



WEEKLY UPDATE

June 15 -22, 2025

THIS WEEK

Budget: Its Great, But... A Percolating Scandal?

The budget hearing dominated county business this week with little additional agency activity, The June 17 Board of Supervisors meeting will be the last until July 8, recognizing the July 4 holiday.

Budget: Its Great, But...

The SLO County Board of Supervisors met on June 9 for a special session budget hearing. The hearing was scheduled to last up to three days, but all the details were covered and approved after just the first day.

As important and detailed as the proceedings were, very few changes were made to the proposed budget. Most of the heavy lifting was done in the months leading up to the June 3 introduction.

Over those months, County Administrative Officer Matthew Pontes worked with each department to review their individual department budget proposal, eliminating redundancies and inefficiencies in what was described as a “rebalancing and resilience Initiative”.

This effort led to a reported \$38 million budget reduction over what it would have otherwise been. Still, the budget grew over last year by \$78 million or almost 9% for a total proposed budget of a little more than \$950,000,000 and when all is said and done, will probably crest \$1 billion.

That is if the California State Budget, set to be released on June 15, doesn’t result in major cuts to county programs funding. At this point, the California May Revise budget forecast identified a \$12 billion shortfall. Currently, the SLO County budget relies on 42% of its budget coming from intergovernmental sources - primarily state and federal funding.

In Monday’s hearing, very few adjustments were made. Some funding to be used as “gap funding” for local non-profit service providers was earmarked, amounting to somewhere between \$1.3 million to over \$3 million, depending on how much is actually allocated. These funds will be drawn from reserves.

Support for the budget as proposed was unanimous, as was support for the first “gap funding proposal of about \$1.2 million. However, Supervisors Peshong and Moreno declined to support any further expenditure of reserve funding, citing budget uncertainties about state funds.

The Board of Supervisors and county staff should be commended for their professional approach to the budget. It’s a pity that the complete lack of responsible fiscal management by our Governor and the State Legislature could blow up the efforts of our county to finally be accountable and transparent.

A Percolating Scandal?

The Paso Water Basin JPA is underway with its Prop 218 “vote”. The potential scandal is the method used to deprive di minimis users of a vote. Whether you are for or against the JPA, it’s indefensible that so many people who should have a vote on the formation of a new government agency - that seeks to regulate one of their most important resources - have been robbed of that right through shifty means.

It appears that just over 1300 agricultural irrigators have received notice of the formation of the JPA. Those parcel owners have until the end of July to write up a

formal protest and mail it to a Post Office Box in Paso Robles, should they wish to protest.

No formal ballots have been supplied. Protests need to be self-generated and include the property owner's name and the assessor's parcel number, along with a statement of protest. The protest letters will be counted in some, yet to be described process by Water District personnel. There is no process outlined (so far) for observers or oversight to ensure the integrity of the count. If a minimum of 50% +1 of parcel owners protest, the JPA cannot proceed. Without a majority protest, the JPA will continue with its formation.

Di minimis users (those who use less than 2-acre feet of water annually) should be entitled to vote as well but have been denied that right through a maneuver by the JPA proponents to pay the annual fee of the small users.

Whether this process is legal remains to be seen. One big question is where the district is getting the funds to pay the fees, and how long will they continue to pay the fees? Another point is that since the district has yet to pay those fees, can they deprive the di minimis user of the vote – shouldn't the fee be paid before the vote is denied?

Organizers opposing the JPA are planning to have as many di minimis users as possible send in a protest in case a legal challenge is brought forth. They are also endeavoring to contact all the ag irrigators that have received notice with advocacy and assistance to file a protest.

The opposition has been vocal and visible in the community, calling the process a flim flam kind of scam. Advocates have had little presence. Their main argument in favor of the JPA is that the basin is over-charged and needs basin-wide management to prevent severe shortages.

An organizational meeting will take place for the JPA in early August. Protest votes will be announced, and absent a majority protest, will proceed with adopting a budget and rate structure. The proposed budget is an average of nearly \$3 million annually over the first five years. Little is known about what this new agency will do to manage the water in the basin or how it will assist those who fall under its regulations.

If building trust and confidence among the people living in the Paso Basin is of any interest to this new JPA, they seem to be failing dramatically. One huge irony is how some sectors of our society are so adamantly in favor of anything making it easier for people to vote, except in this case.

The month of July will be a very hot one when it comes to the water debate in the Paso Basin.

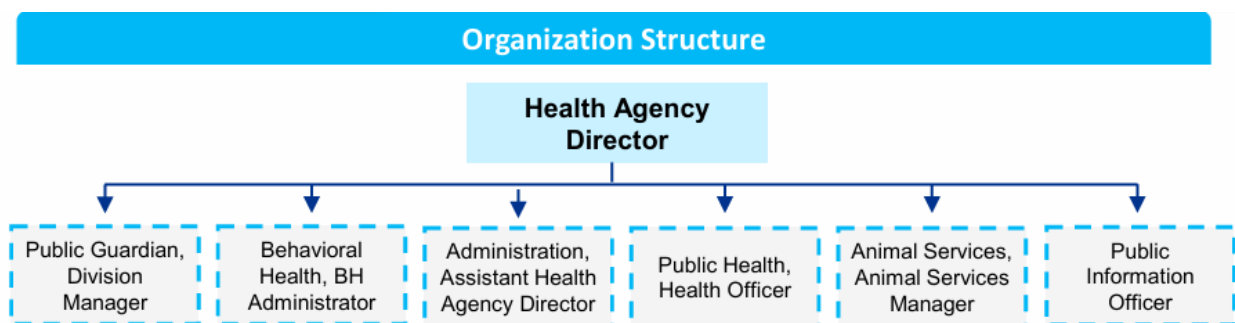
NEXT WEEK

KPMG Health Agency Audit Another Humdinger of an Election Less Air Pollution

KPMG Health Agency Audit

The much-anticipated KPMG audit of the County Health Agency is ready for presentation to the Board of Supervisors at the June 17 meeting. While the audit is extremely detailed, a summary follows in the charts below. It is highly recommended that anyone with an interest in the technical findings of the audit look at the 225 page analysis in detail via the following link:

<https://agenda.slocounty.ca.gov/iip/sanluisobispo/file/getfile/170470>



The Health Agency is divided into six categories. The audit provides detail in each department, including observations and recommendations.

