



**WEEKLY UPDATE  
MARCH 31 - APRIL 6, 2024**

**THIS WEEK PAGE 2**

**NO BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEETING**

**SLOCOG**

**VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED SYSTEM ANALYSIS PRESENTED**

**OTHER AGENCIES DORMANT**

**ARE JOINT POWERS AGENCIES ACTUALLY NEEDED?**

**SEE THE SPECIAL FEATURE ON PAGE 3**

**MORE CORRUPTION AT THE IWMA?**

**LAST WEEK PAGE 5**

**SLO PENSION TRUST**

**POSITIVE INVESTMENT RETURNS CONTINUE**

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEETING**

**RESOLUTION TO EXTEND DIABLO FOR 20 YEARS APPROVED**

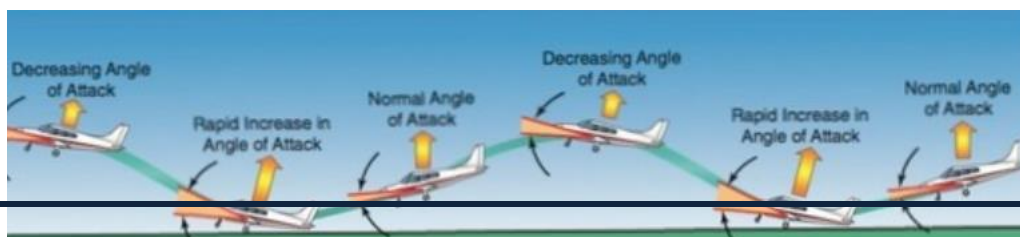
**CLOSED SESSION**

**NOTHING ON NEW CAO LAST WEEK**

**OCEANO AIRPORT RESOLUTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY**

**PAULDING & REST OF BOARD WISH TO KEEP IT OPEN**

**THE COASTAL COMMISSION ALSO STALKING AROUND**



**EMERGENT ISSUES**

**SEE PAGE 9**

**CALIFORNIA’S CARBON CONTRADICTION OF  
FAVORING FOREIGN OIL OVER DOMESTIC TRUTH**

**FLOATING OFFSHORE WIND PROJECTS WILL  
SQUANDER HUNDREDS OF BILLIONS OF DOLLARS**

**THE DAILY CHART: THE U.S. NUCLEAR DEFICIT**

**CALIFORNIA’S LATEST HUSTLE: UTILITY BILLS  
BASED ON RATEPAYERS' INCOME**

**COLAB IN DEPTH**

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**THE CIVILIZATIONAL MASOCHISM OF THE WEST**

*We are swiftly approaching the consequences of our suicidal blindness*

**BY BRUCE THORNTON**

**WILL DEI END AMERICA—OR AMERICA END DEI?**

*OUR FUTURE HINGES ON HOW QUICKLY WE DISCARD DEI*

*ORTHODOXY*

**BY VICTOR DAVIS HANSON**

**THIS WEEK’S HIGHLIGHTS**

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

**No Board of Supervisors Meeting on Tuesday, April 2, 2024 (Not scheduled)**

**Other Agency Meetings in General** – It appears that some of the County joint powers agencies are only meeting every other month or even less frequently. Most LAFCO meetings are being cancelled. These agencies have expensive fulltime staffs, and their budgets have expanded over the years. Some agency Board members may reason that by having fewer meetings, their


activities will receive less coverage in the COLAB Weekly Update. If they can operate out of view, there is less chance that some of their flawed policies will be questioned.

**San Luis Obispo County Council of Governments (SLOCOG) Meeting of Wednesday April 3, 2024**

**Item E-3 Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Mitigation Program Study Update.** SLOCOG is seeking methods to mitigate the State requirements that will prohibit new development or require massive infrastructure taxes and fees for new development to be approved.

*In 2013, Senate Bill 743 was signed into law and fundamentally changed the way transportation impacts are analyzed through CEQA. The goals of Senate Bill 743 relate to public health, meeting housing demand through infill development, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. To encourage this shift, transportation impacts are now determined based on vehicle miles traveled (VMT), rather than traffic congestion. VMT as a metric encourages development in places where trips are short, making the options to walk, bike, or take transit more viable and competitive with driving. As population and employment growth are attracted to these places, the net effect over time is to reduce per-capita VMT and its adverse effects on the environment.*

Figure 1: VMT Mitigation Program Options



**VMT MITIGATION PROGRAM OPTIONS**

	BANK	EXCHANGE	IMPACT FEE
	Establishes a "bank" of VMT-reducing projects where an applicant can purchase VMT reduction credits for a fixed price	Establishes a marketplace that an applicant can fund a specific VMT-reducing project or program from based on its unique price and total VMT reduction	Requires an applicant to pay a fee toward a group of VMT-reducing projects
Source of VMT-reducing Projects	Government agency	Government agency or private party	Government agency
Project Selection Method	Prioritized list of VMT-reducing projects	Government agency or applicant proposed VMT-reducing project	Prioritized list of VMT-reducing projects
Voluntary Participation	Yes	Yes	No
Cost per VMT	Fixed	Varies by project	Fixed based on development location
Mitigation Types	Physical improvements, services, or operations	Physical improvements, services, or operations	Physical improvements

Nothing is going to fix this problem except a massive waking up of the California voters to remove and replace most State elected officials and may local officials. Some of our local officials are resisting the mandate and have helped SLOCOG to work on the mitigations but the basic stack and pack system will remain.

**SLO APCD - 2024 Meeting Dates: January 24, 2024 (Elections), May 15 (first budget meeting), June 19 (budget adoption), September 25, and November 13, 2024.**

**SPECIAL FEATURE**

See the video below for an interesting history on the proliferation of the joint powers agencies, courtesy of CalCoastNews. A former Deputy County Administrator presents a shocking history of staff dominance and patronage

promotion. Control Click on the link below .Then click on the **BROWSE** YouTube Button and the video report should run.

<https://youtu.be/D8rG2anxSIA>



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**SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS (SLOCOG)  
SAN LUIS OBISPO REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY (RTA)**

