



WEEKLY UPDATE
January 8 - 14, 2023



**14TH ANNUAL
DINNER &
FUNDRAISER**

WHAT WILL IT BE, IN 2023?

DETAILS COMING SOON...



SAVE

THURSDAY MARCH 30TH

5:30 PM

MADONNA INN EXPO CENTER

THIS WEEK

THE LEFTIST POLICY SALVO OPENS



**SALES TAX INCREASE FOR TRANSPORTATION TO BE TEED UP
REPEAL OF SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT REDISTRICTING PLAN
PASO BASIN WATER BANKING
VEHICLE MILEGE TAX**

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEETING
APPOINTMENT OF MARIAM SHAH TO PLANNING COMMISSION
FY 2023-24 BUDGET GAP AND PRIORITIES
REDISTRICTING LAWSUIT IN CLOSED SESSION**

**SLOCOG
TAXPAYER FUNDED POLLSTER/CAMPAIGN CONSULTANT TO
SUPPORT SALES TAX INCREASE
DOES SLOCOG SUPPORT VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED (VMT)
TO FINANCE TRANSPORTATION? METERING YOUR DRIVE**

**CENTRAL COAST COMMUNITY ENERGY
AUTHORITY (3CE)
MAJOR OUTSIDE COUNSEL CONTRACT: REGULATORY ISSUES
THREATEN THE RATE STRUCTURE
FY 2021-22 FINANCIAL RESULTS**

**SLO IWMA
LITE AGENDA/HOUSEKEEPING MATTERS**

PLANNING COMMISSION
MONARCH DUNES SPECIFIC PLAN REVISION HEADWINDS

LAST WEEK

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
NEW AND RE-ELECTED SUPERVISORS SWORN IN AT CEREMONIAL MEETING

COLAB IN DEPTH
SEE PAGE 16

10 STEPS TO SAVE AMERICA

Yes, there is a way. But is there the will?
BY VICTOR DAVIS HANSON

THE POWER OF POLITICAL OPTIMISM

In 21st century America, optimism is subversive. Flaunt it.
Deny the doomsayers their moment
BY EDWARD RING

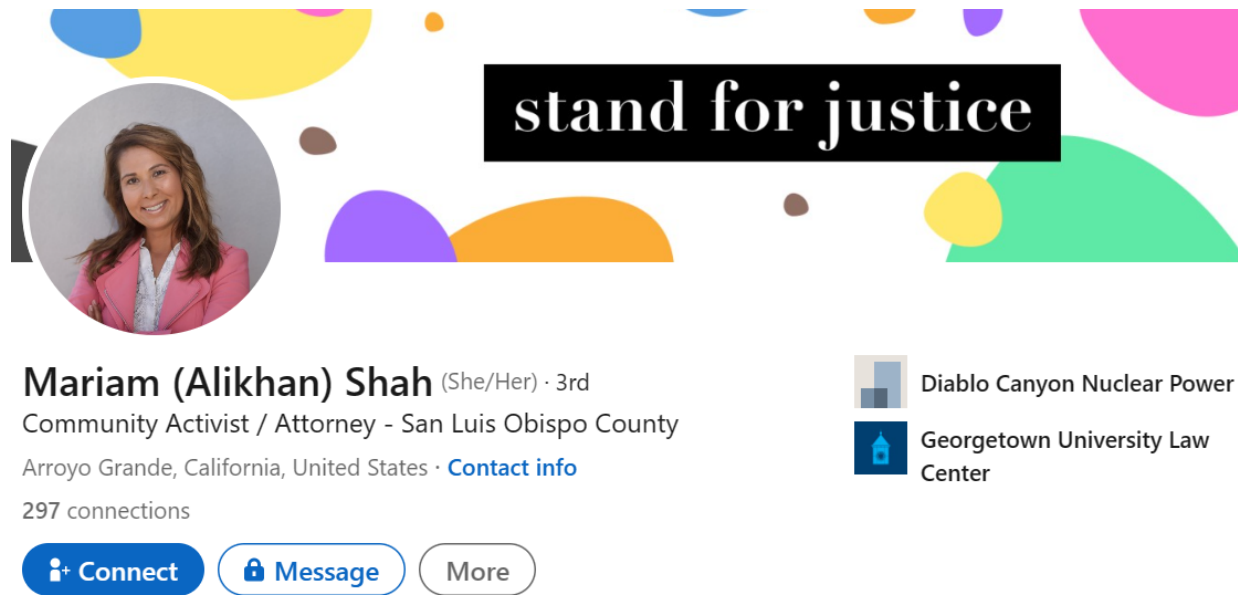
THIS WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

ALL MEETINGS ARE AT 9:00 AM UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

Board of Supervisors Meeting of Tuesday, January 10, 2023 (Scheduled)

Item 11 - Appointment of Mariam Shah to the Planning Commission. Newly elected 4th District Supervisor Jimmie Paulding is appointing former Grover Beach City Councilor and self-described "Community Activist" Mariam Shah to the Planning Commission. Shah was educated at the University of Michigan and holds a law degree from Georgetown. She is admitted to the Bar in both New York and California. During her early career she served in a law firm representing corporate and business clients in New York City. Given this education and professional background, she may offer a more cosmopolitan perspective than some California local officials. Her bio states, in part, that she supports justice and equity. In any case, she may

be one of the more forceful Planning Commissioners in recent history, perhaps since the reign of Sarah Christie¹ over a decade ago. Shah was apparently employed by Planned Parenthood as a community organizer last summer. Her LinkedIn page is displayed below:



stand for justice

Mariam (Alikhan) Shah (She/Her) · 3rd
Community Activist / Attorney - San Luis Obispo County
Arroyo Grande, California, United States · [Contact info](#)

297 connections

[Connect](#) [Message](#) [More](#)

Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power
Georgetown University Law Center

About

I enjoy helping people solve problems and make community connections to seek justice and equity locally and beyond. I spent seven years working as an attorney focused on corporate litigation matters for large and mid-sized corporations in New York and Ohio. I've taken clients from the initial Complaint through a successful jury trial, always making efforts at amenable settlement along the way. I have passed the bar exam and am licensed to practice law in New York, OH (currently on hold) and most recently California.

Since moving to California over a decade ago, I served my community as a Grover Beach City Council Member. During this time I served as the Mayor Pro Tem, the Chair of the County's Homeless Services Oversight Council, and the Chair of the SLO County Air Pollution Control District Board. This experience was a wonderful opportunity to problem solve on a different level, applying legal skills but also focusing on relationships within the community to foster understanding and accomplish goals.

Today, I utilize these combined skills to make positive change within my community. I sit on several local nonprofit boards including the Five Cities Homeless Coalition, the Grover Beach Library and the Oceano Elementary PTA. I also believe that encouraging and supporting good candidates to run in local elections is key. To that end, I am a member of the SLO County Democratic Central Committee where I co-chair a subcommittee called "Run for Office." In 2021, I also co-founded the only Democratic political action committee in SLO County called Shatter PAC (www.shatterpac.com). We support and fund female candidates that shatter glass ceilings and open doors.

¹ Christie, who was the architect of the County's "smart growth" lockdown, is currently the Coastal Commission's Director of Legislative Affairs. Christie's brother is the Executive Director of the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club. As the Joe Ely song says, "the party goes on forever."

I am currently focusing my legal work in municipal law and am looking to grow in that area. I am also doing community outreach for a local healthcare nonprofit.

I attended college at the University of Michigan where I double majored in Spanish and American Culture, Society & Politics. I received my JD from the Georgetown University Law Center.

Shah has been a staunch supporter of Jimmie Paulding in recent years. Her local campaign contributions are listed below as presented on County Clerk recorders website.

