



**WEEKLY UPDATE
JULY 21 - 27, 2024**

**THIS WEEK
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NO BOS MEETING

PLANNING COMMISSION CANCELLED

**LAST WEEK
SEE PAGE 3**

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

GRAND JURY REPORTS

**FAILURE OF CANABIS LEGALIZATION AND IMPENDING
FAILURE OF HOMELESS PROGRAM**

BOB JONES TRAIL MOVES FORWARD

**PASO BASIN WATER RECHARGE STUDY APPROVED
STILL NO ONE WILL TALK ABOUT THE MORATORIUM**

BOARD REQUESTS AND NEW ASSIGNMENTS

**PAULDING & GIBSON SEEK MORE RESTRICTIONS ON HOME
FIREWORKS**

LAFCO CANCELLED

**EMERGENT ISSUES
SEE PAGE 9**

CALIFORNIA NEEDS A MILLION EV CHARGING STATIONS - BUT THAT'S 'UNLIKELY' AND 'UNREALISTIC'

**GOLDEN STATE INSURANCE CRISIS:
CALIFORNIANS GETTING INSURED RIGHT OUT OF THEIR HOMES
NOW YOU KNOW WHO TO BLAME...**

**COLAB IN DEPTH
SEE PAGE 24**

HAVE GOV. NEWSOM AND CALIFORNIA LAWMAKERS HIT 'PEAK STUPID' OR 'PEAK EVIL'?

Newsom blames Republicans and gaslights the people
BY KATY GRIMES

TRUMP AND THE FATE OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION
TRUMP REPRESENTS A MOVEMENT. IT IS BIGGER THAN HIM, AND IT IS BIGGER THAN MAGA.
BY EDWARD RING

SPONSORS



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

No Board of Supervisors Meeting on Tuesday, July 23, 2024 (Not Scheduled)

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 13, 2024.

Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) meeting of Thursday, July 25, 2024 (Cancelled)

LAST WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

Board of Supervisors Meeting of Tuesday, July 16, 2024 (Completed)

Item 6 - Request to 1) approve responses to the FY 2023-24 Grand Jury report titled “Growing Pains: The Cannabis Industry in San Luis Obispo County”; and 2) forward the responses to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court by August 17, 2024. The Board approved the staff response on the consent calendar without comment or question.

The report described the history of the legalization of cannabis in SLO County. It also pointed out that the permit fees and taxes are higher than neighboring counties and yet do not cover the cost of regulating the industry. Few grows have been established due to the costs and time required for permitting. The Grand Jury report does not assess the overall impact of legalization on the people of the County in terms of health, mental acuity, or motivation.

F1. The current fee revenue from the Cannabis Program in San Luis Obispo County is insufficient to support the SOCCU at its current level, preventing the program from being cost neutral as required by Board of Supervisors' policy.

F2. The fees necessary to obtain a cannabis license in the County are significantly higher than surrounding jurisdictions, contributing to fewer than anticipated new license applications.

F3. The Board of Supervisors has not conducted a review of staffing levels needed for the Cannabis Compliance Program to determine if the SOCCU is overstaffed relative to the number of active cannabis cultivators and applications for licenses.

F4. The limited number of new applications in this fiscal year will not generate sufficient revenue to offset the cost of the SOCCU in the County budget, resulting in the program continuing to operate at a deficit.

There is really nothing new here that was not previously known. The larger societal and political issues involving the local, state, and national legalization efforts are not acknowledged. That is, the legalization of cannabis, soon psychedelics, and ultimately heroin and others is a tactic of the political left to weaken the society and implement a socialist takeover. The Grand Jury, most elected officials, and opinion leaders (news media, entertainment, educators, and religious groups) are either oblivious or part of the program.

Item 7 - Request to 1) approve responses to the FY 2023-24 Grand Jury report titled “Moving San Luis Obispo County from Homelessness to Hopefulness”; and 2) forward the responses to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court by August 17, 2024. The response to the Jury was approved unanimously on the consent agenda.

The report summarized the overall situation (number of homeless people, services provided by government and not-for-profits, and barriers to providing housing, such as lack of sufficient sites, neighborhood opposition, and the slow costly permitting process).

Significantly, the Jury found that that the Five Year Plan to Address Homelessness is lagging. The Jury believes that the County must undertake an in-depth education program to convince the public to stop opposing homeless housing projects with their neighborhoods.

Can you imagine the uproar that would take place if such a matter were placed on the Board agenda with a recommendation to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on such an effort?

F1. There is an absence of predictable year-over-year funding for homeless programs. The “San Luis Obispo Countywide Plan to Address Homelessness 2022-2027” relies heavily on partner agencies without providing adequate ongoing funding to those agencies.

F2. The County’s staffing turnover and reorganization of its homeless services has caused the overall progress of the implementation of the “San Luis Obispo Countywide Plan to Address Homelessness 2022-2027” to be slower than projected and is at risk of not meeting County goals.

F3. The County’s selection and vetting process for homeless services site selection has not always been successful due to zoning, ordinances, and public perception of the homeless.

F4. The County has failed to implement a cohesive public awareness plan on homeless issues resulting in insufficient public engagement.

F5. The “San Luis Obispo Countywide Plan to Address Homelessness 2022-2027” lacks quantifiable details and specificity to track progress toward meeting their stated goals.

The Jury report never really faces the 2 key issues:

1. San Luis Obispo County contains 3,304 sq. miles of land area, or 2,114,560 acres. Less than 4% of this is zoned for urban uses when all 7 cities and the unincorporated County are included. This means that there is not enough land zoned for homes of all types. Lack of water and traffic congestion are cited as the reasons not to zone more land. Efforts to develop more water (desalination and capturing more runoff) are sporadic and/or lost in the bureaucratic malaise. Traffic congestion principally occurs on the Route 101 and some arterials during rush hours. The education industry and governments are the largest contributors, as they all start their workdays at 8:00 AM and end at 5:00 PM. A phased approach to spreading this out could help the situation immensely without the expenditure of billions of new tax dollars sought by SLOCOG and the State. High school seniors who are going into the military or workforce next year will be

getting up at 5:30 AM and enjoy a duty day which may end at 4:00 PM sometimes. Those who are going to a competitive university will need to adapt to a relentless 4 years of long days and nights of study, including the proverbial “all-nighters.” Why is 8:00 AM a sacred cow for the faculty and administrators involved?

2. Homelessness is largely experienced by individuals suffering from mental illness, alcoholism, drug addiction, or some combination thereof. In this regard the government service providers and their contractors need to weed out the “worried well” and concentrate on the truly afflicted patients. Then the governments must have the spine to enforce the concept that if you are too sick or too addicted to take care of yourself properly, you can’t sleep out and continue your self-destructive behavior.

