COLAB
San Luis Obispo County
The Coalition of Labor Agriculture and Business

WEEKLY UPDATE
October 6 -13, 2025

Fall Forum Was Great

Thank you to everyone who attended the COLAB Fall Forum on October 2 at the Pioneer Museum in Pasi Robles. COLAB is a 501 C6 organization and part of our mission is to offer educational services. The event was an outreach to present expert opinions on a critical topic that we all struggle to understand.

Our speakers did an excellent job of outlining the challenges facing California energy production and gave a realistic glimpse at what could be in our future as our state leaders struggle with keeping the lights on while at the same time pushing a shift to unreliable, and in many cases, yet unbuilt energy sources.

Author Edward Ring provided a stark description of the costs involved with green energy sources and the unlikely chance that our state could become energy independent with just those sources.

Eric Daniels, Senior External Affairs and Public Policy Representative for PG&E provided many important insights about the process going forward for the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant as well as the many factors that drive costs for consumers. Surprise – regulation and red tape is expensive!

Ben Oakly, Manager of State and Coastal Issues for the Western Petroleum Association shared details that mainstream media ignores regarding the cost and availability of fossil fuels. Again, we were all shocked to learn details of the government's role in driving up prices and scarcity.

Photo by Brooke Borchard

COLAB Board Member Ben Higgens did a masterful job of moderating the panel and threw out a few spicy questions that elicited informative responses.

Many elected officials and pre-elected officials (candidates) attended and had great opportunities to greet old friends while making new ones.   The food, catered from Carla's Kitchen in Morro Bay, was nothing short of excellent. Nobody left hungry! And a fixture at COLAB events, bartender Jim Killion, kept the beverages flowing.

Photo by Brooke Borchard

Again, thanks to those who attended. If you missed it, we hope that you will make our next event which will be announced later in the Fall.

Pioneer Museum – A Hidden Gem

The pioneer museum in Paso Robles is a true local gem. It was an excellent venue for our Fall Forum. Guests enjoyed the many displays of San Luis Obispo County history, ranging from a realistic blacksmith shop to a 1940s doctor's office. They have an outstanding collection of buggies from as far back as the 1800s, along with a great display of antique cars and one of the best collections of antique tractors in the country.

The museum always plays a special role in the community, but October 11 is a very special day for the museum and for the city of Paso Robles. That is Pioneer Day, which features a parade and many active displays at the museum.

Anyone looking for a fun and interesting destination should put the Pioneer Museum on at the top of their list. If you are looking for a great venue, the museum provides a really nice atmosphere and is especially user friendly with fine staff and very reasonable rates. From family gatherings to company get togethers, the Pioneer Museum is a great choice.

Decommissioning Still Underway

The Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant Decommissioning Committee held a public "meeting" on September 24 in the supervisors' chambers in San Luis Obispo. The word meeting is presented in quotes, because it seemed to be more like a recitation of chanting, handwringing '70s anti-nuke hippies than a data driven, scientific approach to assessing the current status and the future of the power plant.

The committee's work is important – especially if our state legislature chooses not to renew the operating permit beyond the existing five-year extension. However, whether their role extends to amplifying the subjective opinions of college professors is debatable.

The meeting featured live video presentations from two speakers. The first was David Erne from the California Energy commission, followed by a professor from Stanford University, Mark Jacobson, who tried to make a case for nuclear being dirty, obsolete and too expensive. Many of the facts that he cited seemed highly suspect.

Erne gave a rosy picture of the future of green renewable energy in California, insinuating that in five years we will have plenty of solar and wind generating capacity and simply won't need Diablo. He was quite optimistic about the future of offshore wind but made no mention of the costs and time involved with such ventures. Nor did he say anything about the resistance from people living in coastal communities who are uncomfortable with offshore wind projects coming to their community. The concerns about safety with battery storage got overlooked as well.

Public speakers mostly expressed concern for the usual "what ifs" – earthquakes, tsunamis and other assorted causes for potential radiation leaks along with worry for nuclear waste. Nobody expressed concern about the potential for an unusually dark cold winter, for the short lifespan of wind-generating equipment, for the impact of green energy generators on wildlife habitats or about the enormous growth in energy needs just beginning from AI companies. Cost apparently was never considered.

Of special note was a letter submitted by Supervisor Ortiz Legg pointing out the critical role Diablo plays not only for much needed reliable, affordable and clean energy for our power grid, but also a a critical component of our San Luis Obispo County economy. She highlighted the jobs (he county's biggest private employer) and the substantial tax contributor to the county and local governments.

Overall, the meeting didn't seem to have a goal or purpose for moving forward. We expect that a Coastal Commission hearing will likely take place before the end of the year and the legislature is expected to take up a platform early next year that could finally produce an indication about the future of this enormously valuable asset.

We hope that the future of Diablo is decided by rational and open-minded policy makers. Your voice can be a big help in pushing the process in that direction. As hearing details are announced, we will provide you with contact information for those serving on the committee conducting the hearing. Please plan to reach out and let policy makers know how important Diablo is to you.

