

# COLAB

San Luis Obispo County



The Coalition of Labor Agriculture and Business

## WEEKLY UPDATE FEBRUARY 18-24, 2024

### CCLAB

San Luis Obispo County



## 15TH ANNUAL DINNER & FUNDRAISER

THURSDAY, MARCH 21, 2024  
MADONNA INN EXPO CENTER

### STRAIGHT SHOOTING FROM OUR SHERIFFS

*The central coast's two most prominent lawmen will team up to enlighten us on the current wave of challenges and opportunities facing law enforcement. The epochal woke assault on justice and behavioral standards combined with budget and staffing limitations underscore the dangerous trend. This will be an undiluted straight shooting forum of major relevance.*

5:00 PM SOCIAL HOUR & OPEN BAR  
6:15 PM FILET MIGNON DINNER & WINE

AUCTION WILL BE HELD AFTER DINNER  
(AUCTIONEER TODD VENTURA)

**\$150/ PERSON**  
**\$1,500/ TABLE (SEATS 10)**



Ian Parkinson, SLO County Sheriff



Bill Brown, SB County Sheriff

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**

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**NO BOS MEETING**

**CENTRAL COAST COMMUNITY ENERGY AUTHORITY  
POLCY BOARD**

**INVESTMENT RETURNS BUILD RESERVES**

**REGULATORY CHALLENGES AND COST PRESSURES**

**2022-23 ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT SAYS THEY ARE FLUSH**

**PLANNING COMMISSION**

**CAMBRIA CHRISTMAS MARKET SEEKS 15-YEAR EXTENSION**

**NEW 312 UNIT APARTMENT HOUSE FOR NIPOMO  
BOTH MARKET RATE AND LOW INCOME UNITS**

**STATE LANDS COMMISSION**

**BRIEFING ON OFFSHORE WIND PROJECTS  
LOCALS WON'T HAVE MUCH TO SAY**

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**NO REGULAR BOS MEETING THIS WEEK**

**SPECIAL BOS MEETING**

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**LAFCO CANCELLED**

**IWMA**

**BUDGET MODIFICATIONS FOR REJOIN OF COUNTY**

**EMERGENT ISSUES**

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**PROPOSITION 1 IS AN EXPENSIVE SCAM THAT MUST BE  
REJECTED ON MARCH 5<sup>TH</sup>**

**NEWSOM WANTS TO ADD \$6.4 BILLION TO  
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PROPOSITION 1**

**COLAB IN DEPTH  
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**DO LEFTISTS NOW BELIEVE LEFTISM DOESN'T WORK?**  
*In 2024—an election year—the left is trying to undo what it created without  
explaining why and what they did to us and themselves as well*  
**BY VICTOR DAVIS HANSON**

**HOW PROGRESSIVE POLICIES ARE DESIGNED FOR  
CIVILIZATIONAL SUICIDE**  
*Evidence now clearly establishes that moderate liberals should face reality and  
reject the policies of the progressive vanguard, leading them to civilizational  
suicide*  
**BY JOHN D. O'CONNOR**

**GUILT-TRIPPING OUR WAY TO SELF-DESTRUCTION**  
*Most, if not all, of the major societal problems we are confronting  
today are a direct result of abandoning the principles that are the  
underpinnings of American culture*  
**BY LAURA HOLLIS**



**THIS WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS**

**ALL MEETINGS ARE AT 9:00 AM UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED**

**No Board of Supervisors Meeting on Tuesday, February 20, 2024 (Not Scheduled)**

**Central Coast Community Energy Authority Meeting of Wednesday, February 21, 2024 (scheduled), 1:30 PM, 70 Garden Court, Suite 300 Monterey, CA 93940 and <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82380649701>**

**Item 4 - Receive a report on 3CE’s investment returns and diversification.** The Authority has built up a large cash balance of \$260 million as a hedge against future volatility in the energy markets and/or regulatory turbulence.

3CE banks with River City Bank of Sacramento. Several other CCAs also bank with River City Bank. 3CE also invests its reserves with River City Bank and River City affiliate, Royal Bank of Canada. So much for its adopted policy of utilizing services and vendors within its service area.

River City Bank (RCB) of Sacramento, the largest local bank in the Sacramento Region, has been 3CE’s bank since its inception as Monterey Community Power. It turns out that RCB has cornered the market as the bank of choice for many of the community energy authorities throughout the state. Its deposits have grown exponentially since the advent of the CCEs.

Under a new investment strategy, detailed by Staff at the June 2022 Policy Board of Directors meeting, excess cash will be allocated to higher-yielding instruments authorized by 3CE’s Investment Policy. Staff allocated \$75 million to RBC Asset Management (GAM Global) under a contract approved by the Operations Board of Directors to Royal Bank of Canada, headquartered in Toronto, Canada, at its June meeting. RBC GAM began managing the funds on August 11. Annualized yields in August on this allocation were approximately 1.8%, reflecting the partial month.

*Staff also negotiated an agreement with River City Bank, CCCE’s commercial banking partner, to invest in treasury-indexed Certificates of Deposit (CD). These CDs yield Treasury rates + 10 basis points on the date of execution and waive penalties if CCCE needs to withdraw funds early due to business needs. In August and September, Staff allocated \$25 MM to these products with a weighted average maturity of 3.9 months and a weighted average annualized yield of approximately 3%. For reference, the iShares Short Treasury Bond ETF, which consists of US Treasury bonds maturing in less than a year, had an annualized yield of 1.67% for the August 11-August 31 period. Staff will begin including performance benchmarks in September, the first full month using the new strategy.*

Cash and Investment Balances	
Operating Accounts	
River City Bank	\$ 144,922,284
Chase	5,321,209
<b>sub-total</b>	<b>150,243,494</b>
Investment Accounts	
Royal Bank of Canada	\$ 80,080,243
Schwab	30,230,860
<b>sub-total</b>	<b>110,311,103</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 260,554,597</b>

River City itself has substantial investments in US Treasury notes. In fact, they constitute almost half of its assets, which in turn are counted as backup to its depositors' accounts. It is not clear if River City's notes are short- or long-term. The same applies to its Federal Agency Securities. What are their terms and interest rates?