Date	Filer Name	\$	Type	Schedule	Name	Address	Spending Code	Employer	Occupation
9/4/2017	Jimmy Paulding for County Supervisor 2018	\$100.00	RCPT	A	Mariam Shah	Grover Beach, CA 93433		City of Grover Beach	City Council Member
11/27/2017	Jimmy Paulding for County Supervisor 2018	\$50.00	RCPT	A	Mariam Shah	Grover Beach, CA 93433		City of Grover Beach	City Council Member
12/27/2017	Jimmy Paulding for County Supervisor 2018	\$50.00	RCPT	A	Mariam Shah	Grover Beach, CA 93433		City of Grover Beach	City Council Member
4/11/2018	Jimmy Paulding for County Supervisor 2018	\$200.00	RCPT	A	Mariam Shah	Grover Beach, CA 93433		City of Grover Beach	City Council Member
1/14/2019	Friends of Adam Hill, County Supervisor 2016	\$100.00	RCPT	A	Mariam Shah	Grover Beach, CA 93433		City of Grover Beach	City Council Member
4/7/2019	Ellen Beraud for Supervisor 2020	\$100.00	RCPT	A	Mariam Shah	Grover Beach, CA 93433		City of Grover Beach	Mayor
9/15/2019	Ellen Beraud for Supervisor 2020	\$100.00	RCPT	A	Mariam Shah	Grover Beach, CA 93433		City of Grover Beach	Mayor
11/17/2019	Friends of Adam Hill, County Supervisor 2016	\$50.00	RCPT	A	Mariam Shah	Grover Beach, CA 93433		City of Grover Beach	City Council Member
1/8/2020	Ellen Beraud for Supervisor 2020	\$50.00	RCPT	A	Mariam Shah	Grover Beach, CA 93433		City of Grover Beach	Mayor
1/12/2020	Ellen Beraud for Supervisor 2020	\$50.00	RCPT	A	Mariam Shah	Grover Beach, CA 93433		City of Grover Beach	Mayor
2/15/2020	Ellen Beraud for Supervisor 2020	\$25.00	RCPT	A	Mariam Shah	Grover Beach, CA 93433		City of Grover Beach	Mayor
4/8/2021	Jimmy Paulding for County Supervisor 2022	\$99.00	RCPT	A	Mariam Shah	Grover Beach, CA 93433		None	Homemaker
6/28/2021	Jimmy Paulding for County Supervisor 2022	\$1,726.10	RCPT	C	Mariam Shah	Grover Beach, CA 93433	FND	None	Homemaker
7/1/2021	Lucia Mar Forward-Committee to Oppose the Recall of Trustees Santos, Martin, and Stewart	\$100.00	RCPT	A	Mariam Shah	Grover Beach, CA 93433		n/a	n/a
8/21/2021	Ortiz-Legg for Supervisor 2022	\$250.00	RCPT	A	Mariam Shah	Arroyo Grande, CA 93420		Unemployed	Unemployed
3/11/2022	Elaina Cano for Clerk-Recorder 2022	\$100.00	RCPT	A	Mariam Shah	Arroyo Grande, CA 93420		Retired	Retired
7/21/2022	Jim Cogan for School Board 2022	\$100.00	RCPT	A	Mariam Shah	Arroyo Grande, CA 93420		Self-employed	Attorney
7/28/2022	Bruce Gibson for Supervisor 2022	\$140.00	RCPT	C	Mariam Shah	Arroyo Grande, CA 93420	Refreshments, Fund Raiser	Planned Parenthood	Community Organizer
8/20/2022	Adrienne Garcia-Specht for Cuesta College Board 2022	\$100.00	RCPT	A	Mariam Shah	Grover Beach, CA 93433		City of Grover Beach	Mayor
8/21/2022	Bruce Gibson for Supervisor 2022	\$100.00	RCPT	A	Mariam Shah	Arroyo Grande, CA 93420		Planned Parenthood	Community Organizer
10/3/2022	VARNI for OCSD Director 2022	\$100.00	RCPT	A	Mariam Shah	arroyo grande, CA 93420		Self	Attorney

Item 31 - Review of the FY 2023-24 Budget Goals and Policies, Budget Balancing Strategies and Approaches, and Board Priorities, and provide direction to staff as necessary. The staff is forecasting an \$8 to \$16 million estimated General Fund revenue - expenditure gap as it begins to formulate the proposed FY 2023-24 Budget. With a current FY 2022-23 General Fund Budget of \$671.0 million, out of a total government funds Budget of \$807.0 million, the gap should be manageable. The high range \$12 million gap is only 2% of the General Fund.

State Controller Schedules		County of San Luis Obispo					Schedule 1	
County Budget Act		All Funds Summary					Fiscal Year 2022-23	
Fund Name	Total Financing Sources				Total Financing Uses			
	Fund Balance Available June 30, 2022	Decreases to Obligated Fund Balances	Additional Financing Sources	Total Financing Sources	Financing Uses	Increases to Obligated Fund Balances	Total Financing Uses	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Governmental Funds								
General Fund	\$ 52,664,754	\$ 337,555	\$ 618,746,914	\$ 671,749,223	\$ 665,599,461	\$ 6,149,762	\$ 671,749,223	
Special Revenue Fund	10,380,783	9,963,128	87,096,547	107,440,458	87,787,683	19,652,775	107,440,458	
Debt Service Fund	471,873	---	20,310,490	20,782,363	16,937,692	3,844,671	20,782,363	
Capital Projects	122,558	---	6,891,191	7,013,749	7,013,749	---	7,013,749	
Total Governmental Funds	\$ 63,639,968	\$ 10,300,683	\$ 733,045,142	\$ 806,985,793	\$ 777,338,586	\$ 29,647,208	\$ 806,985,794	
Other Funds								
Enterprise Fund	\$ ---	\$ 3,570,144	\$ 25,711,295	\$ 29,281,439	\$ 28,271,529	\$ 1,009,910	\$ 29,281,439	
Internal Service Fund	---	7,225,304	66,631,536	73,856,840	72,378,097	1,478,743	73,856,840	
Special Districts and Other Agencies	5,680,164	2,944	11,857,754	17,540,862	15,308,936	2,231,926	17,540,862	
Total Other Funds	\$ 5,680,164	\$ 10,798,392	\$ 104,200,585	\$ 120,679,141	\$ 115,958,562	\$ 4,720,579	\$ 120,679,141	
Total All Funds	\$ 69,320,132	\$ 21,099,075	\$ 837,245,727	\$ 927,664,934	\$ 893,297,148	\$ 34,367,787	\$ 927,664,935	

Note that the total County Budget, when enterprise and County dependent special districts are included, is \$927.7 million. The County had an unrestricted General Fund balance of \$52.6 million on June 30, 2022.

The CAO is prudent in warning the Board to be restrained, as the national and State economic/social situation is volatile and moving toward disruption.

The Budget Goals and Policies, Budget Balancing Strategies and Approaches, and Board Priorities together provide the framework in which the budget is prepared. As highlighted in the financial forecast presented to the Board on November 1, 2022, the County's General Fund faces a budget gap of \$8-\$16 million in FY 2023-24. Given the projected gap, continued compliance with the Board-adopted Budget Goals and Policies will be important to assuring the ongoing fiscal health of the County.