3CE - 41% Success Rate So Far

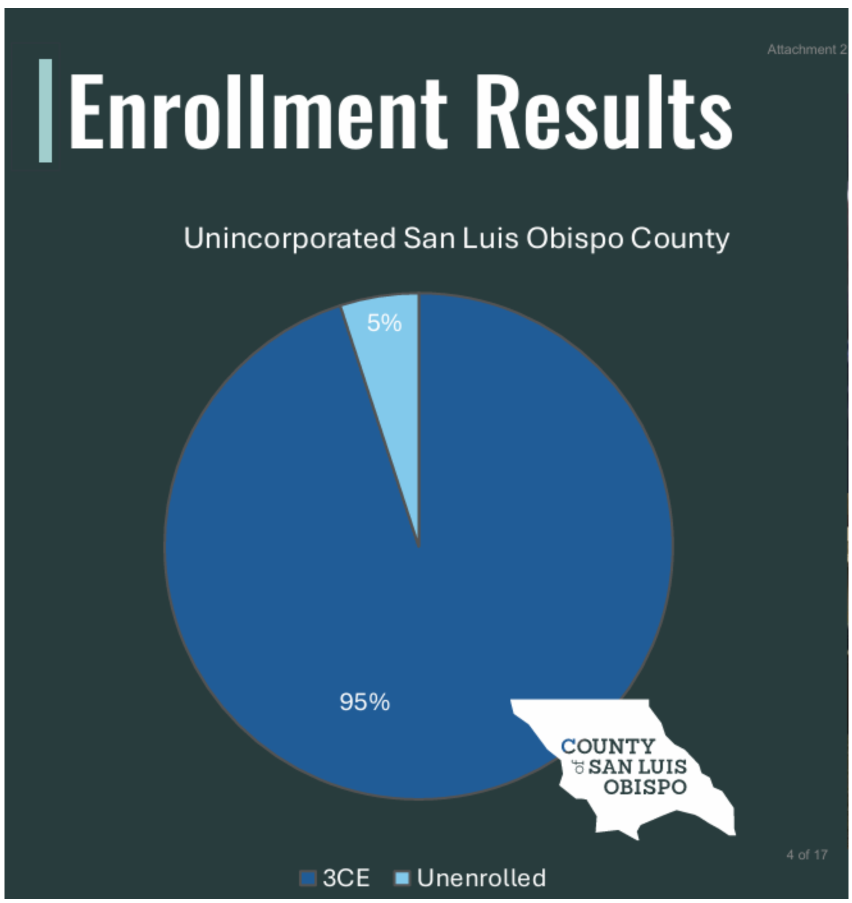
3CE is a lot like car salesmen. They get the power from somewhere else and sell it to you. They don’t actually generate power, nor do they own or operate any power transmission facilities. They like to portray themselves as offering lower cost energy that comes from renewable sources.

3CE presented an update of their performance to the BoS at the September 23 meeting. The report seemed underwhelming.

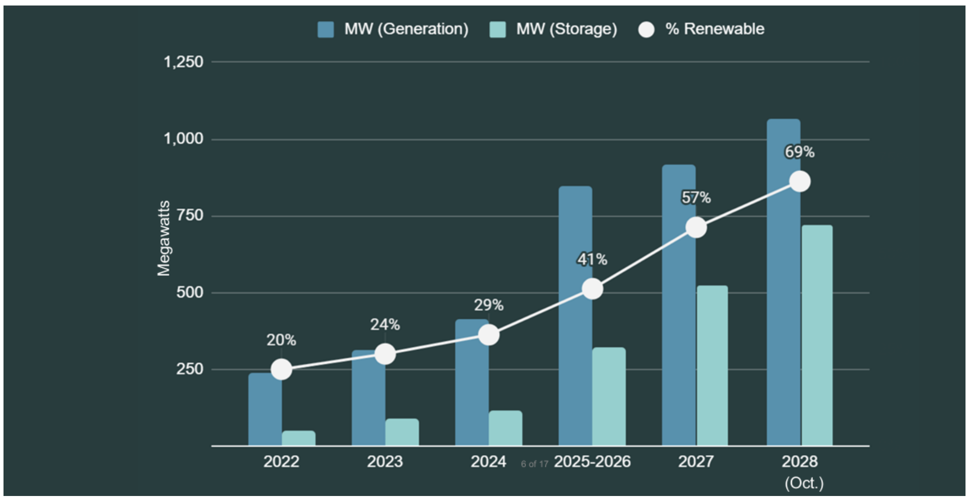
The sales pitch may be appealing to some, but for most it really doesn’t matter. If you weren’t paying close attention, you were signed up automatically. Extra steps were required for many SLO County residents if they did not want to be a customer.

Below is a graph illustrating the number of customers enrolled in their five county territory. Keep in mind, very few customers actually enrolled. They were required to opt out if they didn’t want the service, but that option required reading and understanding the fine print of their automatic “enrollment”.


Together,
Power for Good
3CE NOW SERVES
5 COUNTIES
30 CITIES
1.2M+ CUSTOMERS
94%+ CUSTOMERS ENROLLED
Central Coast Community Energy


Attachment 2
Enrollment Results
Unincorporated San Luis Obispo County
5%
95%
COUNTY of SAN LUIS OBISPO
4 of 17
3CE
Unenrolled

Now, after having made utopian promises of renewable energy for all, we see that currently 3CE is delivering just 41 per cent the electricity it sells as renewable but offers an optimistic prediction of getting to 69% in another two years.



3CE is proud of its 94% enrollment rate despite so few actually signing up. Bur a 41% success rate in delivering what it promises is pretty underwhelming. It must be nice to have a business where your customers are automatically obligated to use your services, and where true performance doesn't seem to matter as mich as the forecasts. We will be watching the reports to see if 3CE delivers on its promises and whether it is a real value to ratepayers, or perhaps just an unnecessary pseudo-governmental agency sending out bills every month.

More Paso Water Basin Worries?

Items three and six of the October 7 BoS agenda present a troubling issue. They are proposals to appoint trustees to North County water districts in lieu of election. It seems that only one candidate has filed for each seat, so instead of conducting an election, the BoS will make the appointments.

It's great that taxpayers don't need to pay for uncontested elections, but it's really sad that more people aren't stepping up to serve. This is especially true when we think about all the headaches and financial turmoil caused by the JPA fiasco.

Sustainability of the Paso Water Basin will be a hot topic for years to come. As we have stated previously, trust in the leadership is key to reaching a reasonable plan that is acceptable to landowners big and small.

