



WEEKLY UPDATE

September 9- 22, 2025

After a three week gap, the San Luis County Board of Supervisors will meet on September 9 with a reasonably full agenda. Prop 50 is sneaking along with very little awareness from voters. Please engage.

The Weekly Update will be on a two-week hiatus and will return on Sept 22.

Cannibis Conundrum

It doesn't much matter which side of the isle you are on, cannabis has become a no-win issue. The Board of Supervisors is slated to take up a proposal to outsourcing some of the Sheriff Department cannabis compliance duties on Tuesday.

The debate about legalizing pot centered around two major themes. The first was that "its only weed" which was claimed to be harmless (allegedly sometimes even healthy) and legalizing it would eliminate the troubling and tawdry aspects of the illegal business. The second was that taxing pot would provide tremendous revenues to government.

Well, the illegal side of the pot business seems to be thriving. Legal growers and suppliers are quick to complain that the illegal trade is almost impossible competition. They say the taxes and compliance restrictions, combined with the complications of marketing, drives customers to the illegal side of the business where product might be stronger, cheaper and/or easier to obtain. This is especially true for minors wanting to get stoned like their adult friends.

The revenue side doesn't seem to have ever worked out either. Those who follow the issue closely suggest that revenues to SLO County from the legal side of the

industry just about cover the cost of compliance and enforcement. The Board of Supervisors has twice opted to forgo the otherwise automatic tax increase that is supposed to kick in every two years. This in an effort to give the legal operators a break.

Pot is one of those issues where most people have an opinion, but nobody has a workable solution. If the legal side of the business falters, the illegal side will flourish. Too many taxes and regulations are hurting, and more would probably put most out of business. On the other hand, taxpayers should never be put in a position of subsidizing the recreational pot industry.

Below are the suggestions put forth by the sheriff department for reducing the cost of cannabis enforcement.

Cannabis Compliance Team Staffing Changes

- Net reduction of 4.00 FTE for Fiscal Year 2025-26
 - Deletion of 1.00 FTE Sergeant
 - Deletion of 2.00 FTE Sheriff's Deputy Sheriff
 - Deletion of 1.00 FTE Program Manager I/II
 - Deletion of 1.00 FTE Administrative Services Officer I/II
 - + Addition of 1.00 FTE Administrative Services Manager

Additional Considerations

- The Sheriff's Office will use a third-party vendor to conduct background checks, resulting in significant reductions to cannabis business application fees.
- Quarterly compliance monitoring inspections will no longer involve Sheriff's Deputies, resulting in reductions to annual cannabis business fees.
- Fees for minor violations and major violations have been revised to account only for the necessary administrative processes. Full cost recovery will be achieved through real time billing when the costs of a violation exceed the fee amounts.

This is essentially privatizing the regulatory enforcement which, on a purely economic model, makes sense. Private firms generally are better at finding efficiencies and operating on leaner and more cost-effective methods.

However, in this case, some of SLO County's recent scandals come to mind. The Bobby Dayspring bribery scheme and subsequent conviction and federal prison sentence doesn't need to be rehashed in detail. But, neither should it be overlooked.

What needs to be considered is whatever safeguards are built into this newly proposed system to ensure we never have a repeat of the Dayspring incident.

Given Sheriff Parkinson's highly professional approach to law enforcement, one would expect that safeguards have been built into his plan. We hope that the Board of Supervisors explore this question thoroughly.

For better or worse, pot is legal, and it needs to be regulated. Figuring ways to do that without helping the illegal side is confounding. This is one of those issues that most policy makers wish would just go away for a while.

Audit Going Deeper

As reported here recently, SLO County has hired the firm of KPMG to audit several departments of the county government. The first audit was of the San Luis Obispo County Health Department. That audit was completed and reported a couple of months ago, with numerous technical findings and recommendations. Thankfully, no serious breeches were uncovered.

