



**COLAB**  
San Luis Obispo County

The Coalition of Labor Agriculture and Business

**WEEKLY UPDATE  
MARCH 5 -11, 2023**

**COLAB'S 14<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL DINNER AND AUCTION  
THURSDAY, MARCH 30, 2023- MADONNA EXPO, 5 PM**



**COLAB – YOUR GOVERNMENT WATCH DOG**

**YOUR SUPPORT ALLOWS THE COALITION OF  
LABOR, AGRICULTURE, AND BUSINESS TO  
FIGHT FOR OUR ECONOMY, COMMUNITY, AND  
HERITAGE EVERY DAY**



## 14th Annual Dinner & Fundraiser

THURSDAY,  
MARCH 30, 2023  
MADONNA EXPO CENTER

Get the close up dual update on what's happening, what's next, and what you can do about it, direct from San Luis Obispo County Board Chairman John Peschong and Supervisor Debbie Arnold. Rally to their long haul perspective to sustain family, freedom, and heritage.



5:00 pm Social Hour & Open Bar  
6:15 pm Filet Mignon Dinner & Wine  
*Auction will be held after dinner*  
(Auctioneer Todd Ventura)

\$125/person  
\$1,250/table (seats 10)

For tickets:

On-Line Reservations & Payment can be made at [www.colabslo.org/events.asp](http://www.colabslo.org/events.asp)  
or

Mail your check to  
COLAB SLO County, PO Box 13601, SLO, CA 93406

*Cocktail Attire Optional*

More info at (805) 548-0340 or [colabslo@gmail.com](mailto:colabslo@gmail.com)

## THIS WEEK

### BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEETING

SOCIALIZED ENERGY SCAM SET FOR MARCH 21<sup>ST</sup> MEETING

2<sup>ND</sup> QUARTER FINANCIAL REPORT – SOME PROBLEMS

\$745 MILLION CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN SUBMITTED

REDISTRICTING LAWSUIT SETTLEMENT?

**IWMA INDOCTRINATION CONTRACT  
PLANNING COMMISSION LIGHT**

**LAST WEEK**

**PENSION TRUST HAD A BETTER MONTH**

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEETING  
CAL POLY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
HOTHOUSE CONTRACT RENEWED**

**COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN GENERAL**

**REACH OF THE CENTRAL COAST'S COUNTY CONTRACT**

**REACH HIRES DEM PROGRESSIVE LEFT ACTIVIST TO RUN  
\$5 MILLION PROJECT  
IS IT POLITICAL PATRONAGE USING PUBLIC FUNDS OR JUST THE  
USUAL SLO COUNTY CRONYISM?**

**EMERGENT ISSUES**

**NRC GRANTS EXEMPTION FOR PG&E TO  
OPERATE DIABLO CANYON NUCLEAR PLANT  
DURING LICENSE RENEWAL REVIEW**

**COLAB IN DEPTH  
SEE PAGE 21**

**THE WOKE WRECKING MACHINE**

*AMERICANS SHOULD END IT NOW BEFORE IT ENDS AMERICA FIRST*  
**BY VICTOR DAVIS HANSON**



# AMERICA'S SHADOW SELF

BY MICHAEL SHELLENBERGER

## THIS WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

ALL MEETINGS ARE AT 9:00 AM UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

### Board of Supervisors Meeting of Tuesday, March 7, 2023 (Scheduled)

**Item 1 - Introduction of an ordinance authorizing the implementation of a community choice aggregation program in the unincorporated areas of San Luis Obispo County through the County organization's participation in Central Coast Community Energy's (3CE) community choice aggregation program. Hearing date set for March 21, 2023.** The purpose of the agenda item is to set a public hearing and Board vote for Tuesday, March 21, 2023.

**ALERT**

**THIS IS THE CONTRACT TO SOCIALIZE THE ELECTRICAL ENERGY DISTRIBUTED IN THE UNINCORPORATED COUNTY, PROMOTE ELECTRIC VEHICLES AT PUBLIC EXPENSE, BAN GAS APPLIANCES, PROMOTE SO-CALLED GREEN ENERGY, AND DOLE OUT FINANCIAL PATRONAGE - ALL IN THE NAME OF TEMPORARILY LOWER RATES**

**BE READY TO FIGHT BACK ON MARCH 21<sup>ST</sup>**



COLAB has been warning about the problems of the community choice energy scam for years. We will update our information in the Weekly Update for the March 21<sup>st</sup> meeting. In the meantime please read the County's own report, which advised not joining at the link:

## THIRD-PARTY REVIEW: COMMUNITY CHOICE AGGREGATION FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO



**Item 5 - Submittal of the FY 2022-23 Second Quarter Financial Status Report and request to approve various financial actions as detailed in Section 4 of Attachment 1 - FY 2022-23 Second Quarter Financial Report (one or more actions require 4/5 votes).** The report indicates that should current trends continue, there could be some substantial problems by the end of the fiscal year. Higher than budgeted expenditures and lower than budgeted departmental revenues combine to generate a potential \$9.4 million problem.

**Table 2: Summary of Notable Issues Included in the Attached Report**

Table 2 Summary of Notable Issues Included in the Attached Report		
Department	Issue	Potential GF Impact
<b>Public Protection</b>		
<b>132 District Attorney</b>	<b>Issue:</b> Projecting to be \$236,475 over its budgeted level of General Fund support due primarily to a revenue shortfall from fines, forfeitures, and penalties	\$236,475
<b>136 Sheriff-Coroner</b>	<b>Issue:</b> Projecting to be \$4.7 million over its budgeted level of General Fund support due to unbudgeted salary and benefit expenses, services and supplies being over budgeted levels, and a projected \$720,000 revenue shortfall	\$4.7M
<b>140 County Fire</b>	<b>Issue:</b> Projecting to exceed current CalFire contract by 3.1M	\$3.1M
<b>143 Court Operations</b>	<b>Issue:</b> Projecting \$168,408 revenue shortfall due to decreased revenue received for recording fees and a decreased revenue for fines, forfeitures, and penalties	\$24,855
<b>Health and Human Services</b>		
<b>182 Social Services CalWORKs</b>	<b>Issue:</b> Projecting to be \$67,110 over its budgeted level of General Fund support due to revenue shortfall as a result of Public Health Emergency Deferred Collections	\$67,110
<b>185 Social Services General Assistance</b>	<b>Issue:</b> Projecting to be \$385,574 over its budgeted level of General Fund support due to revenue shortfall as a result of Public Health Emergency Waivers	\$385,574
<b>375 Health Agency Driving Under the Influence</b>	<b>Issue:</b> Projected expenditures are estimated to exceed revenue by \$340,377 due to a shortfall of revenue in service fees. This fund may need a transfer from General Fund in future quarters	\$340,377

<b>Community Services</b>		
<b>222 Parks and Recreation Community Parks</b>	<b>Issue:</b> Projecting to be \$136,359 over its budgeted level of General Fund support due recreational programs revenue shortfall and forecast over expenditure for services and supplies	\$136,359
<b>305 Parks and Recreation Regional Parks</b>	<b>Issue:</b> Projecting unfavorable operating variance of \$442,254 due to revenue shortfall of 5.8% and increased expenditure levels	None
<b>Support to County Departments</b>		
<b>114 Information Technology</b>	<b>Issue:</b> Projecting to exceed General Fund support at year end by \$444,054 primarily due to unbudgeted negotiated salary and benefit unanticipated travel and consulting expenses	\$444,054
<b>Fiscal and Administrative</b>		
<b>110 Clerk-Recorder</b>	<b>Issue:</b> Projecting to exceed General Fund support level by \$72,767 at year-end due to shortfall in recording revenue	\$72,767

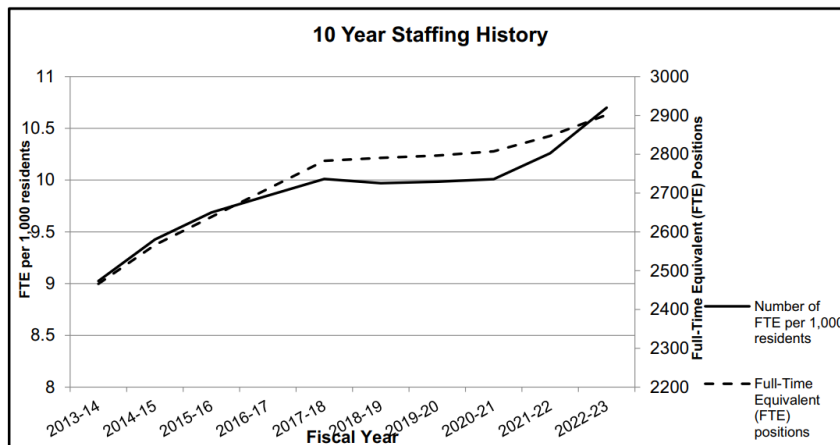
Data is not provided for departments that are projected to incur higher than budgeted revenues and lower than budgeted expenditures, which might offset this problem. Similarly, there are no projections for the major general fund revenues, such as property tax, TOT, and sales tax with respect to their status on June 20, 2023. Higher than budgeted revenues could help offset the problems projected here.

