and political benefits. The replacement and displacement of the tribal populations by a new activist base entirely dedicated to radical leftist politics would be a new Trail of Tears, but also quite dangerous. And yet it's a crisis that's been coming since the American Indian Movement.

[3] **Daniel Greenfield, a Shillman Journalism Fellow at the Freedom Center, is an investigative journalist and writer focusing on the radical Left and Islamic terrorism.**

Between 2010 and 2020, the number of part Indians went from a minority to a majority of the American Indian population. If this trend continues, the vast number of people who build careers and public identities around being American Indians will be fake Indians.

America's fake Indians already outnumber real Indians. And it's only getting worse.

Additional Regulation: The establishment of the proposed marine sanctuary would impose a new and formidable layer of regulation on the people of San Luis Obispo County in addition to other water and land use regulatory quagmires currently in place. Thus, the sanctuary would be in addition to the State of California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the State Water Resources Control Board, the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, the California Coastal Commission, the US Army Corps of Engineers, the US Bureau of Fisheries, the US Coast Guard, the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the California State Lands Commission, the California State Department of Boating and Waterways, the San Luis Obispo County Department of Planning and Building, the San Luis Obispo County Sheriff's Office Marine Unit, the San Luis Obispo County Air Pollution Control District, and numerous others.

Proponents: A key backer of the sanctuary proposal is the Sierra Club and its local Santa Lucia Chapter, which promotes its primary benefit as being that oil, gas, and other kinds of mineral extraction activities are prohibited in Federal Marine sanctuaries. How stupid! If there were oil and gas offshore, you would think the County and others would support its recovery. Why would local officials slit their proverbial wrists over this kind of quackery? The royalties and taxes would help fix the horrible road and infrastructure deficit in the County (hundreds of millions).

Another backer appears to be a somewhat amorphous group called the Northern Chumash, who suggest that the sanctuary is needed to protect Native American cultural and spiritual resources. A more cynical view is that their interest is simply a ploy to create a public shakedown mechanism by which jobs, contracts, and other forms of patronage are distributed to members. In other words, if you want to expand the designated fishing area, you have to get a permit from the sanctuary. Part of the permit process would require you to hire a cultural resources professional to provide expert advice on whether the permit should be granted. A website supporting the Chumash Marine Sanctuary states in part:

*The Sanctuary will protect now submerged Chumash Sacred sites ranging from villages to solstice alignments 6 to 13 miles offshore. Chumash records suggest occupation of the central coast area for 20,000 years with two recorded dates of: * 18,000 years at Point Conception, an extremely important Chumash Sacred Place * 14,500 years on the Channel Islands North of Point Conception, Jalama is a Sacred Chumash village site. Other significant Chumash sites associated with the ocean ecology are found along the adjacent coastal terrain north to Point Sal including two 10,000 year-old sites within Vandenberg AFB. Onshore San Luis Bay are four major Chumash Sacred sites – three known to have been occupied for 9,000 years: * The site for which the City of Pismo Beach is named * The site where the Chumash people return to renew the Traditional Ritual Ceremony Cycle * The old Chumash Capital in the area of Avila Beach, now partially covered by sea level rise * The Chumash Sacred site at Diablo Cove along the coastline of the Pecho Coast Continuing north are the Chumash Village Sacred site in Los Osos, hundreds of Chumash Sacred sites ringing Morro Bay, the Chumash village Sacred site of Cayucos (continuously occupied for 8,000 years), other large sites found in the area to a mile* *north of Pt. Estero, and two Chumash village Sacred sites in Cambria (continuously occupied for 10,000 years).*

How will the Chumash or the general public benefit from the sacred sites that are under hundreds or even thousands of feet of ocean water, depending on their distance from shore? How do current marine activities, such as fishing or launching missiles from Vandenberg, interfere with the sites?

Perhaps, by way of creating cultural resources mitigation, the existing timeshare former hotel in Avila can be expanded into a new casino. It is situated well above any potential sea level rise.

Philosophical Orientation and Elitist Power: The Feds operate a number of marine sanctuaries around the country, including the Monterey Bay Sanctuary to the north and the Channel Islands Sanctuary to the south. Remember that the sanctuary, if established, will be a regulatory program of a Federal department with the full force and might of Federal law enforcement behind it, including the FBI and Federal Prosecutors, and will be backed by trillions of your tax dollars.

Intellectually and programmatically, this new agency will have its roots in the elitist enviro-aristocracy of Boston, Georgetown, and the upper eastside of Manhattan. We would point out that there are no Federal marine sanctuaries around Cape Cod/Martha's Vineyard, the Hamptons, or Boca Raton, where these people enjoy their carbon-based coal, oil, steel, and other robber baron industrial inheritances to finance their yachting, sport fishing, lobster dinners, and vacation "cottages."

Wonder if they use it to check out the surf or travel to conferences too?

Collaborative Approach? Don't throw any fish guts over the side, pee, or smoke a medicinal joint when a Monterey Sanctuary patrol plane is around or you may be doing Federal time like Martha Stewart. Note the high set rearward wing configuration and camera pods to maximize crew observation potential. This thing can fly at high enough altitude where you can't hear it. The crew can sneak up on you, orbit, and zoom in with powerful telephoto lenses. It betrays the real underlying doctrine and purpose of the sanctuary.