**2024 MEETING CALENDAR (Adopted on August 2, 2023; Revised 11/30/23)**

SLOCOG/RTA MEETING DATES	GROUP	AGENDA DIST.	MEETING DATE	KEY TOPICS, ISSUES, DEADLINES
<b>JAN. 10, 2024</b> <b>RTA &amp; SLOCOG</b>	EXEC COM <b>RTA &amp; SLOCOG</b>	12/8/23 <b>12/19/23</b>	12/13/23 <b>1/10/24</b>	<b>RTA:</b> Election of RTA Board Officers (jointly with SLOCOG); Financial audits FY 22/23; Various grant resolutions <b>SLOCOG:</b> New Board Orientation, Election - SLOCOG Board Officers (jointly with RTA); Board Member Committee and Interagency assignments; Advisory Committee Election of Officers (SSTAC, TTAC, CTAC); Reappoint SLOCOG At-Large representatives; Employee Recognition for years of service
<b>FEB. 7, 2024</b> <b>SLOCOG</b> (RTA tentative)	EXEC COM SSTAC TTAC/CTAC <b>SLOCOG Board</b>	1/12/24 1/18/24 1/19/24 <b>1/26/24</b>	1/17/24 1/24/24 1/24/24 <b>2/7/24</b>	<b>SLOCOG:</b> Plaque of Appreciation - outgoing President; Resolution of Appreciation - outgoing Board members (if any); Statewide ATP; Draft OWP & Budget Assumptions 2024/2025; Proposed 2024 State and Federal Legislative Programs; Review Caltrans SHOPP; 23/24 Unmet Transit Needs Hearing; 2025 STIP & SB1 Fund Programs update; Regional Rideshare Biannual Progress Report; Call for Projects; Access for All Program; Federal Performance Measures; Data Services Update <b>RTA:</b> Tentative
<b>MAR. 6, 2024</b> <b>RTA</b> (SLOCOG tentative)	EXEC COM (SSTAC) - V (TTAC/CTAC) - V <b>RTA Board</b>	2/9/24 (2/15/24) (2/16/24) <b>2/23/24</b>	2/14/24 (2/21/24) (2/21/24) <b>3/6/24</b>	<b>RTA:</b> RTA Budget Assumptions 2024/2025 <b>SLOCOG:</b> Tentative
<b>APR. 3, 2024</b> <b>SLOCOG</b> (RTA tentative)	EXEC COM SSTAC TTAC/CTAC <b>SLOCOG Board</b>	3/8/24 3/14/24 3/15/24 <b>3/22/24</b>	3/13/24 3/20/24 3/20/24 <b>4/3/24</b>	<b>SLOCOG:</b> FY 2024/25 OWP and Budget Adoption; TDA/STA Fund Apportionment for FY 2024/25; Transit Programming; FY 24/25 Rural Transit Fund & State of Good Repair (SGR) Program of Projects; 24/25 Unmet Transit Needs Findings; VMT Mitigation Banking Update; FY 23/25 Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP) programming <b>RTA:</b> Tentative
<b>MAY 1, 2024</b> <b>RTA</b> (SLOCOG tentative)	EXEC COM (SSTAC) - V (TTAC/CTAC) - V <b>RTA Board</b>	4/5/24 (4/11/24) (4/12/24) <b>4/19/24</b>	4/10/24 (4/17/24) (4/17/24) <b>5/1/24</b>	<b>RTA:</b> Final FY 2024/2025 Operating/Capital Budgets; RTA Budget Adoption <b>SLOCOG:</b> Tentative
<b>May 29, 2024</b> <b>JUNE 6, 2024</b> <b>SLOCOG</b> (RTA tentative)	EXEC COM SSTAC TTAC/CTAC <b>SLOCOG Board</b>	5/3/24 5/16/24 5/17/24 <b>5/17/24</b>	5/8/24 5/22/24 5/22/24 <b>5/29/24</b>	<b>SLOCOG:</b> Conditional Approval of TDA Claims for FY 2024/25; Triennial Performance Audit presentation; 2025 STIP & SB1 Fund Programs update; Polling Results; State Legislative Update <b>RTA:</b> Tentative
<b>JULY 10, 2024</b> <b>RTA</b> (SLOCOG tentative)	EXEC COM (SSTAC) - V (TTAC/CTAC) - V <b>RTA Board</b>	5/31/24 (6/13/24) (6/14/24) <b>6/28/24</b>	<b>6/12/24</b> (moved from 6/5/24) (6/19/24) (6/19/24) <b>7/10/24</b>	<b>RTA:</b> Tentative <b>SLOCOG:</b> Tentative
<b>August 14, 2024</b> <b>AUG. 7, 2024</b> <b>SLOCOG</b> (RTA tentative)	EXEC COM SSTAC TTAC/CTAC <b>SLOCOG Board</b>	7/12/24 7/18/24 7/19/24 <b>7/31/24</b>	7/17/24 7/24/24 7/24/24 <b>8/14/24</b>	<b>SLOCOG:</b> Status and Assessment of Programmed Projects; Draft SLOCOG and RTA 2025 Meeting Calendar; Closed Session: Exec. Dir. Performance evaluation; Regional Rideshare Biannual Progress Report <b>RTA:</b> Tentative
<b>SEPT. 4, 2024</b> <b>RTA</b> (SLOCOG tentative)	EXEC COM (SSTAC) - V (TTAC/CTAC) - V <b>RTA Board</b>	8/9/24 (8/15/24) (8/16/24) <b>8/23/24</b>	8/14/24 (8/21/24) (8/21/24) <b>9/4/24</b>	<b>RTA:</b> Tentative <b>SLOCOG:</b> Tentative
<b>OCT. 2, 2024</b> <b>SLOCOG</b> (RTA tentative)	EXEC COM SSTAC TTAC/CTAC <b>SLOCOG Board</b>	9/6/24 9/12/24 9/13/24 <b>9/20/24</b>	9/11/24 9/18/24 9/18/24 <b>10/2/24</b>	<b>SLOCOG:</b> Adoption of Unmet Transit Needs Criteria; Rideshare Week & International Walk-to-School Day (in Executive Director's Report); Caltrans Community-Based Transportation Planning Grants; Transit Programming; Adopt POP for 5311 non-urbanized formula funds; Transit Needs Assessment Update; VMT Mitigation Banking Draft; SLOCOG Open House (tentative); 2027 RTP kickoff. <b>RTA:</b> Tentative
<b>NOV. 6, 2024</b> <b>RTA</b> (SLOCOG tentative)	EXEC COM (SSTAC) - V (TTAC/CTAC) - V <b>RTA Board</b>	10/4/24 (10/17/24) (10/18/24) <b>10/25/24</b>	10/9/24 (10/23/24) (10/23/24) <b>11/6/24</b>	<b>RTA:</b> RTA Budget Amendment (if necessary) <b>SLOCOG:</b> Tentative – SLOCOG Workshop
<b>DEC. 4, 2024</b> <b>SLOCOG</b> (RTA tentative)	EXEC COM SSTAC TTAC/CTAC <b>SLOCOG Board</b>	11/8/24 11/14/24 11/15/24 <b>11/22/24</b>	11/13/24 11/20/24 11/20/24 <b>12/4/24</b>	<b>SLOCOG:</b> Year-end legislative Report; FY 2025/2026 Preliminary Overall Work Program; Recommendations for productivity improvements of operators; SLOCOG Annual Report 2023/24; Public Involvement Plan; SLOCOG Financial Audits FY 23/24; SLOCOG Handbook Update <b>RTA:</b> Tentative
<b>JAN. 8, 2025</b> <b>RTA &amp; SLOCOG</b>	EXEC COM <b>RTA &amp; SLOCOG</b>	12/6/24 <b>12/17/24</b>	12/11/24 <b>1/8/25</b>	<b>RTA:</b> Election of RTA Board Officers (jointly with SLOCOG); Financial audits FY 23/24; Various grant resolutions <b>SLOCOG:</b> New Board Orientation, Election of SLOCOG Board Officers (jointly with RTA); Board Member Committee and Interagency assignments; Advisory Committee Election of Officers (SSTAC, TTAC, CTAC)

\* TTAC and CTAC meet at SLOCOG Conference Room or Teleconference, 1114 Marsh Street, San Luis Obispo, California. TTAC @ 2:00 p.m., CTAC @ 4:30 p.m.  
\*\* SSTAC meets at SLOCOG Conference Room or Teleconference, 1114 Marsh Street, San Luis Obispo, California 12:15 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. SSTAC/TTAC/CTAC meetings in PARENTHESIS are TENTATIVE and will

## LAST WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

### SLO County Pension Trust Meeting of Monday, March 25, 2024 (Completed)

**Item 9 - Monthly Investment Report for February 2024.** The results were positive in February, and momentum continues into March. The Trust Board is gearing up study the rates it will charge next year. The process will take place during May and June.

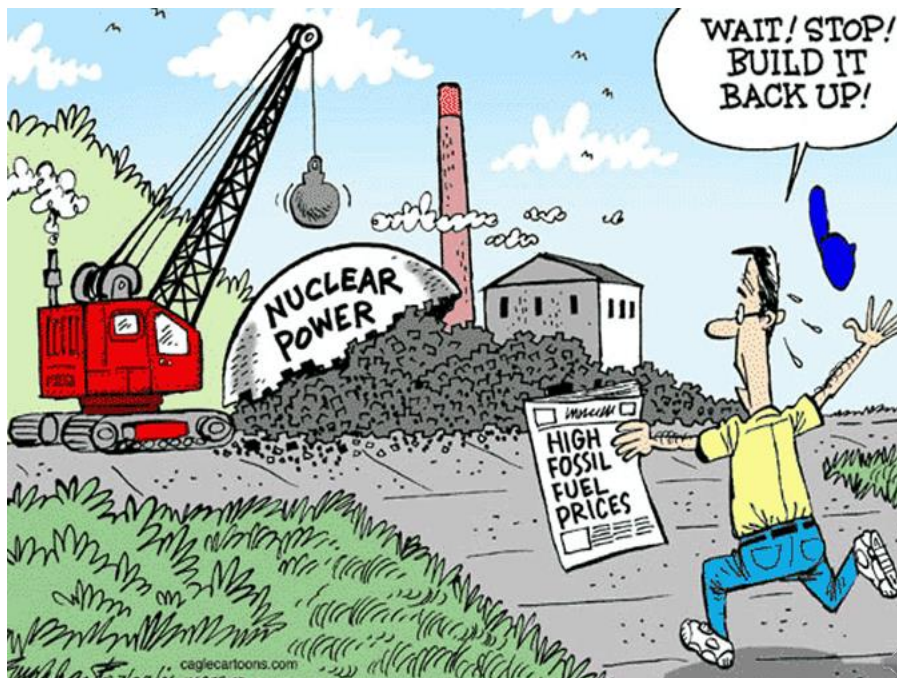
	1-month	YTD	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Total Fund (%) (Gross)	1.3	1.7	8.9	(8.0)	15.2	8.9	16.3
Policy Index (%)*	1.3	1.5	10.2	(9.7)	12.8	10	16.4

	YTD	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Market Value (millions)	\$1,715	\$1,694	\$1,614	\$1,775	\$1,552	\$1,446

\* Policy index as of Nov. 2021 Strategic Asset Allocation Policy with 2024 Interim targets:  
 Public Mkt Equity- 20% Russell 3000, 17% MSCI ACWI ex-US  
 Public Mkt Debt- 4% Bloomberg/Barclays US Aggregate,  
 Risk Diversifying 8% Barclays 7-10yr Treasury, 7% Barclays 5-10yr US TIPS  
 Real Estate & Infrastructure- 14% NCREIF Index (inc. Infrastructure)  
 Private Equity- 12% actual private equity returns  
 Private Credit- 10% actual private credit returns  
 Liquidity- 8% 90-day T-Bills  
 Pending annual updates to interim targets.