FY 24-25	
Operating Expenses	\$168.12 million
Revenue (including federal, state, and grant funding)	\$130.77 million
General Fund Contribution	\$37.34 million
Total FTEs*	581

A key component of funding comes from state and federal sources, many of which are at risk of being cut. Below is a chart comparing SLO Health Agency Data to neighboring counties.

Benchmark Counties Budget and FTEs (FY24-25)						
County	Population	Total Funding	Charges For Service %	General Fund Use	Intergov. Revenue	FTEs
SLO*	281,639	\$257,653	N/A	(\$76,647)	N/A	70.50
Santa Barbara*	441,257	<i>Not Publicly Reported</i>	<i>Not Publicly Reported</i>	<i>Not Publicly Reported</i>	<i>Not Publicly Reported</i>	<i>Not Publicly Reported</i>
Monterey	430,723	\$1,986,419	<i>Not Publicly Reported</i>	<i>Not Publicly Reported</i>	<i>Not Publicly Reported</i>	65.50
Santa Cruz	261,547	\$29,583,606	10%	<i>Not Publicly Reported</i>	\$23,927,441	56.00
Sonoma**	481,812	\$137,576,700	<i>Not Publicly Reported</i>	<i>Not Publicly Reported</i>	<i>Not Publicly Reported</i>	179.00
Ventura***	829,590	<i>Not Publicly Reported</i>	<i>Not Publicly Reported</i>	<i>Not Publicly Reported</i>	<i>Not Publicly Reported</i>	<i>Not Publicly Reported</i>

The following summaries relate to the biggest cost centers of the Health Agency.

Behavioral Health: Potential Cost Efficiency Summary

Outlined below is a breakdown of all cost efficiency opportunities plus vacancies across the Health Agency.

- Behavioral Health: There are 2 positions (LPT/Nursing) in Youth Services proposed for reduction. The remaining positions may be transitioned or eliminated once the County can evaluate utilization against established targets upon data verification. The remaining cost efficiencies is in Contracts.
- While there is opportunities for cost efficiencies in the Span of Control, County Administration will need to accept the opportunities and undergo the 'bumping' process before determining the true financial opportunity.
- Cost efficiency estimates are not exclusively to General Funds.

Behavioral Health			
Opportunities for Consideration		Minimum Total Cost Efficiency	Maximum Total Cost Efficiency
Subtotal		\$ 3,644,000	\$ 6,835,000
Division	Vacancies	Minimum Total Cost Efficiency	Maximum Total Cost Efficiency
Mental Health	12.75	\$ 1,834,679	\$ 3,314,896
Drug & Alcohol	24.00	\$ 1,421,802	\$ 4,016,337
Prevention & Outreach	12.50	\$ 1,080,284	\$ 2,309,260
Access and Crisis Services Division	5.00	\$ 681,217	\$ 786,370
Justice Services	7.00	\$ 965,104	\$ 1,159,683
Subtotal	61.25	\$ 5,983,086	\$ 11,586,546
Estimate Cost Efficiency		\$ 9,627,086	\$ 18,421,546

It is understood that some of these positions may have been eliminated by the County during the process of KPMGs review, however, the analysis above does not account for the changes that took place during the same time period.

Public Health: Potential Cost Efficiency Summary

Outlined below is a breakdown of all potential cost efficiency opportunities plus vacancies across the Health Agency.

- Public Health: There has already been elimination of positions in both Laboratory Services and Maternal Child Services by the department, therefore we believe that these efficiencies are already listed under vacancies.
- While there is opportunities for cost efficiencies in the Span of Control, County Administration will need to accept the opportunities and undergo the 'bumping' process before determining the true financial opportunity.
- Cost efficiency estimates are not exclusively to General Funds.

Public Health			
Opportunities for Consideration		Minimum Total Cost Efficiency	Maximum Total Cost Efficiency
Subtotal		\$ 1,174,000	\$ 1,671,000
Division	Vacancies	Minimum Total Cost Efficiency	Maximum Total Cost Efficiency
Children's Med Services	5.00	\$ 452,482	\$ 612,370
Environmental Health	2.00	\$ 213,402	\$ 292,219
Healthcare Access	1.00	\$ 190,071	\$ 190,071
Healthcare Promotion	1.00	\$ 110,879	\$ 158,743
Maternal Child Adolescent Health	10.75	\$ 1,460,304	\$ 1,657,962
Public Health Admin	1.00	\$ 157,720	\$ 185,322
PH EMSA	1.00	\$ 114,474	\$ 150,561
PH Nursing	2.00	\$ 430,147	\$ 449,594
WIC Program	1.00	\$ 134,174	\$ 151,331
Subtotal	24.75	\$ 3,263,654	\$ 3,848,173
Estimate Cost Efficiency		\$ 4,437,554	\$ 5,518,823

Estimated total cost efficiency across the Health Agency ranges from \$14,064,640 to \$23,940,369.

