



WEEKLY UPDATE

April 27 - May 3, 2025

A COMMENT FROM THE NEW GUY

By now, it's old news that Mike Brown is retiring from COLAB at the end of April. To say that he will be missed is a vast understatement. In the couple of enjoyable months that I've had to get to know Mike, I have been astounded by his knowledge of local government. He knows the obscure regulations or requirements that apply in practically any unusual situation. He can read a budget and instantly understand where the fluff is hidden. And he knows the context for every seemingly non sequitur in governmental history, whether federal, state or local – recent, distant past, or before any of us were around.

COLAB has benefited tremendously from Mike's experience and knowledge, but there is even more to the equation. Mike truly believes in good government. He is a common sense guy looking for reasonable and accountable representation from our elected leaders. He wants to streamline bureaucracy and keep governmental interference in our lives to a minimum. His work with COLAB has been a direct parallel to his own priorities, which means that he has loved applying his expertise to the job. He claims to be the "dog" in watchdog with great pride.

The old adage about big shoes to fill couldn't be more appropriate in this situation. It's my hope that Mike will still be around for the occasional bit of advice or wise interpretation. Several local radio hosts have said that they plan to keep his number on speed dial, and it would be great to hear his commentary on a regular basis. I will certainly be keeping in touch with Mike, and hopefully many of you will too.

Greg Haskin, Executive Director



**THIS WEEK
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BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEETING

**STEPHEN C. LIEBERMAN TO BE DISTRICT 3 PLANNING
COMMISSIONER**

**ILLEGAL DUMPING ON FARMS AND RANCHES IS
GROWING - WHY CAN'T SENTENCED PRISONERS HELP?**

**FIRE RISK REPORT: STILL TOO HOT
*STATE MANDATES FIRE HAZARD SEVERITY ZONES***

**SMALL CAYUCOS MOTEL IN A COMMERICAL ZONE
OPPOSED - BOARD SHOULD REJECT THE APPEAL**

**PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT REVIEW & FUTURE
*HOUSING STILL LAGS – VACATION RENTAL UNITS ATTACKED***

**SIERRA CLUB PRESSURING COUNTY ON PHILIPPS 66
PROPERTY - ANOTHER WEED PARK?**

**LAST WEEK
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NO BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEETING

PLANNING COMMISSION

SLOW PROGRESS ON LOW & MODERATE HOUSING

EXPEDITING ADU APPROVALS

EMERGENT TRENDS - SEE PAGE 15

**DEMOCRAT'S CLOWARD-PIVEN DEFAULT
*LIKE EXPANDING WELFARE, OPEN BORDERS WERE
ADOPTED TO DESTROY THE NATION***

**IS CALIFORNIA GOVERNOR GAVIN NEWSOM AN
ECONOMIC ILLITERATE OR JUST DECEITFUL?**

**PUBLIC WORKERS MAY GET MORE PENSION
BENEFITS UNDER NEW BILL - 2013 REFORMS TO
BE UNDERMINED**

COLAB IN DEPTH SEE PAGE 23

**LIBERAL HYPOCRITES
LIBERALISM IS DEAD AND LIBERALS KILLED IT
BY DANIEL GREENFIELD**

**AFTER THE SUICIDE OF THE WEST
"THE REAL CULTURE WAR"
BY ROGER KIMBALL**

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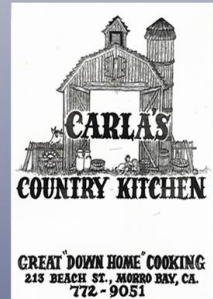
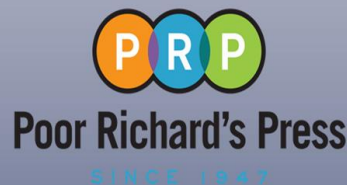
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THIS WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

Item 11 - It is recommended that the Board approve the appointment of Stephen C. Lieberman as a District 3 representative to the Planning Commission. This term will expire January 1, 2029. Mr. Lieberman's County application lists the following experience:

List any/all College, Business School, and/or Military experience (most recent first)
UC Santa Barbara, BA Business Economics

Qualifications

List work experience, training, volunteer activities, and skills relevant to this appointment

Grover Beach City Council (2000-2008)

Fire Chief, Five Cities Fire Authority (2014-2024)

Director, Emergency Medical Services Agency, SLO County Public Health (2012-2014)

List dates/names of positions you have held on any advisory body or elected office

Mayor/Council Member - Grover Beach City Council 2000-2008

Please explain why you would like to serve in this capacity

I have served my community and San Luis Obispo County for close to 25 years, beginning as a volunteer firefighter in then Grover City. I am now semi-retired and have the flexibility to engage in supporting the efforts of Supervisor Otiz-Legg, our county, and my city. Land use policy can be complicated, politically charged, and at times divisive.

I believe I have the experience, intuition, and political acumen to take on this position.

Item 34 - Submittal of a resolution 1) Authorizing the Director of Social Services, or designee, to apply retroactively for the Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle) Farm and Ranch Solid Waste Cleanup and Abatement Grant Program in the amount of \$200,000 to clean up illegally dumped material on farm and/or ranch property; 2) Authorize the Director of the Department of Social services, or designee, to sign related documents that do not increase the level of General fund support required by Social Services. The problem of illegal dumping on farms and ranches is growing all over California. The write-up states in part:

The Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle) offers the Farm and Ranch Solid Waste Cleanup and Abatement Grant Program (pursuant to Section 48100 of the Public Resources Code). The purpose of the grant is to clean up illegally dumped material on farm and/or ranch property. This grant program has already issued several cycles of funding, and the Department of Social Services (Social Services) and the Public Works Department (Public Works) partnered together to submit an application for the last cycle (Cycle 86). I

Of course, the funding for this State grant originates in our taxes or fees paid to the State. Why not use sentenced prisoners from county jails for these cleanups instead of new taxes or fees? We are already paying taxes for the feeding, medical care, counseling, and guarding of these prisoners.

Our woke leaders would naturally oppose such a plan, asserting that the prisoners are already victims and assigning such work would be cruel and oppressive. We live in a society that has lost its collective nerve.

Proposed parcels for clean up are located in blue shaded area



Representative pictures of cleanup needed:

Will this mess increase, once the \$48 million Bob Jones Trail opens?



Item	Amount
Admin Costs	\$11,000
Disposal/Recycle	\$30,000
Equipment	\$40,000
Materials	\$5,000
Contract personnel for clean up	\$114,000
Total	\$200,000

Item 40 - Consideration of amendments to the Board of Supervisor's Rules of Procedure pertaining to the use of County equipment for public comment, and discussion regarding presentations at Board of Supervisor regular meetings. Last year the Board amended its rules of procedure for its meetings. One of the changes included a provision prohibiting the public from using the overhead projector to display graphics during public comment. The stupid underlying theory was that the equipment belongs to the County, and therefore, the public should

not have access. This proviso subjected the Board to considerable derision by various civic groups and individual citizens. Accordingly, it was proposed to amend the rules to eliminate this prohibition. Certainly the taxpayers pay for the equipment. The proposed amendment does not seem to fully resolve the matter. Citizens would now be permitted to use the projector during comment on consent items and business items. They would still be prohibited from using it during general public comment. How trivial and stupid!!

Some of the leftist Board members are worried that public speakers on general matters will display materials that show how out of touch and biased certain governmental woke policies and programs are. The issue was initially triggered by a speaker who displayed a school training manual promoting sex changes and gay sex techniques. Actually, public comment is properly limited to matters that the Board actually has jurisdiction over. They could have simply cut the matter off, since the BOS does not run the public schools.

Item 41 - Hearing to consider adoption of an ordinance of the Local Responsibility Area (LRA) Fire Hazard Severity Zones as recommended by the Office of the State Fire Marshal. (County Fire). Hearing to consider adoption of an ordinance of the Local Responsibility Area (LRA) Fire Hazard Severity Zones as recommended by the Office of the State Fire Marshal. (County Fire). Item 41 is rescheduled for a hearing to consider adoption of an ordinance of the Local Responsibility Act (LRA) Fire Severity Zones as mandated by the Office of the State Fire Marshal (County Fire). It appears that the County has no choice but to comply.

As reported here previously, this is a map created by some people somewhere (it is not entirely clear who or where), with no input invited or accepted from local communities, that designates numerous areas of the county as “very high or high” risk of wildfire. In their initial presentation to the Board, County Fire made it clear that the map could not be amended in any way, except to increase the risk level of any portion of the county. Further, the risk assessment does not recognize any mitigation efforts undertaken by communities, such as mandatory brush clearing or fuel reduction.

While we all have tremendous respect for firefighters and first responders, and we value their insights greatly when it comes to protecting property from fire, the situation unfolding with this map is extremely frustrating. Insurance policies are being cancelled throughout the county, causing property owners to scramble to find new and far more expensive policies - if they are lucky. The fall back for cancelled policies is a state-run program typically costing up to four times the expense of the original policy.