**Board of Supervisors Meeting of Tuesday, March 26, 2024 (Completed)**

**Item 35 - Submittal of a resolution that supports operation of Diablo Canyon Power Plant for 20 years.** The Resolution was approved 3/2 with Supervisors Gibson and Paulding dissenting. For whatever reason, the leftist Democratic establishment is not ready to commit. They assert that the relicensing process must be completed prior to their support. There is an assertion that the metal in reactor vessel I has become brittle with age and could leak radiation.



**During the Meeting:** In attendance were both proponents and opponents who testified. The usual clack of long hairs and tight jawed leftists continued their rant about radiation and tidal waves, and are now adding the brittle reactor vessel theory to their litany. They forget to mention that 1,500 plant employees live in the area. These in turn have thousands of family members. If the reactor were in danger of leaking, don't you think

someone one would squawk? Even St. Senator John Laird attacked the Resolution on the grounds that it is not in accord with the State Legislation that seeks to extend the plant's license for only 5 years. The convoluted logic in this case must be a sop not to anger the anti-nuclear crowd the too much.

**Background:** During the February 27, 2024 Board Meeting, Supervisor Dawn Ortiz-Legg proposed that the Board consider adopting a Resolution supporting the relicensing of the Diablo Nuclear Power Plant for 20 years instead of five years, as has been proposed by the legislature. Supervisors Arnold and Peschong concurred with her by supporting the motion to have staff prepare the Resolution and return at a future meeting. Supervisors Gibson and Paulding vigorously opposed the motion.

The excellent Board letter on this item contains a concise history of the issue and a list of important reasons why the plant's operation should be continued. It also contains key steps in renewing the license by the Federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

*The NRC anticipates making a decision on PG&E's license renewal application in August 2025. As part of the license renewal process, the Coastal Commission must conduct a Federal consistency review to determine whether the license renewal would affect land or water use or natural resources within the coastal zone and whether it is consistent with the applicable provisions of the California Coastal Act.*

There are numerous agency and PG&E requirements outlined in SB 846 to solidify the path toward DCPD extended operations, and progress has been made in meeting them. Some significant milestones include:

- In November 2023, PG&E submitted its license renewal application to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). The application was accepted by the NRC on December 19, 2023.
- In December 2023, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) issued a decision conditionally approving extended operations of the DCPD until October 31, 2029, for Unit 1 and October 31, 2030, for Unit 2.
- In January 2024, the Department of Energy (DOE) announced its final decision to award PG&E \$1.1 billion as part of the DOE Civil Nuclear Credit Program. The funding under this program is to support the continued operation of nuclear power plants which were scheduled to be decommissioned.

The proposed Resolution is displayed below:

Attachment 1

## **IN THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

\_\_\_\_\_ day \_\_\_\_\_, 2024

PRESENT: Supervisors

ABSENT:

**RESOLUTION NO.** \_\_\_\_\_

**DIABLO CANYON POWER PLANT:**

**KEY CLIMATE SOLUTION FOR ENERGY SECURITY AND RELIABILITY BEYOND 2030**

The following resolution is hereby offered and read;

WHEREAS, climate change has led to increased uncertainty, with extreme weather locally, nationally and around the globe; and

WHEREAS, on February 28, 2024, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 6544 (Atomic Energy Advancement Act), in a bipartisan vote of 365-36, to accelerate nuclear energy technologies and modernize regulations; and

WHEREAS, on March 4, 2024, President Biden signed the fiscal 2024 spending bill for the Department of Energy allocating \$2.7 billion for domestic uranium production, with strong bipartisan backing; and

WHEREAS, Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant (DCPP), California's last operating nuclear power plant, is located in San Luis Obispo County and has operated safely since 1985 under the U.S. Nuclear Energy Commission, which protects public health and safety and has the authority to shut down DCPP, if there is any concern; and

WHEREAS, DCPP meets high safety standards with additional oversight from the Diablo Canyon Independent Safety Commission, along with other third-party experts, undergoing the most rigorous assessment of any nuclear power plant in the world; and

WHEREAS, DCPP is California's largest clean energy generator, operating 24 hours per day, 365 days a year, rain or shine; and is the County's largest private employer with 1300 head-of-household jobs, and also provides millions of dollars in annual property taxes for our children's schools; and

WHEREAS, DCPP is a critical, fixed energy generating asset, providing California state wide reliability, including 8.6% of California's energy and 17% of its clean energy; and

WHEREAS, DCPP is currently undergoing an extensive review and process, fulfilling the provisions of SB 846, passed in 2022, to continue operations until 2030; and

WHEREAS, these extraordinary efforts by Governor Newsom and the State Legislature are appreciated, as are the Biden Administration's Department of Energy award of \$1.1 billion dollars in credits supporting the continued operations of safe and reliable nuclear energy facilities, protecting thousands of jobs while avoiding an increase of carbon emissions; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Department of Energy lists nuclear power as safe and reliable clean energy, that helps reduce carbon emissions and address the threat of global climate change; and

WHEREAS, on December 2, 2023, at the World Climate Action Summit 28th Conference of the Parties (COP 28) to the U.N Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United States joined 20 countries from four continents in signing the Ministerial Declaration to Triple Nuclear Energy (Ministerial Declaration) as a key step toward reducing gas emissions by 2050; and

WHEREAS, signatories to the Ministerial Declaration "recognize the importance, where technically feasible and economically efficient, of extending the lifetimes of nuclear power plants that operate in line with the highest standards of safety, sustainability, security, and non-proliferation, as appropriate;" and

WHEREAS, the International Energy Agency states that nuclear energy, alongside renewables, can make a significant contribution to achieving sustainable energy goals and enhancing energy security; and

WHEREAS, California has an important leadership role in technological innovation to advance nuclear applications and processes in order to supply the terra-watts of electricity for data



centers, clean tech manufacturing, electrification of transportation among many other every day needs to drive the world's 7th largest economy; and

WHEREAS, San Luis Obispo County is the sole location in California where nuclear energy is commercially generated, offering significant nuclear expertise, world class educational facilities and operational excellence; and

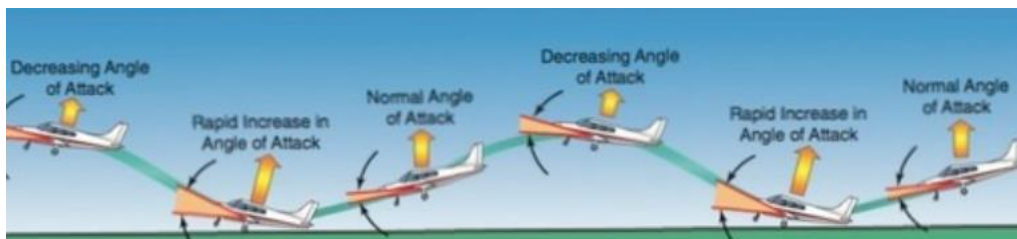
WHEREAS, San Luis Obispo County follows an "all the above approach," generating energy at DCP, two utility-scale solar plants generating 800MW, and offshore wind projects, all driving innovations, investments, jobs and producing carbon free energy; and

WHEREAS, San Luis Obispo County respectfully requests that the State of California give strong consideration to extending the DCP operational lifespan up to 20 more years. Doing so offers certainty, ensures material forecasting, assists workforce planning, drive down costs and together with renewables, DCP enhances grid stability and energy security for all our families and communities.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED AND ORDERED that the Board of Supervisors of the County of San Luis Obispo, State of California, supports the continued operation of Diablo Canyon Power Plant for another 20 years.

**Item 36 - Closed Session- PERSONNEL (Government Code section 54957.) It is the intention of the Board to meet in closed session to: (16) Consider Public Employee Appointment for the Position of County Administrative Officer; and (17) Consider Public Employee Appointment for the Position of Human Resources Director.** As of 5PM, Saturday, there was no posting of a selection for CAO on the County website.