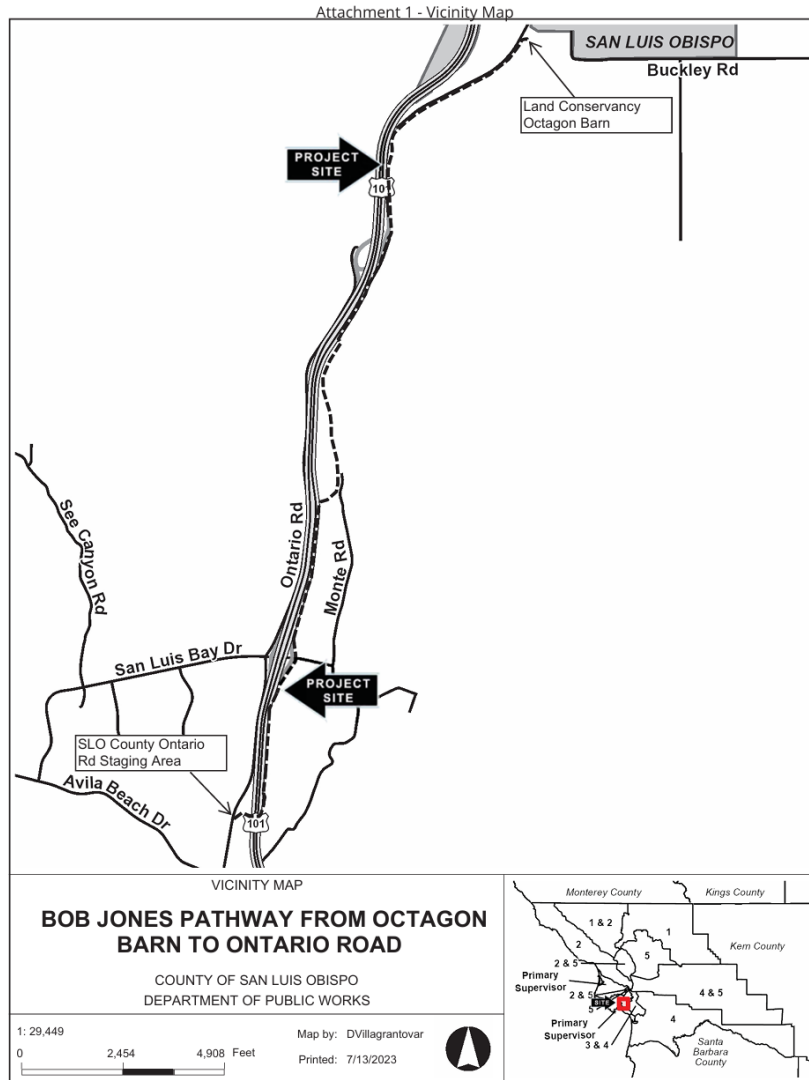
The general public sees no political courage from their elective officials in this regard. Instead they see self-serving accommodation. Why would they tolerate a new apartment house for the habitually intoxicated in their neighborhood?

Item 16 - Request to approve, for necessary right of way and easement access for the Bob Jones Pathway “Gap Closure” Project in San Luis Obispo the following: 1) perpetual and 3-year temporary construction easement agreements with: the City of San Luis Obispo in the amount of \$67,700; Ronald Rinell in the amount of \$500; Sarjit S. Malli and Rupinder K. Malli, Trustees of the Malli Family Trust of June 7, 1994 in the amount of \$29,000; Hobson Ranch, Inc., a Colorado Corporation in the amount of \$17,100; Christopher W. Goodman and Kathryn E. Russum, Trustees of the Goodman Family Trust dated May 14, 2014 in the amount of \$9,400; The Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County, a California non-profit corporation, in the amount of \$264,000; and The Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County, a California non-profit corporation, in the amount of \$41,100; 2) right of way conveyance agreement in perpetuity with Robert L. Kruse, Trustee of the Robert L. Kruse Trust dated December 16, 1999 in the amount of \$25,000; 3) cattle trail access rights modification agreements in perpetuity with: Hobson Ranch, Inc., a Colorado Corporation in the amount of \$1,500; Christopher W. Goodman and Kathryn E. Russum, Trustees of the Goodman Family Trust dated May 14, 2014 in the amount of \$1,500; and Steven Brett Whitaker, Trustee of The Whitaker Family Trust dated November 26, 1997 in the amount of \$1,500; and 4) authorize the Director of Public Works, or designee, to execute any remaining escrow and payment related documents or instructions necessary to close the transactions associated with the acquisition of these real property interests. The agreements were approved unanimously on the consent calendar.

Background: It appears that staff has found a solution to working around the problem of the refusal to sell by one of the property owners along the route. Board members Arnold and Peschong are loath to use property condemnation for a recreational project such as a bike trail. The State grant for the project is time deadlines, and the County could lose \$18 million for the project if work is not started timely.

The Bob Jones Pathway Gap Closure Project (Project) is a multi-year project that is a County goal widely supported by the community. The proposed 4.5-mile extension of the Bob Jones Pathway will connect the Land Conservancy Octagon Barn to the County’s Ontario Road

staging area. The County has previously completed the construction of a public parking lot and staging area at the Octagon Barn site located on South Higuera Street to serve the pathway. This pathway fills an essential link in the County's bicycle transportation network, providing people of all abilities a transportation choice for bicycling and walking to work/school/community destinations. It also offers access through natural and agricultural areas for recreation and exercise.



Consent Agenda Addition Item 29 - Request to 1) approve and authorize the Chairperson to sign a professional consultant services contract with Provost & Pritchard Consulting Group through February 28, 2025, in an amount not to exceed \$297,990, to perform a Paso Robles Groundwater Basin State Water Project Supplemental Water Supply Project Feasibility & Engineering Study; and 2) delegate authority to the Groundwater Sustainability Director to authorize time extensions and remove scope, in addition to other administratively efficient contract management actions as long as such actions do not increase the level of General Fund support required by the department. The item was approved 3/1/0, with Arnold dissenting and Peschong absent. It is not clear how the financing will work, as there was no appropriation and the establishment of one requires a 4/5 vote, as the

funding is not part of the adopted budget. Presumably, the staff will simply go forward and attempt to clean it up in the future as part of a master 3rd quarter transfer or yearend transfer. The District Attorney ought to take a look at this one.

Background: The item was stalled two weeks ago when Arnold and Peschong voted no. It required a 4/5th vote, as the funding (a state grant) had not been included in the adopted Budget. Supervisor Gibson requested last week that it be brought back for further consideration this week. The item is part of a broader cafeteria of state grants obtained by the county to work on the Paso Basin State Groundwater Management Plan.

The write-up states in part:

The subject of today's action relates to a portion of Component 6, namely an engineering study (Study) to assess the feasibility of using State Water Project water supplies, when available, for recharge to the Paso Robles groundwater basin (Basin) and / or for agricultural use as an in-lieu water supply to allow for reduced groundwater pumping in the Basin. Other portions of Component 6 include an engineering study of the feasibility of using available supplemental water supply from the Nacimiento Water Supply Project blended with City of Paso Robles recycled wastewater supplies to stabilize groundwater levels and address surface water depletion utilizing excess water supplies. In addition, funding for Component 6 included the completion of a rate study to identify and evaluate options for assessing groundwater usage fees to commercial agricultural irrigators.