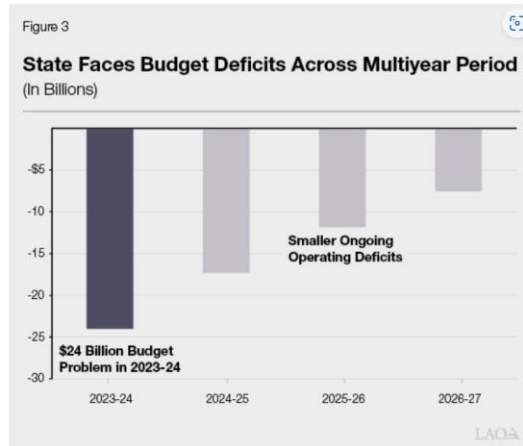
Substantive Board budget priorities have evolved over the years. The current version is summarized in the image below:



Preventing and remediating homelessness has been an expanding priority in recent years. All levels of government are spending more and more each year. The nexus of the problem is that thus far, no one has figured out a way to make a large segment of the homeless population accountable. It is not illegal to be a vagrant. A significant portion (perhaps 70%) is suffering from a combination of mental illness, alcoholism, and drug abuse. These problems do not subside simply because people are provided with housing, medicine, and counseling. Most will never get better.

It will be interesting to see how the new Board majority adjusts the priorities and/or refines them. The Budget is the most significant tool for the Board of Supervisors to set priorities and overall strategic direction of the County.

Bigger Picture: The State Budget can have a major impact on counties, as they are the retailers of most State programs. The graph below displays the State Legislative Analyst's Office projections for the next 4 years.



Additionally, macro national and international trends and events are likely to impact the finances of the states and localities with increasing velocity. Inflation, the cost of debt service on the national debt, the impending recession, the burn down of Social Security and Medicare, the open border, the financial and other consequences of fanatic green energy policies, current US troop and air components fighting Russians in Syria, potential US escalation in Ukraine, and China’s rising economic and military expansion will all combine with our own societal decadence in family formation/preservation, work ethic, academic achievement, government dependence, and cultural dissolution to severely disrupt current patterns of local government finance and service needs.

Please see the articles in the **COLAB In Depth** section beginning on page 17 for more detail and context.

Item 32 – Executive Session – Pending litigation - (3) SLO County Citizens for Good Government, Inc., Gomez, Maruska, Villa v. County of Luis Obispo Board of Supervisors, San Luis Obispo County Superior Court, Case No. 22CVP-0007. After the Board majority voted to reform the Supervisorial District boundaries, the Citizens for Good Government (the “Citizens”) was formed to sue the County to compel adoption of a different version. In February 2022, the Court refused to issue an injunction to prevent the use of the new districts but did find that the plaintiff Citizens would be likely to prevail at trial on the grounds that the Board (majority at the time) did not consider evidence that the districts had been designed to favor Republicans. Presumably, the new Board majority could move to settle the case by adopting a version more acceptable to the “Citizens.” The “Citizens” are Democratic Party activists.

Although the new 2nd District was claimed to be especially favorable to the Republicans, Democrat Bruce Gibson still won with a 13-vote margin. In the prior 2nd district configuration, he usually won by a margin of 76%.

It is possible that the public will not know what is happening until a settlement is reached. Perhaps it already has, in ex-parte political discussions or illegal serial meetings, but we don’t know.

Item B-2: SLOCOG staff, guided by its 22/23 Overall Work Program, seeks to release a Request for Proposals (RFP) and secure a contract (in February) for polling services for a Supplemental Funding Assessment. This poll would update poll questions last asked in 2016. Polling would be conducted in April and results, recommendations, and draft materials would be developed for the June Board meeting. The RFP and Scope of Work are attached. A budget of \$80,000 exists for this effort in FY 22/23.

Who knew? The staff euphemistically references to the need for a “Supplemental Funding Assessment” but has never asked the SLOCOG Board if they supported another run at a sales tax increase. Wouldn’t it be more honest to have a straight up vote and then, if the majority of the members endorse it, hire the consultant to determine which version might work with the voters? It seems kind of sneaky for the elected officials to hide behind a poll paid for at taxpayer expense to show their true colors. Is this leadership?

Item B-3: Draft 2023 SLOCOG State & Federal Legislative Platform & Central Coast Coalition (CCC) Legislative Platform and Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT). The SLOCOG is nervous about the switch from measuring traffic impacts from level of service (LOS) to vehicle miles traveled (VMT). The Board members realize that SLO County is rural to suburban in character. This means that people must drive farther than those clustered in urban cities. From a legislative standpoint, the Board would therefore like to see alternative measures adopted that could be used to offset potential VMT restrictions and/or taxes.

Were the State to adopt severe VMT restrictions in terms of meeting Regional Transportation Plan requirements, the County and its cities could be penalized on the receipt of State and Federal transportation funds. Of course and in any case, imposition of a metered driving tax to fund roads has huge financial and social control impacts.

On September 23, 2020, Governor Newsom issued Executive Order N-76-20, which prohibits the sale of gasoline-powered passenger vehicles by 2035, promotes zero-emission vehicles for future mobility needs. Given that transportation is predominantly funded through the gas tax, a successor funding mechanism will be needed. In July of 2021, the California State Transportation Agency adopted the Climate Action Plan for Transportation infrastructure (CAPTI), which prioritizes multi-modal investments to compel mode shift, and limits highway capacity projects to be delivered on an as needed basis

Given the unique geography of San Luis Obispo County and the travel patterns associated with the jobs-housing nexus, and infusion of tourism traffic, reducing vehicle miles traveled is challenging. The prospects for reducing greenhouse gas emissions however could be realized through investments made to improve the availability of charging station infrastructure and providing incentives for converting from gas-powered to electric passenger vehicles, where feasible, along the state highway system.

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SLOCOG will work with state, regional, and local level to support the planning required by SB 375, while addressing impacts of the jobs-housing imbalance in rural communities. This includes working with the business community to incentivize regional job creation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled.

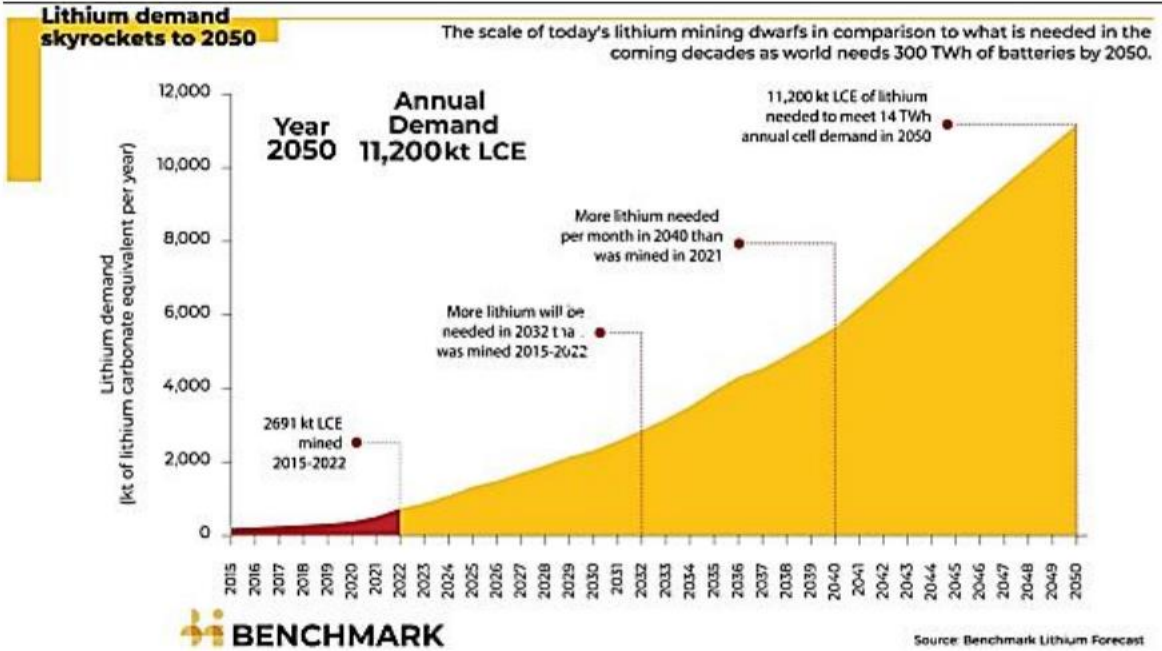
SLOCOG will also pursue funding to help comply with the statewide mandate to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and deliver projects that provide greater mobility options for all users. This includes supporting efforts to expand the infrastructure and incentives for electric vehicle conversion by minimizing concerns over range, cost, and infrastructure. An evaluation of the cost of increased usage of electricity and safety protocols should be considered. Operational improvements such as telecommuting, vanpools, shipping more freight via rail, and promoting opportunities for regions to sell mitigation credits to generate revenue for providing multi-modal options, should also be considered