**Item 38 - Submittal of a Resolution supporting the continued operation of the Oceano Airport and recognizing its important role in San Luis Obispo County.** The write-up indicates that Supervisor Paulding has been receiving pressure from community groups that wish the County to close the airport. The Board voted unanimously to support the Resolution. A number of pilots, business people, and residents supported the Board's endorsement of the retention of the airport. Significantly, Democratic County power broker and financial contributor, Don Ernst, supported the Resolution and reported that although he keeps his airplane in San Luis Obispo, he uses the Oceano airport to practice his touch and goes.



Only 4 speakers were opposed. They claim that the airport is used by wealthy pilots from outside of Oceano and that that the 60 acres would be better used for trails and nature areas.

It is likely that the County will have a major fight with the Coastal Commission over the retention the field in the future.

**Background:** The item report stated in part:

*At the February 27, 2024, Board Meeting, the Board requested that staff prepare a draft resolution supporting the continued operation of the Oceano Airport (“Airport”) and recognizing its important role in the County of San Luis Obispo. The referral was made by Supervisor Paulding. In his referral, Supervisor Paulding explained what prompted the referral was the fact that various community groups and members have recently expressed opposition to the continued operation of the Airport citing environmental justice related concerns, and that these concerns were echoed by the California Coastal Commission (“commission”) when the commission recently reviewed a Coastal Development Permit (“CDP”) submitted by the Airport for a maintenance and improvement project.*

The Board letter did not describe which community groups wish to close the airport or why they wish it closed. The County Department of Airports prepared the Board letter, which is totally in support of its continuation. The record is full of scores of letters from pilots and others who wish the airport to remain open. There are no letters as of this writing from any community group or individuals supporting shutdown of the airport. It has been reported in the media that there are groups that would like the airport to be replaced by wetlands. The California Coastal Commission has been hostile to the Airport and has required the County to conduct a major planning effort prior to making any improvements.

Perhaps Supervisor Paulding wishes to shut off the pressure for him to close the airport by some of his constituents with a powerful set of reasons and a firm “no way” by the Board.

There was no data in the report about how many airplanes are based at the field, how many takeoffs and landings there are per year, how much revenue the County receives from hangers and aircraft parking, how much revenue the County receives from fuel sales, or how much it costs to run the field. Are there other tenants? This is typical of the County’s aversion to real analysis of issues. Again, how are we doing? Is the airport a cost center or a profit center?

The County Budget simply lists the cost.

#### **Oceano Airport Operations**

Oceano Airport is a small, general aviation airport that serves as a critical point for air ambulance, California Highway Patrol, and Cal Fire activities in addition to providing general aviation facilities for airport users.

Provide strategic oversight and long-term planning for the Oceano Airport through the timely and efficient administration of airport business and financial management. Operate and maintain the airfield, facilities, and property in support of general aviation.

Total Expenditures: \$247,625  
Total Staffing (FTE): 0.00

**Item 39 - Any Supervisor may ask a question for clarification, make an announcement, or report briefly on his or her activities. In addition, Supervisors may request staff to report back to the Board at a subsequent meeting concerning any matter or may request that staff place a matter of business on a future agenda. Any request to place a matter of business for consideration on a future agenda requires the majority vote of the Board.** There were no requests for reports or future actions.

## **EMERGENT ISSUES**

**Item 1 – California’s Carbon Contradiction of Favoring Foreign Oil Over Domestic Truth**  
*Iraq is the largest foreign oil importer to California and a leading country in gas flaring* By Mike Vallante, March 23, 2024

In the heart of California's environmental policy discussions, a glaring contradiction casts a shadow over the state's commitment to leading the world in climate action.

California's [proposed Low Carbon Fuel Standard \(LCFS\)](#) regulatory package highlights the absurdity surrounding the carbon intensity evaluations of domestic versus imported crude oil. At the center of this controversy is the state evaluation that crude oil produced within California, under some of the most rigorous environmental, health, and labor regulations globally, is deemed [more carbon-intensive](#) than oil shipped across oceans from countries like Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Ecuador.

This discrepancy flies in the face of logic and highlights the inherent hypocrisy in the state's approach to carbon accounting. It is profoundly frustrating to witness California's environmental policies being purposely skewed by personal agendas over scientific models. How does the heavily regulated domestic oil production, where more than 25 local, state, and federal agencies oversee its operations, compare with oil from countries that don't have to adhere to our laws and often engage in damaging environmental practices?

How is [oil from Ecuador](#), a country [reported](#) by the New York Times that is tearing down the rainforest in pursuit of oil extraction, considered less carbon-intensive? California's "analysis" conveniently ignores the environmental cost of tearing down one of the most diverse ecosystems in the world and further compounds the irony by the fact that 50% of this oil is sold to California. Iraq is the largest [foreign oil importer to California](#) and a leading country [in gas flaring](#). The International Energy Agency [reported](#) that [gas flaring](#) "is a major [source](#) of CO2 emissions, methane, and black soot, and is damaging to health."

Equally astonishing is the environmental and logistical gymnastics required to justify crude oil being [imported](#) on tanker ships from thousands of miles away, like Saudi Arabia, Kazakhstan, Brazil, Columbia, and Guyana, is less carbon intensive than California oil production that pipes the crude directly to the refineries.

The methodological and data flaws in the OPGEE (Oil Production Greenhouse gas Emissions Estimator), which underpin these evaluations, reveal a troubling disregard for comprehensive environmental impact assessments. This model's failure to accurately capture the carbon footprint of imported oil undermines California's environmental leadership, jeopardizes the state's climate goals, and wrongfully targets a key energy industry with 55,000 California employees.

It's frustrating to see policy decisions influenced by models detached from reality. These models must consider the stringent regulations that California's domestic production must comply with including that all their greenhouse gas emissions are accounted for under the state's cap and trade program. Imports are totally exempt from this program.

Penalizing California's oil producers while inadvertently supporting environmentally detrimental practices abroad raises pressing questions about the objectives and integrity of the state's environmental policies of the individuals behind his report. Are personal goals and agendas overshadowing the commitment to truth, science, and environmental stewardship?

Behind the (LCFS) regulatory package decision are the 55,000 men and women who work in our California oil industry. They all have families and are an integral part California's economy and the communities they call home. They deserve honesty, accountability, and transparency. This state government's decisions with our oil and energy industry must be guided by unbiased science, transparent methodologies, and a genuine commitment to the truth, not personal agendas.

*Michael Vallante is an entrepreneur with extensive experience in communications and public relations, who provides consulting and strategic communications services for small businesses and non-profits around the country. In 2017, Mr. Vallante was appointed by President Donald J. Trump as Regional Administrator for U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) Region IX. He oversaw the management of SBA's capital, contracting, and counseling programs serving small businesses throughout Arizona, California, Guam, Hawaii, and Nevada.*

California Globe, March 25, 2024.

## **Item 2 – Floating Offshore Wind Projects Will Squander Hundreds of Billions of Dollars – By Edward Ring, March 27, 2024**

***From a financial perspective, offshore wind, should it go forward, will be the biggest waste of money ever imposed on the backs of working Californians***

In December 2022, after years of planning, the U.S. Dept. of the Interior [sold rights to develop offshore wind](#) in five lease areas off the California coast. Five companies submitted successful bids, paying a total of \$757 million for development rights.

These leases are located 20 miles off the California coast in water approximately 4,000 feet deep. The floating wind turbines will be tethered to the ocean floor with cables, and each of them will also require a high-voltage transmission cable that will pass through the water and traverse the sea bottom for 20 miles to connect to the grid onshore.

The environmental impact and logistical challenges of installing and operating these floating leviathans are devastating. With 25 gigawatts of installed “nameplate capacity” called for by 2045, even at 10 megawatts per wind turbine, this would require 2,500 floating turbines. Each one would tower roughly 1,000 feet from the water line to the tip of a rotor blade in vertical position, with substantial additional structure required underwater in the form of floatation pontoons and counterweights. To put this in perspective, these dimensions are longer than a modern American supercarrier.

Imagine the impact on the California coast as port facilities are constructed, along with substations, transmission lines, battery farms, housing and services for workers, and new access roads. Imagine the impact on whales and other marine life of submarines installing concrete underwater to anchor the tethering cables or laying high-voltage lines on the sea floor. Imagine the operating impact of thousands of rotors turning along avian flyways or the impact of high-voltage electrical waves and mechanical vibrations from the rotor being transmitted into the ocean depths from an obstacle course of thousands of tethering and power cables, each one nearly a mile in length. Where is the coastal commission? Where is Greenpeace? Where are the regulators that won't allow desalination plants with a footprint that is negligible by comparison? Where are the environmentalists whose entire business model is litigation?