Investments - Total	787	773	698	542
Securities Bought Under Resale Agreement	-	40	-	-
Treasury Securities	331	352	217	45
Federal Agency Securities	91	53	205	373
State & Municipal Securities	5	6	5	5
Mortgage Backed Securities	107	135	133	42
Other Securities	95	165	117	42
Other Investments	158	21	21	35

**In thousands**

All we know at this point is that the recent collapse of Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) was caused because the Bank holds too many long-term low interest Treasury notes and Federal Agency Securities. As the Wall Street Journal pointed out last fall:

*SVB held tens of billions of dollars in long-term government bonds. On its face, this may seem like a prudent investment for a bank, but Treasury securities are riskless only when held to maturity. If you have to sell before then, you can easily lose money if market rates have risen since you first purchased the bond. For example, buying a 10-year U.S. Treasury bond with a 2% coupon at par and holding it for 10 years earns you 2% per annum. But if you sell early and rates have jumped—say 4% since you bought the bond—then the price will have declined to about \$838 per \$1,000 face value, meaning you incur a loss of \$162 per \$1,000 bond. Though that risk is implicit in every bond purchase, accounting and regulatory frameworks can obscure it in a way that results in big bonuses for bank officer*

**Item 6 - Regulatory Update.** Like the investor owned utilities, other CCAs, and industries, 3CE must deal with a multiplicity of complex and ever expanding regulations imposed by the California Public Utilities Commission, State Energy Commission, State Air Board, and the California Independent System Operator, which regulates the grid. A key component is the resource adequacy requirement (RA).

*The Resource Adequacy (RA) program is the California Public Utilities Commission's (CPUC) main grid reliability planning program. All load serving entities (LSEs) under the CPUC's jurisdiction, including CCAs, must demonstrate purchase of a specified amount of eligible RA generation capacity each month and year to comply with RA program requirements. Increasing demand for and a decreasing supply of eligible RA capacity over the past five years have resulted in sharply increased prices and unprecedented difficulty procuring sufficient RA to achieve compliance. Over the past year the CPUC has also sought to tie RA compliance to other, unrelated functions such as CCA expansion into new communities.*

*CalCCA<sup>1</sup> submitted a reform proposal on January 19th seeking to stabilize the RA market, reign in prices, and encourage out of state participation in the California RA market. If accepted, the recommendations would help ensure a smooth transition through the first SOD RA framework compliance year. A PD on party proposals is expected in May.*

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<sup>1</sup> The lobbying group which represents 3CE and the other CCA's

The inherent tension is that they must have contracts for energy on the most extreme days. This is very expensive, especially since solar is done on the hot summer evenings. It also undermines their CO<sub>2</sub> free requirements, because nuclear is not counted by the State as CO<sub>2</sub> free and the mix of energy in the evening is mainly natural gas.

**Item 13 - Receive a Presentation of 3CE's FY 2022-23 Audited Financial Statements.** The report states in part:

*For the year ending September 30, 2023, 3CE increased its net position and liquidity by \$34.7 million and \$71.5 million, respectively. These results and ongoing efforts by staff are strong indicators of 3CE's sound financial health and positioned to serve its customers and deliver on its mission. A strong net position of \$243.3 million supports 3CE's newly adopted Financial Policies that established robust strategic reserves to sustain service delivery. Adequate reserves enable flexible financial planning to develop rate structures and future capital projects and deal with unforeseen emergencies. This report was presented to the Audit & Finance Committee on February 21, 2024.*

For FY 2022-23, 3CE had operating revenues of \$461.2 million and a profit of \$34.7 million, or 7%. Thus, while they have built up large reserves, their operating margin is thin.

**California State Lands Commission Meeting of Monday, February 26, 2024 (Scheduled) 12:00 PM, Holiday Inn – Downtown Sacramento and [www.cal-span.org](http://www.cal-span.org)**

**Item 84 - Presentation by the California Energy Commission on the Assembly Bill 525 Drafts Strategic Plan for Offshore Wind Development.** This is a discussion of the regulatory process by which the permits for the individual leases will be approved or denied.



The key Federal permitting agencies are included in the list below. There seems to be somewhat of a conflict of interest, since BOEM is pushing the whole program. Local permitting involvement seems to be, at best, an afterthought, as noted below.

***Feds***

- *Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM)*
- *Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE)*
- *Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) • Department of Defense (DOD)*
- *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)*
- *National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)*
- *U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)*
- *Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)*

- U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)

*Local and Other Permitting of California's 58 counties, 19 border the Pacific Ocean. Depending on the location of proposed offshore wind development areas, several counties and cities could be involved in permitting some portion of an offshore wind development project. Counties and cities with certified local coastal programs may conduct Coastal Act review and issue CDPs within their areas of jurisdiction. County and city jurisdictions start at the mean high tide line and extend to the end of the coastal zone, which may vary based on location. A developer must obtain a local coastal development permit for development within the coastal zone. In addition, city permits could be required depending on the location and nature of offshore wind development and any ancillary portions of the project. Additional local ministerial approvals (such as grading, sewer, waste permits, and so forth) may also be required for offshore wind projects.*

*For offshore wind projects in the vicinity of the Humboldt and Morro Bay WEAs, permits and approvals may be needed from the following land use agencies. Humboldt WEA*

- Humboldt Bay Harbor, Recreation and Conservation District
- Humboldt County<sup>74</sup>

*The cities of Arcata, Blue Lake, Eureka, Ferndale, Fortuna, Rio Dell, and Trinidad*

- The North Coast Air Quality Management District
- Other jurisdictions if seaport facilities are outside the county Morro Bay WEA 74 Humboldt County is currently updating its Local Coastal Program, with a goal of gaining approval for permitting authority within the coastal zone in the county 35

- San Luis Obispo County
- The cities of Arroyo Grande, Atascadero, Grover Beach, Morro Bay, Paso Robles, Pismo Beach, and San Luis Obispo. Of note, the City of Morro Bay manages Morro Bay Harbor.
- San Luis Obispo County Air Pollution Control District
- Other jurisdictions if seaport facilities are outside the county

*Staff will further evaluate how to address local permitting as part of the permitting roadmap in the AB 525 strategic plan.*