Monterey Sanctuary Provides a Window into Potential Chumash Sanctuary Activities and Impacts: Most busy citizens who have even faintly heard of the proposed sanctuary may believe that the regulatory focus is on fishing. In part, this is because local fisherman and other marine related interests have been quick to try to inform the public of the problems faced by their counterparts in the Monterey Sanctuary. Everyone needs to know that the program is much more pervasive and impacts on many aspects of life. Some, but not all, of the regulatory functions include the representative samples below:

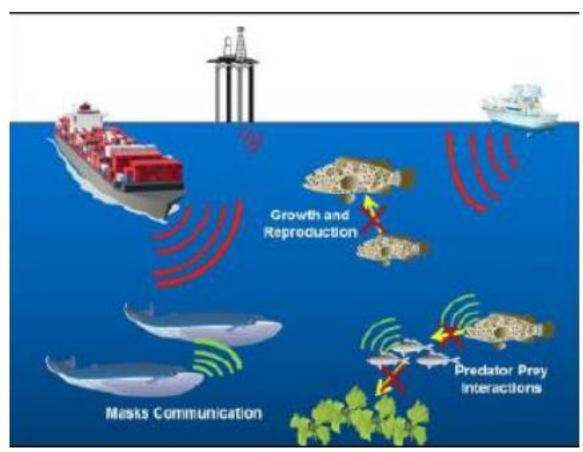
1. Agriculture: The Sanctuary will impact farming and ranching because it has the power to regulate water runoff from streams and other sources on the land. As the Monterey Sanctuary website states in its carte blanch approach to regulatory expansion: "In addition, over 7000 square miles of watersheds immediately adjacent to the Sanctuary drain to its wetlands and marine waters." The website ominously also states:

The aspects of agriculture that potentially impact water quality include erosion and sedimentation, offsite transport of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and microbial contamination. Stormwater, flooding, irrigation, and leaching can all mobilize substances that are beneficial while on-site, but become pollutants as they concentrate in neighboring streams, rivers, wetlands, and nearshore waters. Though each individual farm or ranch may contribute a relatively small amount of pollutants, the cumulative effects through the length of a watershed can be damaging.

a. The Monterey Sanctuary has set up an entire process and sub-organization to regulate agricultural water (the Agriculture and Rural Lands Action Plan). It also has a dedicated staff to manage this program. This is in addition to the State's infamous Agricultural Water Runoff Order.

b. Will a Central Coast Chumash Sanctuary double down as well?

2. Acoustic Impacts: *Noise generated by human activities can have a detrimental effect on marine life. Studies have documented behavioral responses, lost listening opportunities, and physical injuries in wildlife due to exposure to anthropogenic (human-induced) noise. Sources of underwater noise include large commercial shipping traffic such as container ships, freighters, 12 barges and tankers; smaller recreational and commercial vessels; sonars used in military training; pile drivers and dredging used in marine construction; air guns and other seismic sources used in energy exploration; sonars and other active acoustic sources used in research activities; and aerial sources such as over-flights.*



3. Climate Change: *Climate change's effects on the marine environment, including warming seawater temperatures, ocean acidification, sea level rise, and changes in currents, upwelling and weather patterns, have the potential to cause fundamental changes in the nature and character of marine and coastal ecosystems.*

The waters of Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, as well as surrounding coastal areas and communities, are experiencing the effects of climate change (e.g., sea level change, increasing sea surface temperature, and ocean acidification).

4. Fishing and Harvesting: *Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary does not directly manage any aspect of commercial or recreational fisheries. Fishing in state waters (usually 0-3 nautical miles from shore) is generally managed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife The responsibility for managing fishing in federal waters (beyond 3 miles) rests with NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC). In 2008, NOAA issued a report that provided an overview of NOAA's process for regulating fisheries in sanctuary waters as mandated by the Magnuson-Stevens Act and the National Marine Sanctuaries Act. Current involvement of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary in issues related to fishing includes conducting fisheries-related research, sponsoring educational events and programs (Voices of the Bay, Fishermen in the Classroom and Local Catch Monterey Bay), commenting to other agencies on fishery and ecosystem management issues, and the development of ecosystem protection plans related to fishing such as the Effects of Trawling on Benthic Habitats Action Plan and the Fishing Related Education and Research Action Plan.*

a. Although they claim not to be interfering, they are feeding the other regulatory agencies. Fishermen, who are struggling to survive, are facing the powerful staff, financing, and advocacy of a Federal agency.

b. Who is representing the fisherman with public money? Where is the equity?