Is this a deception? Recharge generally refers to water that originates in the basin and is injected, spread, naturally percolated, or otherwise used to fill a basin. Water banking generally refers to water that is imported from outside the basin. Some questions:

1. Does the use of State water pumped into the basin change the legal status of the water in the basin?
2. How do these provisions affect the rights of the Class I overlayers?
3. Does the water that is imported to the basin become public domain water of the State of California?
4. If it becomes public domain water, what happens to the existing water rights?
5. How can the imported State water be differentiated from the other basin water?
6. Can the recharged State water be exported from the basin later on, notwithstanding the County's "no export" ordinance?
7. If the Cooperative Committee members acquire State water for recharge and it is stored in the San Luis Reservoir, can it be sold to other system members?

8. Are there any other legal problems for the thousands of small overlies in the Basin who now have only 32% theoretical representation on the Paso Basin Cooperative Committee? Do Bruce Gibson and Matt Turentine actually represent them?

Task (Scope of Work)	Cost
Information Gathering and Analysis	\$80,593
Alternatives Development	\$91,836
Prepare Preliminary Engineering Report	\$56,618
Project Management and Meetings	\$68,943
Total Contract Amount	\$297,990
Total Cost	\$297,990

COLAB has repeatedly objected to these items on various grounds, including the fact that none specifically deal with the smaller water users who are still suffering under the 2013 water moratorium. The old Board majority of Arnold, Peschong, and Compton adopted a plan to give them some relief, which had been named the Planting ordinance. However, the new Board majority rescinded that plan as soon as they were in office.

Interestingly, during the July 9th meeting, Paso Wine Country Alliance Government Affairs Director Patricia Wilmore, in response to COLAB comments, asserted that various sub-committees of groups in the basin are working on a plan to bring relief to the smaller users locked in the moratorium. The Board should ask where this is in the process, how will it work, and most importantly, when will it be brought to the Board for implementation.

Until then nothing should move.

MATTERS AFTER 1:30 PM

Item 27 - Board of Supervisor comments, activity reports, and requests for future agenda. It turns out that Supervisor Paulding and Supervisor Gibson have constituents who don't like home fireworks. They reportedly received many complaints from their respective neighborhoods. As a result, an ad hoc committee has been established consisting of the 2 Supervisors, the Sheriff, the Fire Chief, and the Admin Office to explore stricter enforcement and potential beefing up of regulations banning the use of the illegal and legal types, as well as increasing fines and penalties. The Committee is to report back to the full Board.

What a sad state of affairs, when one of the longest and most cherished traditions of our cultures is being abolished. Why should a few stiffs be allowed to shut down the fun? People should be allowed to use legal fireworks at the beach, at the dunes, and in other places safe from fire spread.



The M-80, generally banned, is the gold standard for a loud boom.



Sky lanterns already banned



EMERGENT ISSUES

ITEM 1 - California needs a million EV charging stations — but that’s ‘unlikely’ and ‘unrealistic’ By Alejandro Lazo

Public chargers must be built at an unprecedented pace to meet the target in less than 7 years, and then doubled to 2 million in 2035. The high cost — \$120,000 or more for one fast charger— is just one obstacle.

California will have to build public charging stations at an unprecedented — and some experts say unrealistic — pace to meet the needs of the 7 million electric cars expected on its roads in less than seven years.

The sheer scale of the buildout has alarmed many experts and lawmakers, who fear that the state won’t be prepared as Californians purchase more electric cars.

A million public chargers are needed in California by the end of 2030, according to the [state’s projections](#) — almost 10 times more than the [number available to drivers](#) in December. To meet that target, 129,000 new stations — more than seven times the current pace — must be built every year for the next seven years. Then the pace would have to accelerate again to reach a target of 2.1 million chargers in 2035.

A robust network of public chargers — akin to the state’s more than [8,000 gas stations](#) — is essential to ensure that drivers will have the confidence to purchase electric vehicles over the next several years.

“It is very unlikely that we will hit our goals, and to be completely frank, the EV goals are a noble aspiration, but unrealistic,” said Stanford professor Bruce Cain, who co-authored a [policy briefing](#) detailing California’s electric vehicle charging problems. “This is a wakeup call that we address potential institutional and policy obstacles more seriously before we commit blindly.”

Under California’s landmark [electric car mandate](#), a pillar of Gov. Gavin Newsom’s [climate change agenda](#), 68% of all new 2030 model cars sold in the state must be zero emissions, increasing to 100% for 2035, when 15 million electric cars are expected in California.

“We’re going to look really silly if we are telling people that they can only buy electric vehicles, and we don’t have the charging infrastructure to support that,” said Assembly member Jesse Gabriel, a Democrat from Encino [who introduced](#) a package of unsuccessful bills last year aimed at expanding access to car chargers.

“We are way behind where we need to be,” Gabriel told CalMatters.

Big obstacles stand in the way of amping up the pace of new charging stations in public places. California will need billions of dollars in state, federal and private investments, streamlined city and county permitting processes, [major power grid upgrades](#) and accelerated efforts by utilities to connect chargers to the grid.

State officials also are tasked with ensuring that charging stations are available statewide, in [rural and less-affluent areas](#) where private companies are reluctant to invest, and that they are reliable and functioning whenever drivers pull up.

In Pacific Gas & Electric's vast service area, home to 40% of all Californians, electric car purchases are moving twice as fast as the buildout of charging stations, said Lydia Krefta, the utility's director of clean energy transportation. Californians now own [more than 1.5 million](#) battery-powered cars.

Patty Monahan, who's on the Energy Commission, the state agency responsible for funding and guiding the ramp-up, told CalMatters that she is confident that California can build the chargers its residents need in time.

The agency's estimate of the current chargers is likely an undercount, she said. In addition, fast-charging stations could play a bigger role than initially projected, meaning hundreds of thousands of fewer chargers might be needed. Also, as the ranges and charging speeds on cars improve, there may be less demand for public chargers.

"California has a history of defying the odds," Monahan said. "We have a history of advancing clean cars, clean energy, writ-large. We have naysayers left and right saying you can't do it, and then we do it."

Barriers to private investments: an uncertain market

On a September day last year, Monahan spoke behind a podium in the parking lot of a Bay Area grocery store. A row of newly constructed car chargers rose behind her.

"Let's celebrate for a moment," she said.

California had met its goal of 10,000 fast electric chargers statewide — two years ahead of



a [target](#) set in 2018.

California Energy

Commissioner Patty Monahan speaks during the launch of an EVgo fast charging station in Union City on Sept. 25, 2023. Photo by Loren Elliott for CalMatters

Fast chargers like the new ones at the grocery store are increasingly seen as critical to meeting the needs of drivers. They can [power a car to 80%](#) in 20 minutes to an hour, while the typical charger in use today, a slower Level 2, takes from four to 10 hours.

But installing and operating fast chargers is an expensive business — one that doesn't easily turn a profit.

[Nationwide each fast charger](#) can cost up to \$117,000, according to a 2023 study. And in California, it could be even more — between \$122,000 and \$440,000 each, according to [a separate study](#), although the Energy Commission said the range was \$110,000 to \$125,000 for [one of its programs](#).

Most of America's publicly traded charger companies have been forced to seek more financing, lay off workers and slow their network build outs, analysts said. [EVgo](#), for instance, has seen its share price crater, as has [ChargePoint](#), which specializes in selling the slower, Level 2 hardware.