### **Planning Commission Meeting of Thursday, February 22, 2024 (Scheduled)**

**Item 3 - Hearing to consider a request by Pacific Cambria LLC for a Development Plan / Coastal Development Permit (C-DRC2022-00050) to allow a new temporary event program, the Cambria Christmas Market, to operate for up to fifteen holiday seasons. The holiday season would begin the Friday after Thanksgiving (Black Friday) and would last through the last day of the year (New Year's Eve). The hours of operation are Wednesday through Sunday (and all of Christmas week through the last day of the year (New Year's Eve) from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. The market would include temporary lighting, seasonal displays, and concession stands. Forty-six temporary vendor booths would be erected for the event and would be dismantled and removed at the conclusion of the event. Four temporary canopy covers would be erected for outdoor seating and dining purposes. The maximum attendance on any given night would be limited to not more than 3,000 guests. The market would be located within the interior of the Cambria Pines Lodge grounds and at the adjacent Cambria Nursery. The applicant is requesting a 15-year extension. The**

opposition seems muted this time, as there are only a few letters of opposition and some of these are only requesting some modifications. The staff is recommending a ten year permit. There are pages of required conditions with which the applicant will have to agree if the permit is approved. It is a complicated event to stage, with parking off site served by shuttle busses.

Tour companies promote it extensively. Now if Cal Poly, its alumnae, the City of SLO, the County, and REACH would front building the football team into a Class I-A program, we could have a great time. Imagine a Texas football weekend in SLO!

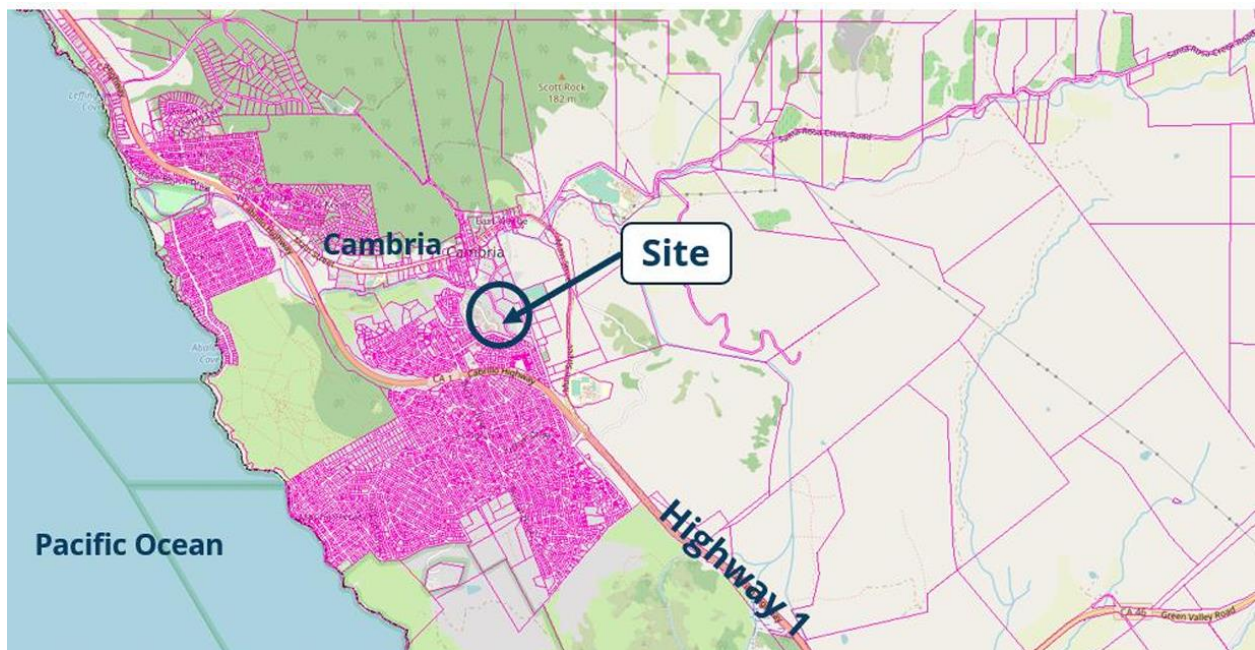
**Comparison Table Showing Proposed Changes from Prior Approval(s)**

	<b>Prior Approval(s)</b>	<b>Current Proposal</b>
<b>Event Permit Duration</b>	8 years (5 years plus 3-year extension granted)	Applicant requests up to 15 holiday seasons County staff recommends 10 holiday seasons
<b>Event Begin and End Dates</b>	Black Friday through December 24 <sup>th</sup>	Extend the permit from Black Friday through the Last day of the year (New Years Eve)
<b>Number of Temporary Vendor Booths</b>	26	46

\*\*All other event components will remain the same as prior year operations such as, but not limited to,: Maximum number of attendees, shuttle routes, lighting plan, traffic and pedestrian management plan, on and off site parking plan, hours of operation, etc.

The Coastal Commission has not yet provided any formal comments but is always a lurking threat. That tiger may doze for years and then turn on you savagely in a Nano second. If approved, the permit is appealable to both the Board of Supervisors and eventually to the Coastal Commission.

The event is hugely popular, and policy officials, who would kill it, would reap severe public criticism.







**Item 4 - Hearing to consider a request by Abbott | Reed Inc. and the Housing Authority of San Luis Obispo (HASLO) for a Conditional Use Permit (N-DRC2023-00001) to construct 313 multi-family residential units on three parcels totaling approximately 10.48 acres (project; Mesa Trails Apartment Community). The project would include the development of 240 market-rate residential units configured in 15 three-story buildings, 73 affordable residential units configured in two three-story buildings, on-site parking areas, a variety of on-site amenities, and landscaping. The project would be located on the west side of**

**Frontage Road south of Hill Street within the community of Nipomo, in the Inland subarea of the South County Planning Area and is partially located within the West Taft Corridor Design Plan Area.** This is the largest proposed truly new project in the South County that we have seen in years. The staff recommends approval of the application.