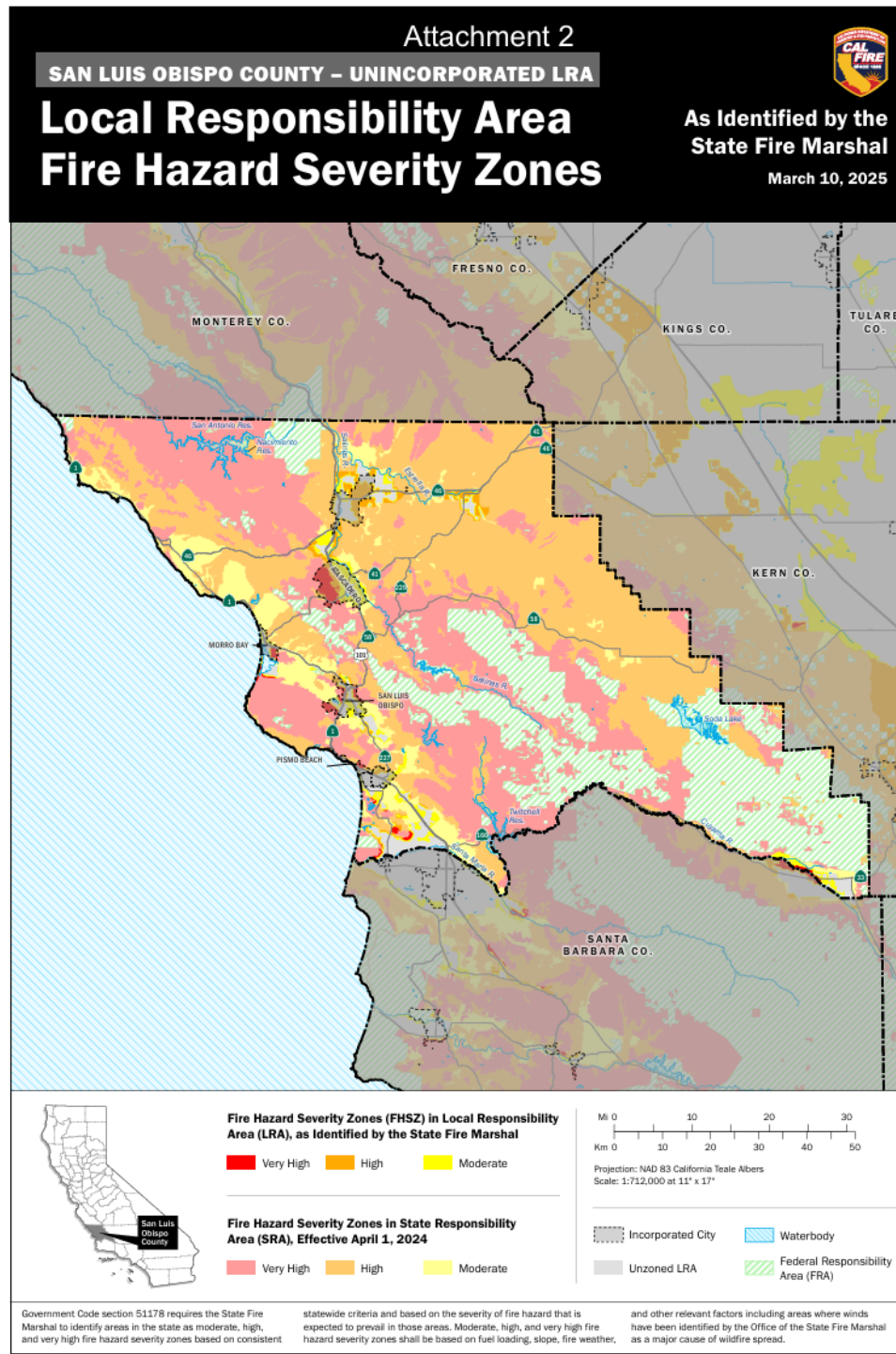
Theoretically, this LRA map is not supposed to be used by insurance companies, but some sceptics suspect the insurance industry does take a peek at these maps from time to time.

Aside from the frustration created by the map itself, it is also frustrating that the State Fire Marshal seems to draw the map in total secrecy. No public hearings are conducted, no public input is allowed, and no consideration is given for the many efforts that communities undertake to reduce fire danger.

While there does not seem to be much that the Board can do on Tuesday to change the course of the current proposed map, it would be entirely reasonable to request the opportunity to have input before the next one is drawn up. Additionally, perhaps Board members should take their

concern to the California State Association of Counties to bring a greater focus to this arbitrary process.

Three related articles are attached in the commentary section that address the potential inaccuracy of these maps, an exploration of the impacts of the maps, and a deal in the works for State Farm to enact a 17% rate increase in California.



Matters After 1:30 PM

Item 42 - Hearing to consider appeals by Harley Dubois (APPL2024-00016), Ann Sturges (APPL2024-00023) and Vicki Tamoush (APPL2024-00028) of the Planning Department Hearing Officer's approval of a request by Uriah Donaldson for a Minor Use Permit / Coastal Development Permit (C-DRC2023-00044) to allow for the construction of a two-story, approximately 4,910 square-foot mixed use motel. The motel will include three guest units and one residential caretaker unit in Cayucos.

Item 42 is yet another hearing to consider appeals by three individuals of the Planning Department Hearing Officer's approval of a minor use permit/Coastal Development permit to allow the construction of a two story approximately 4,910 square foot mixed use motel in Cayucos. Too often, these types of appeals are simply ways to harass developers, extend timelines and run up costs. In the end, few are found to have merit. When liberals wring their hands about the cost and availability of housing, this type of tactic should be something they could focus on. In this case, it is likely that the Board will do the same thing that it has done with many similar games, which is to deny the appeal. That will then open the door for the appellants to go one step further with a final appeal to the Coastal Commission. The entire appeal process (after the original lengthy permit process) could easily add another year to the start date of the project - not to mention the cost of County staff, builder, and contractor personnel, as well as Coastal Commission staff in the otherwise nonproductive preparation for the appeal hearing.

This item also relates to the concept of economic development for San Luis Obispo County. Our budget is stymied. Revenue cannot keep up with expenses. The luddite approach is simply to raise taxes on individuals. A more reasonable approach would be to look for opportunities such as this one that would contribute to County revenue through property and Transit Occupancy taxes, as well as increased revenues generated through the spending by the guests of the proposed motel. SLO County continues to contribute to economic development programs such as the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship at Cal Poly, which is hopefully a good thing. However, a more aggressive approach to supporting projects that will have a direct positive fiscal benefit to the County coffers would be very helpful in these challenging budgetary times.





Item 44 - Consideration of a report on progress updates and information relating to Board priorities for the Department of Planning and Building and provide direction as deemed necessary. This is a status report on various matters related to the Planning and Development Department. The write-up states in its summary:

The purpose of this report is to provide updates and follow-up information on Tier 1 Board Priorities for the Department of Planning and Building ("Department"):

- 1. Target timeline of Tier 1 Board Priorities*
- 2. Progress on housing affordability objectives*
- 3. 2020-2028 Housing Element implementation*
- 4. Housing vacancy rate data*
- 5. KPMG Scope*

The report is fairly extensive and melds a number of issues together. These include next year's long range planning workload (selection of projects). It also contains a repeat of the report from earlier this year that demonstrates that the production of low and moderate income housing in the unincorporated County is running significantly below targets.

It also contains data that much of the vacant housing units in the County are vacation rental units. This will spur an attack by some Board members to begin a project to restrict and prohibit vacation rental units.

Finally, the report indicates that KPMG Consulting will begin undertaking a project to review the efficiency, funding, and performance of the Planning Department.

As we have repeatedly reported in the past, most of this will end up window dressing unless and until, substantially more land is rezoned for housing.

Item 46 - The Appellant and Applicant have requested a continuance to July 15, 2025. Continuance of a hearing to consider an appeal (APPL2024-00029) by the Sierra Club of the Planning Commission's approval of a request by Phillips 66 for a Development Plan/Coastal Development Permit (DRC2022 00048, ED23-054) to allow demolition and

remediation of the Santa Maria Refinery, affecting approximately 218 acres of developed area within the 1,642-acre Phillips 66 owned property at 2555 Willow Road, Arroyo Grande. The Project includes aboveground demolition of refinery structures to ground level, followed by site characterization and soil remediation. Belowground infrastructure would be removed where necessary, to accommodate removal of contaminated soils. After demolition and remediation, hardscape would be replaced where removed and exposed soil areas would be revegetated. At Project completion, features to remain include asphalt and concrete surfacing, perimeter fencing, an electrical substation, water wells, truck scales, and two rail spurs, as well as monitoring wells and equipment associated with ongoing remediation under separate permits. The Project site is within the Industrial land use category, southwest of the Village of Callender Garrett and within the South County (Coastal) planning area. **Planning and Building**). San Luis Obispo County fomented the closure of the refinery some years ago by denying a permit for additional rail spurs that would allow the parking of more tank cars. The idea was to increase the throughput of the refinery to make it more economically viable. Residents of Nipomo combined with anti-oil activists from all over the State to pressure the Board of Supervisors into denying the permit.

Subsequently, and as expected, Phillips shut down the refinery and filed a permit application to clean up the site, dismantle the refinery and auxiliary buildings, and restore the site to marketable condition.