California stands apart from other states — it has by far the most chargers and electric car sales, and more incentives and policies encouraging them.

Tesla, America's top-selling electric car manufacturer, dominates fast-charging in both California and the U.S. — but the company didn't get into the business to sell charges to drivers; it got into the charger business to sell its electric cars. Initially Tesla Superchargers were exclusive to its drivers, but [starting this year](#) other EV drivers can use them after Tesla [provided ports to Ford](#) and other automakers.

Tesla’s manufacturing prowess, supply chain dominance and decade-plus of experience with fast chargers have given it an edge over competitors — a coterie of unprofitable, publicly traded startups, as well as private companies that often benefit from public subsidies, according to analysts.

“All the automakers joined forces with their biggest competitor,” said Loren McDonald, chief executive of the consulting firm EVAdoption. “If that doesn’t tell you how bad fast-charging networks and infrastructure were, I don’t know what else does.”



Tesla vehicles charge at a Supercharger lot in Kettleman City on June 23, 2024. Photo by Larry Valenzuela, CalMatters/CatchLight Local



First: An EVgo fast charger at El Mercado Plaza Shopping Center in Union City. Last: A Hyundai Ioniq 6 charges at an Electrify America station in Oakland. Photos by Loren Elliott and Camille Cohen for CalMatters

Now Tesla is showing [uncertainty about the future of its charging business](#) amid slumping car sales, and [eliminated nearly its entire](#) 500-member Supercharger team in April. Then chief executive Elon Musk said in May that he would [spend \\$500 million](#) to expand the network and [hired back](#) some fired workers.

In California, Electrify America, a privately held company, was created by Volkswagen as a settlement for [cheating on emissions tests](#) for its gas-powered cars. The company is spending \$800 million on California chargers, building a robust network of 260 stations, with more than half in low-income communities, including [the state's worst charging desert](#), Imperial County.

The problem is Electrify America was ranked dead last in a [consumer survey](#) last year, and its chargers have been plagued by reliability problems and customer complaints. The California Air Resources Board in January [directed Electrify America](#) to “strive to achieve charger reliability consistent with the state of the industry.” A company spokesperson said the dissatisfaction showed “an industry in its growth trajectory.” There are signs of improvement, based on [consumer data from the first three months](#) of this year.

Startups continue to jump into the charging business, with the number of companies offering fast chargers growing from 14 in 2020 to 41 in 2024, EVAdoption said. Seven carmakers formed a [\\$1 billion venture](#) to build a 30,000-charger network in North America. And [gas stations](#) such as Circle K are offering more charging because electric car customers spend more time shopping while waiting for their rides to juice up.

But the realization that charging is a costly business has set in on Wall Street, and that doesn't seem likely to change anytime soon. “Can public EV fast-charging stations be profitable in the United States?” the [consultancy McKinsey & Company asked](#).

“The fervor, the excitement from the investor base, has definitely dwindled quite a bit, given the prospects that EV adoption in the U.S. is going to be slower, revenue growth is really slower, the path to profitability is going to be slower, and they might need more capital than everyone originally expected,” said Christopher Dendrinis, a financial analyst who covers electric car charging companies for the investment bank RBC Capital Markets.

The stakes are high for California when it comes to encouraging investments in expensive fast chargers: If 63,000 additional ones were built, California might need 402,000 fewer slower Level 2 chargers in 2030, according to an alternative [forecast](#) by the Energy Commission.

Billions of public dollars: Will it be enough?

Nationwide \$53 billion to \$127 billion in private investments and public funding is needed by 2030 to build chargers for about 33 million electric cars, [according to a federal estimate](#). Of that, about half would be for public chargers.

Congress and the Biden administration have set aside \$5 billion for a national network of fast chargers. So far only 33 in eight locations have been built, but more than 14,000 others are in the works, according to the Federal Highway Administration. California's share of the federal money totals \$384 million; about 500 fast chargers will be built with an initial \$40.5 million, said Energy Commission spokesperson Lindsay Buckley.

In addition, the state has spent \$584 million to build more than [33,000 electric car chargers](#) through its Clean Transportation Program, funded by fees drivers pay when they register cars. The Legislature [extended that program](#) for an additional decade last year.

Jesus Gonzalez, 25, Los Angeles



Jesus Gonzalez, owner of a Ford Mustang Mach-E, charges his car at a FLO EV charging station in Los Angeles on March 1, 2024. Photo by Jules Hotz for CalMatters

Housing: Rented house

Car model: Mustang Mach-E

Charging usage: Public chargers only

Gonzalez lives in the dense Lincoln Heights neighborhood of Los Angeles. He bought his electric car when his older, gas-powered car started giving him problems in 2022.

Gonzalez soon realized charging his car was more complicated than he had anticipated. He initially relied on fast chargers, utilizing the free kilowatts provided by Electrify America with his car purchase. Those credits lasted him only a couple months.

These days he drives 10 to 15 minutes to the nearest Electrify America station, uses a free fast charger run by his local utility or a couple of nearby slower Level 2 chargers.

“At first, the time spent charging was okay,” he said. But these days, “there are longer lines. So instead of just having to wait 20 minutes charging, you have to wait maybe 30 minutes for all the cars that are charging to clear up, and then the time for you to charge your car. I think that’s the biggest pain point.”

Newsom has committed to spending \$1 billion through 2028 on chargers with his “[California Climate Commitment](#),” Buckley said. But this year Newsom and the Legislature trimmed \$167 million from the charger budget as the state faces a record deficit. A lobbyist for the Electric Vehicle Charging Association said “the state pullback sends a very challenging message” to the industry.

California’s commitment to charger funding is “solid,” despite the cuts, Buckley said. They have not yet estimated the total investment needed in California to meet the targets.

But Ted Lamm, a UC Berkeley Law researcher who studies electric car infrastructure, said the magnitude of building what California needs in coming years likely dwarfs the public funding available.

State and federal programs will “only fund a fraction,” and the state needs to spend that money on lower-income communities, he said.

Another possible funding source is California’s [Low Carbon Fuel Standard, which is expected to be revised in November](#). The program requires carbon-intensive fuel companies to pay for cleaner-burning transportation. Utilities get credits and use that money to pay for chargers, rebates to car buyers and grid improvements, said Laura Renger, executive director of the California Electric Transportation Coalition, which represents utilities.

“I think with that, we would have enough money,” Renger said. She said the program’s overhaul could help utilities invest “billions” in chargers and other electric car programs over the next two decades.

Backlogged local permits and grid delays

One of the biggest barriers to more chargers isn't money. It's that cities and counties are slow to approve plans for the vast number of stations needed.

State officials only have so much political power to compel local jurisdictions to do what they want — a reality made [abundantly clear](#) by the [housing crisis](#), for instance. California relies on grants and persuasion to accomplish its goals, and the slow buildout of chargers shows how those strategies can fall short, said Stanford's Cain.

“The locals cannot be compelled by regulatory agencies to make land and resources available for what the state wants to achieve,” Cain said.