However, it seems that there were sufficient follow up questions to do a contract extension of that audit. On Tuesday, the BoS will consider a recommendation to: **“approve Amendment No.1 to the contract with KPMG LLP, for the Health Agency to expand the scope of services, extend term of agreement, and increase the total compensation in the amount of \$315,000, allowing KPMG consultants to implement selected recommendations as outlined in the recommendation from their organizational review of the Health Agency; and approve a corresponding budget adjustment in the amount of \$315,000 from General Fund Talent Development”.**

We are very supportive of the audit process going on. Two additional departments will be audited beginning this fall, and that is all good news. We hope that this additional audit of the Health Department is a wise expenditure that will result in more cost effective department operations,

An Energetic Clarification

Last week we announced the exciting COLAB Fall Forum that is taking place on October 2 from 5:30 to 7:30. The subject matter is Energy Production in California, featuring a panel of three great experts. It's free to attend and will be a great opportunity to mix and mingle with community activists, elected officials and candidates.

A slight mischaracterization was made in that announcement describing the venue location. The event will take place as reported at the Pioneer Museum in Paso Robles. It's a great venue filled with lots of fascinating local history. However, it was previously reported that the Pioneer Museum is on the Fairgrounds/Event Center location, when in fact, it is adjacent to that location.

You won't want to miss this event, and we don't want to send you wandering around the wrong spot, so please take a look at the flyer attached to this newsletter and make note of the address: 2010 Riverside Ave. in Paso Robles ADJACENT to the south end of the Fairgrounds. We would appreciate your RSVP before Sept. 25. Please respond at colabslo@gmail.com or by calling (805) 548-0340



RSVP ASAP to attend this informative Fall Forum at the Pioneer Museum.



The Pioneer Museum is a local gem. We look forward to seeing you there on October 2.

Prop 50 - Newsom Flips The Bird

Proposition 50, Gavin Newsom's temper tantrum that flips the bird at California voters, the California constitution, hundreds of social service provider programs

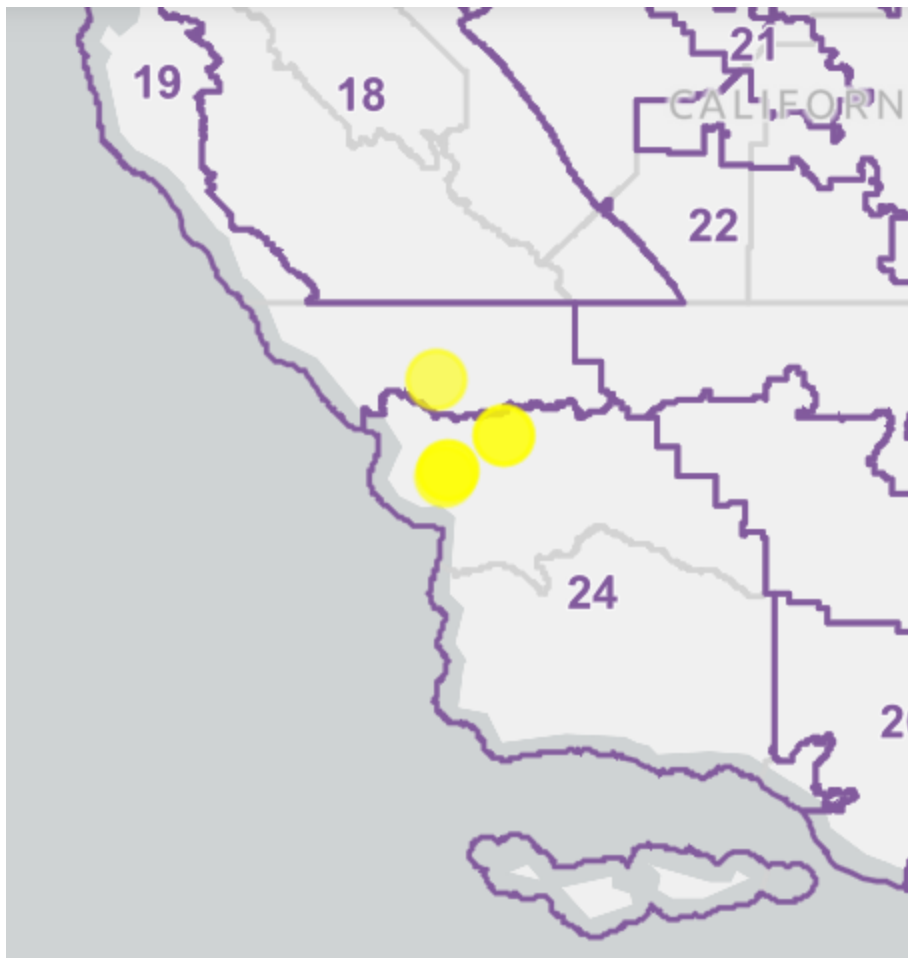
who have experienced budget cuts and the California Redistricting Commission, is proceeding to the Nov 4 statewide ballot.