The County has healthy fund balances at this time.

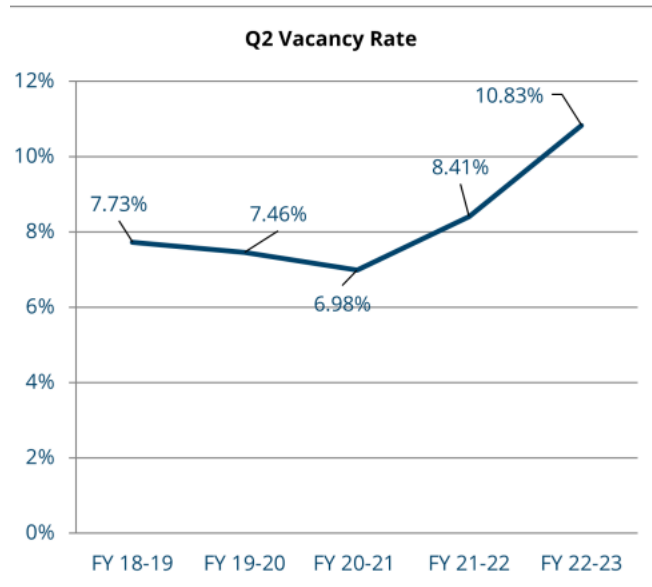
Adding positions over the years is ultimate death

**SUMMARY OF POSITION ALLOCATION CHANGES**

<b>FY 2021-22</b>	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q3</b>	<b>Q4</b>
Quarter Start	2,932.00	2,958.25		
FTE Additions	53.00	27.00		
FTE Deletions	26.75	20.00		
Quarter End	2,958.25	2,965.25		
Net Change	26.25	7.00		
% Change	.90%	.24%		



High vacancy rates continue to plague the County. Interestingly, and as reported in performance measures each year, the vacancy rate does not seem to have negative impacts on the service provision. Instead, the County uses the salary savings to offset unbudgeted salary and benefit increased cost. The vacancies do drive up overtime costs, particularly in public safety departments.



**EMPLOYEE TURNOVER RATE:**

This is another problem that is strange. The County jobs are great with regular high pay, defined benefit pension, health and dental insurance, 12 paid holidays, vacation up to 5 weeks, overtime, special pays, and training. Just about anyone who is sane and shows up regularly can get promotions. The jobs are secure, as the County has no layoff and no mandatory time off policies during economic downturns. Many of the jobs are indoors with heat and air conditioning, free parking, and/or now working from home. Many employees are not required to wear suits, ties, or dresses to work. It's not like working at Chase Manhattan Bank in New York or an LA law firm. The climate is great, and although the housing is expensive, the employees and their union have open access to colleagues who are responsible for doing something about the housing costs. One would think they would get them in room and say "how about it."

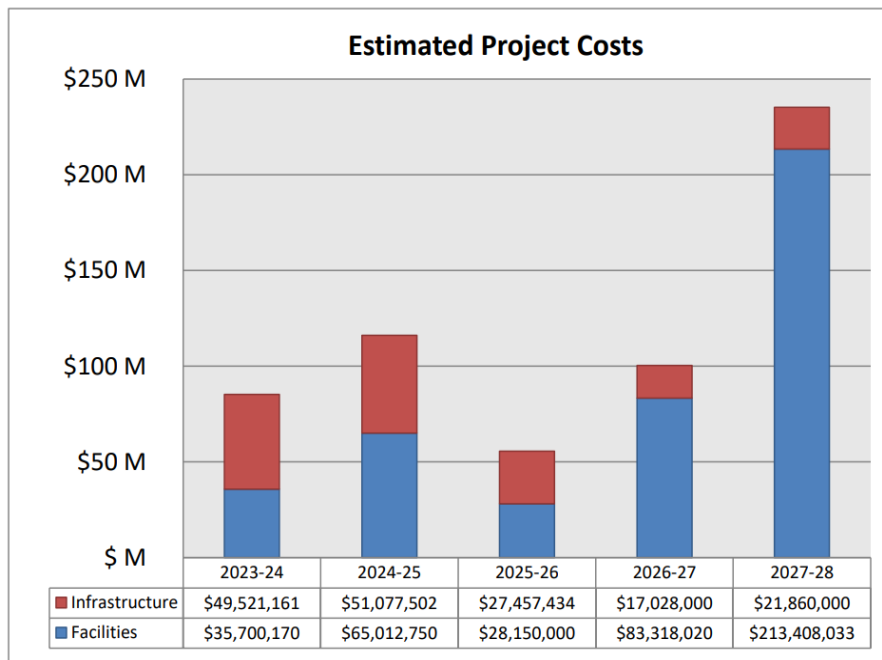


The County turnover rate at the end of the second quarter was 16.00%. This equates to 428.00 employee separations. By comparison, the turnover rate for the second quarter during the prior year was 11.35%. This represents an increase of 4.65 percentage points in turnover for the County overall. In the FY 2021-22 second and third quarter reports Human Resources projected that this number could reach 14.56% by 2023. Due to significant changes in the labor market and workforce priorities, we have seen an accelerated increase in our turnover and have exceed our projected rate more quickly than expected. Unfortunately, labor trends are indicating that it is likely this momentum will continue into coming months

**Item 18 - Submittal of the Facilities and Infrastructure Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan.**

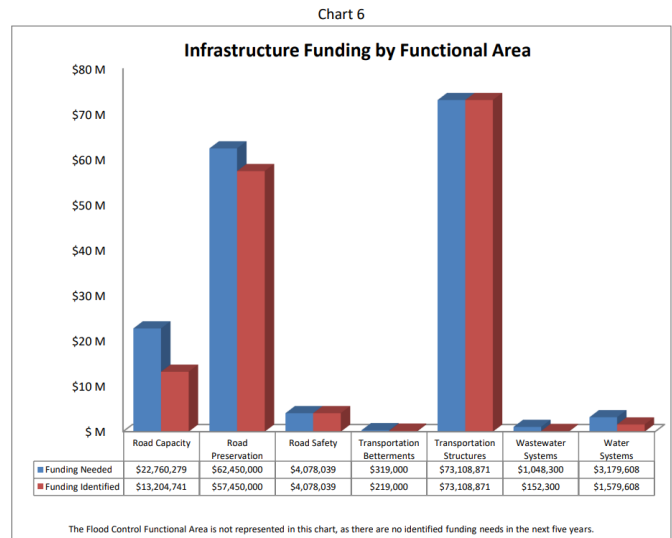
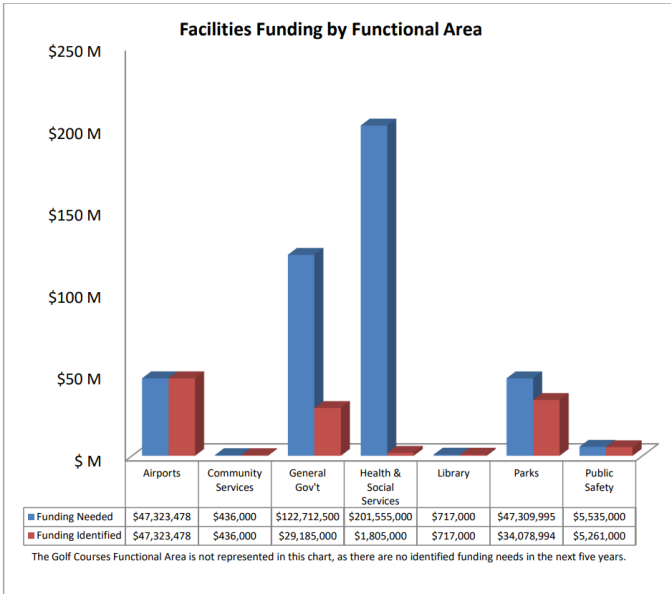
The item is an extensive presentation of the County’s capital investment plan for the Fiscal Years 23-24, 24-25, 25-26, 26-27, and 27-28. It includes both facilities and infrastructure projects. The presentation is excellent, as it is comprehensive and proceeds from the general overall picture to the detail.

- Facilities
  - Airports
  - Community Services
  - General Government
  - Golf Courses
  - Health and Social Services
  - Library
  - Parks
  - Public Safety
- Infrastructure
  - Flood Control
  - Road Capacity
  - Road Preservation
  - Road Safety
  - Transportation Betterments
  - Transportation Structures
  - Wastewater Systems
  - Water Systems





The 2 charts below are especially important, as they illustrate the cost of projects needed and the available funding identified. Thus separately from the annual operating budgets, which must be in balance, the County’s unfunded capital gaps demonstrate the need for a much stronger economy capable of generating the required funding. The situation demonstrates that the County is actually broke.