**Table 2. Summary of Proposed Multi-Family Apartment Buildings**

Building Design	Number of Buildings	Affordability	Individual Building Square Footage (sf)	Number of Units per Building	Energy Connections
A	10	Market-rate	11,422	12	All-electric
B	5	Market-rate	19,665	24	All-electric
C	1	Affordable – lower income	26,247	42	All-electric
D	1	Affordable – lower income	22,557	31	All-electric





## LAST WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

### Special Board of Supervisors Meeting of Friday, February 16, 2024 8:30 AM (Completed)

**Item 1 - PERSONNEL (Government Code section 54957.) It is the intention of the Board to Meet in closed session to: (1) Consider Public Employee Appointment for the Position Of County Administrative Officer.** The Board met from 8:30 AM to 2:00 PM. County Counsel stated that they took no reportable action. It is likely that they were interviewing the finalists. CAL Coast News subsequently reported that there were 8 finalists, which the Board intended to winnow down.

Date and Time of Special Meeting:	February 16, 2024, at 8:30 A.M.
Place of Special Meeting:	Board of Supervisors Chambers, 1055 Monterey Street San Luis Obispo, CA 93408
Business to be considered:	See agenda below.



**Hope for one who lives the vow of professional apolitical government  
“Without Fear or Favor”**

**Integrated Waste Management Authority (IWMA) Meeting of Wednesday, February 14, 2024 (Completed)**

**Item 11 - Resolution 2024-02-01: Approval of Mid-Year Budget Adjustment Request**  
**Recommendation: That your Board adopt Resolution 2024-02-01 Mid-Year Budget Adjustment Request to accommodate the County of San Luis Obispo rejoining the IWMA.**  
The hot links on the agenda packet to see the detail were dead and would not open. Thus, it was not possible to see the discussion and recommendation.

**Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) Meeting of Thursday, February 15, 2024 (Cancelled)**

The agency posted a cancellation notice. There was no explanation.

## **EMERGENT ISSUES**

**Item 1 - Susan Shelley: Proposition 1 is an expensive scam that must be rejected on March 5<sup>th</sup>. By Susan Shelly, California Political Review of February 14, 2024. The article originally appeared in the Orange County Register.**

Gov. Gavin Newsom, who collected unlimited contributions to his campaign to fend off an attempted recall, is collecting again.

This time it's for "Governor Newsom's Ballot Measure Committee," which is currently dedicated to passing Proposition 1 on the March 5 statewide ballot.  
The measure is terrible, but the collecting business is going very well.

In January, the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria kicked in \$1.5 million. In December, contributions of \$1 million each came from the California Correctional Peace Officers Association, the California Hospital Committee on Issues Sponsored by the California Association of Hospitals and Health Systems, the Kaiser Foundation Health Plan and Hospitals, and the Members' Voice of the State Building and Construction Trades Council of California.

Sutter Health donated \$1 million in October and another \$150,000 in January. The Service Employees International Union Political Education and Action Fund contributed \$500,000 in December, and SEIU Local 2015's PAC added \$275,000 more. The California Building Industry Association Issues Committee donated \$250,000, and so did the Issues PAC of the California State Council of Laborers.

Blue Shield of California gave \$200,000. Elevance Health, together with its affiliate Anthem Blue Cross, donated \$125,000.

Uber gave more than \$300,000, Doordash threw in \$100,000, and Airbnb wrote a check for \$50,000.

Five- and six-figure donations came in from associations representing law enforcement officers, dentists, domestic workers, teachers, firefighters, new car dealers, doctors and nurses. Generous donations came in from Dimension Energy, LLC, in Atlanta and the Community Solar Action Fund in Washington, D.C.

Sensing a pattern here?

The government of California directly negotiates contracts that determine the pay and benefits of a lot of people. It also legislates mandates that can make the vendors of certain products and services extraordinarily wealthy, or can put them out of business.

When the governor of California comes collecting, he never goes home empty-handed. As with the governor's campaign committee to fight the recall, there is no contribution limit on donations to a ballot measure committee. There's also no limit on behested payments, a category of giving that Newsom has used to raise huge sums from entities with business before the state. Newsom asked for and received payments totaling over \$4.2 million to fund his 2023 inaugural festivities. The list of donors who made these payments "at the behest" of the governor is remarkably similar to the list of donors giving to the governor's ballot measure committee in support of Proposition 1.

It seems like this kind of activity would end in handcuffs, but it's completely legal in California as long as the forms are filled out correctly.

According to its most recent form, Governor Newsom's Ballot Measure Committee had \$14.2 million in cash on hand as of January 20. Expect to see TV commercials and stacks of campaign mail, all paid for by special-interest money, to sell you on Proposition 1. Don't fall for it.

Proposition 1 borrows money to pay for more of the same homelessness policy that has shown no success despite billions of dollars of spending. The measure authorizes the state to add \$6.38 billion to California's already \$80 billion bond debt, but that money buys only 6,800 treatment beds and "up to" 4,350 housing units. With interest, \$6.38 billion could cost \$12 billion by the time taxpayers finish paying back the debt.

About \$4.4 billion would be spent building unspecified "places" for mental health or addiction treatment. All decisions about what to build and where to build it will be made by the state sometime in the future. It's a blank check.

Two billion dollars would go into the program that currently gives local governments money to buy and renovate hotels, turning them into housing with optional services on-site. Proposition 1 requires these projects to pay the "prevailing wage" for construction labor, raising costs considerably. The projects also are required to comply with the core principles of Housing First, meaning no one can be required to participate in a sobriety or treatment program as a condition of receiving this housing.

You might not want one of these projects in your neighborhood given that the housing units may be awarded to people who are actively using hard drugs, potentially turning the building and the community into a magnet for dealers and problems.

The proponents of Proposition 1 already thought of that, and here's what they did about it: they removed the ability for communities to have any input into the approval or location of these projects. The measure requires streamlined, ministerial approval.

To fool Californians into voting for Proposition 1, the governor has been emphasizing that it will help veterans. In fact, only 2,350 housing units are projected to be built for veterans from this \$6.38 billion bond. That's a lot of money for not much help.

But the worst part of Proposition 1 is its robbery of county mental health services funding.

**Item 2 - Newsom Wants to add \$6.4 Billion to California’s \$1.6 Trillion Debt with Proposition 1. February 13, 2024 by Lee Ohanian.**

California’s state and local government debt is [roughly \\$1.6 trillion](#), which includes a proper accounting of the state’s unfunded liabilities. To put this in perspective, this works out to about \$125,000 of debt per California household and [exceeds the annual GDP of all but 13 countries](#).