The same obstacles have marked the state's broader effort to electrify California and switch to clean energy. Local opposition and environmental reviews sometimes hold up [large solar projects](#) and [transmission projects](#) for years.

California has created a “culture of regulation that emphasizes the need to be extra careful and extra perfect, but this takes an incredible amount of time,” Steve Bohlen, senior director of government affairs at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, said last month at the [inaugural hearing of the state Assembly's Select Committee on Permitting Reform](#).

“We're moving into a period of rapid change, and so perfect can't be the enemy of the good.”





First: Workers install a transformer to power electric car chargers in Calexico. Last: A row of new public chargers there. Photos by Adriana Heldiz, CalMatters

Chargers aren't as complicated as large-scale solar or [offshore wind projects](#). But most chargers installed in public spaces do need a land-use or encroachment permit, among other approvals. California has [passed laws](#) requiring local jurisdictions to streamline permits for chargers. What's more, the Governor's Office of Business Development now grades cities and counties using a [scorecard](#) and [maintains a map](#) displaying who has, or hasn't, made life easier for car charger builders. But these strategies only go so far.

"It doesn't matter how many requirements you put on (local governments)," Lamm said. "If they just don't have the time in the day to do it ... it's going to sit in the backlog, because that's how it works."

The delays have consequences. Getting a station permitted in California, on average, [takes 26% longer](#) than the national average, Electrify America reported. Designing and constructing a station in California can cost on average [37% more](#) than in other states because of delays in permitting and grid connections. A utility on average takes 17 weeks after work is completed to connect chargers to the grid, Electric America said.

Powering large charging projects often requires grid upgrades, which can take a year or more for approval, said Chanel Parson, a director at Southern California Edison. Supply chain issues also make getting the right equipment a challenge.



Andrew Krulewitz charges his electric Hyundai Ioniq 6 in Oakland on Feb. 27, 2024. Krulewitz has owned various types of electric vehicles and used different charging options on the market. Photo by Camille Cohen for CalMatters

Housing: Single family home

Car model: Hyundai Ioniq 6

Charging usage: Home chargers and public chargers

When he lived in San Francisco, Krulewitz had access to a Tesla through his job, and relied entirely on Level 2 chargers near his home, one of which was free.

“I had no parking, I parked on the street, and I had to find places to charge,” he said. He would also use Tesla’s fast-charging Supercharger network. “When talking about infrastructure, it’s (Tesla) Supercharging and everybody else.”

He later moved to Oakland and drove an electric Fiat. He now owns a home, but when he lived in an apartment, he had to run a cord from his apartment building onto the street where he parked his car.

A Level 1 charger, like those found in many homes, adds about 4 miles of driving range per hour of charge. “I think Level 1 is a totally unsung solution to most people’s needs, but it’s not ideal if you need to charge every night,” he said.

“It used to be that public charging was more expensive than home charging, and now that has flipped — home charging can be more expensive than public charging.”

Edison, which has a 10-year plan to meet expected demand, has asked the utilities commission for approval to upgrade the grid where it anticipates high charging demand.

“Every EV charging infrastructure project is a major construction project,” Parson said. “There are a number of variables that influence how long it takes to complete the project.”

Impatient with broken chargers, bad service

Inspired to help the nation reduce its dependence on fossil fuels, Zach Schiff-Abrams of Los Angeles bought a Genesis GV60. As a renter, he has relied on public charging, primarily using Electrify America stations — and that’s been his biggest problem about owning an electric car.

Charging speeds have been inconsistent, he said, with half-hour sessions providing only a 15 to 30% charge, and he often encounters broken chargers.

“I believe in electrical, so I’m really actually trying to be a responsible consumer,” Schiff-Abrams said. “I want to report them when they’re down, but the customer service is horrible.”



Electric vehicles line up at a busy Electrify America charging station in Kettleman City. Photo by Larry Valenzuela, CalMatters/CatchLight Local

For years, the reliability of charging networks has been a well-documented problem. Only [73% of fast chargers in the San Francisco Bay Area were functional](#) in a 2022 study. The growth of the EV market has put increasing strain on public charging stations, [a consumer survey found](#).

In [January](#), the California Air Resources Board approved a final \$200 million spending plan for Electrify America — but not before board chair Liane Randolph scolded its CEO.

Randolph — arguably one of America’s top climate regulators — told CEO Robert Barrosa about an exchange she had with his company’s customer service line after finding a broken charger at a station along Interstate-5.

“It didn’t work,” Randolph said during the board meeting. “Called the customer service line, waited like 10-ish minutes. ... (The charger) was showing operable on the app and the guy goes, ‘oh, my data is showing me that it has not had a successful charge in three days.’”

“These issues are not easy,” Barrosa responded. “Our head is not in the sand,” he [told board members](#) earlier. “We are listening to customers.”

But Randolph, addressing journalists at a [conference in Philadelphia](#), pushed back against the idea that because the transition to electric vehicles is happening gradually that it’s a failure. Many people will rely on charging at home or work, and batteries are becoming more efficient.

“The infrastructure is continuing to be rolled out at a rapid pace,” Randolph said. “It doesn’t all have to be perfect instantly. It’s a process. And it’s a process that’s continuing to move.”

Data journalists Erica Yee and Arfa Momin contributed to this report.

Alejandro Lazo writes about the impacts of [climate change](#) and [air pollution](#) and California’s policies to tackle them. He’s written about the state’s groundbreaking [electric vehicle mandate](#), the oil industry’s efforts at [capturing carbon](#) from fossil fuels, and how California’s climate programs have created a robust [cow poop industry](#). Alejandro is particularly interested in how the [most vulnerable](#) in society are faring in the midst of rapid global warming.

Alejandro joined CalMatters’ environment team in 2023 after spending a year on CalMatters’ [California Divide team](#), where he wrote about California’s [economic](#), [housing](#) and [racial disparities](#), and the [attempts and failures](#) by the state to address these issues.

This article first appeared in the July 16, 2024 CalMatters.

Item 2 - Golden State Insurance Crisis: Californians Getting Insured Right Out of Their Homes

Now you know who to blame...

By Katy Grimes

California is in the throes of a self-imposed insurance crisis. And the state doesn’t seem to be addressing this crisis with any sense of urgency.

The Globe recently spoke with a couple who shared that the condominium complex in which they reside just lost its insurance coverage. “They told our HOA that they just don’t want to insure us anymore,” the husband said.

This is a very nice condominium building.

Consequently, the HOA had to scramble to find new insurance. But the new insurance will cost each of the condo owners an additional \$10,000 a year in HOA costs.

“Who can afford an additional \$10,000 payment to already high HOA dues?” the husband asked.

Indeed, and what about people on a fixed income or retirement? We agreed that some will have to sell their condos and likely move out of state in order to be able to buy another home or condo.

In June, former State Senator Ted Gaines reported on this crisis in “The Time for Action on Insurance Crisis is Now: Insurance lubricates the entire economy; the current system is broken.” “Californians need bold and immediate action from the Governor Gavin Newsom and Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara to help attract insurers back to the state, create a robust market, and give consumers more options for fire insurance coverage,” Gaines said.