Newsom freely admits that the proposed new congressional districts are gerrymandered specifically to maximize the number of democrats holding California congressional seats.

Newsom's rotten abuse of power is out of control. He is spending up to a quarter of a billion dollars (from a state budget that is already beyond broke) weaponize our election system because he believes Texas is abusing their election system by doing the same thing. In other words, he thinks Texas is unfairly reapportioning their congressional districts, so he is going to also unfairly reapportion our California districts.

This childish approach will have huge repro cautions for years to come. It sets a terrible precedence that could wipe out years of election reforms. It allows the politicians to draw their own tailor-made districts. It ignores the mandated one person- one vote principle that is supposed to require every district have equal population, and it is an enormous waste of money we simply do not have.

The direct impact to SLO County districts is minimal. Below is an illustration of the proposed new maps in our area:



The yellow dots are the city of San Luis Obispo.

Presumably, District 19 would remain with Congressman Jimmy Panetta, while District 24 would continue to be represented by Congressman Salud Carbajal.

A (somewhat) detailed map of all the proposed districts throughout the state can be found at:

https://ballotpedia.org/California_Proposition_50,_Use_of_Legislative_Congressional_Redistricting_Map_Amendme

As we have stated previously, this will be a campaign of awareness. Newsom's disciples, sycophants and fellow accomplices in this scheme hope that most voters see this as a technical adjustment that will "even the playing field" in congress. The power abusers hope that most voters ignore, or never learn of, the terrible and unfair aspects of the measure.

Those more respectful of our election system need to get the word out about how wrong this measure is – not just for the Republican voters who are getting robbed of representation, but even the most liberal voter should be outraged that the system is being manipulated with no regard for election integrity.

If this outrageous abuse of power works this year, what is to prevent it from happening any time some Governor decides they want to exert their imperial power and redo the districts again – perhaps to help out a buddy who wants a congressional seat or to upset some federal policy going through congress.

The No on 50 campaign has a website:

[No on Prop 50 – Defend Fair Elections](#)

The No campaign is being led by Former Speaker Kevin McCarthy and Former Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. Yard sign and literature are available at both Republican headquarters:

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](#)

The most important thing that voters can do is engage with the campaign to get the word out. Volunteering, writing a check and putting up yard signs are all critical steps,

Don't forget, this awful abuse of power is being done to "save our democracy" and is being run under the banner of "Courage California". It would be funny if it wasn't so real. The side with the most motivation wins.

November 4 is nine weeks away!!!!

Last Week

An odd gap in scheduling has meant that the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors will not meet again until September 9. That doesn't mean there aren't important issues worth your attention, and they are fast approaching. Please give serious thought to the two outlined here. They will absolutely impact the future of our nation, our state and our county.

Stinky Election in Eight Weeks



An enormously important issue is before California voters and will be decided in just over two months, yet it is unlikely that you will read or hear much about it, or at least any significant details about it, from the mainstream media.