Due to be appointed to the Shandon Warer District are: Marshall Miller, COO of the West Bay Company; Ray Shady, Managing Director of Sunny Slope and Steve Sinton, Landowner. Their hometowns are not listed in the appointment,

For the Estrella – El Pomar – Creston Water District, the scheduled appointees are; Hillary Graves, Creston; Lee David Nesbitt, Paso Robles and Eric Pooler, Napa. Their vocations are not listed in the appointment.

We wish these new Directors well, thank them for stepping up and hope that they keep the local interests of the Paso Water Basin as their highest responsibility.

Housing Summit On The Horizon… Again

We understand that another Housing Summit is in the works. We applaud those that are trying to put a spotlight on the challenges that make home building in SLO County so difficult but sheeesh! When will the true obstacles of long delays (very long), expensive fees (very expensive) and subjective inspections be fixed?

When will municipalities choose to address the homebuilding challenges in their communities by becoming user friendly. Fine tuning "housing elements" doesn't help with the daunting work it takes just to get a project shovel ready.

Prop 50 Less Than A Month Away

Please take a little time to stop in to the GOP office in Arroyo Grande or Atascadero and do what you can to help defeat Gavin Newsom's quarter of a billion dollar taxpayer funded political recenge scheme against President trimp.

There are lots of ways to help. The offices are at:

Atascadero
7357 El Camino Real, Atascadero, CA 93422 · 3.0 mi
(805) 541-4010

Arroyo Grande
1312 E Grand Ave, Arroyo Grande, CA 93420-2422
(805) 668-2064

Last Week

An Appealing Common Sense Idea

Typically, county subsidies are directed at low and fixed income people who cannot afford a vital service. When it comes to disagreeing with the granting of a building permit in the coastal zone, however, coastal residents are automatically offered a free ride subsidy to appeal building permit decisions in SLO County regardless of their financial status. Inland neighbors are charged up to $2,000 to file an appeal.

Supervisor Moreno has been attempting to get an explanation for this odd situation for months and finally had a motion heard at the September 23 Board of Supervisors meeting. Moreno called for the three categories of appeal fees, coastal, inland and cannabis, to all be equal. Her initial request in March of this year was as follows":

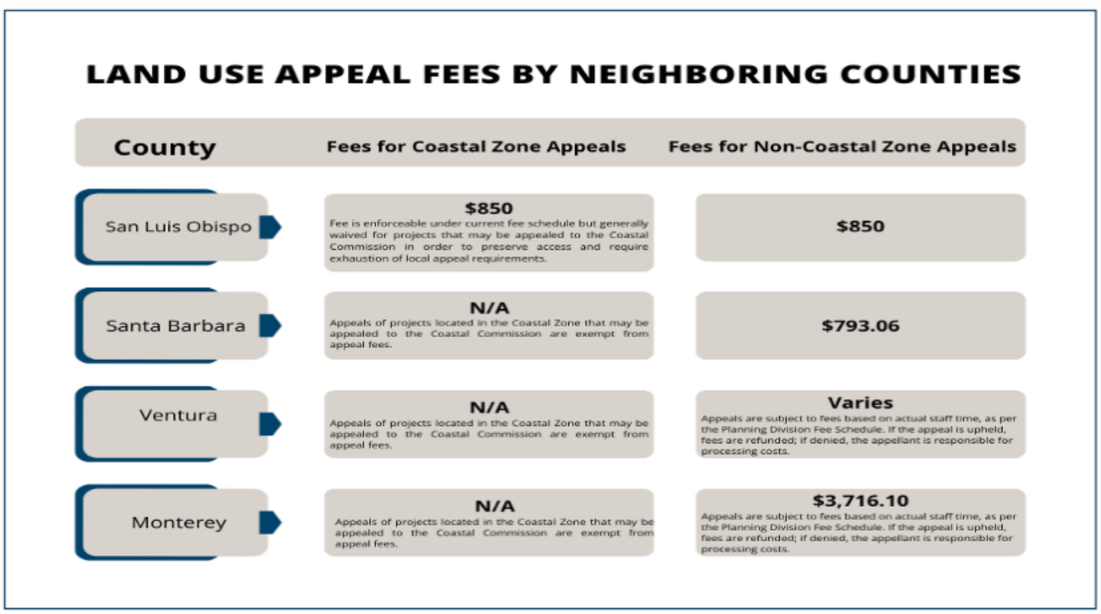
- Research data on projects that are appealed to the CCC;
- Review options to standardize fees across all types of appeals, including coastal, inland, and cannabis projects;
- Explore a cost recovery model that ensures fiscal responsibility

The report came last week, and Moreno followed up with a formal motion to make all appeal fees equal. There was no reason stated as to why cannabis and inland fees were different ($2,000 and $850 respectively) , but the reason that the $850 coastal fees are waived has to do with a Coastal Commission rule that allows appellants the opportunity to take their appeal directly to the Commission if a county charges a fee for an appeal. Theoretically, by waiving the fee, the BoS gets to preserve local control by having their own hearing.

While we are all for local control, there are three important facts that Moreno pointed out; the appeal process costs the county between $8,000 –13,000 in staff time to prepare and present their findings, it takes several months to finalize the appeal hearing and get it on the calander (creating expensive delays for the original applicant) and about 95% of the appeals to the BoS are upheld with almost all of those going to the Coastal Commission anyway.

Moreno's point is that it is costing taxpayers a lot of money to accomplish nothing and its causing permit applicants expensive and unnecessary delays that can take almost a year to finalize. She suggests that we already have local control by hiring and directing quality planning staff and that their competence is reflected in the record of so few appeals upheld.