The Sierra Club then appealed the Planning Commission's approval of the permit on very specious grounds. Its real intent is to force the County to turn the site into open space. This would be foolhardy, as the site is zoned industrial. The decisions about future use of the site should be part of a future and separate long range analysis and plan of the overall public interest.

The Board should reject the Sierra Club scam and deny the appeal forthwith.

As you sit in next year's California gas station lines, you may reflect on the foolish decisions at all levels of our elected officials to submit to radical environmental bullying.

The site would be a perfect location for a major new nuclear generating plant that, among other benefits, would generate tens of millions of dollars in new property taxes for the revenue strapped County.

LAST WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

No Board of Supervisors Meeting on Tuesday, April 22, 2025 (Not Scheduled)

In General: Last week's newsletter was particularly light. The Easter break created a timing gap for the SLO County Board of Supervisors, ranging from the last meeting of April 8 to the next meeting, which will be April 29. In those three weeks, very few business meetings have been conducted.

The April 24 Planning Commission is one of the few agencies that scheduled a meeting in this period, albeit with a light agenda of just nine items, mostly technical in nature.

Item 8 - This item consisted of amendments to the County Inland and Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinances and Local Coastal Program (County File Number: LRP2024-00014) to update regulations relating to the Density Bonus Program for consistency with recent changes in State law and to encourage affordable housing production.

Item 9 - This was an item to consider amendments to the County Inland and Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinances, Local Coastal Program, Real Property Division Ordinance, and Buildings and Construction Ordinance (County File Number: LRP2024-00013) to update regulations relating to accessory dwellings, urban dwellings, and urban lot splits for consistency with State law and to streamline and support affordable housing production, certainly a good thing in terms of aligning with state building laws and regulations.

Planning Commission Meeting of Thursday, April 24, 2025 (Completed)

Item 8 - Hearing to consider amendments to the County Inland and Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinances and Local Coastal Program (County File Number: LRP2024-00014) to update regulations relating to the Density Bonus Program for consistency with recent changes in State law and to encourage affordable housing production. The staff was checking in with the Commission on its plans to amend the zoning ordinances to conform to recent State enabling legislation that requires more generous housing density bonuses. Projects that provide significant low and moderate units may receive higher densities above the underlying zoning. The general provisions include:

The benefits for a development participating in the Density Bonus Program may include:

- *Bonus Dwelling Units. The total number of allowable dwelling units may be increased up to 100% beyond what a project might otherwise be allowed to have.*
- *Concessions. Developers of affordable housing projects are entitled to one or more concessions based on the number of affordable housing units provided in the project. These concessions include reductions or modifications of development standards that result in identifiable and actual cost reductions for the project's affordable housing units. Development standards include, but are not limited to, height limits, setback requirements, floor-area ratio, on-site open space requirements, or minimum parking ratio. The concessions should have proof of resulting in identifiable and actual cost reductions for the project. If the applicable Review Authority finds substantial evidence that the requested concession does not result in identifiable and actual cost reductions, then the concession may be denied.*
- *Waivers. Developers may request adjustments or waivers of development standards that would physically prevent the construction of the proposed density bonus project at the densities or with the concessions permitted under the density bonus program.*
- *Reduced Parking Requirements. Developers may receive a reduction in the number of parking spaces required per dwelling unit.*

The item also contains a table detailing the County's progress to date on various Housing element goals:

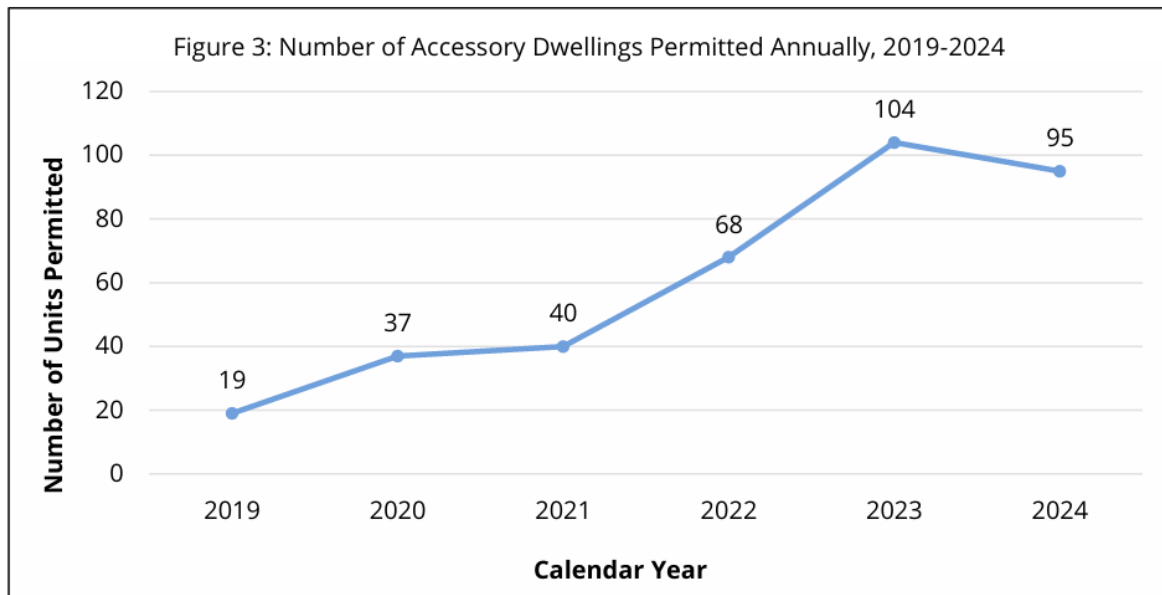
Table 1: Unincorporated County's Regional Housing Needs Allocation Progress

Income Category and Example Occupations ¹	Number of Dwelling Units			Percent Completed
	Total Need	Permitted (2019-2024)	Remaining Need	
Very Low-Income (e.g., barista, farmworker, childcare employee)	801	7	794	1%
Low-Income (e.g., family social worker, community health advocate, roofer)	505	226	279	45%
Moderate-Income (e.g., occupational health worker, construction cost estimator, electrician)	585	246	339	42%
Above Moderate-Income	1,365	1,132	233	83%
Total	3,256	1,611	1,645	49%

The goals are to be attained by 2028.

Item 9 - Hearing to consider amendments to the County Inland and Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinances, Local Coastal Program, Real Property Division Ordinance, and Buildings and Construction Ordinance (County File Number: LRP2024-00013) to update regulations relating to accessory dwellings, urban dwellings, and urban lot splits for consistency with State law and to streamline and support affordable housing production. This item focuses on amendments to the zoning ordinances to facilitate additional dwelling units (ADUs) and the permitting of additional units on existing urban lots.

Figure 3 shows the number of accessory dwellings permitted annually in the past six years. The number of accessory dwellings permitted annually increased significantly from 2021-2023, peaked in 2023 at 104 units, and slightly reduced to 95 units in 2024.



Proposed Ordinances

This section summarizes the proposed regulations for each development type.

The revised provisions are extensive and, over time, could increase urban densities significantly.

For accessory dwellings in the inland areas and Coastal Zone, the proposed ordinances (Attachments 2, 6, and 10) would amend the Buildings and Construction Ordinance (County Code Title 19), Inland and Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinances (County Code Titles 22 and 23) and Local Coastal Program to:

- Streamline and simplify development standards
- Increase the allowable number of accessory dwellings per parcel, as required by State Law, if not limited by public health and safety site standards (e.g., access, fire drainage, flood control, water supply, and wastewater)
 - *Single-Family*: Allow up to three (3) accessory dwellings per parcel, in any combination of attached, detached, or junior accessory dwellings
 - *Multi-Family*: Allow up to eight (8) detached accessory dwellings per parcel, not to exceed the number of existing multi-family units and conversions of existing non-living space to accessory dwellings, not to exceed 25% of the number of existing multi-family units

- Require minimum water supply verification for accessory dwellings using on-site private wells
- Allow parcels with a single-family dwelling to have accessory dwellings and a guesthouse
- Increase the allowable maximum height to be as ministerially allowable for single-family dwellings (SB 897)
- Require approval/denial of applications within 60 days from application completion date (AB 2221) and within 30 days from application completion date if using pre-approved accessory dwelling plans² (AB 1332)
- Require that the Department cannot deny an accessory dwelling that is at least 800 square feet and meets 4-foot side and rear yard setbacks, except for health and safety violations (AB 2221)
- Require applicants to complete a pre-screening checklist, indicating the proposed development adheres to the County Code and applicable public health and safety standards (intended to ensure project feasibility before the applicant prepares construction plans)

The proposed ordinance (Attachment 8) would amend the Inland Land Use Ordinance (County Code Title 22) to:

- Define “urban dwellings” as an allowable land use in Residential Rural, Residential Suburban, and Residential Single-Family land use categories
- Define “primary dwelling” as a dwelling that is considered a primary use on a residential parcel, including multi-family dwellings, single-family dwellings, and urban dwellings
- Establish permit requirements and development standards for urban dwellings
- Allow one urban dwelling per parcel in eligible areas, if compliant with public health and safety standards
- Require applicants to complete a pre-screening checklist, indicating the proposed development adheres to the County Code and applicable public health and safety standards (intended to ensure project feasibility before the applicant prepares construction plans)

Urban Lot Splits (Inland Areas)