It should be noted that many of the cost savings identified involve the use of AI technologies to improve performance and reduce overhead. Other savings are found in personnel reprioritizations. Some of the savings may be more practical to implement than others due to staffing contracts and/or technological abilities. However, the audit provides an excellent basis for internal evaluations designed to make the agency more effective and efficient in both services provided and operating costs.

The BoS will hear a report from KPMG on June 17 and decide how to proceed after that.

Another Humdinger of an Election

The San Luis Obispo County Pension Trust has apparently held an election, and a report of that election will be presented at the June 17 BoS meeting. It's a bit of a yawn actually. Trustee Geoff O'Quest was the only candidate to file and was therefore declared the winner by default to be reelected.

With a pension deficit of over \$1 billion, it's perhaps unsurprising that nobody else desired to serve on the seven member Board of Trustees. They are responsible for overseeing a staff of about 8 people who serve over 7,000 active, retired and deferred employees, and pay out roughly \$135 million annually to nearly 3,400 retirees.

The Trust does have a plan in place to pay down the deficit to zero by 2041. However, that plan is highly dependent on factors such as investment performance and employee salaries.

One notable aspect of this "election" is that it was overseen by SLO County Clerk/Recorder Elaina Canto. So, while an election for a pension fund trustee gets official county oversight, the Prop. 218 vote for the Paso Water Basin JPA involves no official ballots, a P.O. box, some water district staff and a restriction that excludes many voters from participating.

In San Luis Obispo County one could easily get the impression that election inconsistencies are just about the only constancy....

Less Air Pollution

The Air Pollution Control District of SLO County meets on June 18. It will present its annual budget of \$7,346,095 and offer up its annual report which reads in part:

Ozone overall trends show continued improvements with decreasing design values at all locations except for Red Hills whose design value increased 1 part per billion in 2024. Most stations saw a decrease in the number of days with ozone levels in the Moderate AQI range.

For **PM₁₀**, all sites in the County met the California annual average standard of 20 µg/m³ for the first time since monitoring began. The Nipomo Mesa continued to show marked improvements relative to long-term trends. The overall number of exceedances of the state 24-hour PM₁₀ standard of 50 µg/m³ decreased at both Mesa2 and CDF. No federal PM10 standards were exceeded.

PM_{2.5} annual averages decreased at all sites, including those on the Nipomo Mesa, with no exceedances of PM_{2.5} standards in 2024. Notably, all sites continue to meet the new more stringent federal PM_{2.5} annual average standard of 9.0 µg/m³ that was implemented on February 7th, 2024.

South County air quality continues to be impacted by dust from the Oceano Dunes State Vehicle Recreation Area (ODSVRA), but the situation continues to improve. While the federal PM10 standard was not exceeded anywhere in 2024, the more stringent state standard was exceeded on 20 days, with most due to windblown dust. This is the fewest annual exceedances since daily monitoring began. For the first time all sites in San Luis Obispo County had an annual average under the State annual standard. In addition, the Rule 1001 performance standard was violated 10 times during 2024—an improvement from the 11 violations in 2023.

There were no exceedances of the standards for nitrogen dioxide or sulfur dioxide at any stations this year.

Looks like generally great news. What the report doesn't say is how much of the south county dust originates from sources other than the Oceano Dunes State Recreational Area. This is important information as many environmental groups, and even a state agency, seek to close the dunes for off road recreation and overnight camping. Their main argument is that those activities generate too much dust which gets blown into residential areas inland of the dunes. Many, however, argue that the dust comes from several sources beyond just off road recreation.

LAST WEEK

**Keep County Cash in the Unincorporated Parts
Beds Cost Bucks
Just Another Pride Month
Hunger and Juneteenth Just Get a Day
Pot Gets Pity
Tourism Improvement
Meritless Time Consuming Appeal
ADUs, Lot Splits and Density Bonuses**

Keep County Cash in the Unincorporated Parts

Supervisor Paulding offered up a motion regarding the roughly \$2.5 million in SB 1090 funds that the county currently has available for low-income housing projects. His motion was to direct staff to focus on projects in the unincorporated parts of SLO County. He mentioned two projects currently seeking gap funding, one on Cayucos and one in Templeton. Supervisor Peshong agreed and seconded the motion. Supervisor Ortiz Legg cautioned that she believes the county should not be spending funds at this time - or at least it needs to be very cautious about doing so, due to the projected state funding shortfalls.

Beds Cost Bucks

Under Prop 1 funds, SLO County Behavioral Health was awarded a \$21.6 million grant from the state to build a 16 bed Psychiatric Health Facility, which would provide 12 beds for adults and 4 for minors. Currently, minors experiencing mental crisis are sent to facilities over 100 miles away. While the grant will provide desperately needed beds, it comes with a requirement for a \$2 million match from the County and will also require ongoing operating funds when in place.

Just another Pride Month

Much as expected, the Board passed a resolution declaring the Month of June as Pride Month by a 3-2 vote with Supervisors Peshong and Moreno voting no. Supervisors Gibson and Paulding, along with a spattering of audience speakers, each offered remarks, but nothing significantly new was addressed.

Hunger and Juneteenth just Get a Day

The Board also passed a resolution declaring June 6 as Hunger Awareness Day. The day corresponds with an open House at the SLO Food Bank. And it proclaimed the second Saturday in June 2025 as “Juneteenth Day”.

Pot gets Pity

The Board adopted the resolution to keep the Cannabis Tax at the current level of 6% as opposed to letting it incur an additional 2% that would otherwise be an automatic increase. The measure had a half dozen cannabis entrepreneurs testify in favor, citing challenging business conditions and expensive overhead.