He explained that “rate increase applications are languishing in the Department of Insurance (DOI) for up to two years. Instead of losing money while waiting for rate increases, insurers are pulling out of the state with astonishing speed. It’s likely that everyone reading this knows someone who has been non-renewed by an insurer and unable to find the needed fire insurance required by lenders.”

With homeowners’ insurance going up so dramatically (my own homeowners insurance went up 20% this year, and I feel lucky to have it – but the \$3,000 bill for 12 months is painful).

This is pushing Californians to the California FAIR Plan, which is writing the highest-risk policies in California, but it is woefully underfunded, with only a few billion in assets and several hundred billion in liabilities, Ted Gaines reported. Insurers are now asking for a 34% increase in premiums in California now.

Sen. Gaines explained:

Proposition 103, passed by voters in 1988, governs our state’s property and casualty insurance industry. Under Prop. 103, the Insurance Commissioner must approve rate increase requests from insurers before they are implemented.

The DOI should immediately approve all currently filed rate filings from insurance companies. Rates will increase, for certain. But, right now, the choice is not between higher-priced and lower-priced policies, but between California FAIR Plan’s highest-priced policies or no policies at all. These approvals should extend to requests that include forward-risk modeling and reinsurance costs, which is standard in the other 49 states.

A single catastrophic loss event in an area dense with FAIR Plan policies would bankrupt the entity quickly. The insurance industry is the backstop for the FAIR Plan, meaning they would be liable for paying out excess FAIR Plan claims in proportion to the amount of business they write

in our state, even though they are not receiving any premium for those policies and would also pay out for losses on their own policies.

This lose-lose scenario is another reason why insurers are shrinking their California footprint, to avoid FAIR Plan financial liability.

California is and has been a lower-cost state for insurance but that did not accurately reflect the risk insurers faced, as the devastating wildfires of 2017 and 2020 proved. Those fires wiped out decades of insurer California profits and shed critical light on what rate adequacy really looks like. The low prices were an artifact of Prop. 103, which is acting as a price control, which always leads to shortages. It is proving a barrier to its stated goal of ensuring insurance is available to all Californians.

The real responsibility for California's high insurance premiums lies in state politicians' and the governor's policy decisions. Most insurers say because of California's high cost to rebuild, they can't keep premiums artificially low any longer.

And why are California's rebuilding and building costs so high?

- The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA): As Ed Ring reported for the Globe, over 50+ years, "CEQA has acquired layers of legislative updates and precedent setting court rulings, warping it into a beast that denies clarity to developers and derails projects. When projects do make it through the CEQA gauntlet, the price of passage adds punitive costs in time and money."
- Project labor agreements are one of the biggest obstacles to political collaboration between construction unions and groups representing business interests, Ed Ring explained. A PLA is "*a pre-hire collective bargaining agreement with one or more labor organizations that establishes the terms and conditions of employment for a specific construction project.*"
- federal, state, regional, and local agencies permitting, overlapping and conflicting regulations, and the agencies all have the power to halt building projects, allow a lawsuit, or rule change, require an entire new set of designs, and force and individual or builder to resubmit plans to every agency and start all over again (Ed Ring, summarized).

These reasons as well as incoherent water restrictions, preposterous "clean air" requirements, mandatory electricity requirements, mandatory solar requirements, mandatory interior sprinkler systems and the like. These state mandated regulations in home and commercial building have driven the cost of construction to unimaginable levels.

In "LA Homeless Tower Cost as Much as 5-Star Hotel to Build," Thomas Buckley showed how the new Weingart Center 19-story "Permanent Supportive Housing" for the homeless tower cost \$594,000 a unit to build – over \$1,000 per-square-foot.

The cost of the "housing first \$1 Million dollar per-unit recently approved Santa Monica project" is another example of why insurance costs are so high.

Or when in January Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg proudly announced "Sacramento's historic Capitol Park Hotel, a permanent supportive housing complex for "people experiencing homelessness," at a cost of \$478,000 – per 280 square foot room.

Using Darrell Steinberg’s homeless housing math, his home of approximately 2,000+ square feet would cost \$3.8 million, in a residential bedroom community.

For the record, “people experiencing homelessness” are drug-addicted vagrants living on streets, in city parks, or on the banks of California rivers.

In 2020, we reported, “Redevelopment of the hotel is now budgeted at \$59.6 million, (up from \$23 million in 2019) and is expected to be completed in the summer of 2022 (not August 2019).” It was finalized in 2024.

The City of Sacramento says it contributed \$20.3 million. The rest was other taxpayer funds via Gov. Newsom’s state-funded Project Homekey.

It is 2024, and “guests” are just now moving in, the Globe reported. “We are taking bets on how quickly the apartments will be trashed by the ‘unhoused;’ the opening bet is 2 months.”

This is why California’s insurance has escalated to untold amounts in a relatively short amount of time. It’s not just the wildfires.

We always knew California’s leftist political policies would catch up to the people paying the bills. But no one expected just how high the bills would be. Or how devastating the costs and cancellations would be. Or how the repercussions would hit every industry in the state. Or how so many business owners would pick up and leave California. Or how many employees would leave the state.

Oh wait – yes we did. We’ve been warning about this since Jerry Brown was reelected as governor in 2011, and finished the state off that he started to destroy 1975-1983. We’ve been warning that if Gavin Newsom was elected he would be worse than Jerry Brown. We warned that electing Ricardo Lara to Insurance Commissioner – who has never run a business or even signed the front of a paycheck – would be a disaster...

And here we are – your homeowners insurance has just been cancelled.

Katy Grimes, the Editor in Chief of the California Globe, is a long-time Investigative Journalist covering the California State Capitol, and the co-author of California's War Against Donald Trump: Who Wins? Who Loses? This article first appeared in the California Globe of July 18, 2024.

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

HAVE GOV. NEWSOM AND CALIFORNIA LAWMAKERS HIT ‘PEAK STUPID’ OR ‘PEAK EVIL’?

Newsom blames Republicans and gaslights the people

BY KATY GRIMES

California Governor Gavin Newsom was more than 60 days overdue delivering his State of the State, and when he did “deliver” it, he did it via video message, political campaign style. The Globe asked, Just How Deranged Was Gov. Gavin Newsom’s State Of The State Campaign Speech?

Newsom’s speech was very clearly a campaign job application for the rest of the country, omitting facts about California’s actual state of the state while taking shots at the other political party. But it appears at this point Newsom won’t be standing in for Joe Biden in November.

California is in a world of hurt – and not from Climate Change as Gov. Newsom would have you believe, or any future threat from it. California has high crime, high taxes (on everything), high housing costs, high college students (legalized pot), high college tuitions, high inflation, high outbound migration, high gas prices, high homeless population, high rate of State mandated secrecy of gender transitioning children from parents, high illegal alien population, high illegal alien population on state funded healthcare (Medi-Cal), high energy costs, high sex trafficking, high unemployment fraud, high abortion procedures (abortion.ca.gov), high public school teachers strikes, high porn in K-12 curriculum, high Water rationing... (and some say a high governor)...

Need we keep going for anyone to see just what a sh*t-hole state California really is under Gov. Gavin Newsom? Too many of our cities look like Mogadishu, rather than the beautiful classic California coastal enclaves the state is known for.