The proposed ordinance (Attachment 4) would amend the Real Property Division Ordinance (County Code Title 21) to:

- Define “urban lot splits”
- Establish permit requirements and development standards for urban lot splits
- Allow one urban lot split per parcel in eligible areas, if compliant with public health and safety standards
- Require applicants to submit a site layout plan for the proposed buildout of the resulting parcels, including the location of existing and anticipated dwellings
- Require applicants to complete a pre-screening checklist, indicating the proposed development adheres to the County Code and applicable public health and safety standards (intended to ensure project feasibility before the applicant prepares construction plans)

EMERGENT TRENDS

Item 1 - Democrat's Cloward-Piven default, By Mike McDaniel

Post-election lawfare, particularly that designed to prevent the deportation of illegal aliens, is revealing what may be Biden's Handler's intention all along. I hate to give them more credit for intelligence than

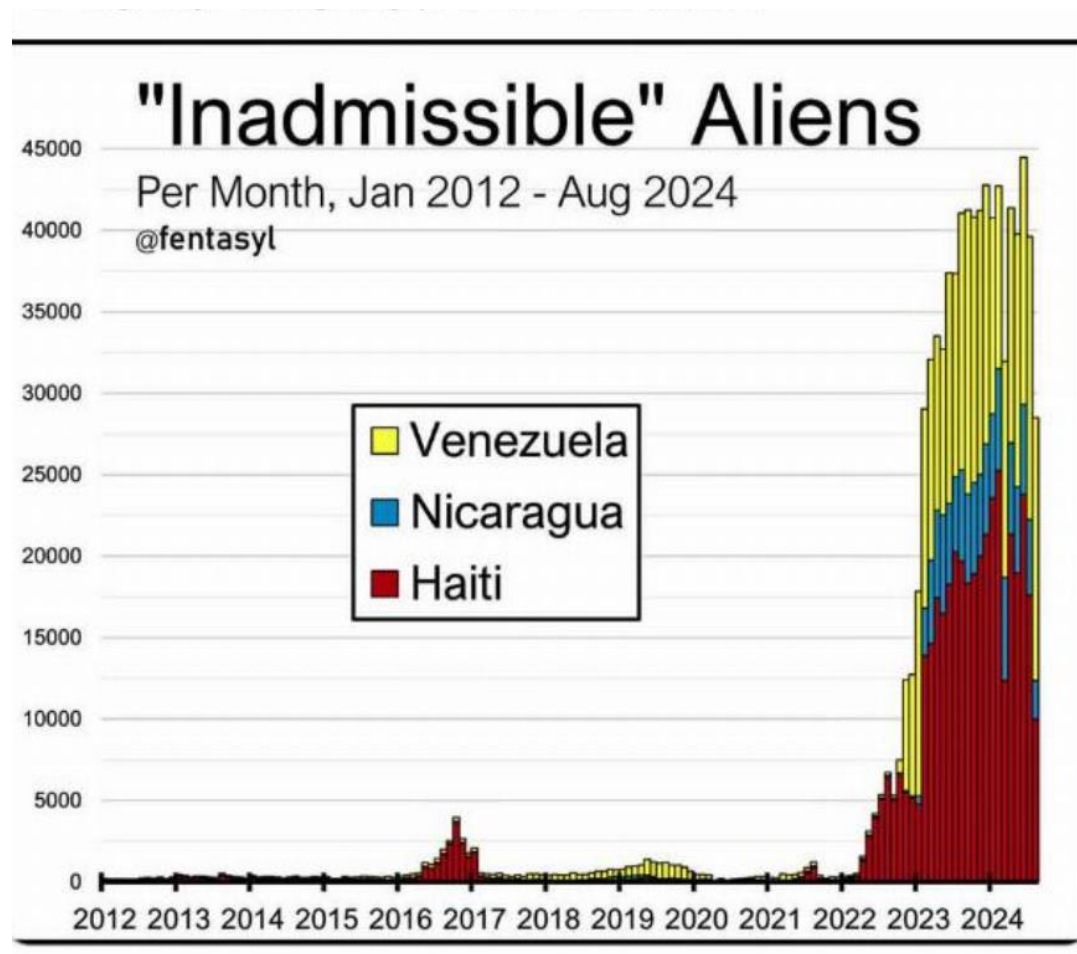
they deserve, and it may be a low level, feral intelligence, but it's more likely the current situation is merely Democrat's constant reliance on the Cloward-Piven Strategy. The invaluable [Discover the Networks](#), explains:

First proposed in 1966 and named after [Columbia University](#) sociologists Richard Andrew Cloward and his wife [Frances Fox Piven](#) — both longtime members of the [Democratic Socialists of America](#), where Piven today is an honorary chair — the “Cloward-Piven Strategy” seeks to hasten the fall of capitalism by overloading the government bureaucracy with a flood of impossible demands, thus pushing society into crisis and economic collapse.

Inspired by the August 1965 riots in the black district of Watts in Los Angeles — which erupted after police used batons to subdue a black man suspected of drunk driving — Cloward and Piven published an article titled “[The Weight of the Poor: A Strategy to End Poverty](#)” in the May 2, 1966 issue of [The Nation](#). Following its publication, *The Nation* sold an unprecedented 30,000 reprints. Activists were abuzz over the so-called “crisis strategy” or “Cloward-Piven Strategy,” as it came to be called. Many were eager to put it into effect.

Is it any surprise they worked at Columbia?

The Cloward-Piven Strategy asserts that overloading and/or destroying any institution, entitlement or program upon which Americans have come to depend will create a panic Democrats/socialists/communists—the contemporary Democrat Party is virtually entirely socialists and communists—can exploit. They'll ride to the rescue with socialist/communist policies Americans would never accept under normal circumstances. *In other words, they'll destroy things and propose anti-American, destructive solutions to the damage they've caused.* Cloward and Piven likely didn't realize how effective a nearly completely Democrat media would be in furthering their brainchild.



Did Dems plan from the beginning to admit tens of millions of virtually unvetted illegals, including criminals and terrorists of all kinds, while making it all but impossible to remove them by demanding comprehensive vetting and interminable “due process” including years of appeals? Did they plan every detail of the current lawfare, perhaps even coordinating in advance with the judges they would cherry pick when the time came? Did they know exactly what their black robed political operatives would do or was all this desperately activated when—gasp!—Donald Trump beat the odds and election fraud in 2024? Could Dems have possibly understood just how effective he’d be, and how fast he’d move in cutting off their federal sources of funding? And was all that even necessary?

It’s more likely reliance on the Cloward-Piven Strategy is baked into their DNA. They’ve had decades to design around it while keeping it their default strategy. They can also depend on their media propaganda arm to do whatever is necessary. Even though they all speak each new narrative in precisely the same words, they don’t need to get together every morning to decide how best to screw Normal Americans. They think alike. They know what to do and how to do it.

So, murderous gangbangers flown into the country unvetted, given free phones, transportation to their choice of destination, Social Security numbers and all manner of entitlements none of them have earned to which they are supposedly, as illegal aliens, not entitled, can’t be deported without Dem’s Cloward-Piven solution to the chaos they’ve created.

If it’s going to be this hard to remove known violent criminals and designated terrorists, it will probably be impossible to remove more run-of-the-mill illegal aliens. If Dems can run out the clock until the mid-terms where they’ll go all out on election fraud, and/or if they can take the White House in four years, illegals will all be allowed to remain to drain the resources we don’t have and can’t afford. They’ll throw the borders wide open again, and that, as they say, will be that.

I guess it doesn’t really matter whether Dems planned this from the beginning, does it? They’re constantly and opportunistically applying Cloward-Piven. Worrying about bringing down America and western civilization isn’t on their radar.

On a different subject, if you are not already a subscriber, you may not know that we’ve implemented something new: A weekly newsletter with unique content from our editors for subscribers only. These essays alone are worth [the cost of the subscription](#).

Mike McDaniel is a USAF veteran, classically trained musician, Japanese and European fencer, life-long athlete, firearm instructor, retired police officer and high school and college English teacher. He is a published author and blogger. His home blog is [Stately McDaniel Manor](#). American Thinker, April 21, 2025

Item 2 - Is California Governor Gavin Newsom an Economic Illiterate or Just Deceitful?

By Katy Grimes, April 22, 2025

The California median home price is \$909,400

California Governor Gavin Newsom is showing the breadth of his economic illiteracy – or just plain old political deceit.

Last week, Gov. Newsom and State Attorney General Rob Bonta sued President Donald Trump over his tariff’s – the first state in the country to do so.

“According to the suit, which was filed in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California, they argue that the tariffs are illegal because, under the U.S. Constitution, only Congress has the power to put tariffs into place.”

“President Trump’s unlawful tariffs are wreaking chaos on California families, businesses, and our economy — driving up prices and threatening jobs,” Newsom said in a statement. “We’re standing up for American families who can’t afford to let the chaos continue. No state is poised to lose more than the state of California.”

Then Gavin Newsom whined that his own 4 kids have lots of cheap toys from China under the Christmas Tree, so the U.S. needs to keep the cheap crap from China rolling in: “I’ve got four kids, 80% of their toys under the Christmas tree come from China. I’ve got family members that live paycheck to paycheck, many family members.”