Citizens in the [afflicted coastal counties](#) are apoplectic over the momentum and support these offshore wind development efforts are generating. Money is pouring in from wind developers to contribute to local politicians who support these projects. But the ordinary citizens who live in these communities, who can't even get a permit to add a room to their home or build a seawall to protect their property, are watching the wholesale industrialization of their coast in a display of institutional hypocrisy that will go down in history.

What will stop offshore wind from ever realizing the ambitious scale currently proposed, however, is its preposterous cost. Unfortunately, that reality may not assert itself until a pretty big mess is made of California's coastline and coastal communities that, to date, have remained among the most pristine and beautiful swaths of real estate in America. And since the State of California and the proponents of floating offshore wind energy won't offer a straightforward disclosure of how much they ultimately will have to spend to build this stuff—all of which will ultimately be paid by taxpayers and ratepayers—here are some estimates.

An online document recently produced by a consortium of some of the biggest offshore wind developers in the world titled "[Guide to a Floating Offshore Wind Farm](#)" includes a chart of "[Wind Farm Costs](#)" with over 70 line items specifically called out, each one showing construction costs per megawatt.

This report is produced by [BVG Associates](#), with offices in London, Glasgow, and Trondheim. They are renewable energy consultants with clients around the world. It is unlikely they are overstating their cost estimates. We also know that since 2021, the year for which the cost data in this report is compiled, costs for offshore wind have gone up considerably. And we know that in California, not only are the challenges of floating offshore wind greater than usual because of the plan to float them in waters 4,000 feet deep and 20 miles offshore, but also because in California [everything](#) costs more to construct.

So here is what is likely to be an impossibly low estimate of what it would cost Californians to install 25 gigawatts of floating wind turbine capacity:

The per-megawatt construction costs (in 2023 dollars) are summarized as follows: \$231,953 for "development and project management," \$2,010,261 for the wind turbine, \$2,628,802 for the "balance of plant," and \$572,151 for installation and commissioning. That's \$5,443,167 per megawatt. Accordingly, to construct 25,000 megawatts of capacity, Californians will have to spend \$136 billion. And that price tag doesn't include transmission line upgrades or battery storage. Tack tens of billions onto the total to account for those necessary additions.

When it's all done, if it's ever done, these planned offshore wind installations will actually only contribute the equivalent of 10 gigawatts of baseload power to California's electricity grid, since even offshore, wind can only be relied on about 40 percent of the time. If anyone, anywhere, wants to bet that 10 gigawatts of baseload power can be realized in California—through the construction of giant floating wind turbines, onshore battery farms, and thousands of miles of high-voltage transmission lines both underwater and on land—for a total project construction cost of less than \$150 billion, I'll take that bet and give you odds. It is more likely the total project cost will soar beyond \$300 billion. This is California, after all.

To further put this in perspective, 10 gigawatts of baseload electricity is only about 10 percent of what California's going to need if it goes 100 percent electric. Floating offshore wind at any meaningful scale would be a financial and environmental catastrophe. But there's a reason offshore wind developers are all running to the fertile territory of California, a land of high taxes, high utility prices, and institutionalized climate crisis conniptions. They're failing everywhere else.

Offshore wind developers have experienced cost overruns and had to abandon or resubmit bids on major projects along the U.S. East Coast as well as in the North Sea. Headlines from late last year and so far in 2024 tell a dismal story. "[Wind Warning: Equinor, BP seek 54% hike in US offshore wind power price](#)," "[Equinor calls halt to North Sea Trollvind project](#)," "[U.S. Offshore](#)

[Wind Projects Hit by Surging Costs](#),” “[Another Offshore Wind Project Terminated Off Coast of New Jersey and New York](#),” “[Equinor Abandons Offshore Wind Projects in Ireland](#),” “[BP and Equinor scrap New York offshore wind contract as costs rise](#),” “[Offshore Wind in U.S. Is Fundamentally Broken](#),” Says Top Industry Leader,” and “[Offshore wind project cancellations jeopardize Biden’s clean energy goals](#).”

Had enough?

But in California, watching the state government squander billions of dollars again and again is a way of life. As long as California’s preening politicians can beat their chests and tell us they’re coping with the “climate emergency,” it doesn’t matter how many whales and other marine life die, how many birds are killed, how many coastal ecosystems are fouled as the most beautiful coastline in the world is industrialized, or how many communities are ruined. Never forget that these are communities where, until now, land development of any kind, no matter how personal and trivial, had to pass through a gauntlet of hostile agencies that would make Stalin blush.

Offshore wind, should it go forward, will be one of the biggest wastes of money ever imposed on the backs of working Californians. And in a state willing to commit tens of billions to build a “[High Speed Rail](#)” network that will never divert more than a minute fraction of drivers off the state’s neglected roads and allocate additional tens of billions to a [Homeless Industrial Complex](#) whose special interest constituents have looted taxpayers while actually increasing the number of homeless and level of disorder on the streets of California’s beleaguered cities, that’s saying a lot.

*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).*

### **Item 3 - The Daily Chart: The U.S. Nuclear Deficit - Steve Hayward m March 27, 2024 Powerline**

I once asked a French acquaintance how it was that France managed to build over 50 nuclear power plants over the same time period that the U.S. built virtually none, and his answer was basically that France didn’t pay any attention to Jane Fonda. Actually his explanation was more colorful (and accurate). Read this with a French accent in your mind:

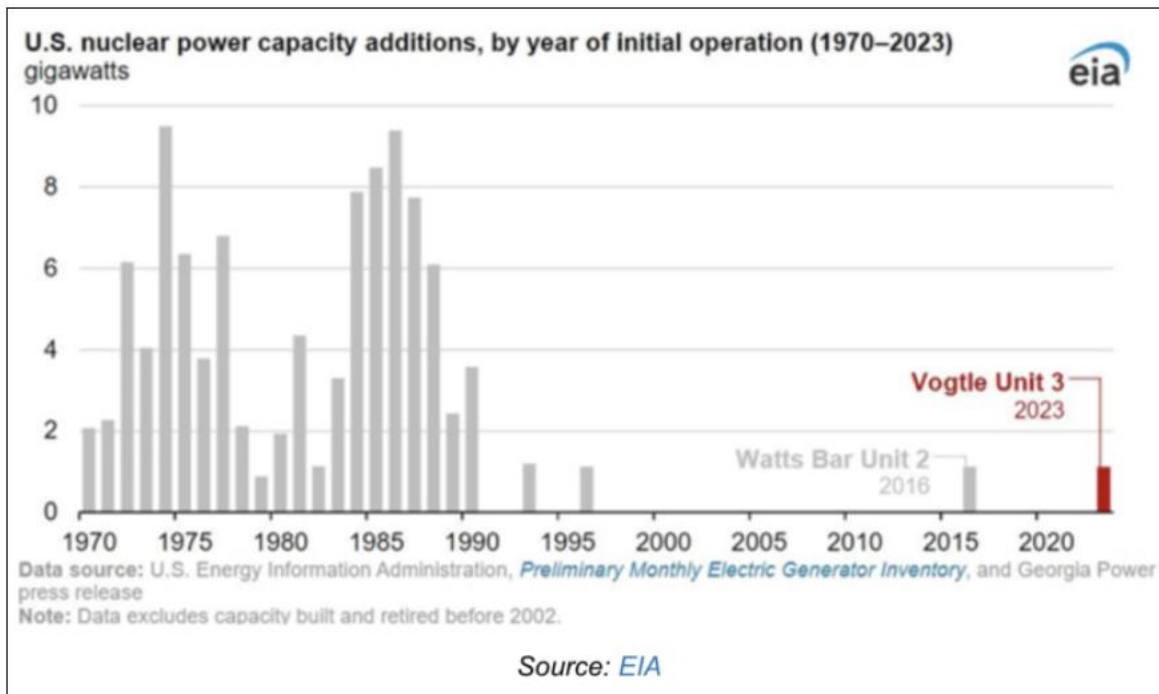
*“Ah, but it is simple you see: In France, our Communists supported nuclear power, whereas in the U.S., your Communists opposed it.”*

True: French labor unions, where Communists have some presence, like nuclear power because it meant lots of union jobs. U.S. progressives say they like labor unions—but they hate construction and electrical unions.

But my follow up question to my French interlocutor is equally pertinent: How did France manage to build nuclear plants so much more cheaply than the U.S.?