**California’s Government Debt**  
Total Estimated Debt and Unfunded Liabilities by Entity

	\$=B
<b>Liabilities and OPEB</b>	
Bond Debt - 6/30/2019 - state government	145
Bond Debt - 6/30/2019 - local agencies	361
Other Post Employment Liability - 6/30/2019	184
Deferred Infrastructure Maintenance	67
<hr/>	
Subtotal - Bonds and OPEB	757
<b>Underfunded Pensions</b>	
Official Estimate - 6/30/2020	298
Additional underfunding (lower discount rate)	584
<hr/>	
Subtotal - Underfunded Pensions	882
<hr/>	
Total	1,639

California is in no position to increase its debt, and not just because of its past over borrowing. California is losing businesses and taxpayers to other states, and at rates that have accelerated since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. To put California’s losses in perspective, since February 2020—the last month before COVID-related shutdowns took hold—California lost roughly 366,000 jobs, while the US gained about 5.4 million jobs in the same period. Because of the loss of population and businesses and because of irresponsible budgeting, California now faces a \$58 billion state budget deficit in the 2024–25 fiscal year and deficits of about \$30 billion after that.

Despite this reality, Gavin Newsom wants California voters to pass Proposition 1, a \$6.38 billion dollar bond issue to build additional drug treatment facilities and permanent housing for the homeless and those with addiction and mental health issues. It is about time that California politicians realize addiction is a huge part of homelessness, which is a view that has been flat-out denied within progressive policymaking circles for years. But I see no reason to expect that passing Proposition 1 will be anything more than doubling down on California’s previous failures to sensibly deal with these issues.

One reason is that politicians and homeless advocates still cling to an unsuccessful vision of dealing with homelessness through “Housing First” policies, which provide permanent housing for the homeless with no expectation that those with substance-abuse issues take responsibility for their actions and become sober.

The flawed idea behind Housing First was that providing homeless individuals with permanent housing would lead them to get their lives together, based on the assumption that substance abuse and mental health issues were a consequence of homelessness, not a cause. But this has not

proven to be the case. Beginning in 2016, California law has required that all state and local homeless policies follow Housing First principles. Before the new law took effect, chronic homelessness had been falling, from 65,000 in 2005 to 32,000 in 2015. But since Housing First became law, chronic homelessness in California has again risen to about 70,000, and the total number of homeless individuals has increased from about 115,000 in 2015 to about 181,000 today.

This increase in the number of homeless persons has coincided with enormous state spending on homelessness, including \$20 billion in just the last five years—more than three times as much as the proposed bond issue. Despite the obvious failure of Housing First, this policy continues today. If Proposition 1 passes, no one who is housed will be required to participate in treatment, and housing cannot be denied to someone who refuses treatment. One only needs to look at the cruel tragedy of wasted human lives, unfolding by the thousands every day in every major city in the state, to know that California has completely lost its way in dealing with these issues.

Another problem with the proposition is that politicians are not being honest with voters regarding the feasibility of creating new housing and treatment facilities. About \$2.2 billion from the bond would be used to build 4,350 permanent housing units. This works out to over \$500,000 per unit, which is outrageous and unrealistic at the same time. It is outrageous because building a small housing unit should in no way cost \$500,000. And it is unrealistic because the price tag is likely to be twice as high as that, [as comparable construction is now exceeding \\$1 million per unit](#). An important reason costs are so high is that builders must pay what is known as “prevailing wages” on these projects, which can be as much as twice as high as market wages. And these costs will continue to rise in the future.

Yet another problem is a lack of transparency and lack of local input. [Despite the bond description’s filling 69 pages](#), there are no specifics for where treatment facilities will be built, or what will be built, and there will be no role for local governments in making these decisions. These projects will be permitted using ministerial review, meaning: what the state wants, the state gets.

There is also the fact that California’s state government does not have a stellar record when it comes to using the funding from bond issues. The \$10 billion high-speed rail bond, which was passed in 2008, is now an obvious mistake, including that the state violated a key legal provision within the bond issue that required a pathway to funding before the project could go forward. Fifteen years later, there is no pathway and there almost certainly will never be one. Yet the state will continue to pour another \$25 billion to \$30 billion into building a rail line between Bakersfield and Merced, a 160-mile route with virtually no legitimate interest.

In the last 25 years, voters have approved eight bond issues totaling \$27 billion in funding for water infrastructure intended to improve water reliability, cleanliness, safety, and protection from flooding. Yet in that time, none of these areas have improved. Over one million Californians do not have clean drinking water. There have been no significant changes to the state’s water storage and conveyance in the last 50 years. And flooding and debris flows from storms have become even bigger safety and economic issues, resulting in 22 deaths and \$5 billion in damages last winter, and 24 deaths near Santa Barbara in 2018.

The state needs to significantly increase treatment facilities for those with mental illness and drug addiction. But Proposition 1 is not the way to do it. The state needs to require that the beneficiaries work toward the goal of becoming responsible for themselves, that building costs for these facilities are substantially reduced, and that local government has input into these decisions. There is adequate funding within the state's \$300 billion budget to deal with these issues. There is no need to push California further into debt.

**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**

**DO LEFTISTS NOW BELIEVE LEFTISM DOESN'T WORK?**  
*In 2024—an election year—the left is trying to undo what it created without explaining why and what they did to us and themselves as well*

**BY VICTOR DAVIS HANSON**

It is hard to destroy a naturally beautiful city like San Francisco, with ideal weather and stunning infrastructure inherited from far better earlier generations.

Yet San Francisco continues its much-publicized and self-inflicted doom loop. The productive classes still flee the increasingly crime-ridden city and its self-induced pathologies. The city is eroding not because of the doomsayers and not because of what people say about San Francisco, but because of what San Franciscans have done to San Francisco.

In 2023, more than 40,000 crimes were reportedly committed in San Francisco. The great majority of the perpetrators were not arrested or never jailed, indicted, or convicted.

Downtown office vacancy rates exceed 35 percent—and are climbing. Tourists have ostracized the city, given the thousands of homeless that occupy sidewalks and downtown. San Francisco claimed to be on the cutting-edge of the woke green movement, proud that it had enacted the most stringent environmental laws and regulations in the world—except when it came to defecation, injection, and urination on the sidewalks, doorways, and parks and during storms, when the toxic, effluviant human waste escapes sewage treatment and flows into the once-cherished bay.