**Item 20 - Conference with legal counsel - 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.** Last week, the item, although listed on the Agenda, was not scheduled for discussion. It may be that the terms of settlement proffered by the leftist so called “Citizens” for Good Government are too onerous for even the Democratic Board members. A big payout to the “Citizens” and their lawyers would be death for the Supervisors who vote for it when election time comes around again.

Again, we will see if anything happens this week.

**Background:** Once again, discussion of the lawsuit against the redistricting plan was on the agenda. It was expected that after this session or a future session, County Counsel will emerge to announce a settlement. The settlement is likely to contain a restricting map that comports with versions supported by the left progressive Democrats.

Another potential settlement would be to leave the current map in place but agree to the establishment of an independent redistricting Commission for the 2030 census.

It is rumored that the plaintiff Citizens for Good Government are seeking a substantial financial settlement in addition, to cover their legal costs. This seems to be a bloated claim, since the legal



work involved on their part was originally a short complaint containing 4 causes of action and the setting aside of the map that was adopted by the then Board majority in 2021. Later in February 2022, the plaintiffs attempted have the court issue an injunction to prohibit the map from taking effect. This pleading was only about 10 pages and was denied. The Board should demand copies of the so-called Citizens legal bills to ascertain the costs and whether the so-called Citizens were overcharged or are seeking to punish the former Board majority.

**SLO Integrated Waste Management Authority Board Meeting (IWMA) Meeting of Wednesday; March 8, 2023 (Scheduled) 1:30 PM.**

**Item 12 - Proposal Selection for Waste and Recycling Education Programs.** The staff recommends that the Board approve a \$100,000 contract with the SLO County based firm ,Science Discovery, to conduct child and adult education on the importance of recycling.

***QUALIFICATIONS OF FIRM AND PERSONNEL***

*Science Discovery was founded in 1996 by Michael di Milo. The business is a sole proprietorship and operates from a 2,500-square-foot facility in San Luis Obispo, California. The Science Discovery site has an office, broadcast studio, and workshop sections dedicated to the needs of its clients .Our company’s principal focus is to provide professional school and public education outreach services to jurisdictions that require assistance in recycling education, solid waste education, and sustainability. The company tagline, Connecting People With Their Environment, encapsulates the overall spirit of what we do.*

The program focuses on visits to elementary school classrooms to brainwash the children to believe that recycling is crucial. Presumably, the children will badger their parents to recycle. Of course, everyone in the County is ripped about the huge refuse collection bill increases engendered by the State’s new food waste and green waste recycling mandate. Meanwhile, landfills constitute only an infinitesimal proportion of California land use.

Much of the recycled material ends up in landfills regardless, because the markets for recycled materials have dried up since the materials are not worth the processing costs. The alleged environmental benefits are insignificant, and solid waste disposal costs rise inexorably. Once the voters wise up, mass public refusal to recycle will be a perfect tool to use in the revolt, as there will be nothing that governments can actually do to punish the public.

**Planning Commission Meeting of Thursday, March 9, 2023 (Scheduled)**

The meeting has a light 2-item agenda. The matters pertain to an extension to construct a small project and some architectural changes to a small commercial project.

## LAST WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

### SLO Pension Trust Meeting of Monday, February 28, 2023 (Completed)

**Item 6 - January 2023 Investment Report.** During January, the markets recovered a little of what was lost last year. So far, February has not been that great. The Trust will discuss rates to be charged to the County in May.

Agenda Item 11: Monthly Investment Report for January 2023

	January	Year to Date 2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
Total Trust Investments (\$ millions)	\$1,665		\$1,614 year end	\$1,775 year end	\$1,552 year end	\$1,446 year end	\$1,285 year end
<b>Total Fund Return</b>	3.6% Gross	<b>3.6% Gross</b>	-8.0% Gross	15.2% Gross	8.9 % Gross	16.3 % Gross	-3.2 % Gross
Policy Index Return (r)	3.7%	3.7%	-9.7%	12.8%	10.0 %	16.4 %	-3.2 %

(r) Policy index as of Nov. 2021 Strategic Asset Allocation Policy with 2023 Interim targets:  
 Public Mkt Equity- 21% Russell 3000, 17% MSCI ACWI ex-US  
 Public Mkt Debt- 10% Barclays US Aggregate,  
 Risk Diversifying 4% Barclays US Aggregate,  
 5% Barclays 7-10yr Treasury, 4% Barclays 5-10yr US TIPS  
 Real Estate & Infrastructure- 15% NCREIF Index (inc. Infrastructure)  
 Private Equity- 10% actual private equity returns  
 Private Credit- 8% actual private credit returns  
 Liquidity- 6% 90 day T-Bills  
 Pending annual updates to interim targets.

*Capital Markets:*

• *Investment Markets - January saw robust returns on equities – both US stocks (S&P 500 +6.3% and International stocks (MSCI ACWI ex-US +8.1%) rallied significantly. Bonds benefited from interest rates retracing some of their recent increases back down slightly (Bloomberg US Aggregate bonds +3.1%).*

### Board of Supervisors Meeting of Tuesday, February 28, 2023 (Completed)

**Item 1 - Request to approve a FY 2022-23 renewal agreement with the Cal Poly Corporation to support the Cal Poly - Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship at the SLO Hothouse in the amount of \$200,000 from Fund Center (FC) 104 - Administrative Office to enhance economic development.** The \$200,000 grant was approved unanimously on the consent calendar. The grant, which has been awarded annually for years, is one piece of the County’s economic development effort. The program is a component of a larger University-related program, the Cal Poly Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship. In turn, the Center is operated by the Cal Poly Corporation, which is a quasi-independent captive entity that provides a variety of services to the University.

*The intended result is successful businesses employing county residents. More specifically, the contribution will support the SLO HotHouse Incubator Program, its economic development*

*activities and its job creation priorities. This contributes to the goals of the Economic Element of the San Luis Obispo County General Plan by enabling the residents of San Luis Obispo to find employment, grow locally operated businesses, and pursue the lifestyles that they value. More specific intended results are detailed in Exhibit A of Attachment 1 - FY 2022-23 Agreement with the Cal Poly Corporation. This agreement is consistent with the County's goal to promote a prosperous community.*

*CIE Startup Incubator Program: Startups Incubating in the SLO HotHouse. As of June 30, 2022, there are 13 companies in the Incubator Program, including:*

- *AcreCloud farm-management platform offers growers and contractors customized control over their operations, extensive auditing capabilities, and access to new products.*
- *ARTIFEX is building a custom measuring tool that converts distance measurements taken on-site by construction professionals into CAD-ready floor plans.*
- *BRUNCH a recipe app that allows you to connect with recipe creators, find new recipes to cook, and plan and shop for the week.*
- *BlendKraft is helping winemakers eliminate redundant and non-creative work so the winemaker can focus on the art of blending wines.is working to save lives by providing first responders with cost-effective tactical robotic solutions.*
- *DcubeD develops mass-customizable, export restriction-free Actuators and Deployable Structures that make advanced SmallSat & CubeSat missions possible by keeping especially the need of New Space Customers in mind.*
- *DEMO is creating a two way marketplace in which artists can "go public" like a company would and sell tokens ("NFTs") that represent shares in their art. Artists can also buy tokens containing the personal data of their fans and investors if those users opt in.*
- *HILITE Fit (High Intensity Low Impact Training Exercise) is a workout methodology that takes inspiration from dance, gymnastics, and circus.*
- *Novocuff is designing a minimally invasive, non-surgical device that will help prevent preterm birth*
- *Tallyfor Inc enhances online accounting software with the ability to complete business taxes by helping owners move data from source transactions to IRS filing.*
- *TractorCloud is an end-to-end heavy machinery diagnostic, management, and predictive maintenance cloud platform.*
- *Zeste Farms is an Indoor Vertical Farm producing living greens like Kale, Arugula, Cilantro, Parsley, Basil, Dill, Dandelion, etc.*
- *Zoetic Motion improves patient adherence through gamifying the process and rewarding our users, while equipping physical therapists with the ability to maximize patient progress*

The Annual Report of the of the Center For Innovation, detailing all of its activities, can be found at the link [Microsoft Word - SLO County Annual Report 2022 \(jdm edits\) \(1\) \(ca.gov\)](#)

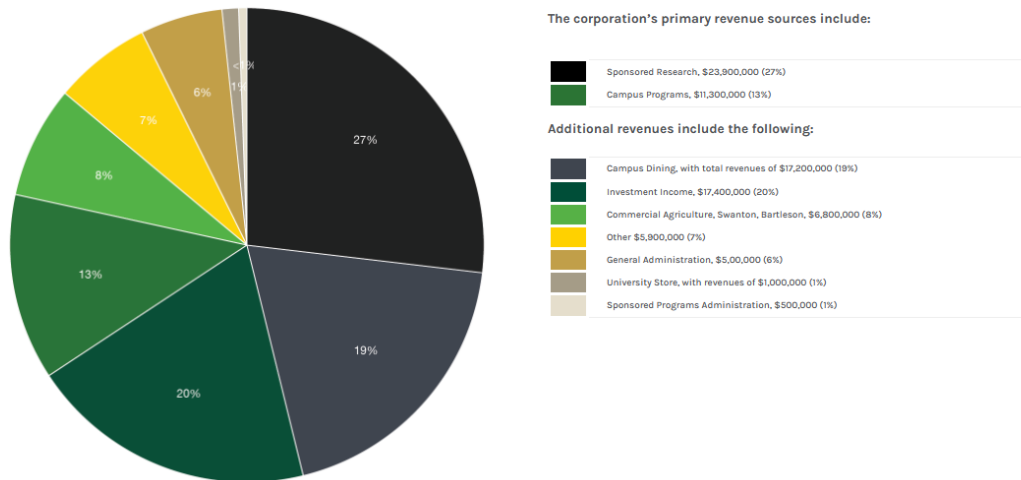
The Cal Poly Corporation is actually one of the larger business entities in SLO County, with \$89 million in annual revenue. It does not receive any tax dollars and derives its funding from the provision of services to the University, students, faculty, and general public.