*“Ah, but it is simple, you see: In France, we have 200 kinds of cheese, but one kind of nuclear plant design. In America it is just the opposite.”*

In any case, this figure shows how the U.S. abandoned nuclear power. Imagine how much lower our carbon footprint would be if we had kept up the pace of the 1950-1990 period. (Keep in mind that the plants that came online in the mid-1980s were begun 10 to 15 years before.)



#### Item 4 - California's Latest Hustle: Utility Bills Based on Ratepayers' Income by Jane L. Johnson, March 25, 2024.

Utility bills—for electricity, natural gas, water, and garbage—have by long-standing tradition been based on customer usage, measured in kilowatt-hours of electricity, therms or Btu of natural gas, hundred cubic feet of water, or number of garbage cans. Every residence and business has electric, gas, and water meters that measure utility usage.

But changes are afoot in the utility business as federal and state governments urge Americans to convert from fossil fuels to electricity for home heating, appliances, and transportation. From this transition will undoubtedly follow changes in utility rate-setting models.

### Fixed Fees Coupled with Usage-Based Electricity Rates

Some electric utilities currently charge customers a flat, fixed fee as well as usage-based charges, both on the same monthly bill. The fixed fees, often called “customer charges” or “meter-reading charges,” are imposed irrespective of energy usage. These fees assure revenue stability and offset the overhead expenses of running electric utilities. Energy usage-based charges, which can vary seasonally, are designed (and regulated) to recover the cost of the electricity sold.

Economists refer to this pricing strategy as a [two-part tariff](#) in which the consumer must pay a fixed fee for the right to buy a product or service (energy in the case of electric utilities). This pricing model effectively maximizes revenue for sellers that have some monopoly pricing power in their respective markets because of the way they have structured their businesses. Electric utilities are, of course, regulated monopolies that serve designated geographic areas.

## Other Examples of Two-Part Tariff Pricing Strategy

- Disneyland charges high entrance fees to its theme parks, but prices for individual rides are just sufficiently high to cover the marginal cost of operating the rides. A family that has traveled from Kansas to California or Florida Disney venues will likely not balk at paying high admission fees combined with low per-ride ticket prices.
- Popular retailer Costco charges annual membership dues that allow customers to buy large product packages at relatively low unit prices. While Costco isn't strictly considered a monopoly among warehouse stores, its unique membership and marketing methods effectively give it monopoly status with great cachet.
- Country clubs typically charge high membership fees that offer members the right to buy greens fees and participate in social activities with other like-minded, equally affluent members.
- Bars levy admission cover charges combined with fees per drink once patrons are inside.

The strategy works when sellers can easily identify different buyer groups and prohibit individual buyers from selling to nonmember buyers. For example, country club members cannot resell greens fees or social activities to nonmembers. Disneyland visitors cannot resell ride tickets to those who have not paid the entrance fee. And electric utility ratepayers cannot resell to others who don't have accounts with the utility.

## Income-Based Fixed Charges

But what if utilities based their fixed fee on customers' income levels rather than a flat uniform fee for every customer?

California, home to 10 percent of the total US population and often considered a state laboratory where policies begin before adoption across the nation, offers a glimpse into the future of utility rate setting as the two-part tariff pricing model has now taken on a new wrinkle.

In 2022 the supermajority Democrat state legislature passed and the governor signed [Assembly Bill 205](#) (AB 205), which ordered the California Public Utilities Commission to authorize a "fixed charge" on residential electric bills by July 2024. Customers of the three large investor-owned utilities (IOUs)—Pacific Gas and Electric Company, Southern California Edison, and San Diego Gas and Electric—would pay this charge regardless of their electricity usage and in addition to that usage. The basis of the fixed charge is to be determined by each IOU utility, subject to approval by the California Public Utilities Commission.

The legislation also required the utilities to reduce their rates for electricity usage in order to assist low-income customers as electricity prices continue to rise. This represents not only a major shift in the standard rate-setting model from usage orientation to fixed charges but also a new emphasis on income and wealth redistribution from high-income customers to low-income, somewhat akin to a progressive income tax. There is no precedent for such redistribution in utility rate regulation.

AB 205 was intended to ensure that the IOUs' new two-part pricing strategy be revenue-neutral—that is, continue to make sufficient revenue to invest in needed infrastructure for long-distance transmission (picture large pylons across the landscape) and distribution (local power lines delivering power to retail customers). The three IOUs own the vast majority of California's energy infrastructure (poles and wires), construction and maintenance of which are so vital to



greater electrification of homes and transportation as California focuses on transitioning from fossil fuels to renewable energy.

A further intent of the legislation, moreover, was to raise additional revenue to pay for burying power lines that might otherwise ignite wildfires and constructing facilities to carry solar and wind-generated energy to large urban areas. Higher-income customers would pay a disproportionately high share of these construction and maintenance costs, even if they don't use more power.

It all sounded like a win-win for progressives: Rich people pay more for energy, poor people pay less, and everyone makes progress on global warming. Until, that is, questions arose on possible fallout from this new rate-setting model: How to determine ratepayers' income levels without invading their privacy?

How might higher income-based fixed charges, coupled with lower kilowatt-hours usage rates, reduce financial incentives to conserve energy usage? How might lower usage rates affect desirable future sales of rooftop solar installation?

Because of these imponderables and because the California Public Utilities Commission has not approved any of several possible methodologies to implement AB 205, one legislator has now introduced [Assembly Bill 1999](#) to repeal the fixed-charge mandate. Another legislator who voted for AB 205 now confesses that the legislation was long and confusing and was called up for a vote very shortly after its text was available to read.

Blame is being passed around. Is the original AB 205 merely a profit-grab by the three large IOUs? Were legislators remiss in approving it too quickly in their zeal to mandate climate goals? Who originally decided to incorporate the income-based fixed charge into the legislation?

Addressing these questions may be a challenge, something akin to solving an [algebraic problem](#) with more variables than equations, which leaves only an indeterminate solution. Too many conditions must be satisfied: revenue neutrality, protecting customer privacy when determining their income levels, energy usage rates low enough to protect low-income customers, usage rates high enough to encourage energy conservation and future installation of rooftop solar, sufficient revenue to invest in infrastructure for wildfire prevention, and additional grid capacity to support electric vehicle recharging stations and home heat pumps.

It is possible to solve such problems using linear programming, maximizing a linear function subject to the various constraints. But it is unlikely that California Public Utilities Commission staff could grapple with such a solution in time to approve income-based electric utility two-part tariffs in time for July 2024 implementation.

Whether this two-part tariff income-based pricing model might migrate to utilities in other states is unclear at this point, but its success or failure in California will probably determine its ultimate fate. In the meantime, perhaps the original legislation AB 205 is so poorly written that it should be repealed outright, consigning another well-intentioned governmental intervention effort to the proverbial dustbin of history.

*Mises wire*

## COLAB IN DEPTH

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

### THE CIVILIZATIONAL MASOCHISM OF THE WEST

*We are swiftly approaching the consequences of our suicidal blindness*

BY BRUCE THORNTON

Last week, Joe Biden issued a schoolmarmish warning to Israel, which he has been browbeating for months to placate his party's anti-Israel left and Muslim American voters in Michigan, a critical swing state. Speaking to the press, he threatened, "There's got to be a ceasefire because Ramadan – if we get into circumstances where this continues to Ramadan, Israel and Jerusalem could be very, very dangerous."

This solicitude for Muslims' sensitivity about their faith bespeaks the West's long bad habit of caring more about Islam—the faith that conquered and occupied, and to this day still occupies, much of the Christian Roman and Byzantine empires—than they do about their own civilization's foundational religion, whose adherents today are being persecuted and massacred in Islamic lands.

This cultural tic does not demonstrate, as many "citizen of the world" globalists believe, a superior morality based on both an uncritical tolerance for the exotic "other," and a haughty disdain for alleged parochial American nationalism and jingoist patriotism. Rather, it signals to the world a civilizational **failure of nerve** so widespread and intense that it has become a form of geopolitical masochism, manifested in conspicuous displays of cringing apologetics and shameful guilt for the West's alleged historical sins.

For example, Biden's foreign policy crew, products of this ruling class sensibility, seem to think that Muslims view Ramadan the way Christians do Easter, and so will be deeply offended by Israel besmirching this sacred time by continuing to fight. Actually, as Bassam Tawil [writes](#), "In the holy month of Ramadan,' [according](#) to *fatwa* 1566/10013/L=1431, 'the reward of virtues is increased.'" And martyrdom while waging jihad against infidels is a theological virtue par excellence.