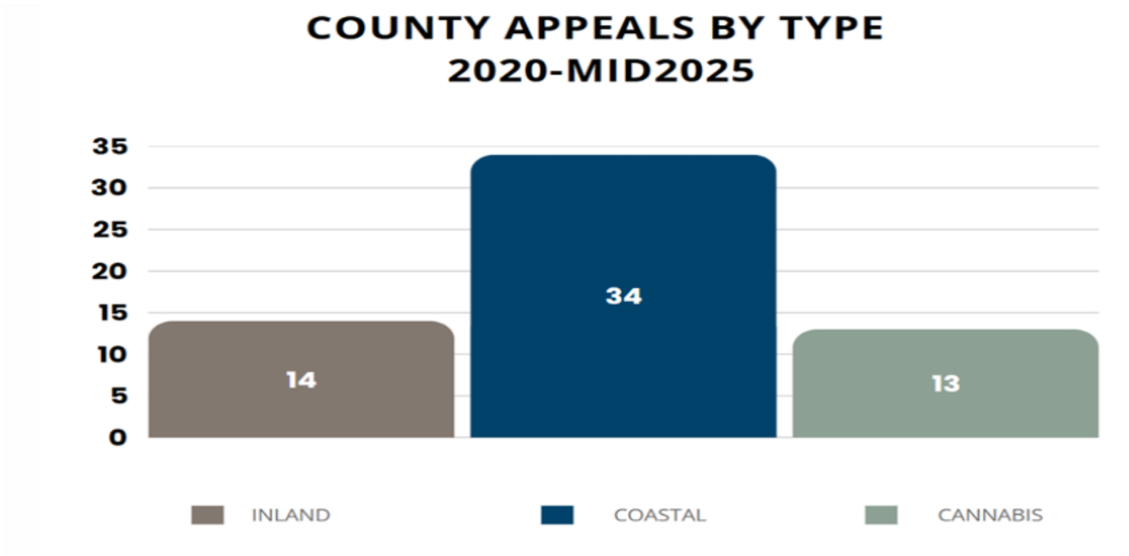
The following graph was prepared by county staff to illustrate our fee structure compared to neighboring counties:



LAND USE APPEAL FEES BY NEIGHBORING COUNTIES

County	Fees for Coastal Zone Appeals	Fees for Non-Coastal Zone Appeals
San Luis Obispo	**$850** Fee is enforceable under current fee schedule but generally waived for projects that may be appealed to the Coastal Commission in order to preserve access and require exhaustion of local appeal requirements.	**$850**
Santa Barbara	**N/A** Appeals of projects located in the Coastal Zone that may be appealed to the Coastal Commission are exempt from appeal fees.	**$793.06**
Ventura	**N/A** Appeals of projects located in the Coastal Zone that may be appealed to the Coastal Commission are exempt from appeal fees.	**Varies** Appeals are subject to fees based on actual staff time, as per the Planning Division Fee Schedule. If the appeal is upheld, fees are refunded; if denied, the appellant is responsible for processing costs.
Monterey	**N/A** Appeals of projects located in the Coastal Zone that may be appealed to the Coastal Commission are exempt from appeal fees.	**$3,716.10** Appeals are subject to fees based on actual staff time, as per the Planning Division Fee Schedule. If the appeal is upheld, fees are refunded; if denied, the appellant is responsible for processing costs.

The following graph illustrates the total number of appeals in SLO County by type over the last five years:



One of the big concerns voiced by each of the Supervisors was the abuse of the appeals system, where some people appeal every building permit in their community – even for interior work or for minor projects like repairing a deck, which results in unreasonable delays and higher costs.

Supervisor Gibson was animated in his opposition to what he described as relinquishing local control. Supervisor Paulding echoed Gibson's comments (as he often does) and Supervisor Ortiz Legg, while agreeing with Moreno's points, ended up siding with Gibson.

In the end, Moreno's proposal that all fees be made equal was passed with a provision that the county would continue to waive fees for coastal appeals. Bravo to Supervisor Mareno. Let's hope that one day common sense will prevail, and true local control on local land use decisions will come about regardless of how far or close a project is to the beach.

County Budget OK, But Revenues Soft

The Fiscal Year 2024-25 Year-End Financial Status Report was presented by county staff and highlighted the major departmental spending and receipts as they align with the current budget.

In the big picture, the county is doing ok staying within its budgetary parameters, but a somewhat troubling trend may be just starting to appear, which is that several departments that rely on revenue are reporting “less than anticipated” levels.

That current revenues are slightly down in a few departments doesn’t automatically mean that we are in financial trouble, but at the same time, the numbers could indicate problems if they become a trend.

The following graph compares the current budget with last year’s at the same stage:

Expense and Revenue Comparison

	FY 2023-24	FY 2024-25
Governmental Funds:		
Expenditures	75%	76%
Revenue	77%	78%
General Fund:		
Expenditures	86%	83%
Revenue	92%	88%

The Sheriff/Coroner office had the biggest shortfall at $2.4 million mostly due to recent salary and benefits negotiations. Planning had fewer building applications resulting in about $250,00 less revenue than expected but was able to reduce some salary and benefit expenditures resulting in a net savings. Likewise, County Fire was able to increase contracted services with CalFire which brought about a nearly $5 million savings.