The lone voice in opposition was from Mr. Murray Powell who said:

THESE CANNABIS TAX RATE REDUCTIONS ARE A FEEBLE ATTEMPT BY OUR COUNTY TO SUBSIDIZE THE FAILING CALIFORNIA POT INDUSTRY AND IGNORE THE WILL OF THE VOTERS AS USUAL. MAKES ONE WONDER WHEN THE COUNTY IS EXPERIENCING A \$40 MILLION BUDGET DEFICIT AND PLANNING TO ELIMINATE 170 STAFF POSITIONS WHILE WASTING COUNTY GENERAL TAX FUNDS ON A FAILED POT INDUSTRY. EVERY \$\$\$MILLION COUNTS!!!!

Supervisor Moreno pointed out the fact that this is one of only two taxes where the County Supervisors have discretion. The other is the Transit Occupancy Tax also known as the TOT or Bed Tax charged to guests staying in local hotels and motels.

Tourism Improvement

Since 2009, the County of San Luis Obispo has had a County Unincorporated Area Tourism Business Improvement District (better known as a CBID) which charges a tax of 2% to guests at the 1,481 hotels, motels and vacation rentals throughout the county. That tax remains in effect until at least a simple majority of those taxed register a vote of protest.

Balloting is now open for such a vote, but only just over 8% have objected. Supervisor Ortiz Legg requested that the hotels being taxed get a survey inquiring about their priorities for how the CBID funds should be spent. She pointed out that some hotels aren't getting the ballot and suggested the CBID needs more info from hotels regarding what sorts of projects would be most helpful to the tourism industry locally

Meritless Time Consuming Appeal

Item 29? Was a simple appeal of a permit to replace a single-story house with a two story home. The original permit was granted on Nov 1, 2024, but has been in limbo since, awaiting the deliberations at this meeting. The agenda item read as follows:

Hearing to consider appeals by Jeff Kwansy of North Coast Advisory Council (NCAC)

(APPL2024-00031), Jeff Lentz (APPL2024-00032), and Christina Galloway (APPL2024-00033) of the Planning Department Hearing Officer's approval of a request by Peter and Beata Przybyslawski for a Minor Use Permit/Coastal Development Permit (C-DRC2023-00060) to allow the replacement of an existing, single-family residence with a new two-story, approximately 2,419 square foot, single-family residence with three bedrooms, three bathrooms, kitchen, dining and family room, a media room, and laundry room, exterior deck, a single car garage and one uncovered parking space. The project will result in the disturbance of approximately 5,929 square feet on a 0.10- acre parcel. The proposed project is within the Residential Single-Family land use category and is located at 2675 Sherwood Drive in the community of Cambria. The site is in the North Coast Area Plan. Also to be considered is the determination that the project qualifies for a General Rule or Common-Sense exemption from environmental review under CEQA. (Planning and Building)

The appeal was based upon several claims that the permit was granted despite the project not following the required specifications. County planning addressed each of those complaints in about four minutes, making it clear that the project met all requirements.

The appellants then proceeded to list in detail each of their objections, almost all of which were subjective, including one lady who was upset because she had built a gingerbread copy of the original house and didn't want to see it demolished, and others worried about two trees that would be removed even though new healthier ones would be planted in their place.

The single item on the agenda took an hour to resolve, and never did the appellant group have a relevant point. It tied up staff from the planning department as well

as countless other staff who were in support roles. It cost the homeowner to have a representative appear and it cost the homeowner over seven months in delays. Due process can be a time-consuming effort.



The photo above shows the house as it currently stands. The photo below illustrates the proposed new structure:



ADUs, Lot Splits and Density Bonuses

The last item on the agenda also proved to be a lengthy discussion about aligning SLO County Additional Dwelling and lot split standards with state SB 9 standards with a goal of producing more low and very low income housing. This data rich presentation called for adoption of recommended ordinances amending the Inland and Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinances and Local Coastal Program to update regulations relating to the Density Bonus Program; and Adopt the recommended resolution amending the Williamson Act Rules of Procedure to update regulations relating to accessory dwellings. The Ordinances if adopted would call for density bonuses of 15% for very low-income targeted projects. The possibility of an amnesty program for unpermitted units meeting minimum standards was included. Limits of 1200 square feet or less on ADUs were also explored.

It's worth noting that the subject of parking did not come up. In practically every planning Department appeal in the Coastal Zone, parking is discussed in great detail. One recent project that met all criteria and was issued a permit got bogged down in the appeal process primarily because its off-street parking plan was deemed insufficient by some Board members. Front-yard setbacks did become a subject of concern and was addressed in proposed language.