5. Oil and Gas Development: *Development of a permanent prohibition on oil and gas activity was one of the major reasons for designation of the Monterey Bay Sanctuary. However, there is some level of remaining threat due to potential oil development to the south of the Sanctuary. In the past 10 years the State of California has adopted legal restrictions to prohibit new oil and gas leasing and development. Temporary moratoria have been in place for federal waters since 1982. The most current directive (June 1998, Clinton administration) under the OCS Lands Act prevents any leasing of new areas for oil and gas exploration and development through June 30, 2012. The OCS presidential deferrals do not restrict development of already leased Federal areas. There are 36 remaining undeveloped active OCS leases south of the MBNMS off the coast 13 in San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara counties. Should these sites eventually be developed, any potential spills could potentially cross Sanctuary boundaries and impact sanctuary resources. Oil spills could have a major impact on foraging birds, marine mammals and fishes, as well as important habitat like kelp beds, wetlands and rocky shores, and on tourism and the coastal economy.*

Note: The Sanctuary staff writer sees oil and gas development as a "threat." So much for fair and impartial government administration. Wonder how they power the patrol plane? Or get to work for that matter.

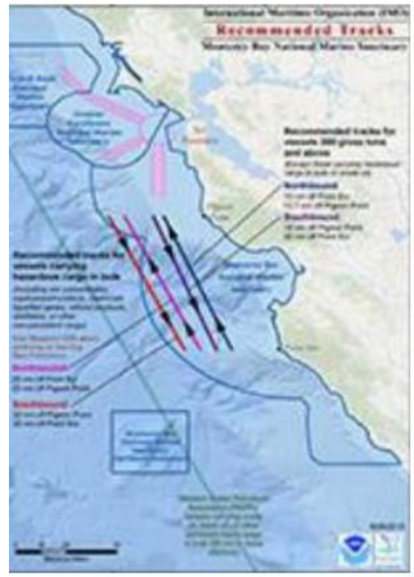
6. Cruise Ships: *Large cruise ships began visiting Monterey in 2002. These ships can provide local businesses with economic benefits, particularly if they introduce the region to tourists who may return for later visits. However, both the public and businesses have raised concerns about*

environmental issues associated with these ships.

Due to cruise ship visitation to Monterey Bay, and concern over potential impacts to marine resources from these vessels, this issue has drawn significant attention from the public. At the February 7, 2003 meeting, the MBNMS Advisory Council passed a resolution recommending that MBNMS staff pursue a regulatory prohibition on harmful discharges from cruise ships.

Note: Anonymous "concern" spurs the agency into developing a regulatory prohibition.

7. Shipping Lanes: *There are approximately 4000 transits of the Sanctuary each year by large shipping vessels (greater than 300 gross tons), including container ships, bulk freighters, hazardous materials carries, and tankers. Vessel traffic within the Sanctuary was a major issue of concern raised during the designation process due to potential impacts from a large spill should one of these vessels ground along the coastline. For example, an oil spill could severely impact the sea otter population. The Sanctuary also hosts an abundance of whales and the National Marine Fisheries Service has identified vessel strikes as one of the threats that could impede the recovery of endangered whales so it is vital to understand vessel traffic in the Sanctuary, for more information on ship strikes see whale strikes.*



8. Desalination - Sanctuary Regulations and Desalination: *Without careful planning and mitigation measures, desalination plants have the potential to negatively impact the sensitive marine environment of the sanctuary. For example, marine organisms can be killed by impingement against seawater intake screens or by being pulled through the intake system (referred to as entrainment); marine life can be significantly impacted by discharge of the saline brine and other by-products produced by desalination, and; local seafloor habitat may be significantly altered by construction of intake and outfall structures*

Three of the sanctuary's regulations relate directly to desalination. *The first involves a prohibition on discharging or depositing any material within Sanctuary boundaries. Since the brine effluent, and in some cases other materials, are usually disposed of in ocean waters, this activity requires Sanctuary authorization of Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) permits. The second sanctuary regulation pertains to discharging materials outside of the boundaries, which subsequently enter sanctuary waters and negatively impact MBNMS resources. As with the previous regulation, MBNMS approval via authorization of the RWQCB permit is required. The third relevant regulation involves a prohibition on activities that cause alteration of the seabed. Thus installation of certain desalination facility structures such as an intake/outfall pipeline on or beneath the ocean floor will also require sanctuary authorization.*

Note: Each of the substantive functional areas discussed above is backed up on the Sanctuary website with additional detailed examples about what they actually mean in terms of regulations and permitting. Our reading of the desalination component suggests that it will be almost, if not totally, impossible to obtain the permits from all the cognizant agencies for a central coast (say combined Santa Barbara County/SLO County) large scale desal plant, even without the opposition advocacy of new marine sanctuary staffers. While proponents are citing prohibitions on oil and gas development as the main justification, we think that this also may be a ploy to drive a final nail into the coffin of any major future desal proposal.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) held workshops on December 8 and 13, 2021, and then on January 6, 2022, to receive public comment. Note that January 6th is a major Christian feast day on which many Churches hold special services.[4]

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) supposedly listened to what locals think about the proposed sanctuary. There was the usual rhetoric about its benefits and functions but little detail about its structure and cost. This information is essential for the public to make an informed opinion concerning the creation of a new government agency. Holding the workshops at the peak of the holiday season, when businesspeople are especially busy, casts suspicion on the whole operation.

Lack of Basic Information:

1. What is the expected annual operating budget for the new sanctuary? Does experience in the Channel Islands and Monterey Bay sanctuaries provide any data on this question?