Here is look at those departments ahead of budget:

Departments with Significant General Fund Savings

General Fund Department	Unspent GFS compared to budget	
Probation	$862,262	5.80%
Information Technology	$890,582	5.40%
Parks and Recreation - Community Parks	$963,769	14.69%
Social Services	$989,281	5.81%
County Counsel	$1,502,711	22.55%
County Fire	$4,868,273	17.35%
Health Agency (137, 160, 166)	$6,183,095	14.82%

An important segment of the budget expenditures is project funding and completion. Done right, these projects can end up saving the county money by replacing assets before maintenance and downtime costs increase beyond practicality. Here is a list of completed projects:

Projects Completed in FY 2024-25

Facilities Projects

- 11 Individual Facilities Maintenance Projects (82% expended)
- 15 Countywide Facilities Maintenance Projects (100% expended)
- 18 Facilities Capital Projects (89% expended)

Airports Projects

- 6 capital projects (77%)

Infrastructure Projects

- 14 Infrastructure Capital Projects (89% expended)
- 1 Infrastructure Roads Major Maintenance Project (100% expended

Parks and Golf Projects

- 2 Parks and Golf Projects

The most significant aspect of this report isn't actually contained within, but rather by extrapolation. This report confirms what we have been saying throughout the budget process: our county economy is esuriently stagnant. Requests for funding are higher than our spending, which is outpacing revenue. This will lead to a very challenging next budget cycle.

Our county went through some very difficult but important reviewing of each department's budget in preparing for the current fiscal year. It was a thorough process that resulted in $38 million in cuts, but we were still almost 9% higher than last year. And a whole bunch of service providers were caught off guard, resulting in pleas for help after the final document was adopted.

New revenue sources for the county tax base have not materialized. We aren't attractive to manufacturing or large-scale distribution businesses because housing costs too much for employees. Several new hotels have popped up, but primarily in incorporated cities. Same for housing. We ran Phillips66 out, along with their 1400 highly paid employees and tax base contributions, and we are faced with rlower tax levels from Diablo Canyon due to its reduced value with only a five-year extension. Watch out if it doesn't get the much needed 20-year extension.

The bottom line is that while the county is doing a pretty good job of trying to keep the budget process in the black, the state is broke, the feds are trillions in debt and are cutting spending - and there are no new golden gooses coming our way for increases in our local tax revenue or other government funding.

It would be wise for any department, agency or service provider dependent upon county funding to find ways to become more efficient sooner rather than later.

Fingers Crossed For A New kind of Funding

As the Supervisors conducted budget hearings earlier this year, one consistent message that was offered from each was that service providers that are dependent on county funding need to find additional financial resources. Nobody knew how much would be cut, but almost everybody knew cuts were coming.

For some organizations, non-governmental funding was an entirely new concept, while others have been working at it for years. In an effort to assist our local nonprofit service provider universe, the Community Foundation of San Luis Obispo County has organized a plan to get funding to those organizations that need it most.

The Foundation has a strong base of philanthropic sources including private donors, trust funds and corporate donors, and has a new Executive Director who has had an excellent record of success in Monterey County for growing that organization.

The Community Foundation's proposal to the County Board of Supervisors is as follows:

Waive the terms of the County Contracting for Services Policy and approve sole source professional services contracts with the Community Foundation, for specialized administrative services to implement the Community Resiliency Grant, in the grant amount of $1,164,000, with payment for services not to exceed $36,000. Assign the Community Foundation selected grant committee to be the review and recommendation body for the one-time Community Resiliency Grant; and authorize the County Administrative Officer or designee to sign any amendments to the agreements that do not increase the level of General Fund Support, provided County Counsel approves said amendment(s) as to form and legal effect.

This is their mission:

Protecting the services our community cannot afford to lose

Across San Luis Obispo County, nonprofits deliver critical services—food, housing, mental health support, childcare, and healthcare—to residents who would otherwise go without. Right now, these essential services are at risk. Many nonprofits are facing significant, unexpected government funding cuts, with some losing nearly half of their budgets. Immediate support is needed to ensure these vital programs continue serving our community.

They are starting strong with a fantastic matching grant program:

Stronger When We Give Together

No donor can fill this gap alone, but together our community can make a real difference. We launched the Together for SLO County Fund initiative to provide rapid, flexible grants to ensure essential services go where they are needed most. **Right now, every gift—large or small—is being doubled through a $500,000 community match.** This is the power of collective giving: neighbors coming together to protect the safety net that keeps our county strong.

The organizations that the Foundation seeks to help are the very same that struggle just to provide basic services, and don’t have enough time or expertise to fundraise as well:

Who Benefits

SLO County residents most in need, such as:

- Families facing food insecurity and childcare needs
- Youth in foster care
- Immigrant and mixed-status families
- People without stable housing
- Neighbors lacking healthcare or mental health support
- LGBTQIA+ community members
- Populations living in poverty

We applaud the Community Foundation for stepping up at this critical time and wish them much success. Anyone interested in learning more can reach them at: Donorservices@cfsloco.org or by calling 805 543-2323

More Housing Elements – Any Solutions?

From a layman's point of view, listening to the proposals brought forth from county staff designed to increase (primarily) affordable housing seems like someone cleaning the windshield on a car that is on fire.

As we reported 6 weeks ago, the county has made numerous building code and regulation adjustments regarding multifamily and low-income dwellings. These adjustments include topics such as density adjustments, lot line regulations and commercial/residential rules.

Now the next step has been adopted, which they call The Housing Element Implementation Action . It seeks to encourage Multi-Family Dwelling Development Action and affirm a Regional Housing Incentive Program. They propose to accomplish this through a supply-side approach because “increased supply improves affordability across all income categories over time”. They also propose a direct an affordable housing approach that better addresses near-term housing affordability. The plan is designed for non-profit builders to leverage local funding to bring in state & federal money into our region.

The plan includes four categories of incentives and takes a creative look at how the fee structure could be used to further incentivize certain housing projects.

Theoretically, these efforts make it easier for lor builders to bring projects into commercial districts through either a commercial portion downstairs and residential upstairs, or in some cases, entirely residential if low-income components are included.

The vision for commercial/residential mixed-use properties:

It is entirely appropriate and good that county staff seek ways to fine tune regulations, and they have put a great deal of work into doing so. This is an an especially complicated process, as state regulations frequently change as well.