In a mere five years, the city went from being one of the most envied and wealthy in the world with a vibrant nightlife and new high-tech start-ups to a West-Cost Detroit.

Now billionaires are trying to heal San Francisco by returning it to the old normality in the era before the progressive city councils, the boards of supervisors, and mayors defunded the police, allowed the homeless to absorb the downtown, and promoted prosecutors who refused to enforce the laws.

The rich are rallying to undo the damage wrought by the very officials whom they and the majority of the city voted into office. Their principles seem simple—start doing the very



opposite of the progressive agenda: enforce laws; arrest, convict, and incarcerate criminals; balance city budgets; and insist that the homeless leave the streets, follow the laws of the city, and relocate to shelters.

Across the bay, Oakland is in even worse shape. The city is on life support as a predictable result of progressive nihilism: do not enforce the law; do not arrest or jail criminals; raise taxes and overregulate businesses; pay exorbitant salaries to unionize public workers and bloated city staff; create toxic racial animosity. And the result is Oakland 2024, a mix between 19<sup>th</sup>-century Tombstone and contemporary Port-au-Prince.

The city is becoming a veritable ghost town as more overtaxed employers leave and more taxes rise on those who cannot leave. Cities like Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, and New York follow the same trajectory. They suffer the symptoms of a collective madness triggered by a combination of the destructive national COVID quarantine that birthed the zoom culture, the systematic attack on police after the George Floyd death, and a nihilist woke epidemic that postulated a binary of stereotyped oppressors and oppressed that saw the so-called punching bag victimizers shrug and move far away from blue states and cities.

In all these doom-loop cities, progressive reformers in the eleventh hour are now trying to undo the very policies of those they elected, as if they are slowly waking up from a collective madness—in an election year.

A similar confessional and re-examination among the left is occurring over the border catastrophe. Upon ascension, the Biden administration discarded, and ridiculed as illiberal, the security measures it had inherited from the prior administration—the end of catch-and-release, the demand that would-be refugees apply for entry in their home countries, the continuation of the wall, and Mexico’s responsibility to stop the transit of millions northward through its country.

Much of the sudden left-wing panic over the border is, of course, opportunistic because it is an election year and the left fears losing power for what it has done to the middle class. The optics of 8 million people swarming the border with impunity over the last few years have alienated the public. And the infusion of illegal migrants into inner-city and border communities threatens to hemorrhage the Democratic base.

So suddenly, no one takes credit for the once wonderful, porous Biden border. Abruptly, the crossings are blamed on Trump—as if no one remembers Joe Biden’s 2019 performance-art boast for illegal aliens to “surge” the border and how he facilitated that advice over the next three years. Abruptly, the Democrats insist that after three years and 8 million illegal aliens into the Biden administration, something must be done—perhaps even a rebranding of what worked in 2020 as their own.

The same rethinking of energy is occurring as well among the left—in an election year. The more they talk of banning natural gas, mandating electric vehicles, and ending internal combustion engines, the more they quietly reverse course, draining the strategic petroleum reserve, quietly allowing more federal oil leases, and encouraging national production to return to pre-COVID levels present during the Trump administration.

Frackers and drillers are working at near-full production. Production in 2023 ended up at 13.5 million barrels a day. In short, halfway through the Biden administration, as it desperately

drained the strategic petroleum reserve on the eve of the midterms to lower the high gasoline prices it had spawned, the left kept up the green rhetoric as it greenlighted oil production.

In early 2024, the U.S. is once again the largest oil producer in the world. Monthly production now matches or exceeds the high record months during the pre-COVID Trump administration.

Why the turnabout? Once again, reality strikes. In an election year, the return to reasonable energy prices is helping to moderate the inflation that the Biden administration fueled.

Energy self-sufficiency is a valuable foreign exchange earner. It allows the U.S. to be independent abroad, free from foreign leverage, whether from the Middle East, Russia, or Iran. American petroleum autarchy keeps the world price low and reduces the income of belligerent states. Again, the green rhetoric continues as the oil flows more than ever. Understood is that the left quietly agrees that oil and gas are necessary for the now slow transition to alternate fuels—in an election year.

Are any of our major cities, the vast majority blue and progressively run, still hammering away at the police, eager to cut more from the police? Are they rallying around another Soros-funded critical legal theory wannabe district attorney?

Or are they more likely desperately trying to offer bonuses to recruit officers whom, in just two or three years, they libeled and drove out?

Why the shift? Perhaps because they got their utopian wish that asserted that blameless criminals break the law only because of society's biases and unfairness, not because they calculate perceived benefits of criminality offset by its dangers. And now they rue the result—in an election year. In other words, leftists don't like getting mugged, car-jacked, assaulted, and beaten and fear their own policies are endangering their own safety.

Why are corporations no longer lavishing money on Black Lives Matter? Why are donations to Ivy League schools down? Is Professor Kendi still a hot ticket on the lecture circuit? Is the reparations movement picking up steam?

Or does the left now fear that its promotion of tribalism and guilt-ridden racial essentialism is leading to a race-obsessed, fractious society, headlong on its way to a Rwanda, former Yugoslavia, or Iraq—in an election year?

The Biden administration, staffed by Obama-era foreign policy apparatchiks and functionaries, sought to remake what National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan once bragged was a quiet inherited Middle East.

The progressive therapeutic approach was supposed to lead to an ecumenical Middle East. A tolerant, passive, turn-the-other cheek enlightened foreign policy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century would lead to a new, better Iran without nukes, a two-state solution of Hamas living peacefully with Israelis, while the occasionally raucous Houthis calmed down, Hezbollah would become more a partner than mere terrorists, Israel would be lectured and sermonized to as an overdog punching too much above its weight, and the childish Abrams Accords nonsense would end the work of Trump's conniving son-in-law, and the pariah Saudi Arabia.

Or so they thought.

So everything was rebooted to kinder and gentler premises—and thus the Biden administration blew up the once calm Middle East.