Let’s analyze Gov. Newsom’s statement:

“President Trump’s unlawful tariffs are wreaking chaos on California families, businesses, and our economy — driving up prices and threatening jobs,” Newsom said in a statement. “We’re standing up for American families who can’t afford to let the chaos continue.”

Newsom claimed that “tariffs are wreaking chaos on California families.”

What is “wreaking chaos on California families?”

Let’s start with the fact that a tariff is not a tax on the American people. More on that below.

Next, the California median home price in 2024 was \$869,500, forecasted to rise 4.6 percent to \$909,400 in 2025. That’s nearly \$1 Million for a basic home. How does a teacher, office worker, court clerk, grocery worker, truck driver, press operator, drywall contractor, warehouse worker, landscaper or housekeeper buy a \$1 million home?

These average Californians don’t buy California homes. They can’t and never will at \$909,400. Instead they move out of California, taking California’s strength and backbone to other states.

Gavin Newsom has never bought into American trade agreements – he’s been a China hustler for years.

Remember Gavin Newsom’s campaign trip to China in 2023? Newsom’s vanity trip complete with a glamour photo shoot at the Great Wall of China, “exposed what an unserious but ambitious politician he really is – governing a big state just isn’t fun, after all. Working to be a statesman isn’t as rewarding as being a high-level office holder for Gavin. The timing of his trip was obviously designed to meet with China General Secretary Xi Jinping ahead of President Joe Biden’s scheduled meeting in San Francisco at the APEC Summit next month.” As the Globe reported, for Newsom, who doth protested he wasn’t running for President in 2024, was sure making a lot of moves which served only to elevate his profile but had no benefit at all for his home state of California.

Fortunately for everyone paying attention, Gavin Newsom showed what Big-Hat-No-Cattle he really is.

As for Newsom’s China connections, think back recently to fall of 2024 when Gov. Newsom’s trip to China was sold to the media as a “climate-focused tour,” centered on electric vehicles providing a greener environment free from fossil fuels. However, what Newsom failed to address with China General Secretary Xi Jinping is that China produces more global emissions than any

other country on earth. When Newsom declared that “foundational and fundamental issues” are climate change, it’s curious that he did not inquire about China’s expansion of approximately two new coal plants a week.

Newsom is no newcomer to China’s economic influences.

In “Fool’s Gold: The Radicals, Con Artists, and Traitors Who Killed the California Dream and Now Threaten Us All,” authors Jedd McFatter and Susan Crabtree expose then-Mayor Gavin Newsom’s cozy relationship with the Chinese community in San Francisco and his ties to Chinese Communist Party-related businesses.

Crabtree and McFatter expose that “Newsom came into office as San Francisco’s mayor in 2004 after receiving strong support from Chinese voters, enough so that he celebrated his victory in Chinatown and the authors write that from an early point in his tenure he was ready to “go full steam ahead with Chinatown’s interests,” Fox reported.

“One of those interests, according to Chapter 3 of the book, was a nonprofit organization initiative started by Newsom called ChinaSF that the book argues served as a gateway for CCP officials and Chinese criminals to exploit California.”

“The U.S. imposes only an average 2% tariff on imported industrial goods, while many other countries have both high tariffs and nontariff trade barriers. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, the merchandise trade deficit has exploded under President Biden, reaching a yearly record \$1.2 trillion in 2022 and hitting a July record of \$103 billion in 2024.”

“Despite promises that free trade can benefit everyone and that the gains offset any losses, the average American has experienced stagnating income and wide-spread job losses in manufacturing hours while the top earners have seen disproportionate income gains,” ProsperousAmerica.org reports. “The top 10% benefit do not experience the job losses from import competition that the working class suffers from. And those at the top of the corporate ladders benefit from the lower wages needed to pay workers in developing countries compared to what they would have to pay Americans.”

This imbalance has been devastating for U.S. industry. Since the North American trade agreement (NAFTA) was passed by the Clinton Administration in 1993, millions of manufacturing jobs have been lost, a huge trade deficit emerged and American manufacturing wages declined.

Gavin Newsom was silent on NAFTA – other than to burnish his globalist chops.

As President Trump lowers marginal tax rates, unleashes the many sources of abundant U.S. energy, and cuts regulations, the cost of everything will decrease, while his tariffs will increase costs on overseas manufacturing. Jobs will be created and manufacturing will come back to the U.S., and those are high-paying jobs with benefits.

Gavin Newsom is silent on that global trade – the trade that benefits America and American workers – other than to demand California’s ability to trade freely globally – outside of the federal government.

“Free trade should apply first and foremost to domestic trade because we should be focused on benefiting our own citizens before we worry about those overseas. We don’t hate foreigners—we just love Americans more,” Heritage Foundation Economist E.J. Antoni explains.

Batya Ungar-Sargon explained beautifully the Trump economy and tariffs:

“You know, the thing that your viewers have to understand is, we were all there in 2018, in 2019, when President Trump put 25% tariffs on Chinese imports of steel and aluminum, and every economist said a toaster is going to cost \$300. And guess what? The price of steel and aluminum went up for three months and it came right back down because this is a glorious country full of free market competition within the United States.

Remember, California Governor Gavin Newsom is also creating energy poverty with 3,200-foot setbacks around oil and gas wells, the Globe reported. With Phillips 66 pulling out of Los Angeles, and Valero closing its Benicia refinery, Chevron leaving the state, California is about to experience fuel shortages – serious shortages.

Is Governor Gavin Newsom economically illiterate, or is he using deceit to destroy California? Either way, Newsom is creating in a dangerous, unstable California.

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?

Item 3 - **Public workers may get more pension benefits under new bill**, By TERI SFORZA | tsforza@scng.com | Orange County Register, April 24, 2025

Supporters insist that even public employees are concerned about retirement security



(iStockphoto via Getty Images)

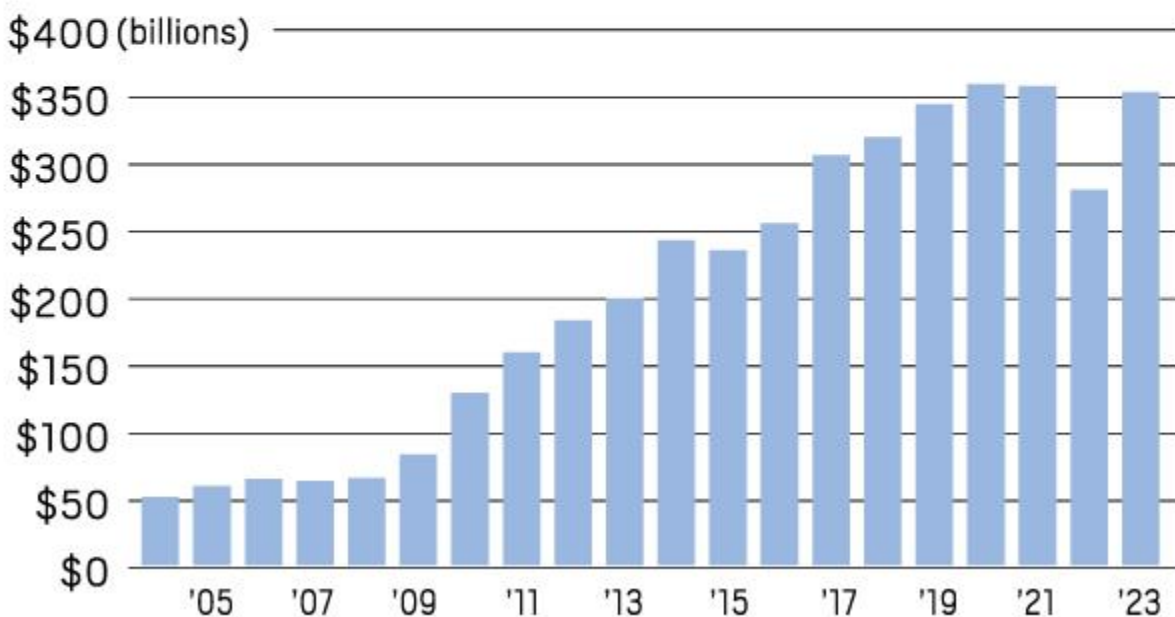
There was nary a peep of dissent when a bill that would let cities offer more pension benefits to public workers sailed through a committee hearing Wednesday.

“Local governments need to be able to offer benefits workers value,” said Assembly member Catherine Stefani, D-San Francisco. “It’s an option, not an obligation.”

We hate to spoil the party, but we’ve seen how responsibly local officials have exercised such “options” before: In their big-heartedness, and/or eagerness to curry favor with employee unions and garner endorsements and campaign contributions, electeds hiked workers’ benefits beyond sustainability. That’s how California’s public pension systems went from being “superfunded” in the early 2000s to sinking into a hole \$351 billion deep today.

California's public pension hole

Back in the halcyon days of the early 2000s, California state and local officials dramatically boosted retirement formulas for their workers with the misguided belief that a surging stock market would pay for it all. It hasn’t. This is how the unfunded liabilities of public pension systems have mushroomed.



Source: California controller

SCNG

[Stefani’s Assembly Bill 569](#) would allow cities (and other local governments) to negotiate over “supplemental” retirement plan contributions, “clarifying” some reforms muscled through the Legislature by then-Gov. Jerry Brown more than a decade ago.