That said, what seems to be missing in all of this work is a deep introspective look at the impediments that builders face when working with the county. Fees, paperwork hassles, subjective inspections, and expensive delays are some of the major issues that builders often cite. Then, there is the opportunity cost. The same amount of work could build a nice single-family home that returns more profit.

Housing costs in San Luis Obispo County are creating havoc for employers who can't find low-income help, or even high-income professional employees. Your favorite cafe is barely making it because labor costs are going up faster than they can raise prices. Getting a doctor or other medical appointment is incredibly frustrating. It is challenging for retirees on fixed income or young people just starting out. The 101 going south from SLO on a weekday afternoon is starting to look like Southern California because housing costs are less in Santa Maria.

We appreciate the thoughtful approach to streamlining various elements of our county housing regulations and encourage county planners to continue. At the same time, leadership should be looking for opportunities to go beyond fine tuning.

Just Government Protecting Us

Sometimes (often?) it is truly amazing how complicated government can make things. Recent Board business is an excellent example. The very basic concept is that if the County Department of Emergency Services needs to call on a transit authority to help transport people during a crisis, formal approval from the Board of Supervisors and a six-page contract needs to be in place first.

Item seven on the last BoS agenda reads as follows:

“Request to authorize the Director of the Office of Emergency Services to sign a no end date Memorandum of Understanding with the San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority on an actual cost basis to provide transportation assistance to the public affected by disaster when there is an immediate threat to life and such services are requested by the County Office of Emergency Services”.

Let's all hope they get that Memo of Understanding signed and filed before our next disaster because apparently without it, even an immediate threat to life wouldn’t be enough to get a ride on a transit vehicle!

Prop 50 Fight Needs You

The fight against Proposition 50, the political dirty trick redistricting plan put forth by Gavin Newsom to interfere with Congress, is progressing. Please engage.

This abuse of power is being portreid by proponents as an emergancy to save our democracy, yet it tramples all over our democracy, ignores our constitution and rejects the work of our California Redristricting Commission.

Signs and volunteer opportunities can be found at the two Republican Headquarters locally:

Atascadero

7357 El Camino Real, Atascadero, CA 93422 · 3.0 mi

(805) 541-4010

Arroyo Grande

1312 E Grand Ave, Arroyo Grande, CA 93420-2422

(805) 668-2064

Emerge nt Trends
Page 23

Gov. Newsom Vetoes Recovery Housing for Drug Addicts to Preserve 'Housing First' Grift

The campaign over Gavin Newsom's maps is one of California's most expensive ever

COLAB In Depth
Page 30

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Gov. Newsom Vetoes Recovery Housing for Drug Addicts to Preserve 'Housing First' Grift

The bill passed the Senate with an overwhelming bipartisan 39-0 vote, and the Assembly 79-0

By Katy Grimes, October 3, 2025 1

Assemblyman Matt Haney's (D-San Francisco) legislation create more drug-free housing options for people recovering from drug addiction passed both houses of the Legislature. The bill passed the Senate with an overwhelming bipartisan 39-0 vote, and the Assembly 79-0.

However, California Governor Gavin Newsom just vetoed the bill claiming that "current law already permits local jurisdictions to receive funding within the Housing First framework." Newsom also claimed Haney's bill would have been a "duplicative and costly new statutory category." The failed "Housing First" program does not prioritize "recovery housing," or sober living programs, which is the only way homeless drug addicts will ever recover.

Houman David Hemmati, MD, PhD
@houmanhemmati

Subscribe

🚨All Americans today should be disgusted by @GavinNewsom

Had the opportunity to sign a bill making Recovery Housing that gives recovery & independence to homeless drug addicts into law. His own DEMOCRAT colleagues passed it.

Instead he vetoed it to preserve “Housing First,” a scam that benefits developers by building million dollar taxpayer funded condos for homeless and hands them to those individuals to life. Without conditions.

The Housing First scam is worst than the High Speed Rail scam because it’s wasted tens of billions of our dollars but has also systematically KILLED people who need our help, all in the interest of stealing many many billions of our dollars.

Don’t believe me? Read below.

Newsom: time to resign.

Houman David Hemmati, MD, PhD posted his disgust to X with Gov. Newsom: "The Housing First scam is worst than the High Speed Rail scam because it's wasted tens of billions of our dollars but has also systematically KILLED people who need our help, all in the interest of stealing many many billions of our dollars."

Assembly Bill 255 would have allowed local governments to use up to 10% of state homelessness housing funds to support sober living programs—an option that's currently off-limits under California law, Haney said in a September press statement.

"Housing first" advocates continue to insist the hundreds of thousands of drug addicts living on California streets, parks, beaches, rivers and golf courses would not be there if they could afford housing, even calling the mentally-ill, drug-addicted homeless the "unhoused."

"The bill takes aim at a major flaw in the state's "Housing First" policy, which was adopted in 2016 to lower barriers to housing," Haney said. "That model prohibits programs receiving state funds from requiring sobriety—even for people who want to live in a clean and sober environment."

"With fentanyl and other deadly drugs taking lives every day, we can't ignore the needs of people who are ready to get clean and stay clean," said Haney. "We should be supporting recovery, not standing in the way of it."

"Housing First" hasn't worked at all for the homeless drug addicts, but has worked beautifully for developers and contractors chosen to remodel and renovate motels and hotels, build low-income apartments and tiny homes – all of which are destroyed by the drug addicts who aren't required to participate in a recovery program. Only triage and treatment will lead to recovery.

The city of Los Angeles spends nearly $1 million per homeless drug addict via NGO/Non-profit that they try to get off the streets. But the incentives are perverse – they want to serve more homeless people to increase their business, so they never implement actual programs that would lead to recovery for the addict.