All this buzz word jargon fails to disguise the fact that the overall climate policy is designed to forestall rural and suburban living and to force society into stack-and-pack housing, while at the same time forcing people out of individual cars and onto public transit. The SLOCOG Board members know that most of their constituents despise this policy. Yet at the same time they want to play along with the politically correct notion of anthropomorphic climate change and mandating CO₂ reduction. In the end they can't have it both ways.

They will not be able to work around VMT mandates, which are replacing the prior level of service (LOS - traffic congestion calculations) that formed the basis of selecting which road projects were to be approved. Separately, the County itself used the LOS calculations to ban development. For example, a proposed subdivision near a freeway interchange labeled F (on an A-F schedule) would be denied. In the future, areas with VMT levels that exceed State or local standards could be redlined.

The Lithium Problem: The element Lithium² is a key component in solar panels, batteries used in electric vehicles, and industrial scale battery farms. How does the SLOCOG policy realistically address the reality described in the graphics below on the next page?

² Lithium is a chemical element with the symbol Li and atomic number 3. It is a soft, silvery-white alkali metal. Under standard conditions, it is the least dense metal and the least dense solid element.



China controls 60% of the world's Lithium supply.



Central Coast Community Energy Authority (3CE) Meeting of Wednesday, January 11, 2023 10:30 AM (Scheduled)

Item 4 - Increase in Outside Counsel Contract. The 3CE and other community energy authorities are finding it increasingly difficult to deal with the energy regulatory environment,

including the State Public Utilities Commission, State Energy Commission, and the California Independent System Operator (CASIO), which manages the overall operation of the electric grid in California. The Authority is spending increasing amounts of staff time and legal time in an effort to make sure that its rates remain below those of PG&E and SCE. Requirements such as maintaining contracts for adequate energy reserves (for example on the hot days) can have major costs. The write-up states in part:

Approve and Authorize the CEO to Amend the Legal Services Agreement with Meyers Nave for Energy Product Litigation and/or Transaction Legal Services to Add \$780,000 for a Not to Exceed Contract Amount of \$1,380,000 (Action Item)

Meyers Nave, with their 3CE engagement led by Deborah Fox, has provided specialized legal services in support of matters of significant importance, including claims related to rate setting, disputes arising from agreements for resource adequacy and other energy products, and negotiation of contracts. CCCE anticipates the need for these services to continue through 2023 as matters progress through discovery and trial in the litigation matters, and toward final negotiations in the contract matters.

Item 5 - Treasurers Report. The September report represents the agency’s fully completed 2021-22 fiscal year. The 3CE generated about \$20 million in profit on revenues of \$410.3 million, or a return of half of 1% (.05). Most of the balance, highlighted in yellow in the table below, is invested in reserve accounts as a hedge against future volatility in electric generation rates. If rates were to suddenly jump, even in their long-range contracts or if some of their contractors default and 3CE must incur high premium costs for alternative energy credits, they could use a portion of the reserve to temporarily stabilize their customer rates. 3CE would argue that they used \$4.4 million of the \$410.3 million for grants to member agencies for electric cars, EV charging stations, promotion of all electric homes, etc., and that this is a form of profit returned to members.

**CENTRAL COAST COMMUNITY ENERGY
STATEMENT OF REVENUES, EXPENSES
AND CHANGES IN NET POSITION
Twelve Months Ended September 30, 2022**

OPERATING REVENUES	
Electricity sales, net	\$ 399,159,960
Liquidated damages	11,153,500
Total operating revenues	<u>410,313,460</u>
OPERATING EXPENSES	
Cost of electricity	372,365,695
Contract services	9,288,170
Staff compensation	6,089,226
General and administration	6,210,745
Depreciation	88,680
Total operating expenses	<u>394,042,516</u>
Operating income (loss)	16,270,944
NONOPERATING REVENUES (EXPENSES)	
Interest and investment income	984,909
Grant revenue	2,759,460
Nonoperating revenues (expenses)	<u>3,744,369</u>
CHANGE IN NET POSITION	20,015,313
Net position at beginning of period	189,988,459
Net position at end of period	<u>\$ 210,003,772</u>

**CENTRAL COAST COMMUNITY ENERGY
BUDGETARY COMPARISON SCHEDULE
Twelve Months Ended September 30, 2022**

	2021/22 YTD Budget	2021/22 YTD Actual	2021/22 YTD Budget Variance (Under) Over	2021/22 YTD Actual / Budget %	2021/22 Annual Budget	2021/22 Budget Less Actual	2021/22 Budget Remaining / Budget %
REVENUES AND OTHER SOURCES							
Electricity sales	\$ 359,103,000	\$ 415,601,926	\$ 56,498,926	116%	\$ 359,103,000	\$ (56,498,926)	-16%
Less bill credit	(3,085,000)	(7,550,100)	(4,465,100)	245%	(3,085,000)	4,465,100	-145%
Less uncollectible accounts	(4,489,000)	(6,191,849)	(1,702,849)	138%	(4,489,000)	1,702,849	-38%
Revenue for damages	-	11,153,500	11,153,500	n/a	-	(11,153,500)	n/a
Investment and miscellaneous income	516,000	1,044,352	528,352	202%	516,000	(528,352)	-102%
Total revenues and other sources	352,045,000	414,057,829	62,012,829	118%	352,045,000	(62,012,829)	-18%
EXPENDITURES AND OTHER USES							
Current Expenditures							
Cost of energy	326,335,000	372,661,211	46,326,211	114%	326,335,000	(46,326,211)	-14%
Energy programs (incentives and grants) *	12,270,000	4,374,729	(7,895,271)	36%	12,270,000	7,895,271	64%
Data manager	3,774,000	3,706,398	(67,602)	98%	3,774,000	67,602	2%
Utility service fees	1,893,000	1,838,834	(54,166)	97%	1,893,000	54,166	3%
Staffing	9,244,000	6,089,226	(3,154,774)	66%	9,244,000	3,154,774	34%
Professional services	1,393,000	1,548,033	155,033	111%	1,393,000	(155,033)	-11%
Legal services	1,037,000	1,180,576	143,576	114%	1,037,000	(143,576)	-14%
Marketing and customer enrollment	943,000	718,813	(224,187)	76%	943,000	224,187	24%
Other general & administration	1,625,000	1,836,016	211,016	113%	1,625,000	(211,016)	-13%
Total current expenditures	358,514,000	393,953,836	35,439,836	110%	358,514,000	(35,439,836)	-10%
Other Uses							
Capital outlay	114,000	1,113	(112,887)	1%	114,000	112,887	99%
Uninterruptible Power Supply expenditures	2,800,000	2,000,000	(800,000)	71%	2,800,000	800,000	29%
Total other uses	2,914,000	2,001,113	(912,887)	69%	2,914,000	912,887	-10%
Total Expenditures and Other Uses	361,428,000	395,954,949	34,526,949	110%	361,428,000	(34,526,949)	-10%
Surplus (Deficit)	\$ (9,383,000)	\$ 18,102,880	\$ 27,485,880		\$ (9,383,000)	\$ (27,485,880)	293%
Reserves at end of reporting period:							
Held for Working Capital	\$ 38,500,000						
Held for Reserves - Cash and Cash Equivalents	111,596,869						
Held for Reserves - Investments	33,434,369						
Total	\$ 183,531,238						

Note that uncollectable accounts are substantial and exceed budget. If they are going to write them off, public agencies are required to place them on the Board agenda and vote in public.