Brown’s California Public Employees’ Pension Reform Act (PEPRA) aimed to

tame the explosive growth in public pension liabilities that were gobbling up bigger and bigger bites of municipal budgets. It met stiff resistance from labor unions even as critics complained it did little to nothing to curb crushing current costs (because many of its provisions applied to new hires only).

PEPRA reduced benefits for new hires (lower pension formulas and higher minimum retirement ages); tackled spiking (based pensions on the highest average salary over 36 months, rather than the highest single year, and excluded overtime and leave from the calculations); eliminated “airtime” (workers could once buy additional years of service to boost retirement checks); and required workers to kick in more of their own money to retirement funds.

Read More

Awkwardly, perhaps, those post-PEPRA workers toil beside pre-PEPRA workers with much sweeter benefits. “Though this may be viewed by some as unfair or other negative adjective,” an [analysis of Stefani’s bill for the Assembly Committee on Public Employment and Retirement](#) said, “the history of questionable public employee retirement activities pre-PEPRA resulted in the PEPRA, which is intended to achieve its multiple public policy objectives.”

Targets ‘highly paid employees’

Stefani’s bill would amend PEPRA “relating to supplemental defined benefit plan exceptions by authorizing a public employer to bargain over contributions for supplemental retirement benefits administered by, or on behalf of, an exclusive bargaining representative of one or more of the public employer’s bargaining units.”

By way of vocabulary, supplemental plans are “designed to provide retirement income, typically, but not exclusively, to highly paid employees to address a shortfall caused by limits and restrictions in qualified retirement plans,” the analysis said.

The supplemental plans would have had to exist before PEPRA and the bill would clarify that employers can negotiate contributions to those plans going forward, Shane Gusman of the Teamsters Public Affairs Council told the committee.

Stefani said it does not create new mandates and does not undermine PEPRA core protections. “It’s just another option at the bargaining table,” she said.

The bill’s fiscal effects are officially “none.” Costs would fall to local governments that use supplementals, not to the state.

The California Teamsters Public Affairs Council is sponsoring the bill, and it’s supported by the California Federation of Labor Unions, AFL-CIO. There’s no opposition on file.

‘Concerned’

“Even public employees with defined benefit plans are concerned about retirement security,” say comments submitted by the Teamsters.

“This is largely due to changes to pension rules that were enacted over a decade ago. ... Public employees hired since those changes spend more out of pocket for lower pension benefits in retirement. While many of the changes were necessary to curb abuses in public retirement

systems, some changes may have had little relation to the targeted abuses and, unfortunately, eliminated tools to attract highly qualified job seekers....”

Yikes. If public employees are worried about retirement security, the rest of us are doomed.

The vast majority of California’s public servants will get guaranteed pension payments for life, regardless of how badly their pension investments perform (that’s what a “defined benefit” plan is, and any shortfalls are made up by us taxpayers). Only about 15% of private workers get such plans.

The rest of the private workforce depends on “defined contribution” plans like the 401(k), where the only sure thing is what goes in, not what comes out. And we all know how turbulent those 401(k) waters have been lately!

If this bill makes it through the Sacramento sausage grinder, we beseech local officials to think not only of their workers, but of their constituents who’ll be on the hook for any shortfalls. Pension envy is real.

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

LIBERAL HYPOCRITES

LIBERALISM IS DEAD AND LIBERALS KILLED IT

BY DANIEL GREENFIELD

A handful of years after they cheered a president flanked by armed soldiers declaring half the countries to be enemies of the state, liberals are denouncing President Trump as a dangerous authoritarian. The misinformation censors of yesteryear have suddenly discovered that they love free speech and the men who filled D.C. with federal troops worry about the right to protest.

This born-again liberalism fools absolutely no one except the fools virtue signaling it.

The majority of liberals cast aside liberal values, they learned to deplore meritocracy, fair play, freedom of speech and all differences of opinion that did not serve their radical cause. They became leftists who play the cynical game of viewing dissent as either a ‘threat to democracy’ or the ‘highest form of patriotism’ depending on whether they’re the ones in power or dissenting.

That’s not liberalism. It’s a leftist wolf who puts on sheep’s clothing when he’s being hunted.

Liberalism means fundamentally distinguishing between speech and violence. It does not mean, as leftists have come to do, declaring that their violence is speech and that everyone else’s

speech is violence. Branding the BLM race riots as the “speech of the unheard”, while also arguing as the New York Times did that, “Free Speech Is Killing Us”, is illiberal totalitarianism.

Free speech isn’t defending the speech you agree with, but the speech you disagree with, and the last time the born-again liberal hypocrites did that was at least a generation ago. The same people who told us that cancel culture was really ‘consequence culture’ are outraged when consequences come for their activists after they spent over a year calling for Death to America.

The cries about the sanctity of academic freedom ring hollow from the establishment that watched conservatives and then even actual liberals and non-conforming leftists being purged from academia until it became a political monoculture. The same liberals now defending campus Hamas riots were fine with campus bans on everything from sombreros to copies of the Constitution. Scrawl a Hamas red triangle and the civil libertarians will jump to your defense who ignored when a campus chalk message in support of Trump was treated like a hate crime.

The old liberal organizations who never said a word when fraternities and sororities were being forced out of Harvard and their members punished, wave the bloody shirt of freedom of association when the Trump administration investigates members of pro-terrorist groups like Students for Justice in Palestine after a year of violence and calls for the murder of Jews.

The federal government has no right to investigate Harvard and Columbia University, they tell us, but when the authorities came for Liberty University and Yeshiva University, they cheered. Unlike suing religious schools to impose LGBTQ values on them, investigating antisemitism at liberal schools is a violation of the rights of the right kind of bigotry at the right kind of university.

The larger issue here is not any of these double standards: it’s the double standard itself.

The spectacle of authoritarians playing libertarians, the thugs who punched you in the face a year ago running to cry to the media when their visas are revoked, and the politicians who were warning about the urgent need to police ‘misinformation’ suddenly talking about the importance of tolerating genocidal views that we might disagree with is the most despicable hypocrisy.

This isn’t even the bare honesty of “when I am weaker than you, I ask you for freedom because that is according to your principles; when I am stronger than you, I take away your freedom because that is according to my principles” practiced by Jihadis and Communists. Instead, Jihadis and Communists playacting as liberals practice this without ever saying it openly.

Like Orwell’s 1984, they switch gears without a trace of shame from tyrants to liberals, alternately lecturing about the threat posed by those who disagree with them and then about the virtues of disagreement, deploring and imploring for freedoms of all kinds, limitations on government authority and due process with no regard to anything except their own power.

A generation of this has destroyed liberalism as thoroughly as any totalitarian regime ever could. No ideal can survive a movement that is both pro-censorship and anti-censorship, for the rule of

law and against it, for the judiciary and against it, for and against the power of the Senate, the White House and any branch of government depending on their control over it.

Liberalism without a set of rules that apply to everyone is a bad excuse for abuses in fair weather and a worse excuse for immunity in poor weather. Moral blackmail by people who have shown us time and again that they have no morals stops working on anyone except idiots.

If liberalism is not the right to tell people what they don't want to hear, the mission to fight to the death for the speech you disagree with, and a free society for all then it's nothing but a lie.

And for the vast majority of self-declared liberals, that is exactly what it has become.

Liberals could have avoided the illiberalism they deplore. They could have stood up to the campaign to ban 'misinformation'. When the government began telling internet monopolies whom to censor, they could have rallied against it. And when cancel culture took hold of everyone from random teenage boys to respected members of their own ranks over offenses so absurd they could have come from a Russian novel, they could have shown some backbone.

Instead they cheered, they lied and they excused locking people into their homes, filling the streets with troops and censorship of even the mildest dissenting views.

It's too damn late now for them to pretend that they're still liberals who want freedom for all.

Under the guise of warning about the urgent threat of the people they disagree with running for office, speaking out or even existing, liberals declared a state of emergency under which civil liberties had to be suspended to save liberalism from those who would destroy it. But the imaginary threat was never more than a justification for suspending the first amendment, and ending free and fair elections, and turning the temporary emergency into a permanent one.

Trump didn't kill the liberal order. If anything he saved its last vestiges from the liberals who would have enthusiastically done it to death while pumping their fists in the air, canceling a few more artists, writers and journalists, and planting "Hate has no home here" signs on its remains.

If the former liberals honestly want to reclaim a principled liberalism, embrace free speech for all, protect the right to assembly and free press that doesn't just advocate for their favored causes, and reopen the institutions they hijacked to more than one point of view, they are welcome to do so, but there's no sign of that taking place because they're not liberals anymore. They don't believe in free speech, a free press or any kind of freedom except as a hollow slogan to hide behind when their plans for building a totalitarian state temporarily fall apart.

They're not liberals. They're totalitarian hypocrites. Liberalism is dead and they killed it.

Daniel Greenfield, a Shillman Journalism Fellow at the David Horowitz Freedom Center, is an investigative journalist and writer focusing on the radical Left and Islamic terrorism.