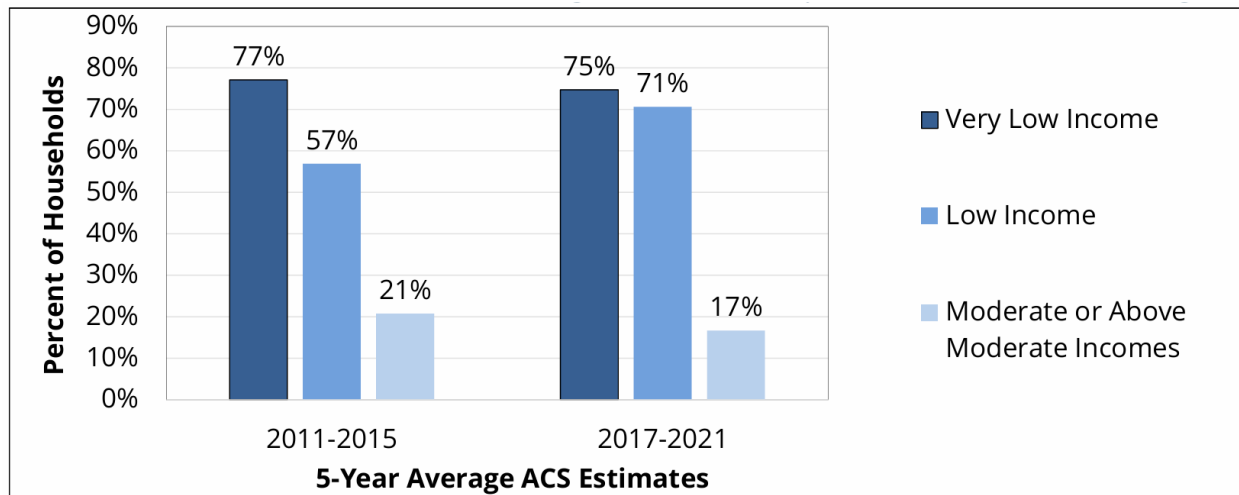
Discussion of how a homeowner could create a lot split, add additional structures, how many and how large those structures would be, became very technical. At a couple points, Supervisors seemed befuddled by the various equations and options but ended up adopting standards recommended by staff with some minor revisions that are hoped to allow for some flexibility.

Despite an admirable presentation by staff, and voluminous discussion, this subject seemed a bit too detailed to be heard and codified in a 40ish minute session. One got the impression that there were a lot of fingers crossed when the vote was finally taken.

As to specific details of the measure that was adopted, it is recommended that anyone thinking about lot splits, ADUs, seeking amnesty or wondering exactly what can and cannot be done in this regard, consult the planning department with very specific questions early on. It could be a complicated process.

The following illustrates key data points used in configuring ADU regulations:

American Community Survey for San Luis Obispo County

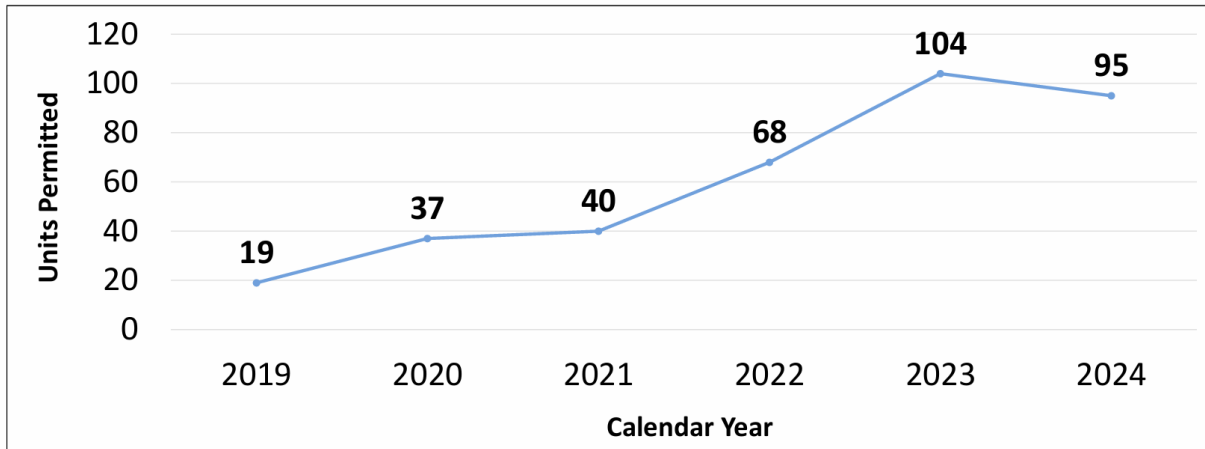


The following graph illustrates the anticipated number of homes needed in four different categories, and compares those needs to actual dwellings built in those specific categories. The measurement, called the RHNA, is a standardized formula used by all counties in California to gauge progress towards housing goals. Farther below is a chart illustrating the number of ADUs built in SLO County by year, and the last graph illustrates the number of ADUs allowed on a lot.

Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA)

Income Category	Number of Dwelling Units			Percent Completed
	Total Need	Permitted (2019-2024)	Remaining Need	
Very Low-Income	801	7	794	1%
Low-Income	505	226	279	45%
Moderate-Income	585	246	339	42%
Above Moderate-Income	1,365	1,132	233	83%
Total	3,256	1,611	1,645	49%

Accessory Dwelling Production



Allowable Number of Accessory Dwellings

Accessory Dwelling on...	Existing Regulations	State Law
Parcel with single-family dwelling	2 accessory dwellings (1 attached/detached and 1 junior accessory dwelling)	3 accessory dwellings
Parcel with multi-family dwellings	2 detached accessory dwellings	8 detached accessory dwellings, not to exceed the number of existing multi-family units
	AND conversions of existing non-living space, not to exceed 25% of the number of existing multi-family units	

EMERGENT TRENDS - SEE PAGE 18

Unions want to chip away at Jerry Brown's pension law. He has something to say about that

California lawmakers going big on pro-development bills — not so much on renter protection

COLAB IN DEPTH SEE PAGE 28

America is Drowning in Laws

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Unions want to chip away at Jerry Brown's pension law. He has something to say about that



BY ADAM ASHTON JUNE 10, 2025 UPDATED JUNE 12, 2025

California public employee unions think their members are falling behind financially in retirement, and for the first time in recent memory they're making a serious case to increase their pensions.