IWMA Meeting of Wednesday, January 11, 2023 (Scheduled) 1:30 PM

The meeting agenda is light and pertains to housekeeping items such as appointments to the agency's Executive Committee

Planning Commission Meeting of Thursday, January 12, 2023 (Scheduled)

Item 6 - (Continued) Hearing to consider a request (LRP2021-00003) by Monarch Dunes LLC to amend the Monarch Dunes Specific Plan to modify the allowable land uses of four sites within the Monarch Dunes Specific Plan area: Site #1 (Village Center) is proposed to be redesignated from Commercial Retail land use to Recreation-Resort land use, to support up to 65 hotel rooms (a reduction and reallocation from the 400-room hotel allowable on Site #3); Site #2 (Village Center) is proposed to retain the Commercial Retail land use designation, but would be modified to support up to 40 condominium residential dwelling units on the second floor (above commercial retail spaces) and to decrease the maximum allowable floor area for commercial uses from 140,000 square feet to 38,500 square feet; Site #3 (Resort Area) is proposed to be redesignated from Recreation-Resort land use to Residential Single-Family land use, to support up to 76 residential dwelling units in the form of 38 common wall developments; and Site #4 (Public Park Area) is proposed to be redesignated from Public Park land use to Residential Single-Family land

use, to support 46 residential dwelling units in the form of 23 common wall developments. The Monarch Dunes Specific Plan area is located on the Nipomo Mesa, approximately two miles west of the community of Nipomo, east of State Route 1, and approximately half a mile south of Willow Road. The applicant requests a number of modifications to the development's Specific Plan, which dates back to 1998. It has been before the Commission several times, most recently on October 13, 2022. At that meeting the Commission directed that the applicant and staff present further data and ideas about:

Item A – Affordable Housing

Item B – Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Reduction

Item C – Design of Site #4 (Public Park Area)

Item D – Village Center Uses

Item E – Traffic Impacts (as it relates to the Village Center)

As a result the staff has recommended more stringent affordable housing requirements, including more low and low moderate units, contractually price capped units, and barring the counting some of the ADU's as affordable. The applicant has responded that these provisions are not financially feasible in terms of the overall affordability design of the project.

Similarly, the staff recommends stricter greenhouse gas reduction requirements, even though the project includes all sorts of advance energy conservation and CO₂ reduction standards. Again, these would increase the price of the units by \$11,000. It appears that the redesign actually reduces the number of vehicle trips, when compared with project as originally designed. The staff does not provide a recommendation with respect to whether the Commission should recommend for or against the plan to the Board of Supervisors. The report simply requests them to determine what they will do.

A number of current residents oppose the plan; however, the HOA and Maintenance Board both endorsed it after running an extensive public process with their members. The application was first filed in 2021 and is still being massaged by the County 2 years later. The time and cost of processing it for the applicant are enormous.

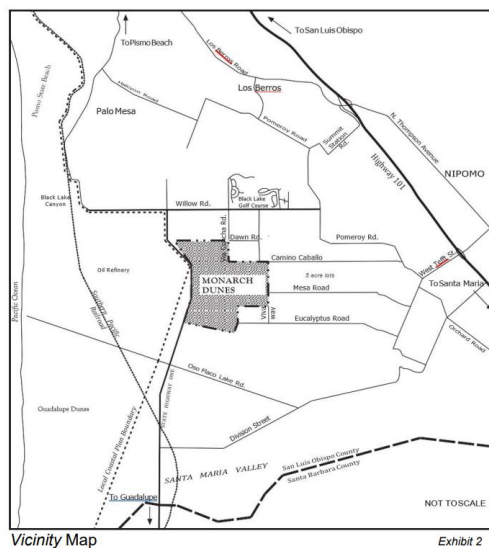
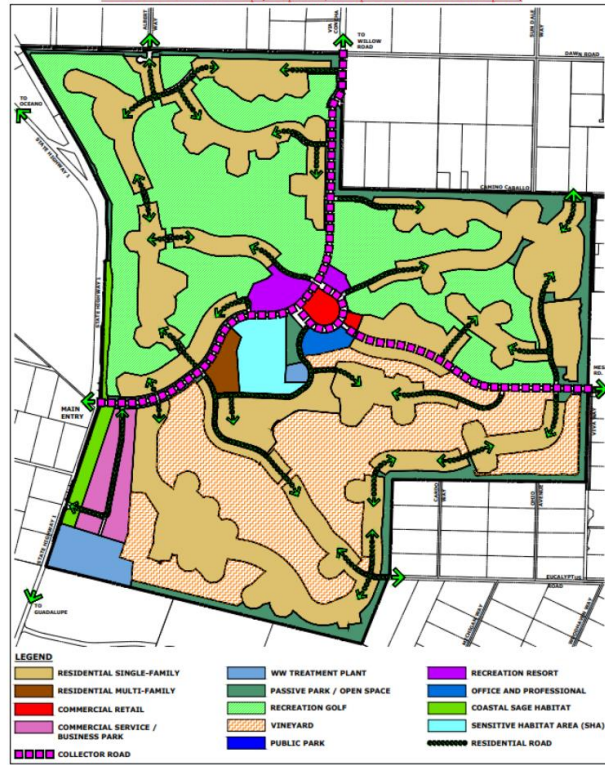




Exhibit 3: Land Use Map [Proposed, to replace below land use plan]



LAST WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

Board of Supervisors Swearing In Meeting of Tuesday January 3, 2022 (Completed)

Item 1 - Swearing In of Elected Officials. In a noisy, crowded, and celebratory meeting, Supervisors Gibson, Ortiz-Legg, and Paulding were sworn into office by victorious Clerk Recorder Elaina Cano. Five of the six elected Department Heads, (Assessor, Auditor Controller, Clerk-Recorder, Sheriff, and Treasurer) were also sworn into new 4-year terms. The District Attorney was absent and had been previously sworn in.

Clerk Recorder Elaina Cano was given the oath first by County Administrative Officer Wade Horton so that she could then administer the oath to the Board Members and other elected Department Heads. Cano received special recognition several times during the meeting for having experienced multiple attacks from critics of the election process and then having prevailed both electorally and with respect to the conduct of the election itself.



Horton and Cano embraced after he administered the oath.

The Supervisors each spoke for a few minutes but did not announce any policy initiatives. The comments were generally about inclusion, collaboration, and listening to everyone's point of view.

Gibson: *We've got a lot of work to do. Work across the aisle.*

Ortiz-Legg: *We need to strengthen the middle class. Let's go to work.*

Paulding: *We should build on a past legacy of partnership – consensus.*

During the public comment period various local Democratic Party officials delivered the policy, making references to joining the Central Coast Community Energy Authority, ending motorized recreation at the Oceano Dunes, and reversing the current Supervisorial district boundaries.

There was considerable praise for the County staff generally by the Board members and some of the public speakers. This would seem to signal that the upper echelon is in the good graces of the new regime and need not run off to safer pastures.