Moreover, jihadists have only contempt for Christian and Jewish holy days, rituals, churches, and temples, even as they demand universal obeisance to every jot and tittle of Islamic doctrine. Tawil continues, " Hamas and other Palestinian terror groups have never hesitated to use Jewish holidays to wage war, carry out terrorist attacks and murder Jews, including October 7, 2023, which was the Jewish Sabbath *and* the Simchat Torah holiday—not to mention the launch of the Yom Kippur War by Egypt and Syria" in 1973.

This is just one example of the shameless double standard the self-loathing West has adopted in regard to Islam and Muslims. Christianity and Judaism, in contrast, are regularly disrespected, dismissed, blasphemed, and mocked by our cognitive elites, but few are offended or troubled

about the feelings of those faiths' adherents. Such insults are the cost of living in the secular Western world where religion has been banished from the town square, and free speech is privileged—unless, of course, Muslims, including sadistic butchers and brutal rapists like Hamas, are the targets.

Indeed, this blatantly appeasing double standard has increasingly characterized Western sensibilities since the Iranian revolution of 1978-79. A key consequence of that foreign policy disaster was the global empowerment of modern jihadist assaults on the West. One early example of the aggression against the West's defining rights and principles such as free speech, was the fatwa that Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini issued against Indian novelist Salman Rushdie for his "blasphemous" 1989 novel *The Satanic Verses*.

Across the world violent protests and riots erupted, while "cosmopolitan" Westerners sided with the Ayatollah. Celebrated British historian Hugh Trevor-Roper sniffed that he "would not shed a tear if some British Muslims, deploring Mr. Rushdie's manners, were to waylay him in a dark street and seek to improve them."

The Rushdie fatwa, however, is just one of many Muslim assaults on the postwar West and its principles. In 2004, Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh was stabbed to death on the street by a Moroccan immigrant angered over van Gogh's film *Submission* and its criticism of sharia laws that subordinate women. His collaborator Ayaan Hirsi Ali had to go into hiding to escape threats to her life for that offense, and for writing *Infidel*, which also criticized Muslim misogyny.

Much of the European response to these murderous reactions to Westerners practicing the foundation human right to free speech blamed the victims rather than supporting free speech. In England, for example, the *Index on Censorship*, supposedly a champion of free speech, called van Gogh a "free speech fundamentalist" who deserved death because he "roared his Muslim critics into silence with obscenities."

Similarly, in 2005 after a Dutch newspaper published cartoons depicting Mohammed, 139 people died in subsequent rioting. The reaction of Europe likewise blamed the newspaper's free speech rights for provoking the violence. A Dutch justice minister proposed to strengthen illiberal blasphemy laws to facilitate "integration" of Muslim immigrants, and to censor "possible explosive material in society to avoid reactions," a euphemism for murder and mayhem.

More shameful, President Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, leaders of the "free world," condemned the cartoons, and the EU proposed a "media code" to censor speech about religion. Of course, offenses against Christians or Jews and their faiths were not included. The EU justice minister further proclaimed that "we can and are ready to self-regulate that right" of free speech, and admitted that fear of violence justified censorship.

This masochistic support for violations of core Western principles even as they were under attacked, created what Daniel Pipes called the "Rushdie Rules," the imperative that Westerners grovel before violent, illiberal theocrats, and even support their terror, as the current administration and its "red line" is doing in the case of Israel's management of the defensive war against Hamas. Meanwhile, Christians and Jews remain fair game for insult and ridicule by the West's sophisticated "brights"—on the cheap, since they know that Christians and Jews aren't going to murder them for exercising their right to speak freely in the town square.

Given such a record of sacrificing core Western values to gratify traditionalist Muslims, 20 years later we shouldn't be surprised that our prestigious universities, media, and progressive politicians have supported Hamas' sadistic, genocidal crimes against Israeli civilians; or that the U.S. president is actively undercutting Israel's efforts to end decades of terrorist murder and bombardments; or that the Senate Majority Leader has interfered in Israel's politics by calling for new elections, explicitly in order to remove Prime Minister Netanyahu.

Lame duck Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell [got it right](#): “It is grotesque and hypocritical for Americans who hyperventilate about foreign interference in our own democracy to call for the removal of a democratically elected leader of Israel,’ he said. ‘This is unprecedented. We should not treat fellow democracies this way at all.’”

Finally, betraying a liberal-democratically to gratify brutal terrorists and their American fellow-travelers, is also a sign of a civilization in decline. As the 1<sup>st</sup> B.C. Roman historian Sallust wrote about the decaying Republic, “decadence and hubris—the natural dividends of prosperity” have come to dominate Western civilization. Even as we speak, ruthless enemies like Russia, China, and Iran are watching and waiting to try conclusions, as we indulge ourselves with dangerous distractions like DEI, anthropogenic global warming, “net-zero carbon” schemes, “systemic racism curricula,” and limitless fabricated “genders.”

Worse, while those rivals spend big bucks on their militaries, ours is dwindling both in men and materiel, caught in a state of “managed decline,” as the [Wall Street Journal](#) put it. Butter, not guns is the highest bipartisan priority: “The federal government gives more cash to state and local governments (e.g., Medicaid money) than it spends on its own defense. These are the priorities of a peacetime welfare state, not a nation serious about defending itself in a world of determined enemies and new technology that will put the U.S. at increasing risk.” We're a few years away from spending more on entitlements than we do on defense. Such bad choices are another sign of a civilization in decline.

Our current malaise and dysfunctions are not just about our appeasement of modern jihadism. We are closing out a century of relentlessly sawing the civilizational branches we are sitting on, by discarding our Constitutional foundations, common sense, tradition, and the authority of nature and nature's God in order to pursue impossible utopias.

We are swiftly approaching the consequences of such suicidal blindness—and, as George Orwell put it, we're heading for a fall not into “a bed of roses, but a cesspit filled with barbed wire.”

*Bruce S. Thornton is a Shillman Journalism Fellow at the David Horowitz Freedom Center, an emeritus professor of classics and humanities at California State University, Fresno, and a research fellow at the Hoover Institution. His latest book is Democracy's Dangers and Discontents: The Tyranny of the Majority from the Greeks*

# **WILL DEI END AMERICA—OR AMERICA END DEI?**

## ***OUR FUTURE HINGES ON HOW QUICKLY WE DISCARD DEI ORTHODOXY.***

**BY VICTOR DAVIS HANSON**

At the nexus of most of America's current crises, the diversity/equity/inclusion dogma can be found. The southern border has been destroyed because the Democratic Party wanted the poor of the southern hemisphere to be counted in the census, to vote if possible in poorly audited mail-in elections, and to build upon constituencies that demand government help. Opposition to such cynicism and the de facto destruction of enforcement of U.S. immigration law is written off as "racism," "nativism," and "xenophobia."

The military is short more than 40,000 soldiers. The Pentagon may fault youth gangs, drug use, or a tight labor market. But the real shortfall is mostly due inordinately to reluctant white males who have been smeared by some of the military elite as suspected "white supremacists," despite dying at twice their demographics in Iraq and Afghanistan. And they are now passing on joining up despite their families' often multigenerational combat service.

The nexus between critical race theory and critical legal theory has been, inter alia, defunding the police, Soros-funded district attorneys exempting criminals from punishment, the legitimization of mass looting, squatters' rights, and general lawlessness across big-city America.

The recent epidemic of anti-Semitism was in part birthed by woke/DEI faculty and students on elite campuses, who declared Hamas a victim of "white settler" victimizing Israel and thus contextualized their Jewish hatred by claiming that as "victims," they cannot be bigots.

There is a historic, malevolent role of states adjudicating political purity, substituting racial, sex, class, and tribal criteria for meritocracy. They define success or failure not based on actual outcomes but on the degree of orthodox zealotry. Once governments enter that realm of the surreal, the result is always an utter disaster.

After a series of disastrous military catastrophes in 1941 and 1942, Soviet strongman and arch-communist Joseph Stalin ended the Soviet commissar system in October 1942. He reversed course to give absolute tactical authority to his ground commanders rather than to the communist overseers, as was customary.

Stalin really had no choice since Marxist-Leninist ideology overriding military logic and efficacy had ensured that the Soviet Union was surprised by a massive Nazi invasion in June 1941. The Russians in the first 12 months of war subsequently lost nearly 5 million in vast encirclements—largely because foolhardy, ideologically driven directives curtailed the generals' operational control of the army. After the commissars were disbanded and commanders given greater autonomy, the landmark victory at Stalingrad followed, and with it, the rebound of the Red Army.