Gov. Newsom painted California as being “under attack” by “conservatives and delusional California bashers.” That is laughable because the California Legislature is run by a Democrat super supermajority. The Governor is a Democrat. All of the state Constitutional Officers are Democrats. State Republicans have no say in how the state is governed except for a few very local lawmakers.

California’s elected Republicans should be placed on the endangered species list.

Monday Newsom claimed, “California is leading the nation’s economic growth.”

Do we live in the same State?

Newsom can’t brag about California’s GDP without acknowledging that California is the largest welfare state in the country with the highest cost of living, has a massive \$1.5 trillion in

unfunded public pension debt, a \$45-\$75 billion budget deficit, and record entitlement and welfare spending.

How does California's economic growth comport with California being home to 1/3 of the nation's welfare recipients, and home to the highest homeless vagrant population living on California streets, and home to the most illegal immigrants – all of which receive taxpayer funded entitlements.

In Newsom's statement he says "the state has retained its title as the world's fifth largest economy, broken tourism-spending records, increased its population, created thousands of fast food jobs, has the most companies on the Fortune 500 list, and expanded businesses in San Francisco."

Arrogant Newsom said:

"People across the globe look to California and see what's possible, and how to live and advance together and prosper together across every conceivable difference."

In fact, the images of California's streets are all over news reports – images of rotting, drug addicted vagrants, living and dying on the streets, in pop-up tent encampments filled with garbage and stolen loot – images of drug deals in city parks, or images of unprovoked violent attacks of people in the wrong place at the wrong time.



Homeless drug addict at Broadway Sacramento Post Office. (Photo: Katy Grimes for California Globe)



Sacramento homeless, C St. near/around Stanford Park. (Photo: sacra.org)
Tonedear Newsom said:

“But the California way of life is under attack. For conservatives and delusional California bashers, their success depends on our failure. They want to impeach the very things that have made us successful, as a tactic to turn America toward a darker future.”

It's not conservatives or Republicans who have attacked California's way of life – it's solely the policies of Newsom's leftism – zero bail, felony crimes now misdemeanors, legalized drugs, the largest welfare state in the country with the highest cost of living, byzantine, conflicting regulations to build any housing, highest income taxes, exorbitant minimum wage, government created water shortages which cause shrinking agriculture, illegal immigrants flooding the California border, ...

Newsom also just signed just signed **Assembly Bill 1955** by Assemblyman Chris Ward (D-San Diego), the bill to prohibit schools from notifying parents if their child is “gender confused” or “transitioning” to the opposite sex. Horrifyingly, the bill's title is “Support Academic Futures and Educators for Today's Youth Act.”

This is pure evil.

The bill now authorizes public schools to hide important health and medical information about minor children from parents. Welcome to George Orwell's 1984.

And despite that the Democrat governor and Democrat supermajority Legislature continues to try to replace parents with school counselors, teachers, mental health providers, abortion providers, “gender-affirming” trans care specialists, or any number of adults willing to give vaccines, feed kids drugs, provide opposite-sex hormones, authorize gender surgeries, and get them treatment

for sexual violence and rape – without a parent being any the wiser, California’s public school system is a disaster.

“Too many high school graduates are in for a rude awakening when they discover that their K-12 public education has left them woefully unprepared for the rigors of college coursework,” Lance Izumi, senior director of the Center for Education at the Pacific Research Institute, told the Globe last month. College readiness has reached historic lows, including the lowest scores in 30 years on the ACT and declining scores on the SAT, the two primary standardized tests used for college admissions.

California has the nation’s lowest literacy rate, and the California State Board of Education is focused on teaching inappropriate sex to young children.

It appears California’s schools are teaching “peak stupid” instead of math, history, literature and geography, setting students up for failure. But kids will have learned the 104 different genders, and the First Partner’s the “genderbread person,” who aims to show children how biological sex, “gender expression,” “sexual attraction,” and “gender identity” exist on a spectrum, and read Trans+: Love, Sex, Romance, and Being You, “A groundbreaking all-inclusive, uncensored, must-have guide for teens who are living in this world, who identify as transgender, nonbinary, gender non-conforming, gender fluid, or are questioning their gender identity or how they express themselves, and for their cis-allies and advocates.”

Gavin Newsom signed the \$20 fast food minimum wage into law which has led to thousands of fast food jobs lost and fast food restaurant owners closing their California businesses or moving them out of state.

Newsom vetoed the bill to provide an annual report on the state’s homeless spending, calling AB 2570 “redundant.” So where did the \$24 billion Newsom spent on homeless in California go? We will never know now that Newsom vetoed the only accountability bill that would have told us. And this bill was supported in the Assembly and Senate by both parties.

Newsom’s State of California also owes the federal government more than \$21 Billion after borrowing billions to pay unemployment benefits during the Covid flu lockdowns. And while California already has paid more than \$650 million in interest on the loan, there is another \$550 million due Sept. 30, 2024, the Los Angeles Times reported.

Newsom, as with too many of today’s elected lawmakers, is a transactional politician. Gov. Newsom didn’t have to borrow the money from the feds – California could have used federal American Rescue Plan Act funds to pay the debt. Instead, Newsom sent stimulus checks to California residents, and spent the relief money on new projects which only increased the state’s massive budget deficit.

Newsom just signed 55 bills into law Monday – 55 new laws we don’t need, 55 new laws that will surely constrict the middle class and businesses more, 55 new laws to infringe on our freedoms.

None of the 55 new laws will fix California’s insurance crisis.

Our homeowners insurance went up 20% this year, and I feel lucky to have it – but the \$3,000 bill for 12 months is painful. A good friend who moved to Nevada last year just shared his homeowner’s insurance bill – \$594 for the year.

Our commercial warehouse property insurance went up more than 20% – from \$6,700 annually to \$14,000 for 12 months. And as with all commercial properties, those increased costs are shared by the small businesses renting the warehouse units.

This is pushing Californians to the California FAIR Plan, which is writing the highest-risk policies in California, but it is woefully underfunded, with only a few billion in assets and several hundred billion in liabilities, Ted Gaines reported for the Globe in June. Insurers are now asking for a 34% increase in premiums in California now.

Rather than fixing what is broken in California, Newsom blames Republicans and gaslights the people. Notably, gaslighting is a form of emotional abuse and mental manipulation that makes you question your own reality and self-worth.

Katy Grimes, the Editor in Chief of the California Globe, is a long-time Investigative Journalist covering the California State Capitol, and the co-author of California's War Against Donald Trump: CalGlobe , July 16, 2024.

**TRUMP AND THE FATE OF WESTERN
CIVILIZATION**
***TRUMP REPRESENTS A MOVEMENT. IT IS BIGGER
THAN HIM, AND IT IS BIGGER THAN MAGA.***
BY EDWARD RING

Less than a week ago, a lone assassin’s bullet came within millimeters of killing Donald Trump. Had it succeeded, the unrest and polarization we already endure in America would have gotten significantly worse. There will be endless theories and explanations about how this near miss will affect the election, inspire more violence, or stimulate calls for unity and calm. But what is it about Trump that has made him a target of relentless and unified defamation, or worse, from every established American institution for nearly a decade?