They proposed legislation this spring that would allow newly hired police and firefighters to retire two years earlier — at age 55 — and with a more generous pension formula, arguing that the nature of their work exposes them to hazards and takes a toll on their health.

[The bill](#), carried by Democratic [Assemblymember Tina McKinnor](#) of Inglewood, also would lift a cap on how much California pensioners can

earn in retirement, increasing it by almost \$100,000 to match the federal limit of \$280,000 a year. That change alone would cost government agencies and workers more than \$300 million a year in new payroll expenses, according to a legislative analysis of the plan.

Their proposal would chip away at the 2012 law then-Gov. Jerry Brown championed to shore up [California's public pension funds](#) after they suffered severe losses in the Great Recession and lumbered to recover under the weight of [benefits lawmakers expanded](#) in better days. Under Brown's law, public employees hired after Jan. 1, 2013 accrue pension benefits under a less generous formula and have to work longer to earn a full retirement.

Brown, in retirement, noticed the new bill and warned that the changes would hurt taxpayers in a future financial crisis.

"It's a big complicated system, and what's being proposed here is to make it less secure. As a member of the pension system, I object to that," he said in an interview with CalMatters.

Today, the big pension funds are still clawing out from their recession losses. Both the California Public Employees' Retirement System and the California State Teachers' Retirement System — which combined administer the pensions of some 3 million people — are considered underfunded because their assets are worth about 75% of what they owe to their members. That's a shortfall worth tens of billions of dollars.

They're closing the gap in part by charging government agencies, including cities and school districts, more money to pay down past losses, which employers say leaves less room for them to hire new police officers, parks workers and other civil servants.

Union leaders backing the bill to boost benefits say they're focused on a different crisis: Ensuring that California agencies can recruit and retain

police and firefighters, and that those workers can retire comfortably after careers spent in harm's way.

"I do not want to roll back all of the gains Gov. Brown made, but we have got to make adjustments and modifications to (Brown's pension law) because my members are dying over it," said Brian Rice, the president of California Professional Firefighters, a union that represents some 35,000 firefighters.

Rice acknowledged there's "never going to be a perfect time" to ask lawmakers for a benefit that has the potential to drive up expenses for government agencies, but he said he was persuaded after seeing how Brown's law played out and the number of firefighters who die of cancer every year.

"I feel strongly that 57 is too high," he said, referring to the retirement age for California firefighters hired after Brown's law took effect. "It extends the exposure too long, and it exposes the members after our health starts to decline. We are very vulnerable after 50."



Former Gov. Jerry Brown announced his public employee pension reform plan at the State Capitol in Sacramento, on Oct. 11, 2011. He proposed 12 major reforms for state and local pension systems that he claimed would end abuses and reduce taxpayer costs by billions of dollars. Photo by Max Whittaker, Getty Images

Pension heyday to freefall

His advocacy for Assembly Bill 1383 reflects the decades-long debate over how much California government workers should be able to earn in retirement. The pendulum swung in favor of public employees in 2000 when Gov. Gray Davis signed a law that allowed them to [retire at a younger age](#) and increased benefits retroactively.

Police and firefighters under that law could retire at 50 with a formula that gave them 3% of their final wages for every year of service, meaning

California Highway Patrol officers with 30 years on the job would get a pension worth 90% of their final year earnings.

Back then, CalPERS and CalSTRS expected to earn investment returns of 8.25% a year, and some cities and schools skipped the contributions they make toward their employees' pensions because the funds [were so flush from the Dot-com bubble](#).

It didn't last.

CalPERS lost \$67 billion in 2008 and 2009 as the recession took hold. Brown took office in 2011 at a moment when voters were alarmed by the freefall in the pension funds, and he set to work on changes that would "balance" the fund by lowering benefits for new employees and requiring them to contribute more toward their pensions.

It also instituted the cap on pensionable income for newly hired employees, a number that increases somewhat every year and today stands at \$186,000. People hired before 2013 are not subject to that cap, and about 1,250 CalPERS pensions exceed current IRS limits.

Outside of Brown's law, the pension funds adapted by lowering the expected investment target to 7% at CalSTRS and [6.8% at CalPERS](#), a change that effectively requires government agencies and employees to pay more for retirement plans because it acknowledges that the funds will earn less over time.

"This is a modest reform and you should not undermine it in any way," Brown told CalMatters. "If there's a problem attracting firefighters then perhaps the academies or the local jurisdictions can increase the pay."

Unanimous vote to boost pensions

Rice said the unions backing the bill to lower the retirement age for public safety workers learned from past mistakes and took care not to jeopardize the system.

For instance, the bill would not require agencies to give police and firefighters the more generous pension formula of 3% per year of service, but it would allow unions to negotiate for that rate. And, the bill would not increase benefits retroactively for current employees.

“We’re taking 2012 prior standards to today’s realities and maybe the things we did in (Brown’s pension law) needed to be done, but that doesn’t mean you shouldn’t look for appropriate modifications,” he said.

The bill sailed through the Assembly committee that oversees public employment issues in April, where dozens of police and firefighters showed up to press for the lower retirement age.

“In Los Angeles, we just had one of the biggest fires we’ve ever had in the history of Southern California,” Assemblymember McKinnor, the bill sponsor, said at the hearing. “And to see the lines of all these guys showing up and men and women, this is how they showed up for us when we had this disaster, like, never ending.”

The Republicans on the committee backed the proposal, too. Both of them, Assemblymembers Juan Alanis and Tom Lackey, are former law enforcement officers who cited their personal experiences in supporting the lower retirement age.