Early Indicators:

As noted above in the SLOCOG section, there are 2 telling votes at the Wednesday, January 11, SLOCOG Board meeting. One initiates expenditure for a taxpayer funded pollster-political campaign consultant to kick off the process for placing a sales tax increase on the ballot for transportation.

The 2nd is a vote on the SLOCOG 2023 Legislative Program, which contains an item on the State's draconian push to charge a vehicle miles driven tax to replace lost revenue from the current taxes on motor fuels as the gas and diesel vehicles are legislated out of existence.

Will anyone remember that Katcho Achcadian made his middle-class living running gasoline service stations? It is not clear how government subsidized corporate proliferation of electric vehicle charging stations and selling fake green energy (renewable energy certificates) will help build the middle class. Would working across the aisle include working with the local oil industry and gasoline retailers? Do the Supervisors accept that all new gasoline vehicles should be banned by 2035? Do they believe in free market operations or Government decree to decide this question?

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

10 STEPS TO SAVE AMERICA

Yes, there is a way. But is there the will?

BY VICTOR DAVIS HANSON

Most Americans know something has gone terribly wrong—and very abruptly—with the United States. They are certain that our wounds are almost all self-inflicted. The current pathologies are not a result of a natural disaster, an exhaustion of natural resources, plagues, or an existential war.

Crushing national debt and annual deficits, spiraling food and fuel costs amid “normal” seven percent-plus annual inflation, bread-and-circuses entitlements, a nonexistent border, a resurgence of racial tribalism, pandemic violent criminality, and humiliation abroad—all these pathologies are easily cited as symptoms of a sick patient. Our crises are not as the Left maintains—a nine-person Supreme Court, the Electoral College, or the filibuster—all distractions from existential problems the Left largely created.

So, what are the therapies and prognoses for America?

In the spirit of constructive rather than blanket criticism, here is a partial, 10-point plan of national recovery.

Cut the Debt

Americans’ national debt is now \$31 trillion. That is about 123 percent of current GDP. The liabilities are unsustainable. We run annual deficits of \$1.6 trillion. These financial obligations will eventually ensure that rising interest rates to service the debt crowd out essential spending for national defense and the general welfare.

Or *in extremis*, in the not too distant future, the government will be forced to default on what it owes the “rich” bondholders and foreign debt holders. Or the government will be forced to confiscate private wealth, as for example occasional crazy suggestions to nationalize and absorb 401(k) retirement plans into the soon-to-be-insolvent Social Security system. Or the state will simply print millions of dollars to pay off obligations, Weimar-style.

In addict style, the more we come to realize that our binging habit cannot go on, the less we can practice self-restraint. And the more it is the case that those who receive government redistributions outnumber those who pay the majority of federal income taxes, the less hope there remains to avoid insolvency.

In 2010 then-President Barack Obama appointed a bipartisan “National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform.” More commonly remembered as the Simpson-Bowles commission, after chairmen Senators Alan Simpson (R-Wyo.) and Erskine Bowles (D-N.C.), it included private citizens and elected officials.

The commission recommended radical tax simplifications and some cuts—along with reductions in tax deductions and credits, an increase in the gas tax, restraints on entitlement spending, and various spending caps.

Obama and Congress ultimately rejected the recommendations and the commission’s blueprint died. But had it succeeded, the current debt would have long been frozen at the 2014 level of \$17 trillion—with annual reductions ensuring that this coming year 2023 the debt would have plunged to \$10 trillion and then disappeared in another decade.

Something like Simpson-Bowles could still stop the madness and avoid the natural corrective on the horizon of financial collapse. Note that federal tax revenue has increased almost every year since 2010. Sometimes it grows by nearly a half-trillion dollars *per annum*, even as we sink deeper in debt. Our crisis, then, is one of spending what we do not have rather than one of declining revenue.

Secure the Border

We no longer have a southern border. There have been 5 million illegal border crossings just since Joe Biden took office. He intentionally destroyed immigration law for cheap political advantage. Nearly 50 million current American residents were not born in the United States. Well over 20 million—and perhaps 30 million—are illegal aliens. Old melting-pot efforts at assimilation and integration eroded into the salad-bowl metaphor that has just become tribalism—even as intermarriage is at an all-time high.

The Left brags that “demography is destiny” as it cheers the changes in the electorate aimed at ensuring its political dominance. And simultaneously, it smears conservatives who agree with its triumphalism as “great replacement theory” conspiracists.

Yet we finally found a solution in 2019-2020. Had we continued replacing rickety border fencing with an effective wall and then completed it along the entire border, had we stopped catch-and-release, had we continued demanding that refugee status be obtained *before* entry, had we forced Mexico and Central American governments to stop exporting human capital and subjected them to taxes on more than \$60 billion in annual remittances (along with trade penalties) for their complicity with the situation at the border, had we continued to deport those who entered illegally, had we returned to assimilation and integration on the theory any who entered America did so because they wanted to become Americans, then a desired legal, meritocratic, and diverse immigration policy might easily have assimilated and absorbed perhaps 200,000 skilled and legal immigrants per year.

Again, we had the outlines of a solution and then simply destroyed it for liberal political agendas and cheap corporate labor.

Tap Natural Resources

Similarly, by 2020, the United States enjoyed inexpensive fuel. It was all but independent in gas and oil. It had become the world largest combined gas and oil producer. That status radically curtailed the need for optional military engagements in the Middle East. It gave America enormous clout against hostile oil exporters like Russia, Iran, and Venezuela. And such independence helped reduce vast trade deficits.

Again, the Biden Administration simply exploded the idea of fossil-fuel independence as a gradual transition to sustainable energy. So simply doing the opposite of its policies would correct the pathology almost immediately: Issue more federal gas and oil leases, approve the Keystone and Constitution pipelines, reopen the Arctic National Wildlife Reserve, and build

nuclear power plants. The present course of high-priced and scarce gasoline and oil is eroding the middle class, spiking inflation, widening class divisions, and reducing American autonomy abroad.

Oppose Discrimination

Never has the United States seen more evidence of progress in racial relations, and never has such progress given way to more tribalism. If we do not return to a Martin Luther King, Jr. “content of our character” policy—one that views race as incidental rather than essential to who we are—then our future is a sectarian one with echoes of the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and Iraq.

Affirmative action was never envisioned as permanent quotas and race-based reverse-discrimination. Yet after over a half-century it has ballooned under the idea of “diversity” to invent a victim class of nearly a third of the nation, absurdly and loosely defined—in an age of commonplace intermarriage—as “non-white.”

Help for the underprivileged should be race-neutral and entirely based on class and income, given numerous ethnicities exceed the so-called white medium income. The labyrinth of racial categories grows unfathomable. The identity politics mess logically results, on the one hand, with rank iconic frauds like Elizabeth Warren, Ward Churchill, and Rachel Dolezal, and, the other hand, with well-off poseur victims in the manner of a Meghan Markle, Colin Kaepernick, or Jussie Smollett.

Substitution of racial criteria for merit, rather than aiding the poor of all races, is creating a commissar-like drag on the economy, spiking racial and ethnic tensions, and ensuring that every group will eventually, for its survival, go tribal on the basis of the same logic that applies to nuclear proliferation. Again, the remedy? Just enforce civil rights statutes that prohibit racial discrimination and consider the Pavlovian shriek of “racism!” as the revealing projection of racists.

Disrupt and Reform Higher Education

Our universities are failing to produce competent graduates essential to a meritocratic nation engaged in fierce global competition. Increasingly, students are politicized, largely ignorant, indebted, bitter, and unable to ensure American preeminence in basic science, technology, engineering, and math.