Trump represents a movement. It is bigger than him, and it is bigger than MAGA. Trump and MAGA have counterparts all over the world, especially in Europe. The people in these movements all share at least two common grievances: they don’t want their national cultures destroyed, and they don’t want their standard of living destroyed. And in every country where these movements have arisen, that is exactly what is happening, and it’s happening fast.

In response to these reasonable concerns, voiced by people who can no longer afford homes, can no longer survive operating a small business, and no longer feel safe or welcome in their own

countries, the established media—everywhere—refers to them as “far right.” It is tempting to digress and identify the political clowns, from Canada to Ireland and on dozens of other national stages, who regurgitate the approved disparagements. But we hear them all. To summarize: We’re too white, and the oceans are going to boil. If you object, you’re a racist and a “denier.”

But why is this happening? Why have western nations, just since 2000, admitted tens of millions of immigrants from some of the most desperate places on earth? It’s not to relieve population pressures in those nations. In 2000, the total population of Africa was 820 million. Today, it is 1.5 billion. By 2050, barely more than two decades from now, Africa’s population is projected to increase to 2.5 billion. Shall we invite a billion Africans to resettle in Europe? Or maybe there’s room in Ohio.

Again, it is tempting to be sidetracked by tales of “diversity” gone awry. But it shouldn’t surprise anyone. The European Left, just like its American counterpart, is doing everything it can to discourage assimilation. Bring in millions of people who have nothing in common with the legacy population, then teach them they are victims of racism while allowing them to overwhelm taxpayer-supported public services, and voila, there is tension.

To stick to the point, however, it is clear that mass migration from regions of the world where the population is exploding into developed westernized nations will do nothing to help the nations where these immigrants are coming from. There are simply too many of them. It doesn’t make a dent. So this migration must be in the interests of the European nations. Is that it?

It isn’t just mass migration that is disrupting western nations; it is also environmental edicts in the name of fighting climate change. These regulations, affecting most western nations but curiously diminished, if not nonexistent everywhere else, have been with us for decades. In recent years, catalyzed by the alleged climate crisis, they have expanded to reach into every aspect of our lives. And yet again, we must resist the temptation to enumerate the countless examples of environmentalist policies leading to shortages and high prices and, with irony that has by now become passé: environmental destruction. Offshore wind farms and the “cradle-to-cradle” impact of EVs come immediately to mind.

What bears discussion are the shared consequences of mass migration and extreme environmentalism. In both cases, the middle class of western nations is economically harmed, the aspiring low-income communities have their upward mobility taken away, more people become more dependent on the government, and the wealthiest people and the biggest corporations see their power and wealth increase. Last week, I attempted to explain these forces in more detail, using California as an example. But it’s everywhere, and it is the most powerful coalition of corrupt special interests the populations of modern western nations have ever faced.

Resistance to this upward/downward transfer of middle class wealth (mostly upward) can now be tagged by the establishment as racist and anti-environment, and hence stigmatized as selfish and immoral, and, of course, “far right.” To the extent this resistance has grown, it constitutes a threat to the agenda. This is why Trump, Orban, Wilders, Meloni, Le Pen, and dozens of other

emerging leaders are either being relentlessly stigmatized, subjected to lawfare, politically outmaneuvered, co-opted, or killed.

The most outrageous, and very effective, tactic of the establishment has been to mobilize the political left to be their foot soldiers. Once again, this process is thick with irony. The consequences of government policies that harm the poor and benefit the rich are precisely the result of the machinations of those oligarchs and corporate globalists that the left traditionally despises. But the economic dead-end that everyone in the West now faces has been sold to the left as the last gasps of a racist and privileged white middle class sucking the life out of an exhausted planet. Their solution? Redistribution.

Although many leftist activists are naïve enough to think that Marxist redistribution is our solution, that's not what they're going to get. Nor is our solution to be found in neoliberal free trade, even though that would define the economic world view of many Never Trumpers, to the extent any of them have ever really thought about it. These two ideological polarities, in actual practice, are two sides of the same coin: they both facilitate the centralization of power and ownership. That's the pragmatic ideology of the migrant-importing, climate crisis-mongering, stop the "far right" (at any cost) western elites who want to rule the world. For them, ideology is window dressing.

And so it is, as President Biden puts it when he's lucid enough to spout these lies, that "Donald Trump and MAGA Republicans are a threat to the very soul of this country." And from Ottawa to Dublin, the same wholly owned political puppets use the same playbook.

If "far right" populism is to have any chance to stop the established elites and their leftist foot soldiers from achieving absolute victory, there are a lot of things that have to happen. They have to recognize the meaning and curb the excesses of these pernicious variants of capitalism—casino capitalism, globalist capitalism, crony capitalism, monopoly capitalism—without losing an absolute commitment to competitive, decentralized capitalism as the only way to protect private property, upward mobility, and economic freedom. They have to recognize the value of environmentalism while throwing away the corrupt excesses being pushed by the climate lobby and powerful economic and political special interests. That's a hard balance. And they have to make common cause with nationalist movements in developing nations that are not helped by outmigration and are, if anything, even more victimized by extreme environmental restrictions, while avoiding supporting the corrupt elites in those nations.

None of this is easy, but meanwhile, there is one more elephant in the room. Demographic implosion. Women in developed nations are not having children at anywhere near replacement rates.

Apart from flooding city after city with foreigners who have no intention of ever assimilating, there are solutions. Retain productivity in an aging society by automating industry. That's going to happen anyway, and in some Asian nations, it is already the de facto strategy. Or, perhaps more life-affirmingly, stop the environmentalist extremism that has made everything scarce and expensive. Reduce excessive demand by stopping mass immigration, then increase supply by letting home builders, miners, loggers, farmers, ranchers, and manufacturers all work again

without crippling restrictions on their efforts. Lower the cost of living so people can afford to purchase homes and start families.

This solution still might not work. We haven't fully come to terms with the impact that a knowledge economy combined with universally available birth control has had on the decisions women make in their lives. If people could more easily afford to start families, would women choose to do so? Or would they still prefer their careers? And notwithstanding the intentional devaluation of masculinity over the last few decades, when women make more money than their potential male partners, does this make them less attracted to those men as potential fathers? There's evidence to support that theory.

It is possible that only communities bound tightly together through faith or tribal roots can overcome these many obstacles to sufficient fertility. Which perhaps explains why Christianity itself has been identified, along with MAGA, as a "threat to democracy."

When Trump says, "They're not coming for me, they're coming for you, and I'm just in the way," this is what he's referring to. Whether you love Trump or hate him, now is a good moment to reflect on what forces are at work in America and the West today. It's complicated, and traditional labels and paradigms no longer apply.

Edward Ring is a senior fellow of the Center for American Greatness. He is also the director of water and energy policy for the California Policy Center, which he co-founded in 2013 and served as its first president. Ring is the author of Fixing California: Abundance, Pragmatism, Optimism (2021) and The Abundance Choice: Our Fight for More Water in California (2022). This article first appeared in the July 17, 2024 American Greatness.



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