2. Similarly, how many staffers will be employed by the new sanctuary?

3. What does the typical table of organization look like?

4. What types of professions and job titles will be involved?

5. Will any of the staff be Federal officers with police powers? Will any such officers be assigned collaterally?

6. What has been the regulatory violation and enforcement experience in the Monterey Bay and Channel Islands sanctuaries to date – year over year?

7. How much in fines is collected each year?

8. Would the Federal Government consider letting the citizens of San Luis County vote on the issue rather than simply having some Federal imperial praefect make the decision?

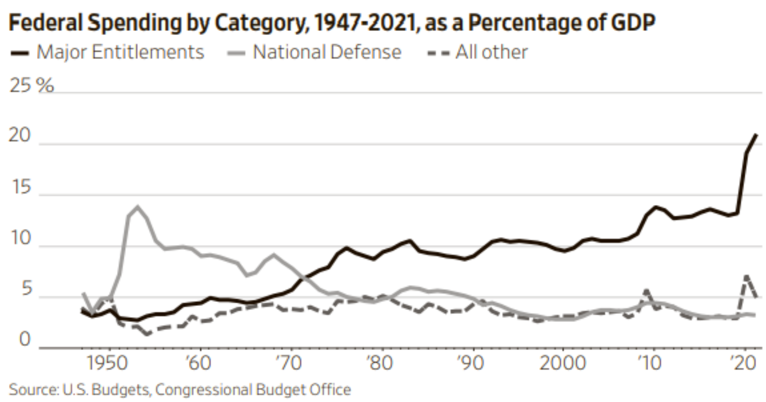
[4] **Epiphany (i-PIF-ə-nee), also known as Theophany in the east, is a Christian feast day that celebrates the revelation (theophany) of God incarnate as Jesus Christ. In Western Christianity, the feast commemorates principally (but not solely) the visit of the Magi to the Christ Child, and thus Jesus Christ's physical manifestation to the Gentiles.**

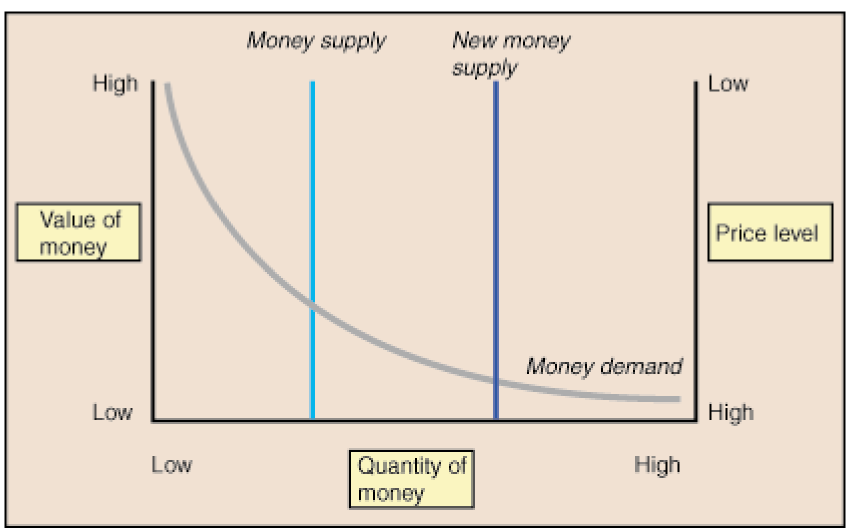
9. Proponents claim an economic development net benefit to those communities that host Federal marine sanctuaries. Where is the independent economic analysis to support this assertion?

10. When will the Board of Supervisors renew its 2016 opposition to the Sanctuary? Where are all the City Councils on this matter? What about the various chambers of commerce and regional economic development agencies, such as REACH?

Item 3 - Inflation. The trillions of dollars in COVID relief, American Rescue Plan, enhanced unemployment benefits, rent relief, and related programs are entirely funded by debt financed expansion of the money supply. In turn, this is generating record inflation. Once interest rates rise to meet the inexorable rising costs of rolling over the debt, there will be devastating impacts on the Federal Budget and ultimately the economy.

The two graphs below summarize the disaster. Please read the two accompanying articles, which spell out the future consequences.





WESTERN ECONOMIES ARE SELF-DESTRUCTING WITH INFLATION, DEBT, AND TAXES

BY NIKOLA KEDHI

Although reluctantly, current central bank governors and respected economists have ramped up their warnings that inflation is here to stay. However, while it took officials a considerable period of time to admit the inflationary threat, despite the signs and warnings, they are failing to name its root causes. Inevitably, and a new, a wrong diagnosis will lead to repeated erroneous remedies, which will continue the self-destructive, complacent vicious cycle our Western economies have entered.

The consensus among officials seems to be that this unexpected inflation is solely due to economies being forced to shut down and then reopen, causing disruptions in the supply chains in the process. These disruptions may push the prices of certain products upward. Yet we are seeing an increase in the overall level of prices, in all economies, which should not have happened if there is monetary stability. So, while broken chains may explain in part the price hikes, we must look elsewhere for the true reasons of overall inflation, namely damaging monetary policies and damaging fiscal signals and programs.