Cal Poly Corporation revenue comes from a diverse range of sources, including Campus Dining, the University Store, commercial agriculture and investments. A breakdown of revenue sources and annual financial reports are available below. Information pertains to the financial condition and results for the year, ending June 30.

## REVENUE SOURCES

Revenue generated from corporation-managed operations for fiscal year 2020-21 totaled \$89 million.



**Item 30 - It is recommended that the Board receive and file a presentation regarding the Fiscal Year 2023-24 County and State Budgets, and provide direction to staff as necessary.** The Board heard the staff presentation and then engaged in some discussion. Supervisor Gibson pointed out that the County has an ongoing structural deficit. It is strange that Gibson hadn't noticed it before. After all, the County has been using its high staff vacancy rate, now reported at 15%, to balance the budget. Also, as noted above in the Capital Budget item, the County is hundreds of millions of dollars unfunded for vital infrastructure.

The CAO's proposed budget strategy for FY 2023-24 does not contain any proposed structural reductions to the base. After some debate, the CAO was directed to return with a range of structural reductions in line with one of the County's standing budget policies:

**In Times of Financial Difficulty** *When faced with financial difficulty, the County should identify budget balancing strategies that address both short and long-term budget gaps, while also minimizing the impact of budget reductions to the community and employees. It also becomes increasingly important to focus on employee retention as the cost of turnover can outweigh savings produced by vacancies. Focusing on creative and cost neutral or low-cost options to manage turnover at a strategic rate is imperative to maintaining service during difficult times.*

*Depending on the financial difficulty being experienced, short and long-term budget balancing strategies may be needed over multiple years. An important consideration in developing and implementing budget balancing strategies is identifying the timeframe for fixing the problem and bringing about structural balance. Utilizing reserves and other short-term budget balancing solutions can soften the impact of reductions to programs and services. However, it is imperative*

*that these short-term solutions be used judiciously in order to maintain the County's overall fiscal health. Should short term solutions be over-utilized, the magnitude of reductions required later would be amplified.*

A 3-year time horizon was projected for reducing the structural imbalance.

Some of the specific policies state:

*Reductions: Reductions shall be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, in a fashion consistent with Board approved budget policies, to reach the appropriations level required within the available means of financing. When budget reductions are necessary, departments will prioritize their service programs and propose reductions in areas that are least effective in terms of achieving departmental goals and desired results. Departments must also consider the potential effects on interrelated programs and desired communitywide results when developing budget reductions.*

*Detailed Budget Reduction Lists (i.e. cut lists) - The County Administrative Office should require departments to incorporate a prioritized list of resource/expenditure reductions into their annual budget submittals. Reductions with the least impact upon programs and services should be the first in line for reduction per Board approved Budget Policy #19- Reductions. The concept is that departments are the experts in their respective fields and are in the best position to recommend budget reductions in line with the Budget Goals and Policies, Board priorities and direction, and detailed budget instructions. If reductions are necessary, targeted reduction amounts are included as part of the detailed budget instructions provided to departments.*

It may be that Gibson, in addition to beginning to reduce the structural deficit (which has been around for years), wishes to free up money for the expansion of homeless programs, which is his top priority.

**Background:** The informational report updates the status of the preparation of the Proposed FY 2023-24 Annual Budget. The analysis primarily addresses the General Fund portion.

Last November, the staff forecast that an \$11 million revenue expenditure gap might require reductions. At this point the gap has shrunk to \$5.1 million, primarily due to lower than forecast salaries and non-salary expenses. The County was also able to cancel some reserves for continuing programs that originally had been funded by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Unused Federal and State COVID slush funds were substituted. The table below summarizes the current situation.

The report notes that this is a budget that does not provide service increases, that is, a "Status Quo Budget." Risks include how the projected State Budget shortfall of \$25 billion might short State revenues for counties. Also the development of a recession could negatively impact both State and Federal revenues.

**FY 2023-24 Forecast vs. Status Quo Budget (General Fund)**

	<b>Forecast</b>	<b>Status Quo</b>	<b>\$ Diff</b>	<b>% Diff</b>
<b>Non-Departmental Revenue</b>	\$276,587,042	<b>\$273,523,873</b>	-\$3,063,169	-1.1%
<b>Departmental Revenue</b>	\$371,677,820	<b>\$371,672,345</b>	-\$5,475	0.0%
<b>Fund Balance Available</b>	\$43,354,334	<b>\$43,354,334</b>	0	0.0%
<b>Cancelled Reserves</b>	\$337,555	<b>\$5,246,883</b>	\$4,909,328	
<b>Total Revenue</b>	\$691,956,750	<b>\$693,797,435</b>	\$1,840,685	0.3%
<b>Salary and Benefits</b>	\$387,576,936	<b>\$383,526,549</b>	-\$4,050,387	-1.1%
<b>Non-Salary Expense</b>	\$282,794,039	<b>\$277,139,983</b>	-\$5,654,056	-2.0%
<b>5% Contingency</b>	\$33,518,549	<b>\$33,033,327</b>	-\$485,222	-1.4%
<b>New Reserves</b>	0	<b>\$5,212,398</b>	\$5,212,398	
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	\$703,889,523	<b>\$698,912,257</b>	-\$4,977,267	-0.7%
<b>Available Funds/(Gap)</b>	-\$11,932,773	<b>-\$5,114,822</b>		

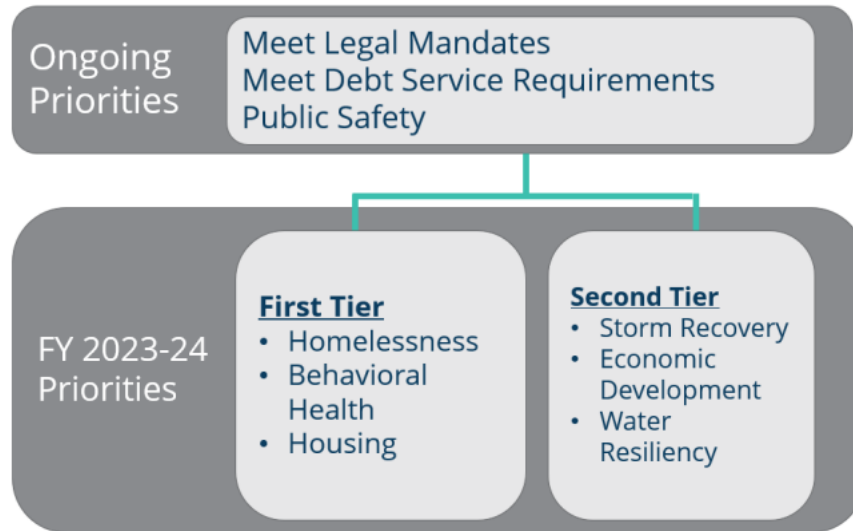
The various departments have made supplemental requests (Budget Augmentation Requests [BARs]) totaling \$13.8 million above what is allowed in the Budget policy.

All things being equal and absent some shock such as a bigger war, recession, or massive social unrest, we would expect the gap to narrow between now and May, when the Budget is submitted for consideration. The control of the southern border by cartel gangs, the spread of Fentanyl, the collapse of law and justice in many of the urban cities, and the woke effort to extinguish the heritage of western civilization, along with the emerging totalitarian Neo-Axis of China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, and some of the Stans, all bode ill for the future.

California has lost 750,000 of population in recent years, and over 250 significant companies have left the state completely or moved their key factories and headquarters. The future of the Diablo Power Plant seems up in the air, while the putative massive wind farm project may be too expensive to build, even with massive subsidies.