Yet the solutions are again simple: get the government out of the student-loan business that ensures escalating tuition hikes greater than the rate of inflation. Eliminate faculty tenure and replace it with five-year contracts that require demonstrable achievement. Subject large endowments to taxation on their interest income to curb their wasted spending. Allow public schools to hire either those with school of education credentials or one-year master’s degrees that focused solely on academic study. Require standardized exit tests, in the fashion of erstwhile

SAT and ACT entry tests, for the certification of the bachelor's degree. Force universities to follow the Bill of Rights on campus, regarding due process and freedom of expression.

These are not radical suggestions. Yet the likely fierce faculty opposition to them is proof that the Left envisions higher education as it views Silicon Valley—another private monopoly that helps to maintain political power in lieu of popular support.

Revive the Armed Forces

Our military is in dire straits. It is overcommitted, under-resourced, and without any geo-political strategy other than *ad hoc* responses without defined objectives. It has become politically weaponized and, inevitably, unable to meet recruitment goals. The Pentagon remains obsessed with exorbitantly priced weapons that cannot be produced in sufficient numbers in an age of hostile swarms of cheap, mass-produced drones and thousands of batteries of ground-to-air and shore-to-ship missiles.

Constant profiling, racial, and gender quotas and obsessions over proportional representation and disparate impact increasingly apply to training, education, and promotion—to everything except worries over the disproportionate profile of those killed in battle. The Pentagon has become adept in publishing racial data on every aspect of military service to emphasize disparity and bias—except concerning the combat dead.

To address the changes, retiring high-ranking officers should refrain from board memberships on contracting corporations for at least five years upon leaving the military. The uniform code of military justice must be strictly enforced, including article 88 which prohibits retired officers from attacking in personal terms high-ranking elected officials, and in particular their commander-in-chief.

Woke training is destroying morale and battlefield efficacy. The military must return to a race and gender neutral stance that does not erode meritocratic standards to fit political agendas. We should never again witness a chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff virtue signaling to Congress and the nation his intention to understand “white rage” in the ranks, without supplying any confirmatory evidence or data for his apparent allegation of systemic racism in the ranks—particularly not while the greatest U.S. defeat and humiliation in a half-century was unfolding on the horizon in Kabul. Any high-ranking military officer who informs his Chinese counterpart of his own psychiatric diagnosis that his commander-in-chief is unhinged and thus U.S. strategic intentions will first be relayed to Beijing should be summarily dismissed.

Fix Voting

Elections are a mess. The greatest political revolution in our election history has been the change—accelerated under the cover of COVID and the George Floyd riots—in many key states from a 20-30 percent “absentee ballot” vote to 70-80 percent early/mail-in balloting. In a mere four years we have all but destroyed Election Day voting and Election Night final tabulations as we had known them for decades.

All discussions of voter IDs, fraud, and charges and countercharges of election denialism are irrelevant if there is no real mechanism to validate the authenticity of mail-in ballots that have incomplete or false addresses, names, and signatures, or do not match registration rolls. Third-party ballot harvesting and ballot curing should be outlawed at the federal level, and we should return to the requirement of requesting absentee ballots rather than automatically sending them out. Otherwise, no future election will again win the confidence of a majority of Americans. And without trust in balloting, consensual government becomes nonexistent.

Drain the Swamp

Americans distrust the “swamp,” administrative state, or deep state. Call what you will, the Washington nexus of bureaucracies, media, and lobbyists has created a huge, unelected permanent army of auditors, regulators, investigators, and punishers, all mostly exempt from audit and accountability and without fear of their elected overseers.

The easiest solution is to break up concentrations of power. Transfer out of Washington, in this age of zoom and telecommunications, major cabinet departments like Health and Human Services, Energy, or Agriculture into the hinterland. Restore the idea that lying to Congress, feigning amnesia, or pleading ignorance under oath to Congress or federal investigators or in depositions is a prosecutable felony with jail time.

Had we restored equality under the law, then an Andrew McCabe, James Clapper, and John Brennan would not have dared lie under oath. And a Robert Mueller, James Comey, Anthony Fauci, or Jack Dorsey might have not so easily believed they simply could plead memory loss or mislead in a fashion that no American would dare to do with the IRS.

Being forced to tell the truth would be a powerful deterrent against bureaucratic overreach.

Finally, ossified centralized agencies like the FBI need to be broken up and their bureaus redistributed through the cabinet-level departments to avoid past pathologies resulting from a concentration of power.

Upend the Welfare State

The number of those receiving federal and state subsidies is beginning to match the number of those who subsidize them. “No one wants to work anymore” is now a common public lament. Inflation and recession may come and go, but workers are now scarce whether we are in boom or bust times. Labor non-participation remains at an all-time high. Soon only 60 percent of the available labor force will be working. Trillion-dollar COVID subsidies have accelerated the idea that Americans need not work full-time to maintain a living.

We can easily return to the “workfare” championed by a triangulating Bill Clinton in the 1990s that demanded healthy and able recipients to be gainfully employed upon receipt of state and federal cash. In the context of the homeless, we need to return to pre-Reagan norms of institutionalizing the mentally ill and creating hospitals and safe spaces away from American

downtowns to house those who either cannot or will not take care of themselves. Defecating, urinating, injecting, and fornicating on city-streets are not victimless crimes, but assaults on civilized life as we once knew it.

Restore Norms

The fact is, few public norms are left. Rather than the current therapeutic obsessions that seek to divide Americans into binaries of oppressors and the oppressed, we are in desperate need of civic education in K-12 that acquaints all children and teens with American institutions, key events like Gettysburg or D-Day, and familiarity with the Constitution and the duties of the citizen. We will get nowhere basing our understanding of the world on psychodramas and therapeutics.

Neither journalists nor elites understand, much less appreciate, the First Amendment, and in ignorance despise the Second.

Like it or not, the nuclear family remains the bulwark of the American nation, which will not survive if current fertility rates of below 1.7 children per woman continue to diminish and age the population. The government must incentivize childbearing and child raising.

Without clear punishment for violent crimes, deterrence is lost, and the innocent become victims of the exempt criminal class. Critical race theory, critical legal theory, and critical criminology theory are euphemisms for unleashing lawbreakers upon the vulnerable. We are in a strange cycle in which we deliberately do not enforce gun laws in our cities and then when murder reaches near historic proportions we blame unenforced guns laws rather than the criminals who are exempt in using deadly weapons as the cause.

These are just a few of the many ways that the United States could stop the present madness—which, after all, was entirely self-created.

*Victor Davis Hanson is a distinguished fellow of the Center for American Greatness and the Martin and Illie Anderson Senior Fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution. He is an American military historian, columnist, a former classics professor, and scholar of ancient warfare. He has been a visiting professor at Hillsdale College since 2004. Hanson was awarded the National Humanities Medal in 2007 by President George W. Bush. Hanson is also a farmer (growing raisin grapes on a family farm in Selma, California) and a critic of social trends related to farming and agrarianism. He is the author most recently of *The Second World Wars: How the First Global Conflict Was Fought and Won*, *The Case for Trump* and the newly released *The Dying Citizen*. This article first appeared in the December 19, 2022 *American Greatness**

THE POWER OF POLITICAL OPTIMISM

In 21st century America, optimism is subversive. Flaunt it.

Deny the doomsayers their moment

BY EDWARD RING

There is a difference between optimism and naïveté. In politics today, optimism offers conservatives an inexhaustible source of infectious power that can overcome and shatter the foundations of the establishment's fear-based version of "populism." Indeed it is naïve to think any other approach has a chance.