And now? Two carriers were dispatched to the Mediterranean. The U.S. is belatedly bombing and launching missiles to respond to some 170 attacks on American installations. In an election year, Biden seems baffled that distancing himself from Israel still earns him the moniker of “Genocide Joe” from once loyalist Democratic Arab-American communities.

The woke, Jacobin revolution was promoted by progressives, mostly out of guilt and insecurity, as an overdue remake of America based on therapeutic principles. For three years, it found a rare pathway to power, enacted much of what it had long wished, and discovered the result was not just a catastrophe but dangerous to the very architects themselves.

So now in 2024—an election year—the left is trying to undo what it created without explaining why and what they did to us and themselves as well.

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## **HOW PROGRESSIVE POLICIES ARE DESIGNED FOR CIVILIZATIONAL SUICIDE**

***EVIDENCE NOW CLEARLY ESTABLISHES THAT MODERATE  
LIBERALS SHOULD FACE REALITY AND REJECT THE  
POLICIES OF THE PROGRESSIVE VANGUARD, LEADING  
THEM TO CIVILIZATIONAL SUICIDE.***

**BY JOHN D. O’CONNOR**

We all understand, in the timeless words of the poet Robert Burns, that the best laid plans of mice and men often go awry. Most Americans are accustomed to assessing the various failed initiatives of our country’s leaders as well-intended actions that turned out badly. The Vietnam, Afghan, and Iraq wars, the 2008 financial meltdown, and the COVID pandemic overreaction, all in hindsight, can be viewed as simply the unfolding of human stupidity in the contingency of time.

In accordance, it is understandable that many are inclined to believe that our country’s current serious problems are, once again, merely the failed result of well-intentioned policies. But what if, we ask, seemingly fumbled programs were intended to be the initial throes of civilizational

suicide? What if apparent missteps were actually directed at the purposeful destruction of a prosperous, free, safe, and secure society?

As we examine the policies pushed by the Biden administration progressives regarding climate, national security, crime, and the border, we can rationally conclude that they are being purposely implemented to render our society unsuccessful, not successful, in its traditional aims, causing what could be the ultimate destruction of a thriving, liberal enlightenment society.

Let us begin with escalating climate mandates, now reaching gas stoves and tires, seeking the total elimination of fossil fuels. Because our mainstream media, more out of reflexive conformity than malevolence, constantly amplify climate alarmism, most Americans believe climate programs are designed in good faith to protect us from planetary disasters. Climate subsidies are aimed, they are led to believe, at increasing prosperity through good “green” jobs in emerging “green” industries, all part of the supposedly improved “Bidenomics” economy, however counterintuitive many think them to be.

When Biden, immediately upon assuming office, stopped issuing new drilling leases, canceled the Keystone Pipeline, and issued EPA regulations effectively shutting down multiple power plants in the near future, was he, however idealistically, trying to wean our country off of fossil fuels in favor of clean, “renewable” energy? If so, what could be wrong with that?

If the administration had calculated that lost energy from stifling fossil fuel sources could actually be replaced, these initiatives, even if overly optimistic, could be viewed as well-intended.

However, within the climate camp, it has been well known that fossil fuels, which power [82% of world energy needs](#), cannot conceivably be replaced by renewable energy to any substantial degree. So, as these policies take effect over the coming years, our [hospitals and medical centers](#), relying on petroleum-based plastic furniture, fixtures, and equipment, energy-dependent stainless-steel implements, and high-power physical plants, will be hit hard. Health care costs will soar, while treatment will decrease to emerging society levels. Our food costs, already rising dramatically, will skyrocket as petroleum fertilizer, now tripling yields, becomes economically impractical. Housing costs, dependent on fuel-powered equipment and concrete and steel needing massive energy inputs to manufacture, will put homeownership out of reach for all but the rich and reduce housing to cramped, third-world levels. And, of course, transportation will become an expensive luxury for both people and products.

But isn't this all meant well? For trusting, uncritical moderates and traditional liberals, yes. For the progressives pulling the strings, no.

[Maurice Strong](#), the Canadian socialist responsible for steering the United Nations into the bureaucratic sinecures of the climate alarmist [IPCC](#), has stated from the outset that his intention is the diminishment of the wealth of the Western industrialized nations, making them more like less-advantaged societies.

Although they tout their certainty, climate warriors conceal that for decades, their computerized GCMs (General Circulation Models) have over predicted global warming by 300%. Well, they respond when confronted by the knowledgeable, the increased heat was swallowed by the oceans, or perhaps tamped down by those pesky aerosols. They know better, but gullible, well-intentioned believers do not.

Documents from a key IPCC research center in East Anglia, the GRU, reveal the fear of climate activists that the public will learn of the [Medieval Warm Period](#) and that its temperatures were warmer than today without any claimed assistance from carbon dioxide. Progressive climatologists, in essence, know they are pushing a canard.

Progressive border policies need little discussion. When Biden was elected, the country was led to believe that he would aim to control the southern border, but do so in a humane, non-Trump manner, no longer putting children in cages (which in truth and in fact were Obama-inspired).

Of course, to any rational observer, it is now clear that the massive invasion at our southern border was intended by progressives. The “great replacement” theory is not needed to prove this invasion intentional, obvious to any observer. Three-star New York hotels and thousand-dollar-a-month payments to migrants? Free health care? These are among the positive incentives to illegally migrate, revealing intentionality after the maligned Trump proved that the border was substantially controllable.

The intended result of mass migration is not just new Democratic voters; the most obvious result. It is, more significantly, a deliberately overwhelming burden on our social welfare system, heretofore supported sufficiently by taxes on a powerful economy. With more unemployment and more burdens on social welfare, the progress of the aspiring poor, primarily minorities, will be crushed. Our society is headed, as intended by progressives, to socialism, which, as Winston Churchill noted, has “as its greatest virtue the equal sharing of misery.”

Moving to national security, the tinderbox of the Middle East was not caused by Trump’s irrational temperament, which, in hindsight, has proven its deterrent value. Rather, putting Obama’s progressive policies on steroids, Biden both directly sent cash to Iran and also removed oil sanctions, giving the country financial power to fund Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis, and, of course, Iran’s own depredations on U.S. troops. Biden’s special Iran envoy, the pro-Hamas Rob Malley, and other pro-Iran and pro-Hamas officials influence our Middle East policy to intentionally favor our enemies.