Why Price Inflation Didn't Arrive until Now

Politicians and central bank officials for the better part of the last two decades have agreed that the only way to confront a financial or economic crisis is through interest rate cuts, massive borrowing, and spending, even though there is ample proof that debt accumulation and huge government spending have little effect on economic recovery and gross domestic product (GDP) growth.

The problems arise when, after the crisis has passed, such ineffective programs do not stop. Debt goes up considerably during an emergency, but no effort is made to lower it afterward. Thus, rates were lowered after the subprime mortgage crisis and then the debt crisis in Europe, and they currently remain either at very low positive levels in the US or in negative territory in the eurozone.

After a decade of uninterrupted money printing and deficit spending, the eurozone economies were merely surviving on borrowed time. On the other side of the Atlantic, the same policies were being implemented until 2016. Afterward, deregulation gave some needed breathing room to the American private sector and individuals.

It is true that the Federal Reserve continued its quantitative easing program even during the Trump administration. However, this did not lead directly to price inflation due to the dollar's status as the reserve currency. That is, the demand for dollars remains quite high even when monetary inflation exists. In fact, until 2020, demand for dollars was higher than the supply of dollars. At the end of 2019, there was a $17 trillion shortage for the dollar.

As Production Declined, Inflation Gained Steam

Nevertheless, during the pandemic, governments shut down their respective economies, sharply reducing activity on the supply side. As a result, production fell considerably in almost all Western countries, including the US. Yet, the Fed, similarly to its counterparts, printed money uninterruptedly to finance the government's massive spending and to keep rates low. The money supply growth reached an all-time high of 27.1 percent in February 2021, compared to an average of around 6 percent in the previous years. For comparison, the demand for dollars has been growing at about 8 percent on average.

So, for the better part of last year, money was created out of thin air, unbacked by actual physical goods, as production was falling. Naturally, by having an enormous quantity of money circulating in the economy, going to each household in the form of helicopter money, the dollar's value would be substantially lowered, giving rise to inflation.

Just as the economy was showing signs of improvement, President Joe Biden and the Democrat-run Congress approved trillions of dollars more in spending, much of which was channeled toward zombie companies or unproductive programs. This can be paid either with higher taxes for all individuals or considerable debt increases, and certainly with higher inflation, as the Fed is continuing its money printing to finance government deficits.

Currently, after more than $6 trillion dollars and counting spent, a budget deficit of 12.4 percent of GDP according to the Congressional Budget Office, and $80 million monthly asset purchases by the Fed, the result is a stagnant participation rate of 61.6 percent in the workforce, disappointing monthly job gains, annualized third-quarter GDP growth of 2.0 percent, and just 1.6 percent consumption growth, an average GDP forecast of 1.7 percent for the next decade by the Congressional Budget Office, an expected average unemployment rate of 4.8 percent, and high inflation—currently at a thirty-nine-year high of 6.8 percent.

The situation in the eurozone is even worse, since there have never been any true supply-side measures to boost production, enhance hiring and push up wages, as occurred in the US after 2017. Instead, there was deeper government centralization of the economies, reckless spending, and deficit financing through money printing.

Presently, the base euro area interest rate is zero, while deposit rates are in negative territory—unthinkable a decade ago. The European Central Bank shows no sign of interrupting the bond purchasing, and its governor persists in her refusal to acknowledge dangerous inflationary signs. To make matters worse, nobody even admits that the process of economic zombification in the eurozone is well underway. Centralization of the economy has never worked in human history and is failing once again. Unfortunately for the West, the United States is now surely on the same path as the euro area countries, yet maybe just in time to correct course.

Furthermore, financial repression (by keeping yields artificially low) and central bank interference in markets are unnatural and causing massive deformities in financial and other markets. For example, yields in a stable, healthier country such as Germany are not much different than those in countries with massive debt levels and weaker economic parameters. Central banks have become active market participants, straying far away from their original purposes.

That is why a free market—in essence a most democratic institution—driven by the actions of a considerable number of individuals and reflecting the needs and wants of society is necessary. Only when market participants are left to act and compete freely, are they able to allocate capital in a way that reflects societal requirements and need for innovation. The government, as every monopoly in existence, can never be a substitute for that, leading to unproductive capital allocation and debt accumulation.

A rising inflation environment would require rates to increase and this pace of money printing to stop. Will politicians allow rate hikes, considering their plans for more spending and higher debt? What would the fiscal implications of such a move be? Unavoidably, tapering would reveal structural imbalances that have been hidden in most of the Western economies. That is why, perhaps, central bank officials have been reluctant to stop their quantitative easing programs. Such an action would certainly need to be followed by huge spending cuts, deregulation, and tax reductions to boost productivity—moves that require a political will not present in any Western government.

A desperate need for deep structural changes in Western economies toward higher economic liberty, free and fair markets, more limited government, and fiscal responsibility is evident. However, in the end, all Western governments will be faced with the consequences of their misguided policies and the imbalances they have created.

There needs to be a serious discussion in the economic and financial community, independent of political interference and government lobbying, if we truly want to save Western economies and restore sanity in policy making.

Nikola Kedhi is a Senior Financial Advisor at Deloitte and contributor to various media outlets in the US and Europe, including Fox News, The American Conservative, The European Conservative, Il Giornale, The Federalist, *and many others. The article reflects solely the views of the author*.