In January the Board revised its overall Budget priorities to eliminate roads and demote economic development, while elevating Homelessness Prevention and Remediation and Behavioral Health. The former are investments with future benefit. The latter are consumptive and have expanded immensely over recent decades with no visible overall success. While they are humane attempts to deal with the plight of the suffering people, the numbers of ill and addicted grow inexorably.

## FY 2023-24 Board Priorities



The next steps in the FY 2023-24 Budget Development Process are as follows:

- *February-April: Administrative Office reviews Departmental Budget Submittals and works with Departments to develop a Recommended Budget.*
- *May 16: Recommended Budget is introduced.*
- *June 12-14: Budget Hearing.*
- *June 20: Recommended Budget is adopted.*

Save **Monday June 12<sup>th</sup>** to come and comment on the Budget and the program of service it supports (9:00 AM)

**Item 31 - Request to receive and file the County's temporary events update regarding rules, regulations, and enforcement.** In the end, and after considerable public comment, the Board did nothing but accept the staff's prior of dodging of the original question:

During the initial Board item last November 29<sup>th</sup>, on the subject, some staffers appeared offended that they would be asked such a question. They retorted that they were simply enforcing State code requirements and some County ordinances. This response did not answer the original question of why the increased effort suddenly began. Venues which had been operating for years were suddenly informed that they had to install new safety features, expand driveways, and in one case even modify a State highway at their own expense.

**The Report Failed to Answer the Real Questions and the Board Did Not Pursue the Answers:**

**Were all the inspections and enforcement actions generated by a complaint?** The report contained no tabulation of how many complaints have been received, how many were found to be valid, how many have been fixed, and in how many cases the owner determined to cease his or her activity. There was no way for the Board or Public to assess the issue without this information. This was a travesty.



### **Venues Serving Conservative Groups Targeted? Need For Independent Review:**

Are venues that host conservative groups targets? We are aware of some venues which have hosted events by conservative organizations for years, being shut down due to the costs that the County would impose on them to come into compliance. The Board should commission an outside investigation of the records of the involved departments and divisions to assess this potential. The investigation should include confidential employee interviews, review of inspection records , communications such as emails, and so forth.

Over the past years the County Board of Supervisors has eschewed such investigations into various matters, which have later comeback to reveal major problems and have caused embarrassment and lack of confidence in the government as well as major costly legal settlements.

**Background:** This report, which resulted from that prior direction, again did not answer the basic question of why the sudden inspections and enforcement started last year. Instead, the five-page Report simply listed various State codes.

Beginning last year, event venues for weddings, not-for-profit fundraisers, political candidate fundraisers, barbeques, wine events, and community organizing began to experience increased scrutiny and enforcement by various County agencies. Eventually, the Board of Supervisors asked the staff why the sudden new vigor?

During the initial Board item on the subject, some staffers appeared offended that they would be asked such a question. They retorted that they were simply enforcing State code requirements and some County ordinances. This response did not answer the original question of why the increased effort suddenly began. Venues which had been operating for years were suddenly informed that they had to install new safety features, expand driveways, and in one case even modify a State highway at their own expense.

Instead, the five-page Report amplified and detailed what had already been stated:

*At a high level, there are three primary components with regulating temporary events: (1) a land use ordinance; (2) a California Building Code (“CBC”) component; and (3) a California Fire Code and Board of Forestry Regulations component. The Board has significant discretion on establishing land use and zoning through amendments to Titles 22 and 23; however, the Board does not have discretion over the CBC which is established through the California Health and Safety Code and the specific minimum building standards are developed by the State, specifically, the Building Standards Commission and the Board of Forestry. Each of these issues are again discussed below:*

#### ***Temporary Event Land Use Ordinance***

*Under Title 22, temporary events as a land use are considered “Recreation, Education and Public Assembly Uses” and are a conditionally allowed use under the agricultural, rural lands, residential rural, office and professional, commercial retail, commercial service, industrial, recreation and public facilities land use categories. Section 22.30.610 of the County’s code (Attachment 1) establishes the permitting framework and development standards for temporary*

event land use permits within the Inland area of the County. In general, this section requires a landowner to obtain a Minor Use Permit unless the event is (1) a "Public Event"; (2) Commercial Entertainment and the operator has obtained a commercial outdoor entertainment license under Chapter 6.56 of the County's code; (3) a parade; or (4) is part of a permitted "Temporary Camp."

### **Temporary Event California Building Code Rule**

Sections 103 and 104 of the CBC establish the office of the Building Official who is charged with the enforcement of the CBC and local building codes. Section 302 of the CBC established various "Occupancy Classification and Use Designation[s]." Occupancy classification is the formal designation of the primary purpose of the building, structure or portion of it. In other words, the building standards set forth in the CBC are designed based on what the structure will be used for.

### **Later in this section:**

In addition, buildings in this occupancy class must be ADA compliant. Tasting rooms for example, are constructed to this occupancy classification. Neither the Board nor the Chief Building Official can modify the construction standards set forth in the CBC, except that the Building Official may consider alternate means of methods of construction, however, those proposals must be the functional equivalent to the standards set forth in the code.

County Fire is involved with the review and permitting of temporary event centers for conformance with the California Fire Code and Board of Forestry Regulations. Buildings used for temporary events are required to meet commercial access road standards and dead-end road lengths as outlined in Title 14 of the Code of Regulations and San Luis Obispo County Title 16. These buildings are also required to comply with the California Fire Code, Chapter 10, Means of Egress requirements which includes requirements such as: exit signs, exit doors, exit hardware, and exit illumination. A registered Fire Protection Engineer is required to provide a written technical analysis of the fire protection requirements. A commercial automatic fire sprinkler system is also required to be installed in accordance with provisions set forth in the California Fire Code as amended by the San Luis Obispo County Title 16 and the applicable National Fire Protection Association Standard. Automatic fire sprinkler systems are required to be designed by a fire protection engineer or C-16 licensed contractor.

Code Enforcement Process for Unpermitted Event Venues When a complaint is received, code enforcement investigates the situation to confirm whether a violation exists. Staff addresses each complaint on a case-by-case basis, and in some instances, venues are allowed to honor existing bookings while they go through the land use and/or building code process.

**Item 33 - Conference with Legal Counsel - 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.** The item, although listed on the Agenda, was not scheduled for discussion. It may be that the terms of settlement proffered by the leftist so-called "Citizens for Good Government" are too

onerous for even the Democratic Board members. A big payout to the “Citizens” and their lawyers would be death for the Supervisors who vote for it when election time comes around again.

## EMERGENT ISSUES

**Item 1- NRC grants exemption for PG&E to operate Diablo Canyon nuclear plant during license renewal review.** The article below first appeared in the publication Utility Dive of March 3, 2023. The author is Stephen Singer.

- *The Nuclear Regulatory Commission authorized Pacific Gas & Electric to continue operating the 2,240 MW Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant in California as it considers the power plant’s expected license renewal application, the agency said Thursday.*
- *The license for Unit 1 is due to expire next year and Unit 2 is set to shut in 2025. With the NRC decision, the existing licenses will remain in effect if PG&E submits a renewal application by Dec. 31. If its license is renewed, Diablo Canyon may continue to operate for up to 20 years beyond the current licenses.*
- *The NRC staff determined an exemption is authorized by law and will not present undue risk to public health and safety. It also cited “serious challenges to the reliability of California’s electricity grid.”*

### ***Dive Brief:***

*The Nuclear Regulatory Comm NRC regulations allow a reactor’s operating license to remain in effect beyond its expiration date if the applicant submits a sufficient license renewal application at least five years before its expiration.*

*PG&E needs the exemption because it did not meet the five-year requirement, the NRC said. PG&E applied to renew the licenses in November 2009, but withdrew the application in 2018 and announced plans to cease operations and decommission the reactors when the licenses expire.*

*In August, the California legislature and Gov. Gavin Newsom, D, stepped in, enacting Senate Bill 846 which invalidated a 2018 decision by the state Public Utilities Commission approving PG&E’s proposal to retire the units. The law requires the PUC to set new retirement dates for Diablo Canyon, conditioned on the NRC extending the operating licenses.*

*In November, the plants received conditional approval of \$1.1 billion from the U.S. Department of Energy’s Civil Nuclear Credit program intended to support decarbonization goals.*

*PG&E said Thursday in a statement it intends to submit a license renewal application by the end of the year.*

*“We are pleased the NRC approved our exemption request,” said Paula Gerfen, senior vice president and chief nuclear officer. “Aligned with Senate Bill 846, PG&E will continue on the path to extend our operations beyond 2025 to improve statewide electric system reliability and reduce greenhouse gas emissions as additional renewable energy and carbon-free resources come online.”*

*Environmental groups criticized the NRC’s decision, calling it unprecedented.*

*The Environmental Working Group said the federal agency has never approved an exemption for a license renewal applicant to operate a nuclear reactor past its 40-year legal limit without a comprehensive safety and environmental review.*

*“But the NRC, in its bow to PG&E, completely ignored its own rules, with far-reaching implications for all its safety standards,” EWG said.*