AFTER THE SUICIDE OF THE WEST

“THE REAL CULTURE WAR”

BY ROGER KIMBALL

“It looks as if Islam had a bigger hand in the thing than we thought. . . . Islam is a fighting creed, and the mullah still stands in the pulpit with the Koran in one hand and a drawn sword in the other.”

—Richard Hannay in John Buchan’s *Greenmantle*

Suicide is probably more frequent than murder as the end phase of a civilization.

—James Burnham, *Suicide of the West*

It seemed fitting that a symposium devoted to the subject of “Threats to Democracy” should convene on the anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar. Not only was it one of the greatest sea battles in history, but it was also a battle greatly pertinent to the questions that guided our deliberations: What is the nature of the threats to democracy, to the culture and civilization of the West, and how can we best respond to those threats?

Let me say at the outset that I believe that Lord Nelson had the right idea—sail boldly in among your enemy’s ships, start firing, and don’t stop until you’ve reduced them to a shambles. It was good for England and for the rest of Europe that the Duke of Wellington proved himself to be of like mind a few years later. “Hard pounding, gentlemen,” he said at Waterloo. “We’ll see who pounds longest.”

Today, I believe, there is a widely shared understanding that our culture—not just the political system of democracy but our entire western way of life—is at a crossroads. That perception is not always on the surface. Absent the unignorable importunity of attack, absorption in the tasks of everyday life tends to blunt the perception of the threats facing us. But we all know that the future of the West, seemingly so assured even a decade ago, is suddenly negotiable in the most fundamental way. The essays that follow highlight some of the principle features of those negotiations. In this introduction, I want simply to review some of the moral terrain over which we are traveling.

I believe that Irving Kristol got it right when, in the early 1990s, he responded to the euphoria and naïveté that greeted the fall of the Soviet Union. Many commentators announced the imminent arrival of a new era of peace, brotherhood, international comity, and enlightenment. Kristol was not so sanguine. In an essay called “My Cold War,” he wrote that

There is no “after the Cold War” for me. So far from having ended, my cold war has increased in intensity, as sector after sector of American life has been ruthlessly corrupted by the liberal ethos. It is an ethos that aims simultaneously at political and social collectivism on the one hand, and moral anarchy on the other. It cannot win, but it can make us all losers.

The oft-noted linguistic irony about the “liberal ethos” that Kristol fears is that it has very little to do with genuine liberty and everything to do with the servitude of statist ideology.

That ideology comes in a range of flavors and a wide variety of wrappings. But the essential issue is one that Tocqueville, in *Democracy in America*, anatomized as “democratic despotism” and that Friedrich Hayek, harkening back explicitly to Tocqueville, laid out with clinical brilliance in *The Road to Serfdom*. Quoting Tocqueville on the “enervating” effect of paternalistic democracy, Hayek notes that “the most important change which extensive government control produces is a psychological change, an alteration in the character of a people.”

One of the most penetrating meditations on the nature of that alteration is James Burnham’s book *Suicide of the West*. Written in 1964, that book, like its author, is largely and unfairly forgotten today. Burnham’s was a first-rate political intelligence, and *Suicide of the West* is one of his most accomplished pieces of polemic. “The primary issue before Western civilization today, and before its member nations, is survival.” *Suicide of the West* is very much a product of the Cold War. Many of the examples are dated. But as with Irving Kristol’s Cold War, so with Burnham’s. The field of battle may have changed; the armies have adopted new tactics; but the war isn’t over: it is merely transmogrified. In the subtitle to his book, Burnham promises “the definitive analysis of the pathology of liberalism.” At the center of that pathology is an awful failure of understanding which is also a failure of nerve, a failure of “the will to survive.” Liberalism, Burnham concludes, is “an ideology of suicide.” He admits that such a description may sound hyperbolic. “‘Suicide,’ it is objected, is too emotive a term, too negative and ‘bad.’” But it is part of the pathology that Burnham describes that such objections are “most often made most hotly by Westerners who hate their own civilization, readily excuse or even praise blows struck against it, and themselves lend a willing hand, frequently enough, to pulling it down.”

By way of illustration, let me return for a moment to Lord Nelson and Trafalgar. For anyone concerned with the fate of our culture, our civilization, the anniversary of Trafalgar was full of lessons. I wonder, for example, what Nelson would have thought of the Royal Navy’s decision last summer to reenact the battle not as a conflict between the English on one side and the French and the Spanish on the other but, out of sensitivity to the feelings of the French, as a contest between a Red Team and a Blue Team. Today, I suppose, Nelson, instead of broadcasting his famous message about duty, would have had to hoist the signal that “England Expects or at Least Suggests That Every Person No Matter What Gender, Race, Class, Sexual Orientation, or National Origin Will Be Politically Correct.” Hard work on the flag officer, of course, but preserving the emotion of virtue is not without cost.

Trafalgar is full of lessons. When my wife and I visited London last September, we took our young son, a fervent admirer of Nelson, to Trafalgar Square to see Nelson’s column. We were surprised to see that it had company. On one of the plinths behind the famous memorial sat a huge sculpture of white marble. This, I knew, was one of the benefactions that Ken Livingstone, the Communist mayor of London, had bestowed on his grateful constituency: public art on Trafalgar Square that was more in keeping with cool Britannia’s new image than statues of warriors. From a distance, the white blob looked like a gigantic marshmallow in need of an air pump. But on closer inspection, it turned out to be a sculpture of an armless and mostly legless woman, with swollen breasts and distended belly. In fact, it was a sculpture by Marc Quinn of one Alison Lapper, made when she was eight months pregnant. Ms. Lapper, who was born with those horrible handicaps, is herself an artist. Asked how she felt about the sculpture, Ms. Lapper said that she was glad that at last Trafalgar Square recognized someone who was not a white male murderer. It is worth noting, as one journalist pointed out, that the architects of Trafalgar Square were ahead of their time in at least one sense, for the sculpture of Ms. Lapper represented

the second commemoration of a seriously disabled person. After all, there is Nelson on his column, missing his right arm and an eye.

How England chose to commemorate the Battle of Trafalgar and to respect its most public acknowledgment of Lord Nelson's service to his country should give us pause. The union of sentimentality, political correctness, and multicultural piety is a disturbing ambassador to the future. It is a perfect example—one of many—of the “liberal ethos” whose progress Irving Kristol mournfully observed and whose essential character Burnham delineated.

What are the stakes? The terrorist attacks of 9/11 gave us a vivid reminder—but one, alas, that seems to have faded from the attention of many Western commentators who seem more concerned about recreational facilities at Guantanamo Bay than the future of their towns and cities. For myself, ever since 9/11, when I think about threats to democracy, I recall a statement by one Hussein Massawi, a former Hezbollah leader, which I believe I first read in one of Mark Steyn's columns. “We are not fighting,” Mr. Massawi said, “so that you will offer us something. We are fighting to eliminate you.”

It is worth pausing to reflect on that statement. The thing I admire most about it is its pristine clarity. You know where you are with Mr. Massawi. It requires no special hermeneutic ingenuity to construe his meaning. And you also know that he wasn't speaking idly. He was a man of his word, as the events of 9/11 and the names Bali, Madrid, and—just last summer—London remind us.

Or so one would have thought. Mr. Massawi speaks clearly, but who is listening? Our colleges and universities have been preaching the creed of multiculturalism for the last few decades. Politicians, pundits, and the so-called cultural elite have assiduously absorbed the catechism, which they accept less as an argument about the way the world should be as an affirmation of the essential virtue of their own feelings. We are now beginning to reap the fruit of that liberal experiment with multiculturalism. The chief existential symptom is moral paralysis, expressed, for example, in the inability to discriminate effectively between good and evil. *The New York Times* runs full-page advertisements, signed by all manner of eminent personages, that compare President Bush to Adolf Hitler. Meanwhile, the pop singer Michael Jackson spends an unspecified number of millions to finance the construction of a mosque in Bahrain “designated for learning the principles and teachings of Islam.” Thanks, Michael.

Over the years, *The New Criterion* has commented often on “the culture wars,” the vast smorgasbord of intellectual, political, and moral havoc bequeathed to us by the 1960s. What we see now is a darker face of those conflicts. On the one hand, you have people like Mr. Massawi, and their name is legion. If American Airlines will lend them a 767, they will happily plow it into the most convenient skyscraper. Should they somehow get hold of a vial of anthrax or smallpox or an atomic weapon, we can be sure they would have not the least hesitation about obliterating whatever seat of Western decadence was most ready to hand—an American target would be best, of course, but failing that almost any other city would do. So far, Mr. Massawi and his pals have had to do without atomic or biological weapons, but they have kept themselves busy with semtex, car bombs, and the occasional televised beheading.

All this violence is not aimless. It has a clear goal, not only to push the West out of Saudia Arabia and other parts of the Middle East but also to establish the rule of Sharia, of Islamic law,

wherever Muslims in any number have congregated. This is the condition that the Egyptian historian Bat Ye'or has called dhimmitude: the state of the dhimmis, the “protected” or “guilty” non-Muslim people in a Muslim world. Dhimmitude outlines the official status of a conquered, spiritually cowed people, people, as the Koran puts it, who are allowed to live unmolested as second-class citizens so long as they “feel themselves subdued.”