Optimism has insurrectionary power because it contradicts everything the American establishment now trains voters to accept. From uniparty conformists and their corporate, academic, and media allies who package and spread the messages, to deep state agencies and plutocrats who decide on the messages, there is a common theme: pessimism. And when pessimism impels us to believe in worst-case scenarios, panic follows close behind.

What else might explain every rote proclamation that the world is coming to an end because of the climate crisis? What else explains why millions of American children are coping with mental illness, suicidal thoughts, and hopelessness for the future? They've been convinced the earth is on the brink of burning up. What else accounts for educated adults utterly convinced that the planet may soon be uninhabitable? What else lends apocalyptic context to every report—a staple now part of all reporting on hurricanes, floods, or winter storms?

It isn't merely the end of our planetary biosphere that has turned half the nation into compliant defeatists. Along with the climate emergency we have a health emergency that even now finds millions of Americans afraid to congregate, afraid to take off their masks, afraid to get a job or go to school.

The currency of establishment politics in America relies on pessimism. What other word better characterizes the incessant claim that white Americans are by definition racist, that America is an inherently racist nation, and that BIPOC individuals (for the blissfully uninitiated, that's black, indigenous, and people of color) cannot possibly hope to succeed without government edicts and entitlements to compensate for the pervasive discrimination inflicted on them by privileged white people?

The power of political optimism is that it rejects all of this. Burning fossil fuel is not going to immolate the biosphere. Forests are not disappearing. We can protect wildlife and wilderness, while also remaining realistic about what sort of a human footprint is necessary to power civilization. Diseases and pandemics will strike, and with courage we can balance the risks, protect the weak, preserve our freedom, and exercise reasonable precautions as we build herd immunity and move from pandemic to endemic. We can methodically develop vaccines and

treatments, but don't need to compel people to take them. As for racism, only vestiges remain, as Americans have built the most inviting and inclusive culture in human history.

That is optimism. It is powerful because it challenges the establishment narrative at its roots. In 21st century America, optimism is subversive. Flaunt it. Deny the doomsayers their moment. Reject the pessimistic essence of everything they're saying. Starting there, we have a chance.

Staying Optimistic Despite Current Events

Anyone taking a hard look at what has happened to this country over the past 50 years can make the case that optimism is naïve and futile. American culture has been under unrelenting attack. The values that made America great have been undermined if not lost. The traditional family, with children raised by a father and a mother, is now denigrated as a vestige of the oppressive patriarchy. A work ethic, once considered the first prerequisite for success, is being systematically destroyed by the rhetoric of "equity." A united nation, which for centuries had embraced the process of ethnic assimilation, in recent decades has been fractured not merely by massive new waves of immigration, but by a new message of division. For the first time in history, immigrants are not encouraged to work and assimilate, but rather to resent as racist the people who built the nation they've entered, and to fight to destroy it. Even the concept of what it is to be a man or a woman is questioned by the institutions we once trusted.

In recent years, unforgettable moments exemplify how far we've fallen as a nation. The heartbreaking images of howling mobs toppling statues of American heroes. The historic St. John's Church came within an eyelash of turning into a pile of ashes, as rioters assaulted the White House, nearly breaking through the fence. Rampaging mobs spent the summer of 2020 spreading a defiant message as they smashed and looted downtowns across the nation: Stop resisting, elect our candidate, or we will burn this whole country to the ground. Major cities, now more than ever, are taken over by tens of thousands of predators, psychopaths, and addicts who are stealing, screaming, shitting, and shooting up in ruined public spaces that once were magnificent examples of a brilliant civilization.

These depredations to our nation and culture just scratch the surface. But the madness that inspires them is fertilized by pessimism. An optimist would never condemn the traditional family, the value of a work ethic, the promise of assimilation, or the immutability of biological sex. An optimist doesn't believe our cities must be ceded to disorder, or that compelling addicts to sober up is an inhumane and futile act. An optimist does not think that life is fundamentally unfair, or that life on planet earth is about to end because we've reached a catastrophic climate "tipping point."

This is the transgressive, revolutionary power of optimism. Not only does it unequivocally reject the fear-based premises of America's establishment uniparty, but it can inform a comprehensive worldview that sees a bright future for America and for humanity.

In every aspect of global challenges there are optimistic scenarios. Perhaps the biggest premise of the currently prevailing political establishment in America is that globally, we are running out

of resources and civilization as we know it is unsustainable. Here and abroad, this deeply pessimistic assertion is used as the moral justification for unprecedented assaults on every aspect of our lives—from freedom of movement, to the retention of middle-class wealth and survival of small businesses, all the way to basic property rights and national sovereignty. Yet this premise is a deeply flawed and hopelessly pessimistic, agenda-driven distortion of reality.

And it is easily debunked.

Choosing a Better Future

Adequate water is often cited as the looming and inevitable Malthusian check on humanity achieving universal prosperity, but technology already exists to recycle urban wastewater, desalinate seawater, engineer interbasin transfers from water-rich regions to water-poor regions, and more efficiently harvest storm runoff. Apart from mustering the political will to undertake these projects, the energy required to pump and treat water is considered by some to be the most prohibitive obstacle. But pessimism over securing adequate energy resources also rests on dubious premises.

To begin with, conventional energy is not in short supply. Proven reserves of so-called fossil fuels, at double the current rate of consumption, are sufficient to last about another 160 years. “Unproven” reserves of natural gas, oil, and coal, are estimated to be many times that. Energy abundance can also be achieved with advanced nuclear fission, or nuclear fusion, factory-produced biofuels, or through improving photovoltaic technologies, satellite solar power stations, or even direct synthesis of CO₂ exhaust into liquid fuel. Energy scarcity is a political choice, not an unyielding reality.

While hard limits do exist on some of the most essential mineral resources, there are also tantalizing new workarounds and innovations to compensate for scarcity. Most metals can be recycled, and even complex systems like batteries will be cost-effectively recycled once robotic technologies dramatically lower reprocessing costs. One of the most promising alternative building materials is cross-laminated timber, a mature technology that is now available to replace concrete panels and steel trusses, and is already used as the primary structural building material in high-rise buildings around the world.

Perpetual human innovation, whether it’s cross-laminated timber, or next-generation concrete using abundant desert sand, or, for low-rise buildings, structural blocks with cores of hemp or straw, or virtually inexhaustible new minerals mined from the moon and asteroids will ensure that when the political and economic environment favors innovation, the collective lot of humanity will get better and better.

Optimism is the prerequisite for everything good—the motivation and freedom to innovate, the courage to coexist in peace, the character to work hard and accept meritocracy, the vitality to stay healthy and sober, the judgment to balance the needs of the environment with the needs of humanity, the faith to believe in a bright future, the charisma to attract others to a joyful movement, and the enduring conviction that we will overcome this rapidly descending tyranny.

Pessimism, on the other hand, catalyzes fear, panic, despair, and desperate fanaticism. Pessimism provides the fertile soil into which manipulative agendas are planted, sowing guilt, resentment, hatred, and the dark comfort of extremist solutions to manufactured problems. Pessimism and the products of pessimism are the body on which evil festers and grows.

Practicing optimism, and professing optimistic perspectives on political challenges is the furthest thing from being naïve. Optimism is a weapon, a talisman, capable of recruiting and realigning the American people to obliterate every diabolical schema and evil scheme that currently threatens their nation. Make it the foundation of your politics, and wield it with recognition of its power. And enjoy every minute.

Edward Ring is a senior fellow of the Center for American Greatness. He is also a contributing editor and senior fellow with the California Policy Center, which he co-founded in 2013 and served as its first president. Ring is the author of *Fixing California: Abundance, Pragmatism, Optimism* (2021) and *The Abundance Choice: Our Fight for More Water in California* (2022). This article appeared in the December 28, 2022 edition of American Greatness.



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