But what could be the progressive motive for Iran’s hegemony in the Middle East? Clearly, it is to cause the demise of “right-wing” leadership in Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, all American allies, so that the region will be controlled by anti-American repressive regimes. Interestingly, progressives revealed their anti-democratic, authoritarian roots by supporting Mullahs who [kill members of the LGBT community](#) and subdue women. Again, Iran’s terrorism is not an unfortunate artifact of balanced statesmanship. Rather, it is intended to exterminate a democratic Jewish society and a Saudi regime seeking to modernize itself. In a remarkable exercise in projection, progressives at the same time deem Trump to be a Hitler stand-in.

Similarly, the cause of increasing crime in our cities is no mystery. Progressives applauded, not decried, the George Floyd mayhem, largely an exercise in looting. Beautiful cities such as San Francisco, Portland, Seattle, and Los Angeles, all run by progressives, have become dystopian hellholes.

So, sincere, well-meaning liberals should, but generally do not, see that they are being led like lemmings to the sea, toward civilizational suicide, by the progressives they have long trusted as being in the liberal leadership, not the socialist vanguard.

In the nineteenth century, the brilliant French observer of American culture, Count Alexis de Tocqueville, said that democratic despotism would be effectuated, if at all, not by overt state

terror but by the infantilization of a trusting population. The evidence is now clearly established that moderate liberals should face reality and reject the policies of the progressive vanguard, leading them into civilizational suicide.

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## **GUILT-TRIPPING OUR WAY TO SELF-DESTRUCTION**

***Most, if not all, of the major societal problems we are confronting today are a direct result of abandoning the principles that are the underpinnings of American culture.***

**BY LAURA HOLLIS**

Everywhere we turn, the country looks like it is falling apart. Crime is out of control. Millions of illegal immigrants are pouring across our borders. Our schools are more interested in cultivating gender dysphoria and a proclivity for porn in our children than in educating them. The press routinely censors the truth at the behest of the government, which also increasingly prosecutes (or opts not to) based on political party affiliation. In sport after sport, biological males who have decided to “identify” as female are taking awards away from actual biological women, and we’re told that we must indulge their delusions.

Americans are asking themselves: [How on earth did we get here?](#) And even more urgently: [How do we turn things around?](#)

Most, if not all, of the major societal problems we are confronting today are a direct result of abandoning the principles that are the underpinnings of American culture. In fact, we have been guilt-tripped into abandoning them, and we are reaping the consequences.

The current immigration crisis is an example of this catastrophe.

It is estimated that between six and 10 million people have crossed the southern border of the United States since Joe Biden took office in January 2021. One of the lynchpins of American governance has been the rule of law—the concept that laws are fairly and uniformly enforced by our government. Additionally, both our Declaration of Independence and our Constitution explicitly state that our government was instituted for the protection of Americans and our rights.

This administration has utterly abandoned both fundamental principles, and millions of Americans are willing to let them get away with it.

But it’s worse than that. The United States is a big country; in truth, we could probably absorb 10 million people. It isn’t the raw numbers; it’s the policies in place when the millions of migrants arrive. There was a time when immigrants were expected to assimilate, to learn English, to support themselves and family members or other dependents via gainful employment—and to abide by our laws.

No more. Now they pour across the border and receive free phones, welfare payments, housing and food, education, and health care, all courtesy of the American taxpayer. Those who import drugs and traffic women and children do so with impunity. There are disturbingly large numbers of drunk driving instances involving illegal immigrants, and in most cases, the perpetrators have no insurance. When they commit violent crimes—like the group that violently assaulted police officers in New York City last week—they flip America the middle finger. Migrants who commit crimes know that, in the unlikely event that they are arrested, they will be released. If they happen to be tried and convicted, they won't be deported. If they are deported, nothing will happen if they return.

Why is this happening? Because we have been guilt-tripped into accepting that demanding integration into American society is insufficiently “multicultural” and that America is an exploitative nation that somehow “owes” the world’s poor billions of dollars that must therefore be extracted from American taxpayers.

American schools provide more examples. Each week brings more amateur videos of violent behavior by students. Social media commentator Marina Medvin posted on X earlier this week a list of 53 Illinois schools at which no student—not a single one—was grade proficient in math. Most of them were in Chicago. These dismal results are not limited to Illinois by any means. Oregon recently eliminated the requirement that high school students be proficient in reading, English, and math in order to graduate. Many colleges have eliminated entrance exams.

Why is this happening? Because we have allowed ourselves to be guilt-tripped into believing that demanding appropriate behavior and insisting upon objective academic standards is “white privilege” and that we must expiate our collective guilt as a nation by excusing the violence and catastrophic failures permeating our schools.

In states like California, Illinois, and New York, shoplifting has become epidemic. Flash mobs steal thousands of dollars’ worth of inventory and are not prosecuted. Retailers across the country lost \$112 billion just in 2022. Homelessness has been allowed to explode in our major cities, contributing to crime, disease, and filth that would have been unimaginable in America just 20 or 30 years ago. Stores and other retail establishments are closing in the downtowns of major cities due to theft, crime, and generally unlivable conditions.

Why is this happening? Because we have been guilt-tripped into believing that involuntary commitment of the mentally ill isn't “compassionate” and that enforcing shoplifting laws protecting property is “systemic racism.”

Men now insist that they can become women—and vice versa; minor children and staggering numbers of preteen and teenage girls with clear mental illness are being railroaded into chemical sterilization and surgical mutilation. Teachers think it is appropriate to discuss their sexual proclivities with grade schoolers and expose them to pornography.

Why is this happening? Because Americans have been silenced by buzzwords like “cisprivilege,” “heteronormative,” and “transphobic.”

Enough.

If these crises have been facilitated by our silence and our willingness to be cowed into submission, then they can be addressed when we refuse to be cowed; when we refuse to be silent; when we refuse to use the nonsense lingo that activists demand be injected into everyday

parlance; when we stop apologizing for the sins and imperfections of those who lived generations ago; and when we vigorously defend the principles that represent the best of America.

Those principles built this country. Abandoning them will destroy it.

*To find out more about Laura Hollis and read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate website at [www.creators.com](http://www.creators.com). This article first appeared in the February 12th, 2024 American Greatness.*



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