This is their business model. Governor Newsom knows this. As we have all witnessed in California, the more money spent on "homelessness" the more drug-addicted homeless vagrants we attract. The more we complain about the homeless drug addicts living in our neighborhoods, the more money is spent on it.

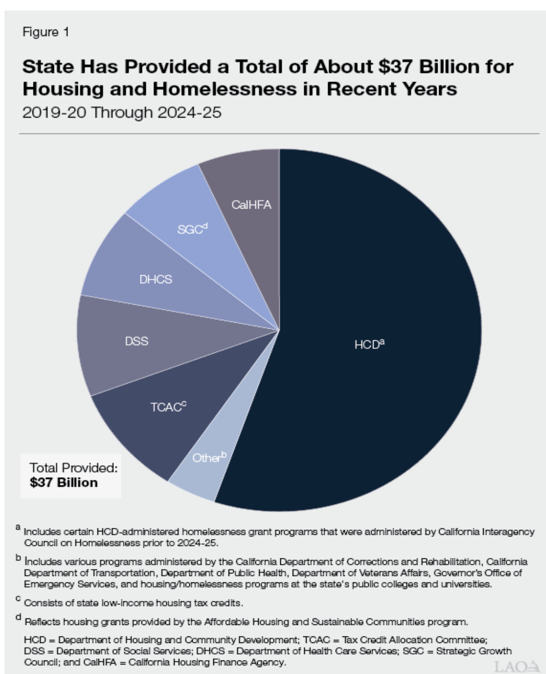
If Newsom actually adopted a recovery model for homelessness, the spigot of funding would diminish.

“Turning a blind eye to their conditions by instead placing them in a home without support to address their underlying needs is the antithesis of compassion,” said Michele Steeb, Senior Fellow Texas Public Policy Foundation (TPPF) who oversees TPPF’s initiative to transform United States’ and Texas’ homelessness policy. That was in 2021 when Rep. Andy Barr (R-KY) introduced legislation to reform the failed Housing First policy, which Steeb supported.

The “Housing First” plan, was first implemented in 2013 by the Obama administration as a one-size-fits-all solution to homelessness, but there never was evidence it would work. They promised it would end homelessness in a decade, Michelle Steeb and Rep. Roger Williams wrote at The Hill in 2021. “Under the Housing First rule, homelessness rose by 16 percent.”

And it is worse today, with California home to the bulk of the country’s homeless drug addicts.

Gov. Newsom has spent $37 billion on homelessness since 2019, according to the California Legislative Analyst’s Office.



The LAO report reveals significant issues with tracking spending, evaluating program effectiveness, and says that most of the money has gone to housing first:

"The state has provided about $37 billion in funding for housing- and homelessness-related programs. The majority of this funding—which includes the state General Fund, special funds, voter-approved bonds, and certain federal funds—has been allocated to the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) and Cal ICH. Broadly, state funds have been designated to support the creation of affordable housing and to provide services to people at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness."

Mental Health America of California supported Haney's AB 255, and explained why in a support letter to Assemblyman Haney:
For individuals in recovery who secure permanent supportive housing, many prefer the option of living in a drug and alcohol-free environment. Under the current Housing First model, state-funded housing programs cannot deny housing solely based on drug or alcohol use unless other violations occur. This bill would authorize up to 25% of a county's total permanent supportive housing inventory to offer a drug- and alcohol-free environment for those who voluntarily choose it. If participation in a supportive recovery residence remains a voluntary choice and is not the individual's only available housing option, this bill would align with the Housing First model and supports MHAC mission to increase access to essential supports and services.

By respecting an individual's right to self-determination in choosing the housing environment that best supports their recovery journey, this bill promotes a person-centered approach to care.

Be sure to thank Governor Newsom for once again propping up the grift, rather than supporting a solution.

California's Obsession With Density Limits Housing Growth

By Edward Ring, California Policy Center July 26, 2025

California Gov. Gavin Newsom recently signed a "landmark package of bills" to overhaul the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). He took the unusual step of holding up the budget until the Legislature passed them. For the blissfully uninitiated, CEQA, signed in 1970 by Gov. Ronald Reagan, is California's gift to litigators, bureaucrats and every special interest that ever wanted to stop development projects in their tracks.

Morphing from a once-reasonable requirement that building permit applicants report on the "significant environmental impact" of their construction project and how they intend to mitigate that impact, CEQA is now a process-heavy, bureaucratic beast that delays projects for years and costs developers millions. Of all the ways California's Legislature and state agencies are trying to elevate prices for everything in the state, CEQA is the worst.

But the new laws and other CEQA-related bills California's enlightened legislators are expeditiously moving towards passage are not addressing CEQA's fundamental flaws. They aren't restricting the right to litigate under CEQA to district attorneys, which would stop opportunistic lawsuits by extortionate third parties, or requiring the loser to pay legal fees in frivolous lawsuits. Nor are they limiting, across the board, the time periods allowed for permit processing and appeals (although one measure is attempting to impose some deadlines). These steps would rectify CEQA for everyone, but everyone is not a concern.

Instead, California's Legislature is exempting favored projects from the excesses of CEQA, specifically those having to do with "water, transportation, clean energy and housing." While we may hope that "water" might at least include finally building the badly needed Sites Reservoir, "transportation" means throwing more money at light-rail projects, "clean" energy means more utility scale solar, wind and battery farms, and "housing," of course, means more high-density infill.

Just how dense the Legislature will require housing to get in order to be exempt from CEQA provisions is found in the State Government Code Title 7, Division 1, Chapter 3, Article 10.6 "Housing Elements," where the "lowest" permissible density is 10 units per acre. That would only be allowable, however, in an "unincorporated area of a nonmetropolitan county." If the area is incorporated, it's 15 units per acre. If the site is in a "suburban jurisdiction," 20 units per acre, and if that suburban jurisdiction is in a "metropolitan county," 30 units per acre.