*“Public safety concerns were blatantly ignored by the NRC over this politically motivated and reckless decision to bend the law for PG&E,” said Ken Cook, president of EWG.*

*However, the Breakthrough Institute, an environmental research organization, said the NRC “did the right thing -- and did so promptly and flexibly.”*

*“It was put in this situation by California, which last year had an about-face on the Diablo Canyon reactors. The state was first bent on forcing the plant to retire, and then realized that its electric system would not be able to get by without the facility’s output,” it said.*

*Gene Nelson, president of Californians for Green Nuclear Power, said the nuclear plants provide “emission-free power” and praised the NRC for its decision.*

*“Today is definitely a day for celebration,” he said in an interview Thursday. “It’s not a surprise, but it’s welcome news that Diablo Canyon gets an exemption from the five-year rule.”*

*Newsom said Diablo Canyon supports energy reliability, and he cited last September’s heat wave and other weather patterns due to climate change that are “causing unprecedented stress on our power grid.”*

*Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., said the NRC’s decision “will allow Diablo Canyon to serve as a bridge to a clean-energy future, maintaining a reliable source of carbon-free power as we continue to invest in renewable energy.”*

*She reversed herself last year after supporting plans in 2016 to shut Diablo Canyon.*

*“I remain concerned about the lack of long-term storage for spent nuclear fuel and am working to develop better solutions,” she said in June 2022. “But at this point, keeping Diablo Canyon open and producing carbon-free energy is more important.”*

*The nuclear power plant supplies about 17% of California’s zero-carbon electricity and 9% of its total electricity, according to the California Energy Commission. On Tuesday it approved a resolution that “the state’s electricity forecasts for the calendar years 2024 to 2030, inclusive,*



*show potential for reliability deficiencies if the Diablo Canyon power plant operation is not extended beyond 2025.”*

*Extending its operations to at least 2030 is prudent to ensure reliability, the CEC said.*

*Editor’s Note: This story has been updated with comments from the Breakthrough Institute.*

## **COLAB IN DEPTH**

**IN FIGHTING THE TROUBLESOME, LOCAL DAY-TO-DAY ASSAULTS ON OUR FREEDOM AND PROPERTY, IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO KEEP IN MIND THE LARGER UNDERLYING IDEOLOGICAL, POLITICAL, AND ECONOMIC CAUSES**

### **THE WOKE WRECKING MACHINE**

***AMERICANS SHOULD END IT NOW BEFORE IT ENDS***

***AMERICA FIRST***

**BY VICTOR DAVIS HANSON**

Almost everything that has followed from the woke mass hysteria gripping the nation since 2020 has proved disastrous.

Wokeism destroys meritocracy in favor of forced equality of result—history’s prescription for civilizational decline.

If we continue with the woke hiring of administrators, air traffic controllers, ground crews, pilots, and rail workers, there will be even more news of disasters and near-miss airline crashes.

Wokeness demands a McCarthyite suppression of free expression. No wonder a woke FBI recently hired out social media censors to suppress stories it deemed unhelpful.

Soviet-style, wokeism mandates strict ideological party-line narratives under the cover of “science.” No wonder a woke government lied that requiring vaccines would prevent both infection and infectiousness.

Woke substitutes race for class in its eternal neo-Marxist quest to divide permanently the nation along racial lines, between victims and victimizers.

Yet wokeism recently has embarrassed itself as never before.

Take the COVID pandemic.

The Department of Energy has joined the FBI and is now attributing the origins of the pandemic to a leak of a likely engineered virus from the top-security virology lab in Wuhan, China.

Wokesters had long suppressed that reality, demonizing any who rejected its orthodox lies and spoke a larger truth: A dystopic China is *not* our global partner in greening the planet. Criticizing Stalinist China is *not* “racist.” China is *not* building a progressive society that is a model for others.

The ongoing environmental catastrophe in East Palestine, Ohio, following the train derailment revealed more woke moral bankruptcy.

Ostensibly the ensuing toxic spill and noxious plume have poisoned a poor and working-class small town. It should have galvanized the old Democratic Party that once voiced loud support for all green causes and championed the lower American classes.

But woke ended all that—substituting racial chauvinism for class concerns and ideology for genuine worry over the environment.

Woke dogma mandates that pollution and poverty are no longer concerns—*if* they affect the white poor who are stereotyped collectively as privileged victimizers.

Wokesters insisted that California is the greatest casualty of “climate change” defined as permanent drought.

Purported climate change required radical new bureaucratic rules and antidemocratic mandates over irrigation supplies, ground water, and contracted water deliveries from public reservoirs.

But then it rained. And it snowed. And it became terribly cold in supposedly scorching California.

Southern California is blanketed in snow.

Even so, for much of this cold, wet winter, state officials continued to claim the man-made drought was in full force. But finally, the most recent frigid, wet weather strangled the woke drought—and with it the credibility of our climate change Cassandras.

Americans sympathize with Ukraine’s plight as Vladimir Putin seeks to destroy its autonomy. But woke brooked no deviation from the party line that Ukraine’s Volodymyr Zelenskyy is a saint, while Russia is near bankrupt due to sanctions, and doomed to lose the war.

Accordingly, the United States was obligated to give Ukraine a veritable blank check given Kyiv’s commitment to freedom. Zelenskyy’s team now even talks of a victorious Ukrainian armored counteroffensive into Moscow’s Red Square.

This week, however, we are learning the Russian economy is nearly as strong now as it was before the war. It has mobilized 700,000 troops to ensure that eastern Ukraine becomes a Verdun-like killing field where tens of thousands more will be ground up.

Ukraine bars dissidents and maintains a government media monopoly. And the more Joe Biden promises another \$2-3 billion in biweekly aid, the more Zelenskyy acts as if it is a pittance given what supposedly stingy Americans should be capable of supplying.

Meanwhile, at home, new woke protocols mandate race as essential rather than incidental to the human experience. Supposedly such fixations will heal racial wounds.

Under the new reparatory and compensatory diversity, equity, and inclusion rules, those deemed non-white were to be hired and admitted to colleges in greater numbers than their demographics. Even the old mandated proportional representation quotas were no longer enough.

But racial chauvinism, nonstop talk of reparations, and the new campus segregation have not resulted in better racial relations.

Polls show that there are greater racial tensions than ever before.

Data on interracial and hate crimes show even sharper racial disproportionalities. The incidence of both black violent criminal perpetrators and black crime victims are near historical highs.

Woke policies of no cash bail, downgrading felonies, and no jail time only spiked violent lawlessness.

Our elite universities are now fully woke. Almost weekly an embarrassing story further erodes their credibility and reputation.

Ridiculous lists of taboo words are issued on woke campuses, barring incendiary words like “American” and “immigrant.”

Bragging of segregated dorms, graduations, and safe spaces recalls Jim Crow, not woke racial utopias.

Grades and standards are deemed counterrevolutionary, even as incompetent graduates increasingly fail to impress employers.

Someday wokeism will disappear because it is inherently nihilistic and cannibalistic.

But in the meantime, Americans should end it now before it ends America first.

*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 March 1, 2023 Stanford University Hoover Update.



## AMERICA'S SHADOW SELF BY MICHAEL SHELLENBERGER

*Editor's note: This story appears in City Journal's special issue on California, which will be published in March.*

For roughly 100 years, California was America's synecdoche<sup>1</sup>: the part of the country that best represented its whole. It was town and country, coastal metropolis and interior farmland, opportunity and freedom. It was Hollywood, the defense industry, and the high-tech economy. Its people were both high-achieving and laid-back, able to enjoy the state's natural bounty, from the beaches and cliffs to the forests and Sierras.<sup>2</sup> California boasted a pioneering public education system, in which every child, no matter how poor, could receive a good education. It had affordable suburbs, built around nuclear families. It was growing, quadrupling its population after World War II. In a word, California represented progress.

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<sup>1</sup> Synecdoche is a type of metonymy: it is a figure of speech in which a term for a part of something is used to refer to the whole, or vice versa. The term is derived from the Greek *συνεκδοχή*. Examples of common English synecdoches include suits for businessmen, wheels for automobile, and boots for soldiers.

Now the state has become America's shadow self. True, it is more prosperous than ever, surpassing Germany last year to become the world's fourth-largest economy. But Los Angeles, San Francisco, Sacramento, and smaller cities are today overrun by homeless encampments, which European researchers more accurately describe as "open drug scenes." Crime has become so rampant that many have simply stopped reporting it, with nearly half of San Franciscans telling pollsters that they were a victim of theft in the last five years and a shocking one-quarter saying that they had been assaulted or threatened with assault.

These pathologies are just the most visible manifestations of a deeper rot. Less than [half](#) of California's public school students are proficient in reading, and just one-third are proficient in math (with a stunning [9 percent of African-Americans and 12 percent of Latinos](#) in L.A. public schools proficient in eighth-grade math). Education achievement declined precipitously in California in 2021, as the state kept children studying at home well after kids in other states had returned to the classroom. Californians pay the most income tax, gasoline tax, and sales tax in the United States, yet suffer from electricity blackouts and abysmal public services. Residential electricity prices [grew three times faster](#) in 2021 than they did in the rest of the United States.