THE COMING FINANCIAL VISE NO ONE WILL TALK ABOUT

The longer Americans put off the reckoning on our government's spending, the more painful the reckoning will be.

BY ROD THOMSON

Every day, Americans are experiencing rapid inflation. And if their guts tell them it is much higher than the official 7.1 percent of the Consumer Price Index, their guts are right.

That official rate is the highest since 1982, when we were coming down from the disastrous Jimmy Carter years. At the time, the Federal Reserve under Chairman Paul Volcker, with the support of President Ronald Reagan, aggressively pursued defeating the inflation monster by using all of its tools, including increasing interest rates and reducing the money supply. It worked. The moves caused a short, sharp recession, but the country was better off for a long time afterward. Good policies matter.

We have been blissfully enacting awful policies for decades now, however, and the Fed is continuing in its share of that. It simply has no intention of following in Volcker's successful footsteps, for reasons that will become painfully clear. The only thing surprising about the growing wave of price inflation we are seeing now is that it did not arrive sooner.

The Fed gushed cash into the American system by increasing the money supply by about 40 percent over the past two years. Much of that money went to American consumers via the overly large stimulus payments so many received, encouraging Americans to keep spending like drunken sailors on leave. We did. And yet with inflation taking off, the Fed is continuing to pump more money into a glutted money supply.

At the very same time, governments throughout the United States and much of Europe and Asia shut down vast swathes of their economies for months on end, and when they reopened it was tentative and slow. The forehead-slapping obvious result of this was that production fell off a cliff, because the simplest explanation of the cause of inflation is too much money chasing too few goods, causing prices to rise. The government in two moves created the perfect storm for inflation to swirl into action.

The shutdowns also created supply-side carnage. Modern Western economies are built on just-on-time production methods, where parts arrive at factories and are installed with little and sometimes no storage time at all. Just-in-time delivery also is used in the retail business. This saved on costs by eliminating the need for massive warehouses. But now, after shutting down modern economies in a doomed attempt to stop a virus, catching up on the supply chain is proving very difficult—which continues to restrict the supply and pushes the imbalance further toward inflation.

And we've seen the result of these foolish policies in rapidly rising prices, with no end in sight.

What You're Hearing Isn't Real

Back to the American gut on inflation. For the average American, it is indeed much higher than 7.1 percent because the government keeps changing how the CPI is measured and—who's surprised?—it always lowers the official metric of inflation. The biggest changes came in 1998, when the Bureau of Labor Statistics accepted the recommendations of what was called the Boskin Commission. Even the BLS called these changes "sweeping," and indeed they instantly lowered official inflation by 1.3 percentage points.

But the basket of goods and services in the CPI is constantly being changed, ostensibly to reflect changes in consumer-buying habits. That makes sense, but we see throughout the decades that every change has worked to lower the official inflation rate, an outcome in which the government has a vested interest. That does not make sense. Economist Peter Schiff estimates that if the same CPI was used today as in the 1970s—not the same basket of goods, but the same weighting and categories in general—our inflation would be as high as 15 percent. And this is why Americans know that 7.1 percent is not right. Because it's not real.

"The government always makes changes to their methods of measuring things, whether it's GDP, or inflation, or unemployment,"Schiff says. "And they always tweak the numbers to produce a better result as a report card."

Why does the government do this? In short, because lower inflation means less pressure on interest rates, *which saves the government billions of dollars on its debt*. This is part of why inflation will be so painful and difficult to combat, and will make much of the economy and the federal financial mess so much worse.

Traditionally, as in the case of Paul Volcker in 1982, the Fed pursues a tightening monetary policy, in which it reduces the amount of the money supply circulating and it increases interest rates. This two-punch method would work, and current Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell has tip-toed around the idea. But even then it is laughably too little, and only a possibility.

Again using 1982 as the model, Volcker raised interest rates an eye-popping amount. As the Washington in his obituary two years ago:

When he took the reins of the central bank, the nation was mired in a decade-long period of rapidly rising prices and weak economic growth. Mr. Volcker, overcoming the objections of many of his colleagues, raised interest rates to an unprecedented 20 percent, drastically reducing the supply of money and credit.

But Powell is only talking about raising interest rates from the current level of 0.25 percent to 0.50 or 0.75 percent. And not doing it until next spring. In the meantime, the Fed will keep inserting even more money into the economy, continuing the quantitative easing that has been going on for years. If this strikes you as unserious, you're right.

A Financial and Political Buzzsaw

After decades of irresponsible, profligate federal spending by Congress and presidents, and the Federal Reserve printing money like we may run out of ink any day, our economy now has an entrenched addiction to easy money and Congress has the same addiction to spending whatever it wants, regardless of revenues. There is never even a serious discussion about living within its means.

So any serious tightening of monetary policy, increasing interest rates, runs into a financial *and* political buzzsaw. To make a real attempt at taming inflation before it gets out of control, the Fed probably needs to raise interest rates to 5 or 6 percent, at least according to non-political economists using traditional measurements. While that is still below the Volker benchmark of raising rates above inflation (even the manipulated inflation of today) it would still have the effect of easing money out of the economy and slowing consumer debt spending.