Alanis, a former Stanislaus County sheriff’s deputy, said he has a son in law enforcement who’d be able to retire at a later age than him because he began working under the conditions of Brown’s pension law.

“I feel for him and all those that came up and those that fall under (Brown’s pension law) who with this bill will at least possibly get the

chance to get two years of their lives back. I probably would have made it a lower age, but I think 55 is pretty fair, at least a good start,” he said.

But the bill will not pass this year. It was tabled by the Assembly Appropriations Committee and can return for consideration after January. Rice plans to continue advocating for it.

Former Gov. Brown followed the bill and noted the bipartisan vote for it. He pointed out that Republicans voted for the 2000 expansion of benefits that contributed to the pension funds’ shaky footing in the recession.

“Every year there’s an effort to achieve more benefits for the organizations, and some organizations like firefighters have a much more compelling case than others, but nevertheless the government has to live within limits,” he said.

He continued, “The great danger of pensions is that risk comes later when the current lawmakers and advocates are no longer around, so the current leadership has to act as stewards for future beneficiaries, and that is very difficult because the future is not here, but the present is now.”

California lawmakers going big on pro-development bills — not so much on renter protection



BY BEN CHRISTOPHER JUNE 11, 2025

California’s strategy for tackling its housing affordability crisis is having a split screen moment.

On the one hand, state lawmakers have gone big on legislation aimed at boosting housing construction. They've passed bills to [densify wide swaths](#) of urbanized California, to [rewrite the state's signature environmental protection law](#) to exempt most apartment buildings from review and to speed up the building permit process. In the past, such efforts have [fizzled](#) or been too politically radioactive to attempt. Now, fresh off last week's deadline for the state Senate to hand its own bills off to the Assembly and vice versa, 2025 is shaping up to be a banner year for pro-development legislation.

Then there are the bills aimed at providing immediate help to renters.

In short, there aren't that many. Of all the tenant-focused legislation introduced at the beginning of the session, the most ambitious have been shelved for the year.

A bill that would have [reduced allowable rent increases](#) across the state was [quietly extinguished](#) in late April before it received a hearing in the Assembly Judiciary Committee. That's despite the fact that the committee's chair, San Jose Assemblymember Ash Kalra, was the bill's author.

Another bill to [limit the types of fees](#) that a landlord can charge tenants on top of monthly rent was put on ice until at least next year, even though the bill was introduced by San Francisco Assemblymember Matt Haney, chair of the Assembly Housing Committee, its main backer is the state's attorney general, and it was deemed priority legislation by the Legislature's [growing renters' caucus](#).

As legislative leaders [focus on finding solutions to California's affordability problems](#), some solutions are getting a warmer reception than others.

"Fighting for tenants in this building is not popular and it's not easy and it's always going to be an uphill battle," said Sen. Aisha Wahab, a Fremont Democrat, a member of the Renters' Caucus and chair of the Senate Housing Committee.

Wahab has introduced her own share of tenant-minded bills this year. They include:

- [Senate Bill 436](#), which would require landlords to give tenants 14 days to pay any late rent they owe before facing eviction (the current notice period is three days);

- [Senate Bill 681](#), a housing policy grab-bag which includes restrictions on certain rental fees and an expansion of state tax credits for renters;
- [Senate Bill 262](#), which would change the way that the state awards its “[prohousing designation](#)” to cities — a bureaucratic imprimatur that comes with prioritized access to state funds.

So far these bills have survived the Legislative gauntlet, but often significantly watered down. An earlier version of SB 436 would have given tenants up until the day of their physical eviction to make good on the rent they owe and “redeem” their tenancy, addressing situations in which renters scrounge up the money they owe but too late and are [evicted anyway](#). An earlier version of SB 262 would have rewarded cities with credits toward a prohousing designation if they have local caps on rent in place.

In both cases, the bills were amended in the face of fierce opposition from landlords.

Debra Carlton, a lobbyist with the California Apartment Association, the premier trade group representing the state’s rental property owners, said that this year’s crop of tenant-related legislation doesn’t go nearly as far as the construction-related bills, but instead “nibble around the edges.”

Still, she argued, landlords are frustrated at having to constantly push back against legislation written to constrain the way they do business. She noted that in 2019, the association acceded to a [statewide cap on rents](#) — “that was huge for the industry.” Then came Kalra’s effort this year to lower the cap.

“Every time we sit at the table then the following year there’s something else,” she said. “It gets frustrating when we feel we’re negotiating in good faith... It’s like, why do we even negotiate?”

Other bills that would stick landlords with additional regulations: [Senate Bill 52](#), authored by Pasadena Democratic Sen. Sasha Perez, would restrict landlords from consulting certain software to set their rents and [Assembly Bill 246](#) by Culver City Assemblymember Isaac Bryan, a Democrat, would shield tenants from eviction if they are due delayed Social Security payments. The current version of Bryan’s bill is significantly more modest than the [initial proposal](#) introduced back in January: An across-the-board, yearlong rent freeze across Los Angeles County.

Modest appears to be the only kind of renter protection bill that has a chance in the current political climate, said Wahab.

“I want to make sure that the policies cross the finish line and get signed by the governor,” she said. “That is extremely difficult when you are dealing with special interest money, millions of dollars going in to people’s races that are afraid to make the right choice out of fear of losing their seat, millions of dollars being put into campaigns to ensure that they select the person that would vote with them instead of doing the right thing by millions of Californians.”