And the state government, dependent on income taxes, faces a projected \$23 billion budget deficit that will only grow if the nation's economy enters a recession. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given these trends, California's population stopped expanding in 2014 and has slightly declined since, resulting in the loss of a congressional seat after the 2020 Census.

Homelessness and disorder loom as the biggest problems. Most of the assaults and threats that San Franciscans reported came from the city's large number of homeless and mentally ill addicts, who are allowed to sleep, defecate, and use drugs in public. Los Angeles is in even worse shape, as the city is so much larger than San Francisco and the local government is, against stereotype, even more progressive. Skid Row can no longer contain its massive population of street homeless; the city's government has all but legalized open-air drug dealing and use. Over the last decade, homelessness increased 43 percent in California, even as it fell 7 percent nationally.

Some signs of hope seem to have emerged on this front. Since taking office in December 2022, the new mayor of Los Angeles, Karen Bass, has worked to shut down drug markets and tried to move people into shelter and housing through a program called "Inside Safe." Venice Beach voters elected as mayor a moderate named Traci Park, who worked with Bass to move street-dwellers inside. San Francisco's mayor, London Breed, closed an experimental government-funded drug-consumption site in June, responding to complaints from residents, business leaders, and mothers of homeless addicts. In November 2022, San Franciscans elected a majority of moderates to the city's governing board of supervisors, who, like the mayor, favor stronger



action to remove self-destructive addicts from the streets. Those changes followed a voter recall earlier that year of a radical district attorney, Chesa Boudin, whose policies of de-prosecution encouraged disorder.

But there is less than meets the eye to these developments. Bass's office reports that just 31 homeless people in Hollywood, and fewer than 100 in Venice, had been moved inside between December 11, 2022, and January 21 of this year. For context, according to the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, there were 41,290 total homeless in Los Angeles in 2020, of whom 70 percent were "unsheltered"—living in tents or cardboard boxes on sidewalks and underneath overpasses. Voters increased the progressive majority on the Los Angeles City Council and tossed out the sheriff of Los Angeles County, who had advocated a tougher response to crime, drugs, and violence, in November 2022. In San Francisco, a judge halted efforts to move the city's vulnerable homeless indoors before torrential rains pounded the state for weeks; the judge had sided with a lawsuit brought by the American Civil Liberties Union against the city. And six months after closing the drug-consumption site, Mayor Breed and the Board of Supervisors announced in early January that they intended to open 12 new sites across the city. In the state's two major cities, significant improvement on crime, drugs, and homelessness is unlikely under current political leadership.

What explains California's dramatic decline? And what would it take for the state to return to its former greatness?

The reasons progressives give for California's problems stopped making sense long ago. Since the 1970s, they have attributed much of the state's difficulties to Republicans' unwillingness to fund social programs. The cause of homelessness, they alleged, was Ronald Reagan's decision to close mental institutions and tighten civil-commitment standards as governor and his refusal, as president, to fund "community-based" alternatives. But progressives have been unable to make that argument credibly for decades. For 12 years, Democrats have held a supermajority of the California legislature and controlled the governor's mansion. California [spends much more than other states on homelessness and mental illness](#), yet has worse outcomes.

Without Republicans to blame, Democrats have turned to the state's housing shortage as a catch-all explanation. A lack of housing does cause problems in California, as Christopher Elmendorf explains in this issue. Los Angeles and the Bay Area struggle even to build apartments near mass-transit stations. Insufficient housing, massively driving up the cost of keeping a roof overhead, contributed to the state's population drop-off since 2014, as well as to the loss of many tech companies and jobs to more affordable locales in Texas and Florida. And it's not just housing that is missing—the inability of California's local governments to build hospitals, group homes, and shelters has undermined cities' ability to solve the homelessness problem.

“Californians pay the most income tax, gas tax, and sales tax, yet suffer from electricity blackouts and abysmal services.”

But expensive housing is not the main driver of street disorder. Advocates of development, such as progressive state senator Scott Wiener, cynically insist in public that expensive rent causes thousands of people to wind up living and dying on city sidewalks, yet freely admit in other contexts that leaders’ refusal to mandate psychiatric or addiction treatment is the true culprit. If California were to deal with homeless addicts and untreated mental illness on a statewide level, as in Massachusetts, and not locally, then the street population could get treatment in drug-recovery communities, hospitals, and group homes in cheaper parts of the state, such as the Central Valley.

The story is little better when it comes to K–12 education. California [spends more here than most states](#), too, with dismal results. If the state allowed parents to choose the best schools for their children and injected competition into school administration, student performance would undoubtedly improve.

But such sensible reforms face fierce opposition from the ideologically extreme nonprofit organizations and public-sector unions that dominate California politics. Homeless-services providers make political donations to the same politicians who give them billions in contracts to help the homeless, creating a homeless-industrial complex that discourages real change. And the reason that California’s children had to stay home when other children went back to school during the pandemic, for instance, is the outsize influence of the teachers’ union. After former state senate president Gloria Romero passed a “parent trigger” law, giving parents the right to take over underperforming schools, in 2010, the California Teachers Association spent millions on ads to tank her bid for schools superintendent, derailing her political career in the process. Democratic state legislators, [she recalled](#) later, “always wanted to know where’s CTA” because that’s “their sugar daddy.”

Conflicts of interest aside, the leaders of these organizations tend to be motivated more by power than by money. Teachers’ union officials “walk around [in Sacramento] like they’re God,” observed Romero. A nonprofit activist named Jennifer Friedenbach, who runs the Coalition on Homelessness, has accumulated so much power in San Francisco through sheer ideological influence, manipulation of language, and bullying that she effectively controls hundreds of millions of the city’s budget spent on homelessness. L.A. County’s advocate-dominated Board of Supervisors controls both the city’s and the county’s spending on mental health and education and is thus more powerful than state legislators.

Or consider environmental nonprofits. Groups like the Sierra Club, Natural Resources Defense Council, and Climate Works often dictate what infrastructure can get built and combine pro-

scarcity environmentalism with woke identity politics. For half a century, these neo-Malthusians have blocked new housing, power plants, and water storage and desalination in the state. Many of the advocacy groups support policies that license self-destructive behavior, the true driver of crime and homelessness. No city needs to have any unsheltered homeless. Shelters can be built; people can be required to sleep in them. California cities don't do this because progressive politicians have, for decades, demanded that taxpayer resources flow to expensive apartment units rather than to low-cost shelter beds. Groups like Friedenbach's Coalition on Homelessness protest, lobby, and sue to prevent the city from requiring that people sleep indoors. California's progressive leaders, judges, and voters have disempowered the police, reduced the state's jail and prison populations by nearly one-third, and allowed the spread of public camping, drug use, and prostitution.

The progressive defense of urban chaos is that it is cruel, racist, and immoral to insist that criminals, addicts, and the mentally ill obey the law. When a homeless man shot and killed an Oakland postal worker in January 2023, a local politician came to the aid of the criminal's family, not the victim's. Such behavior is typical. In California, addicts and the mentally ill are treated as sacred victims and permitted to take over large parts of cities. To victims, everything should be given, and from them, nothing required. Once labeled victims, they become blameless; if they harm others, it is the system's fault. These ideas, once radical, are today the conventional views of the people who run California, from its legislature to its governor's office to the myriad organizations that influence them.



Los Angeles has one of the nation's largest homeless populations. (FREDERIC J. BROWN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES)

To understand the intellectual roots of this toxic policy mix, Friedrich Nietzsche is an illuminating guide. Writing in the nineteenth century, Nietzsche foresaw a coming crisis of nihilism. Nihilism had at least two manifestations, in his view. One was the notion that life has no inherent meaning, value, or purpose. Humans are no different from frogs, as the nihilistic antihero, or villain, of Ivan Turgenev's 1862 novel, *Fathers and Sons*, explained. Thinking and feelings are just the excretions of bodily organs; there's nothing divine about humans. Nihilism was also a psychology and ideology of destruction.

For Nietzsche (and others who followed), the first form of nihilism precedes the second. If life has no inherent meaning, then humans can, say, pursue empty pleasure, whether through drugs or sex or some other form of escapism, at no cost. But another response to the loss of meaning has been to invent new religions, usually in the form of totalizing political ideologies that provide the intoxication of power. As Communism was the nihilistic alternative to industrial capitalism and fascism the nihilistic alternative to liberalism, woke progressivism can be seen as the nihilistic alternative to our postindustrial, post-scarcity society, whose institutional structures are the enemy of sacrosanct racial and sexual identities. It is a political ideology, a psychopathology, and a religion all in one.