This is the vision of the YIMBY (Yes In My Backyard) movement, supported by land developers who feed on subsidies and tax incentives, large-scale developers who have in-house bureaucracies primed to navigate the Byzantium otherwise known as the California Code. And this is the promise of "infill," that moral imperative that deems any development outside of existing urban boundaries to be a crime against the planet. But why?

As the Free Cities Center has often argued, these exemptions are a step forward. Any sort of CEQA reform is progress. We're glad the governor used his political capital to force through broader exemptions. But the state will not solve its housing problems until lawmakers focus on reforming the law broadly—and not just for their favored high-density projects. A report by YIMBY Law has found that these targeted exemptions haven't produced much housing.

If greenhouse gas caused by long commutes is the concern, how does that take into account the fact that people increasingly work from home, or that automotive technology is allegedly—at least according to the California Legislature—becoming Earth friendly? How does that account for the reality that in every high-density urban area, automotive congestion increases air pollution, and the higher the density, the bigger the problem?

More to the point is the sheer absurdity of claiming California even has sprawling suburbs. The megacities of Los Angeles/San Diego and the San Francisco Bay Area are "sprawling" merely because that's where everybody lives. California's population grew relatively late compared to the rest of the nation, and most newcomers settled down in a few spots.

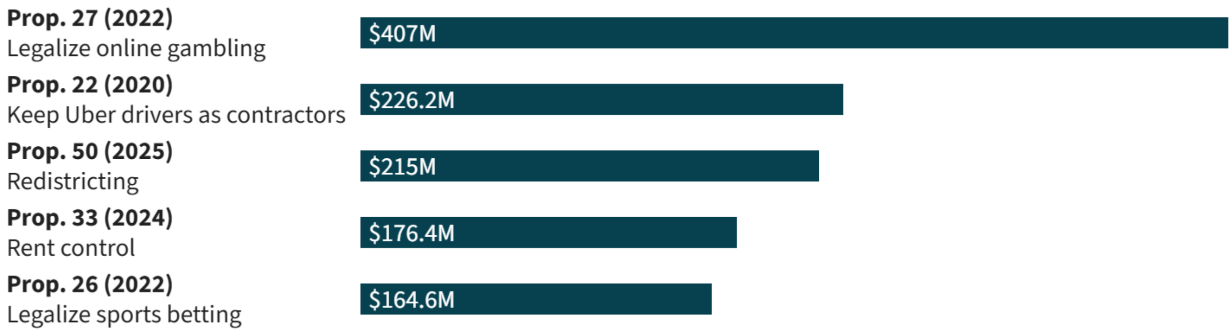
The campaign over Gavin Newsom's maps is one of California's most expensive ever

BY JEREMIA KIMELMANOCTOBER 3, 2025

With five weeks until election day, the fight over changing congressional districts in California to favor Democrats has already become one of the most expensive ballot measures in recent state history.

The official campaigns supporting and opposing Gov. Gavin Newsom's Proposition 50 reported raising more than $215 million as of Oct. 2, with more than $100 million raised in September alone – the third most of any proposition for at least the past decade. Campaigns only spent more money on Prop. 22 in 2020, which upheld the independent contractor status of Lyft and Uber drivers, and Prop. 27 in 2022, which would have legalized online gambling..

Prop. 50 is already the third most-expensive ballot measure in California history



Prop. 50 funding last updated Oct. 2, 2025.

Chart: Jeremia Kimelman, CalMatters • Source: California Secretary of State • Embed

The campaign to support Prop. 50, led by Newsom, raised more than $138 million with $49 million, or about 40% of the total, coming from donors who gave less than $100. Most of those contributions were reported by the House Majority PAC. Five major donors collectively contributed a little more than $25 million. They were:

- **$10 million:** House Majority PAC, a SuperPAC focused on electing Democrats to Congress;
- **$10 million:** George Soros' Fund for Policy Reform, which focuses on drug policy and electoral reform, according to IRS filings;
- **$6.9 million**: MoveOn.org, a liberal grassroots organization;
- **$3 million:** The California Teachers Association, a powerful union with close ties to Democrats;
- **$3 million:** The National Education Association, the largest teachers union in the country that gives overwhelmingly to Democrats.

Newsom also transferred $2.6 million from his 2022 gubernatorial campaign. More than 68,000 unique contributors gave money to the "Yes" campaign, according to a CalMatters analysis of data from the California Secretary of State.

The groups opposing the redistricting measure are relying on two major donors who gave more than 90% of the $77 million raised for their campaign. They have a smaller share of small donors, raising $8,300 from people who gave less than $100. Below are the top five donors:

- **$42 million:** The Congressional Leadership Fund, a Super PAC controlled by Republican leadership in Congress;
- **$33 million:** Charles Munger Jr., who contributed to the original ballot measure that created the independent redistricting commission;
- **$1 million:** Kevin McCarthy, former Republican Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, who transferred the money from his campaign account, far less the $100 million he said he would raise a few weeks ago;
- **$1 million:** Thomas Siebel, a Bay Area billionaire businessman who is related to First Partner of California Jennifer Siebel Newsom;
- **$50,000:** Republican donor Susan Groff.

Other groups unaffiliated with the campaigns are spending money, too. At least fifteen organizations spent more than $540,000 in support through ad buys and outreach, while at least seven groups spent more than $570,000 in opposition.

Newsom proposed the ballot measure after the Trump administration pressured the state of Texas to gerrymander its congressional districts in a way that would flip five Democratic seats to Republican in the upcoming 2026 midterm election.

Newsom needs voter approval because Californians created an Independent Redistricting Commission through a 2008 ballot measure. Prop. 50 would suspend the maps drawn by that independent commission until 2030.

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