The apartment association is a major presence both in the Capitol and on the campaign trail. This year alone, the organization has lobbied on at least 25 bills, according to a [tabulation by Digital Democracy](#). In just the first quarter of this year, a committee affiliated with the association has spent nearly \$200,000 on campaign activity. Late last month it produced a [website directed specifically at Wahab](#), which refers to the senator as “the biggest threat to California’s housing progress” and someone who “has sided with NIMBY obstructionists.”

“Every member of the Legislature and anyone who runs for office in the state of California understands the power of the apartment association and the association of Realtors,” said Michelle Pariset, director of legislative affairs with the nonprofit Public Advocates.

But there are other reasons that may explain why tenant bills often have a tough time in Sacramento. Roughly [44% of California homes](#) were occupied by a renter, making tenants a minority. Homeowners are also much [more likely to vote](#) than tenants — and *far* more likely to contribute financially to a campaign, attend a town hall meeting or [otherwise engage with the political system](#). When lawmakers listen to their constituents, homeowners have a much louder voice.

America is Drowning in Laws

How America was buried alive under unconstitutional codes, mandates, and BAR tyranny

By Maureen Steele, June 2, 2025 11:08 am

There was a time in this country when Americans knew the law. It was printed on four pages, handed out with reverence, and taught in every schoolhouse across the land. It was called the Constitution of the United States. It was meant to be the supreme law of the land—clear, concise, and divinely inspired.

But fast forward 250 years, and we are now drowning in a legal swamp so vast and bloated that not even the government knows how many laws we're supposed to follow. That's not liberty. That's bureaucratic tyranny enforced by cowards in black robes and traitors with law degrees.

How many laws exist in America? No one can say for certain—not even Congress. Federal statutory laws, the ones actually passed by our elected representatives, number in the tens of thousands. But that's just the beginning. Federal regulations created by unelected agencies exceed one million individual rules buried across more than 180,000 pages of the Federal Register. The number of executive orders now exceeds 14,000, many of which are enforced like laws. State statutes across all 50 states likely top 500,000. And with over 89,000 local governments issuing their own ordinances, we're looking at tens of millions more “laws,” “codes,” and “mandates.”

That isn't law and order. It's legal suffocation—and the vast majority of it is unconstitutional garbage.

If a rule was created by a federal agency, it is unconstitutional. Congress cannot delegate its legislative power to unelected bureaucrats. The Supreme Court has affirmed this, yet agencies like the EPA, CDC, IRS, and ATF write binding rules and enforce them with armed agents. If a law requires a license to exercise a fundamental right—such as traveling, speaking, working, marrying, or owning property—it is unconstitutional. These rights are natural and God-given. They do not require government permission. If a law bypasses due process—such as the CPS raids, red flag gun laws, vaccine mandates, and civil forfeiture schemes—then it violates the Constitution on its face.

We estimate conservatively that at least 80 to 90 percent of all the laws Americans live under today are unconstitutional. Yet they are enforced every single day by public officials who either don't know the law or don't care. And the reason they

don't know—or pretend not to know—can be traced directly to one organization: the BAR.

The American Bar Association and its state affiliates control who becomes a lawyer, what they are taught, how they are licensed, and how justice is practiced. The BAR doesn't just certify attorneys—it indoctrinates them. It writes the law school curriculum and drills into every student that statutes must be followed and enforced, even if they contradict the Constitution. That's a direct betrayal of our founding principles. The landmark decision in Marbury v. Madison (1803) established that any law “repugnant to the Constitution is null and void.” That means statutes that violate your natural rights are not just wrong—they are legally invalid. But that truth is buried in law schools and courtroom procedure. The BAR has turned lawyers into tools of statutory tyranny. Judges, trained and licensed by BAR-controlled systems, routinely rubber-stamp agency rules, unconstitutional code, and bureaucratic mandates without question. Lawyers who challenge these injustices are disbarred, silenced, or sanctioned. The legal profession, once meant to serve justice, now serves the system. It doesn't defend the Constitution—it defends the status quo.

And the enforcers of this unconstitutional swamp? They are just as guilty. Every time a police officer arrests someone for violating a code that's not rooted in constitutional law, they are committing a felony under 18 U.S. Code § 242—deprivation of rights under color of law. Every code enforcer issuing fines for trivial infractions, every bureaucrat enforcing permit requirements for free speech, every judge signing off on a child kidnapping by CPS without due process—each of them is violating their oath and breaking the law. They are the real criminals. So no, America does not need more laws. We don't need new legislation. We don't need to “modernize” the Constitution or pass another thousand-page omnibus bill. We need one thing: to enforce the Constitution. It already guarantees every right we need—freedom of speech, freedom of religion, the right to bear arms, the right to due process, the right to travel freely, the right to own property, and the right to live without government intrusion into every aspect of our lives.

Every single day, Congress and state legislatures introduce more laws we don't need. Every day, federal agencies push more regulations through bureaucratic backdoors. Every day, BAR-trained attorneys prosecute Americans for violating codes that should never have been written in the first place.

What we need is a legal bonfire. We need to strip rulemaking power from every federal agency, dismantle the BAR cartel, prosecute public officials who enforce unconstitutional laws, restore jury trials to family and civil rights courts, and teach the real Constitution to every American—starting in elementary school. We need

to decentralize the legal system, abolish judicial immunity for bad actors, and fire every judge who refuses to uphold their oath.

We must tear down this house of lies, this temple of false law, and return to the one law that matters: the Constitution of the United States.

It is not a suggestion. It is the law. Everything else is fraud. Every unlawful “law” is a theft of liberty. Every official who enforces such a law is a traitor to their oath. And every citizen who understands this must rise, speak, and act.

We are not subjects. We are sovereign. We are not ruled. We are free—if we remember who we are.

Let the restoration begin.

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