Today's nihilists are busily destroying the institutions that make civilization possible. Of course, opposing civilization is ultimately possible only if one takes it for granted. Our grandparents may have known what real poverty was like, but few of us do. Today's nihilism is the ideology of the privileged, the children of the people who worked hard and made it—a descent from the successful nineteenth-century Russian farmers in *Fathers and Sons* to California's 1960s-era "trustafarians," who inherited nest eggs and never had to work, to San Francisco's contemporary homeless, who get \$700 per month in cash welfare from the city and most likely spend it on drugs. That such nihilism took root in America's most prosperous, libertine state should not surprise us: there were always more bars than churches in San Francisco, the last American city to shut down opium dens.

California's decline, then, flows from the same forces that destroy all once-great civilizations. It became decadent and nihilistic, escapist and intoxicated. A victim of its own success, it has been brought down by the spoiled children of its successful creators. Unable to create a civilization as glittering as the one created after World War II, with a string of great schools, waterways, and cities, the baby-boomer generation used its power to unmoor civilization—and the power plants, meritocracy, and law and order upon which it depends. What Governor Edmund Brown helped build after World War II, his son, Governor Jerry Brown, sought to undo. This may seem paradoxical. But even the will to ruin, Nietzsche noted, is a kind of will to power. For post-Cold War progressives to put their stamp on the world, they could not simply modify the glittering California civilization that their predecessors had created. They had to destroy it.



*Is it possible to be optimistic about California's prospects? The spread of nihilism, decadence, and secularism can appear ineluctable. Voters say that they are unhappy about homelessness, but Angelenos voted for progressive Democrats for mayor and city council. In focus groups, white voters in Los Angeles expressed horror at the thought of voting for a white man over a black woman; they didn't like what they thought such a vote would say about them. Neither Latino nor black Angelenos were nearly as antiwhite as the white voters. In other focus groups, voters stated the belief—a preposterous one—that centralized power plants shouldn't be necessary and that solar panels and batteries should be enough. Few residents today make the connections between those two trends and the decreasing availability of reliable, cheap electricity.*

While politicians across the board are more pro-police than they were in the summer of 2020, they are doing nothing to address the state legislature's overregulation of policing, which is [driving good officers away from dangerous cities](#). When cities try to bring homeless people indoors, progressive judges block them. Yet nobody is talking about the need to centralize shelter, as well as psychiatric and addiction care, at the state level, in order to get the state's unsheltered homeless indoors and, one hopes, rehabilitated. And while the Covid-19 lockdowns alienated many parents, they have not organized into a force sufficient to resist the teachers' unions, much less to secure school choice.

It is thus understandable why so many have given up on California and treat it simply as an example of what not to do. But change in the U.S. often starts in California and moves east. And neither party has set forth a compelling alternative to the California model. Anti-woke liberals and conservatives alike who have chosen to stay in California should take the opportunity to build a new political movement based on a clear-eyed assessment of the situation, an expansive vision, and first principles. A political coalition that differentiated itself from the Democratic Party's progressive wing, while retaining support from moderate Democrats, could command immense political support by focusing on two issues alone—homelessness and schools. Add public order, nuclear energy, water desalination, and sensible housing policies, and such a movement could be of generational importance.

First principles first. Such an alliance should have humanism at its foundation. To be pro-human is to be pro-health and pro-civilization. The possibility that life has no inherent meaning could even lead some who hold this view to infuse it with meaning as an act of faith, saying yes to life and the well-ordered society. Nihilism could, taken as a spur to action, serve as a kind of death meditation: an awareness that our time on earth is finite and that we should make the most of it. At the heart of civilization are cities, which, to flourish, must make their public spaces available for all to use. That means that people must be forbidden to camp on sidewalks, no matter how victimized they are. Though many mental-health problems can be improved via exercise, cognitive behavioral therapy, and psychiatric care, California has failed to increase the physical exercise of its children or to invest in sufficient inpatient psychiatric capacity, despite voters



repeatedly voting to tax themselves more to invest in mental health. A new anti-woke alliance must protect civilization by improving human health, from better physical education in public schools to the enforcement of anti-camping laws to higher-quality, standardized, and statewide delivery of mental-health care to California residents.

This agenda would be popular, I believe. A large majority of California voters say that they support mandating psychiatric care or rehab for people who break laws against camping, drug use, and defecation in public. Even in progressive San Francisco, nearly three-quarters of the public support removing homeless people from the streets and requiring that they move in to shelters, go to rehab, or get psychiatric care. Already, to the extent that politicians in L.A. and San Francisco are capable of addressing public safety, it's thanks to the popular backlash against rising crime.

Other crises in California are spurring change in the right direction. Serial blackouts and changing attitudes toward nuclear power resulted in Governor Newsom's decision to keep operating the state's last nuclear plant last year. Anti-Malthusians should next demand the restart of San Onofre in Southern California, more reactors at Diablo Canyon, and more natural-gas plants, so that the state doesn't have to keep relying upon old diesel generators in minority neighborhoods.

California presages the country's demographic future, and its leaders should forge a pan-racial alliance that accounts for past injustices without creating new ones. California voters in 2020 rejected racial preferences in education, employment, and contracting by a larger margin than they had a quarter-century earlier. Working-class members of minority groups don't share elite ideological obsessions; they want public order, good jobs, and better schools. Now, the anti-woke movement should be seeking school choice and the recriminalization of loitering with the intention of soliciting prostitution, theft, and drugs. And the state should consider innovative ways to facilitate not only recovery from addiction but also reintegration into the workplace and with families, while also keeping the binds of the justice system intact until the most psychiatrically disordered Californians are treated.

At the heart of the new anti-woke alliance's offering to California voters is a memory of what California once was—and anger at those preventing its restoration. California's cities should be safe, its schools the greatest, and its people the healthiest, yet they're not—and taxpayers' money too often makes things worse. In the grip of ecological and human pessimism, the state's leaders are pursuing an antihuman agenda.

Such anger should be motivating. It is grotesque that, in the name of repairing slavery, we are depriving all kids, but especially black ones, of a proper education. It is abhorrent that, in the name of helping victims, we are leaving them to be assaulted, overdose, and die on our

sidewalks. We can't change the fact that California is America's synecdoche the part standing for the whole. And so we must change the synecdoche.

*Michael Shellenberger (born June 16, 1971) is an American author and former public relations professional whose writing has focused on the intersection of politics, the environment, [climate change](#) and [nuclear power](#), as well as more recently on how he believes [progressivism](#) is linked to [homelessness](#), [drug addiction](#) and [mental illness](#). He is a co-founder of the [Breakthrough Institute](#) and the California Peace Coalition.<sup>[3]</sup> He is also the founder of Environmental Progress. This article first appeared in the City Journal of February 26, 2023.*

## ANNOUNCEMENTS



## ANDY CALDWELL SHOWNOW LOCAL IN SLO

### GETTING DISASTER HELP FROM SBA

#### INITIAL STEPS: Register with FEMA, Apply with SBA, and Visit a Disaster Recovery Center

- ◆ **Step 1:** Register with FEMA at [www.disasterassistance.gov](http://www.disasterassistance.gov) -or- [www.disasterassistance.gov/es](http://www.disasterassistance.gov/es) (Spanish). This is the fastest way to register for help and you will receive a FEMA number unique to your application.
- ◆ **Step 2:** [Apply For A Disaster Loan \(sba.gov\), \[disasterloanassistance.sba.gov](http://Apply For A Disaster Loan (sba.gov), [disasterloanassistance.sba.gov). The section "What You Need to Know" provides information on the SBA federal low-interest disaster loans for **businesses of all sizes, most private nonprofit organizations (including places of worship), homeowners, and renters.**
- ◆ **Note:** Homeowners and renters should submit their SBA disaster loan application, even if they are not sure if they will need or want a loan. If SBA cannot approve your application, in most cases we refer the applicant to FEMA's Other Needs Assistance (ONA) program for possible additional assist.

### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- ◆ SBA offers federal low-interest disaster loans to **businesses of all sizes, most private nonprofit organizations, homeowners, and renters.**
- ◆ Businesses of any size may borrow up to \$2 million to repair and replace damaged property and working capital needs caused by the disaster.
- ◆ Small businesses, small businesses engaged in aquaculture, and most private nonprofit organizations (including places of worship) may borrow up to \$2 million to repair and replace damaged property and working capital needs caused by the disaster.
- ◆ If over 50% of revenue is carried from agricultural, farming, and ranching business-contact your local United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Farm Service Agency (FSA) for available programs.
- ◆ If you are a homeowner or renter, FEMA may refer you to SBA.
- ◆ Homeowners may borrow up to \$200,000 to repair or replace their primary residence.
- ◆ Homeowners and renters may borrow up to \$40,000 to replace personal property, including vehicles.
- ◆ SBA Customer Service #: 1.800.659.2955
- ◆ FEMA Customer Service # 1.800.621.3362

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## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

### MEMBERSHIP OPTIONS:

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

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

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

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

### MEMBER INFORMATION:

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

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