One reason why the dictator Napoleon ran wild in Europe for nearly 18 years was that his marshals of France were neither selected only by the old Bourbon standards of aristocratic birth and wealth nor by new ideological revolutionary criteria, but by more meritocratic means than those of his rival nations.

Mao's decade-long cultural revolution (1966–76) ruined China. It was predicated on Maoist revolutionary dogma overruling economic, social, cultural, and military realities. An entire meritocracy was deemed corrupted by the West and reactionary—and thus either liquidated or rendered inert.

In their place, incompetent zealots competed to destroy all prior standards as “bourgeois” and “counter-revolutionary.” It is no surprise that the current “people’s liberation army,” for all its talk of communist dogma, does not function entirely on Mao’s principles.

Muammar Gaddafi wrecked Libya by reordering an once oil-rich nation on Gaddafi’s crackpot rules of his “Green Book.” At times, the unhinged ideologue, in lunatic fashion, required all Libyans to raise chickens or to destroy all the violins in the nation. I once asked a Libyan why the oil-rich country appeared to me utterly wrecked, and he answered, “We first hire our first cousins—and usually the worst.”

There were many reasons why the King-Cotton, slave-owning Old South lagged far behind the North in population, productivity, and infrastructure. But the chief factor was the capital and effort invested in the amoral as well as uneconomic institution of slavery.

After the Civil War, persistent segregationist ideology demanded vast amounts of time, labor, and money in defining race down to the “one drop” rule—while establishing a labyrinth of segregation laws and refusing to draw on the talents of millions of black citizens.

Yet here we are in 2024, ignoring the baleful past as the woke diversity/equity/inclusion commissars war on merit. Institutions from United Airlines and the Federal Aviation Administration to the Pentagon and elite universities have been reformulated in the post-George Floyd woke hysteria. And to the delight of competitors and enemies abroad, they are now using criteria other than merit to hire, promote, evaluate, and retain.

The greatest problem historically with hiring and promoting based on DEI-like dogma is that anti-meritocratic criteria mark the beginning, not the end, of eroding vital standards. If one does not qualify for a position or slot by accepted standards, then a series of further remedial interventions are needed to sustain the woke project, from providing exceptions and exemptions, changing rules and requirements, and misleading the nation that a more “diverse” math, or more “inclusive” engineering, or more “equity” in chemistry can supplant mastery of critical knowledge that transcends gender, race, or ideology.

But planes either fly or crash due to proper operation, not the appearance or politics of the operator. All soldiers either hit or miss targets, and engineers either make bridges that stand or collapse on the basis of mastering ancient scientific canons and acquired skills, training, and aptitude that have nothing to do with superficial appearance, or tribal affinities, or religion, or doctrine.

The common denominator of critical theories, from critical legal theory to critical social theory, is toxic nihilism, which claims there are no absolute standards, only arbitrary rules and regulations set up by a privileged, powerful class to exploit “the other.” Yet, not punishing looting has nothing to do with race or class, but everything with corroding timeless deterrence that always has and always will prevent the bullying strong from preying on the weak and vulnerable.

Defunding the police sent a message to any criminally minded that in a cost-to-benefit risk assessment, the odds were now on the side of the criminal not being caught for his crimes—and so crime soared and the vulnerable of the inner city became easy prey.

Another danger of DEI is the subordination of the individual to the collective. We are currently witnessing an epidemic of DEI racism in which commissars talk nonstop of white supremacy/rage/privilege without any notion of enormous differences among 230 million individual Polish-, Greek-, Dutch-, Basque-, or Armenian-Americans, or the class, political, and cultural abyss that separates those in Martha's Vineyard from their antitheses in East Palestine, Ohio.

Moreover, what is “whiteness” in an increasingly intermarried and multiracial society? Oddly, something akin to the old one-drop rules of the South is now updated to determine victims and victimizers—to the point of absurdity. Who is white—someone one half-Irish, one half Mexican—who is black—someone one quarter Jamaican, three-quarters German? To find answers, DEI czars must look to paradigms of the racist past for answers.

Moreover, once any group is exempted and not held to collective standards by virtue of its superficial appearance, then the nation naturally witnesses an increase in racism and bigotry—on the theory that it is not racist to racially stigmatize a supposedly “racist” collective. And we are already seeing an uptake in racially motivated interracial violence as criminals interpret the trickle-down theory of reparatory justice as providing exemption for opportunistic violence.

Throughout history, it has always been the most mediocre and opportunistic would-be commissars that appear to come forth when meritocracy vanishes. If there was not a Harvard President and plagiarist like Claudine Gay to trumpet and leverage her DEI credentials, she would have to be invented. If there was not a brilliant, non-DEI economist like Roland Fryer to be hounded and punished by her, he would have to be invented.

The DEI conglomerate has little idea of the landmines it is planting daily by reducing differences in talent, character, and morality into a boring blueprint of racial stereotypes. Punctuality is now “white time” and supposedly pernicious. The SAT, designed to give the less privileged a meritocratic pathway to college admissions, is deemed racist and either discarded or warped.

In its absence, universities are quietly now “reimaging” their curriculum to make it more “relevant to today’s students” and, of course, “more inclusive and more diverse.” Translated from the language of Oceania, that means after admitting tens of thousands to the nation’s elite schools who did not meet the universities’ own prior standards that they themselves once established and apprehensive about terminating such students, higher education is now euphemistically lowering the work load in classes, introducing new less rigorous classes, and inflating grades. In their virtue-signaling, they have little clue that inevitably their once prized and supposedly prestigious degrees will be rendered less valued as employers discover a Harvard, Stanford, or Princeton BA or BS is not a guarantee of academic excellence or mastery of vital skill sets.

Toxic tribalism is also, unfortunately, like nuclear proliferation. Once one group goes full tribal, others may as well, if for no reason than their own self-survival in a balkanized, Hobbesian world of *bellum omnium contra omnes*. If our popular culture is to be defined by the racist hosts of The View, or the racist anchorwoman Joy Reid, or members of the Congressman “Squad,” or entire studies departments in our universities that constantly bleat out the racist mantra, then logically one of two developments will follow.

One, so-called whites in minority-majority states like California will copy the tribal affinities of others that transcend their class and cultural differences, again in response to other blocs that do the same for careerist advantage and perceived survival. Or two, racism will be redefined empirically so that any careerist elites who espouse ad nauseam racial chauvinism—on the assurance they cannot be deemed racists—will be discredited and exposed for what they've become, and thus the content of our character will triumph over the color of our skin.

Finally, do we ever ask how a country of immigrants like the United States—vastly smaller than India and China, less materially rich than the vast expanse of Russia, without the strategic geography of the Middle East, or without the long investment and infrastructure of Europe—emerged out of nowhere to dominate the world economically, financially, militarily, and educationally for nearly two centuries?

The answer is easy: it was the most meritocratic land of opportunity in the world, where millions emigrated (legally) on the assurance that their class, politics, religion, ethnicity, and yes, race, would be far less a drawback than anywhere else in the world.

The degree to which the U.S. survives DEI depends on either how quickly it is discarded or whether America's existential enemies in the Middle East, China, Russia, and Iran have even worse DEI-anti-meritocratic criteria of their own in hiring, promotion, and admissions—whether defined by institutionalized hatred of the West, or loyalty oaths to the communist party, or demonstrable obsequiousness to the Putin regime, or lethal religious intolerance.

Unfortunately, our illiberal enemies, China especially, at least in matters of money and arms, are now emulating the meritocracy of the old America. Meanwhile, we are hellbent on following their former destructive habits of using politics instead of merit to staff our universities, government, corporations, and military.

Our future hinges on how quickly we discard DEI orthodoxy and simply make empirical decisions to stop printing money, deter enemies abroad, enforce our laws, punish criminals, secure the border, reboot the military, regain energy independence, and judge citizens on their character and talent and not their appearance and politics—at least if it is not already too late.

*Victor Davis Hanson is a distinguished fellow of the Center for American Greatness and the Martin and Illie Anderson Senior Fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution. He is an American military historian, columnist, a former classics professor, and scholar of ancient warfare. He has been a visiting professor at Hillsdale College since 2004, and is the 2023 Giles O'Malley Distinguished Visiting Professor at the School of Public Policy, Pepperdine University. Hanson was awarded the National Humanities Medal in 2007 by President George W. Bush, and the Bradley Prize in 2008. Hanson is also a farmer (growing almonds on a family farm in Selma, California) and a critic of social trends related to farming and agrarianism. He is the author most recently of The Second World Wars: How the First Global Conflict Was Fought and Won, The Case for Trump and the recently released The Dying Citizen, and the forthcoming The End of Everything (May 7, 2024). American Greatness, March 25, 2024.*





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