For the economy, which is to say Americans, this means reduced credit spending and constricting the money supply, triggering a sharp decline in asset prices, including stocks and possibly real estate. Rising interest rates will cause consumers to spend less and perhaps save more, restoring a closer approximation of a healthy long-term balance.

But the drop in consumption, on which too much of our economy is built, would cause companies' sales to decline, and they will cut capital investments and jobs. Banks and smaller companies would be very hard hit and there would be a recession—probably a sharp and long one at this point—as the economic market mechanisms work to restore the previously misallocated resources driven by easy money.

And this will happen while the economy is already sluggish. Unfortunately, it is not a roaring economy that triggered the inflation, making the inevitable downturn more painful and probably longer.

But that may not be the worst. Such a move would utterly ruin the federal budget that is already financially diseased. The federal government will spend around $413 billion in 2021 on debt interest alone, according to the Congressional Budget Office. Debt service was a comparably reasonable $197 billion in 2010. Even the World Bank knows that's a problem. It figures that a country reaches a negative tipping point when the debt-to-GDP ratio hits 77 percent. The U.S. debt-to-GDP ratio today is around 125 percent and climbing.

But remember that is at about one percent interest. Each one-percent interest-rate increase costs another $413 billion. More precisely, each one-percent interest-rate increase costs *American taxpayers* another $413 billion (and climbing.) If the Fed was serious and raised rates to five percent—which still may not be enough—that would be close to $2 trillion in interest the federal government would need to pay annually. That's half of the entire federal budget. Americans will be outraged to discover that Social Security, Medicare, defense spending, infrastructure, and everything else will need deep cuts in order to pay interest on money long spent by craven, irresponsible politicians.

But we will also be impotent to do anything short term.

The Silent Thief That Never Sleeps

And there is another costly wrinkle very few Americans understand. The Federal Reserve is the nation's central bank, and as a bank it must maintain balanced books. It currently has about $7 trillion in U.S. Treasury debt, according to Bankrate.com. If interest rates go up, which pushes down the value of the federal notes and bonds the Fed holds, it must raise money to balance that sheet. Guess who has to make up the difference on the Fed's balance sheet should that come to pass? Yup, the American taxpayer.

But given this level of pain, is inflation really *that* bad? Yes. Inflation is the same as Americans constantly taking pay cuts as long as it exists. Wages and salaries rarely keep up with inflation, and never come close when inflation is high. So each dollar earned buys less. And buying power is the only relevant measure of wages and salaries. We may think a 10 percent wage increase is awesome. But if inflation is 12 percent, then it is the same as a 2 percent wage cut with no inflation. Inflation is a silent thief that never sleeps.

This is the terrible place that our political leadership has put us in, a place that the media rarely if ever has actually explained to Americans—if it even understands it—because it is too busy chasing clicks or pursuing its own political agenda.

But we will all have to pay for this one day, and as people like me have been saying since last century, the longer we put off the reckoning on our spending, the more painful it will be. And we have put it off for a very long time.

Rod Thomson is an author, former journalist, past Salem radio host and ABC TV commentator and founder of The Thomson Group. Twice banned on TikTok. Follow him on Instagram. Like Rod on Facebook.

4. Court Allows Dunes Riders Quiet Title Action to Proceed to Trial – Rebuff to Coastal Commission. The Coastal Commission had sought to have the case , in which, the riders claim that their ,over half century use of the Dunes , establishes their right. The Court rejected the Coastal Commission motion for dismissal and set the issue for a March trial. The use of the Dunes for riding and free style camping predates the establishment of the Coastal Commission by decades.

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

IS A PUSHBACK AGAINST SOFT DESPOTISM COMING IN 2022?

The ruling elite are not going to surrender power without a fight.

BY BRUCE THORNTON

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Over the last two years, many of us have been surprised and troubled at how eagerly millions of citizens have surrendered their freedoms to the shifting, contradictory, nakedly politicized diktats of various “experts” and government agencies. Coerced vaccinations, boosters, masks, and social distancing continue to be mandated and just as eagerly obeyed, even in the case of the mild Omicron COVID variant. The technocratic Left currently ruling the country has wrung every ounce of unconstitutional power from the sovereign people, a large cohort of whom, especially the cognitive elites, have willingly gone along with every new crisis and command.

As the year ends, signs of a pushback are multiplying. But will such resistance reach the critical mass of voters necessary for liberating us from such “soft despotism” and its wardens?

We shouldn’t be surprised that progressives have seized the opportunity to aggrandize themselves through serial changes on the pretext of an exaggerated crisis. It has long been a truism of history that, as James Madison said in 1788, “there are more instances of the abridgment of the freedom of the people by gradual and silent encroachment of power, than by sudden usurpations.”