I think we know where we are with the Mr. Massawis of the world. But how do we react? Well, the U.S. and British armed forces act in one way. Our intellectual and cultural leaders, by and large, act in quite another. Our reaction—or lack of reaction—is just as much of a threat as the overt belligerence of Massawi & Co. A few days after 9/11, I was talking with a friend who teaches at Williams College. The response on campus there, as on so many campuses across the country, was shock, dismay, and outrage—partly at what had happened at Ground Zero, the Pentagon, and that field in Pennsylvania, but even more at what has come to be called Islamophobia. At Williams, my friend told me, one distraught colleague insisted that the college air movies about the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II as a warning about the Great Backlash Against Muslims that was just about to sweep the country.

Not just this country, either. This past summer, BBC was preparing a film version of John Buchan's great “shocker” *Greenmantle*, whose plot turns on supposed German efforts to stir Turkish Muslims to jihad during the First World War. All was going along swimmingly until July 7, when some real-life British Muslims detonated themselves on the London transport system. Reaction at the BBC? They canceled the show for fear of wounding the feelings of Muslims.

While we are waiting for that backlash, and humming “Let's Not Be Beastly to the Muslims,” it is worth noting the word “Islamophobia” is a misnomer. A phobia describes an irrational fear, and it is axiomatic that fearing the effects of radical Islam is not irrational, but on the contrary very well-founded indeed, so that if you want to speak of a legitimate phobia—it's a phobia I experience frequently—we should speak instead of Islamophobia-phobia, the fear of and revulsion towards Islamophobia.

Now *that* fear is very well founded, and it extends into the nooks and crannies of daily life. A couple of months ago, for example, I read in a London paper that “Workers in the benefits department at Dudley Council, West Midlands, were told to remove or cover up all pig-related items, including toys, porcelain figures, calendars and even a tissue box featuring Winnie the Pooh and Piglet” because the presence of images of our porcine friends offended Muslims. A councillor called Mahbubur Rahman told the paper that he backed the ban because it represented “tolerance of people's beliefs.” In other words, Piglet really did meet a Heffalump, and it turns out he was wearing a kaffiyeh.

The observation—often, though apparently inaccurately, attributed to George Orwell—that the triumph of evil requires only that good men stand by and do nothing has special relevance at a time, like now, that is inflected by terrorism. I have several friends—thoughtful, well-intentioned people—who believe the United States should never have intervened in Afghanistan, who believe even more staunchly that the United States should never have intervened in Iraq, and, moreover, that we should get out forthwith. “We should,” they believe, “keep to ourselves. We have no business meddling with the rest of the world. We cannot be the world's constabulary, nor should we aspire to be. It is not in our interest—for it breeds resentment—and it is not in the

interest of those we profess to help, since they should be allowed to govern themselves—or not, as the case may be.”

Whatever the wisdom of the position in the abstract (and I have my doubts about it), the resurgence of international terrorism, fueled by hate and devoted to death, renders it otiose. Last summer’s bombings in London were, as these things go, relatively low in casualties. But they were high in indiscriminateness. The people on those buses and subway cars were as innocent as innocent can be: just folks, moms and dads and children on their way to work or school or play, as uninterested, most of them, in politics or Islam as it is possible to be. And yet those home-grown Islamicists were happy to blow them to bits.

Here is the novelty: Our new enemies are not political enemies in any traditional sense, belligerent in the service of certain interests of their own. Their belligerence is focused rather on the very existence of an alternative to their vision of beatitude, namely on Western democracy and its commitment to individual freedom and economic prosperity. I return to Hussein Massawi: “We are not fighting so that you will offer us something. We are fighting to eliminate you.”

In fact, the situation is even grimmer than Mr. Massawi suggests. For our new enemies are not simply bent on our destruction: they are pleased to compass their own destruction as a collateral benefit. This is one of those things that makes Islamofascism a particularly toxic form of totalitarianism. At least most Communists had some rudimentary attachment to the principle of self-preservation. In the face of such death-embracing fanaticism our only option is unremitting combat.

The large issue here is one that has bedeviled liberal societies ever since there *were* liberal societies: namely, that in attempting to create the maximally tolerant society, we also give scope to those who would prefer to create the maximally intolerant society.

In these pages last June, I wrote about the philosopher Leszek Kolakowski. Let me conclude by returning to what I said there. In an essay called “The Self-Poisoning of the Open Society,” Kolakowski dilates on this basic antinomy of liberalism. Liberalism implies openness to other points of view, even (it would seem) those points of view whose success would destroy liberalism. But tolerance to those points of view is a prescription for suicide. Intolerance betrays the fundamental premise of liberalism, i.e., openness. As Robert Frost once put it, a liberal is someone who refuses to take his own part in an argument.

Kolakowski is surely right that our liberal, pluralist democracy depends for its survival not only on the continued existence of its institutions, but also “on a belief in their value and a widespread will to defend them.” The question is: Do we, as a society, still enjoy that belief? Do we possess the requisite will? Or was François Revel right when he said that “Democratic civilization is the first in history to blame itself because another power is trying to destroy it”? The jury is still out on those questions. A good test is the extent to which we can resolve the antinomy of liberalism. And a good start on that problem is the extent to which we realize that the antinomy is, in the business of everyday life, illusory.

The “openness” that liberal society rightly cherishes is not a vacuous openness to *all* points of view: it is not “value neutral.” It need not, indeed it cannot, say Yes to all comers, to the

Islamofascist who after all has his point of view, just as much as the soccer mom, who has hers. American democracy, for example, affords its citizens great latitude, but great latitude is not synonymous with the proposition that “anything goes.” Our society, like every society, is founded on particular positive values—the rule of law, for example, respect for the individual, religious freedom, the separation of church and state. Western democratic society, that is to say, is rooted in what Kolakowski calls a “vision of the world.” Part of that vision is a commitment to openness, but openness is not the same as indifference.

The problem is that large portions of Western society, especially those portions entrusted with perpetuating its political and cultural capital, have lost sight of that vision. In part, I believe, this is a religious problem—more to the point, it is a problem consequent upon the failure of religion. In his essay “Targeted Jihad” below, Douglas Murray summarizes this point well.

It may be no sin—may indeed be one of our society’s most appealing traits—that we love life. But the scales, as in so many things, have tipped to an extreme. From seeing so much for which we would live, people in our society now see fewer and fewer causes for which they would die. We have passed to a point where prolongation is all. We have become like the parents of Admetos in Euripides’ *Alcestis*—“walking cadavers,” unwilling to give up the few remaining days (in Europe’s case, of its peace dividend) even if only by doing so can any generational future be assured. Even the interventionist wars of the West only seem possible when we can ensure that our troops kill but do not die for the cause in hand. wrong.

In fact, I believe that Mr. Murray may overstate the extent to which we in the West “love life.” We love our pleasures, which isn’t quite the same thing. But his main point, about there being fewer and fewer things for which we would be willing to risk our lives, is exactly right. James Burnham made a similar point about facing down the juggernaut of Communism: “just possibly we shall not have to die in large numbers to stop them: but we shall certainly have to be willing to die.” The issue, Burnham saw, is that modern liberalism has equipped us with an ethic too abstract and empty to inspire real commitment. Modern liberalism, he writes,

does not offer ordinary men compelling motives for personal suffering, sacrifice, and death. There is no tragic dimension in its picture of the good life. Men become willing to endure, sacrifice, and die for God, for family, king, honor, country, from a sense of absolute duty or an exalted vision of the meaning of history. . . . And it is precisely these ideas and institutions that liberalism has criticized, attacked, and in part overthrown as superstitious, archaic, reactionary, and irrational. In their place liberalism proposes a set of pale and bloodless abstractions—pale and bloodless for the very reason that they have no roots in the past, in deep feeling and in suffering. Except for mercenaries, saints, and neurotics, no one is willing to sacrifice and die for progressive education, medicare, humanity in the abstract, the United Nations, and a ten percent rise in Social Security payments.

The Islamofascists have a fanatical belief that theirs is a holy mission, that incinerating infidels is their bounden duty. For them suicide is a gateway to paradise. For us suicide is just that: suicide. Although we began by calling this symposium “Threats to Democracy,” it became clear in the course of our proceedings that the threat was larger, more encompassing than that title suggests. As the succeeding essays make clear, what we are dealing with is the real culture war—a war, as Burnham said, “for survival.” In “It’s the demography, stupid,” Mark Steyn writes about the West’s survival in the most elemental sense: much of what could once upon a time have been

called Christian Europe is simply failing to reproduce itself. "A society that has no children," he notes, "has no future." But the demographic timebomb, as Douglas Murray, Roger Scruton, and Keith Windshuttle note, is only part of the story. As Scruton puts it, a kind of "moral obesity" cripples much of Western culture, "to the point where ideals and long-term goals induce in them nothing more than a flummoxed breathlessness."

The question is whether we believe anything with sufficient vigor to jettison the torpor of our barren self-satisfaction. There are signs that the answer is Yes, but you won't see them on CNN or read about them in *The New York Times*. The people presiding over such institutions would rather die than acknowledge that someone like James Burnham (to say nothing of George W. Bush) was right. It just may come to that.



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assemblymember.addis@assembly.ca.gov

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bgibson@co.slo.ca.us

SLO County Supervisor Heather Moreno
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hmoreno@co.slo.ca.us

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