Nearly half a century later, Alexis de Tocqueville foresaw an even more insidious stealth despotism that could arise in American democracy: “An immense and tutelary power, which takes upon itself alone to secure [the people’s] gratifications and to watch over their fate.” And he prophesized that the bureaucratic regulatory state would be the instrument of this “soft despotism”: a power “absolute, minute, regular, provident, and mild” that “covers the surface of society with a network of small complicated rules, minute and uniform.” The goal is “to keep [the people] in perpetual childhood,” for this power is “well content that the people should rejoice, provided they think of nothing but rejoicing.”
The last hundred years have seen such a regime gradually become reality. Crises such as the Great Depression, Two World Wars, and other conflicts and recessions provided the pretexts for expanding and concentrating the powers of federal agencies and their “network of small complicated rules.” And like children, too many citizens have accepted these encroachments, willingly ceding their autonomy and freedom to overseers who bribe them with the redistribution of other people’s money, and with promises “alone to secure their gratifications and to watch over their fate” from the cradle to the grave —what we call “entitlements” but think are unalienable rights.

Moreover, our unprecedented wealth has obscured the dangers of this dependence and weakening of the habits of self-government. But the contrary bad habits of prioritizing comfort, pleasure, and security insidiously erode our tolerance for risk and suffering, the nonnegotiable, eternal constants of human existence. The COVID pandemic has graphically revealed this intolerance for risk, which the “managerial elite” has exploited to leverage more power and authority.

Hence the government and its agencies such as the CDC hyped the dangers of an infectious disease whose victims overwhelmingly comprised the elderly already dying of something else. It didn't take long to see that the typical victim was 80-years-old and possessed multiple comorbidities like heart disease, diabetes, and obesity. Children and the young—unlike during the Spanish flu—were spared. Masks, lockdowns, and social distancing were mostly pacifiers for soothing anxiety and creating the illusion of control, rather than protecting the vulnerable, even as those measures damaged the economy, impaired education, and multiplied "deaths of despair" like suicide and addiction.

Meanwhile, in Sweden and in states like Florida, the absence of such mandates did not lead to "super-spreader" events, but rather fewer fatalities than countries like England or states like New York with their draconian lockdowns.

These outcomes will surprise no one who understood from the start that after a few months of uncertainty in early 2020, the issue was not the pandemic, but how the pandemic could provide the pretext for expanding government power, and damaging a president whose policies pushed back against the progressives program to "fundamentally transform" the United States. And the way to do that is to erode our unalienable rights and our political freedom, the indispensable tools for checking tyranny and holding office-holders accountable to the people.

Now, however, there are multiple signs that voters are getting fed up with the whole COVID endless crises triggered by variants and spikes in infections, a datum that creates big dramatic numbers and increases, but isn't as significant as death rates. They're sick of their children's schools serially opening and shutting, demanding useless masks, and making grammar school kids eat lunch outside in the cold. They've had it with the endless parade of "experts," especially government functionaries unaccountable to either the voters or the market, playing the endless loop of virus porn.

Nor are they fooled by the Dems' proposed electoral "reform" legislation, which would hijack elections from the states, and put into law many of the shady practices we saw in the 2020 presidential election. And for a year they've watched Biden's feckless incompetence weaken the nation's prestige and interests abroad as both decline in the face of Iran's march to a nuclear weapon, China's threatening Taiwan and our regional allies, and Russia's positioning tens of thousands of troops and weapons on its border with Ukraine—all the consequences of our shameful skedaddle from Afghanistan that cost 13 dead American troops, left behind billions of dollars in materiel, and stranded hundreds of American citizens and Afghan allies.

Finally, growing numbers of voters have soured on progressives' "cancel culture" and strong-arm tactics—their "relentless moral condescension, the messianism of mass protests, physical intimidation, social ostracism and demands that you simply shut up"—as the Wall Street Journal's Daniel Henninger describes the treatment of renegade Democrat Senator Joe Manchin, who stopped their Build Back Better binge of green pork and welfare lucre.

Throw in the Biden administration's abysmal record of failure on every important issue like inflation and border security, and things are looking grim for the Dems. Biden's approval numbers have been tanking for months, and now even usually reliable constituencies are disgruntled. An Economist and You.gov poll finds fewer than 3 in 10 adults under 30 approve of the job Biden's doing. A Zogby poll's approval numbers for independents, the most critical swing-vote, are particularly ominous. They favor Republican control of Congress by 23 points. And another critical constituency for Democrats, Hispanics, are moving towards Republicans. According to a Wall Street Journal poll in early December, Hispanic support in Congressional races is split evenly at 37% for each party.

As of now, these portents suggest a midterm "shellacking" of the Dems, as Barack Obama called the debacle of the 2010 midterms that hamstrung his ambitions to remake America. And Obama was a well-liked president with tons of voter good will, not a cognitively impaired mediocre grifter.
But let's not be hasty. The Dems still possess the commanding heights of media, entertainment, popular culture, sports, government agencies, and universities.

They're still addled by their humiliation at the hands and tweets of Donald Trump, and still thirsting for revenge against him and his supporters, the "bitter clingers," "deplorables," and "smelly Wal-Mart shoppers" who refuse to accept the superiority of self-proclaimed "brights" who feel entitled to push them around.

The ruling elite are not going to surrender power without a fight, and we'd better be ready. Next year will determine whether "soft despotism" is our future, or the love of freedom and our unalienable rights will triumph once again.

Bruce Thornton is a Shillman Journalism Fellow at the David Horowitz Freedom Center, This article first appeared in the Friday December 2021 edition of FrontPage Magazine and the Hoover Institute of Stanford University Daily Update of the same day.

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