Proposition 50, called "Courage California" by its proponents will be on a statewide ballot on November 4 of this year calling for a pure politically designed reapportionment (Gerrymandering) of our state. It has significant constitutional

issues, breeches uncountable numbers of political and moral ethics and will dramatically shortchange hundreds of thousands of California's voters in what is essentially a highly political rotten tomato toss at President Trump and the State of Texas from our Governor Newsom.

So why is there such a shortage of reporting on an issue so big? First, as most of us know, the mainstream media might possibly be biased and would be happy to see California cause any possible trouble for Congress or the President. Mainstream media knows that the less people are aware of it, the more likely it is to pass. Another key factor though is that redistricting is a buzz kill for the media. Reapportionment is guaranteed to drown click bait potential.

Another reason we won't see much coverage is that even the most partisan democrats will be hard pressed to make a reasonable case for supporting Prop 50. We will see plenty of Kamala Harris style word salad explanations, but reporters know that's not a good look.

Redistricting is technical and complex. It's not appealing as a subject because even if one does a deep dive understanding it, almost nobody else cares and all that knowledge turns out to be useless. Everybody expects the party in power to manipulate new district boundaries to enhance their power base, and most people resent being expected to be fooled by the rhetoric,

Newsom is ignoring our state constitution which calls for redistricting to be done at the end of each decade. He is ignoring the mandate to create districts with equal numbers of residents. He is rejecting the work of the "independent redistricting commission".

Newsom likes to make a big deal about how Prop 50 "reaffirms" the independent redistricting commission – whose work he is ignoring and negating. The commission would otherwise be just fine with the 2030 reapportionment regardless of this sanctimonious affirmation.

He is leaving Republican voters in California with only 9% representation in congress from our state, despite being nearly 40% of the voting population of California.

It doesn't take courage to throw a political tantrum, ignore election rules, disregard voters and twist the situation around to esuriently weaponize our election system. All of this in the name of fairness and "saving democracy".

The Prop 50 campaign will be a deeply partisan effort. It will be all about turnout. Democrats will be told that this is a way to hit Donald Trump where it hurts.

Whichever party is more motivated to vote will come out on top. Mainstream media knows that any coverage of this issue will infuriate conservative voters, thus motivating them to get their ballots in. Even common sense moderates and liberals should be outraged that the Governor is manipulating our election process just to spite our President.

One of the big mysteries surrounding Prop 50 is the funding. Cost estimates run from \$215 -230,000,000 to taxpayers. This from a state facing huge cuts because of shortfalls. This from a state that struggled for months to pass a budget that almost all admit is balanced in name only – and by the way, there was no couple of hundred million dollar slush fund set aside for this endeavor. So where does this quarter of a billion dollars come from, and what gets cut in its place?

Even for those who believe that President Trump and Texas Governor Abbot are overreaching, it is impossible to rationalize this overtly political measure. Politicians should never be able to influence the reapportionment of their districts, yet several in the state legislature have used Prop 50 as an opportunity to create a custom-made congressional district for themselves.

We are fortunate to have a few local radio shows and Cal Coast News to provide substantial facts. Not so much from “mainstream” media outlets. If only more people paid attention....

Next week we will provide details about the local impact of Prop 50 (should it pass) and suggestions should you be interested in getting involved.

Tax Measures in Ten Months

Two other ballot measures are in the works that you should be aware of. They are SLO countywide sales tax measures that are being considered for the June 2, 2025 primary election ballot – ten months away. Language for these measures is not yet final, but the overall concept and basic priorities are pretty well established. The biggest question is whether the voters have an appetite for additional taxes and under what conditions?

The two measures being contemplated are each half cent sales taxes, one for public safety and the other for transportation.

The very legitimate reason for the taxes is that our county economy is stagnant, and revenues are not keeping up with spending. The legitimacy of the spending priorities of each tax remains to be seen.

For public safety, one automatically assumes police and fire. One of our greatest needs in SLO County is more fire stations in rural areas, along with additional firefighters. Possibly a wise investment. However, public safety could also mean homeless services, mental health facilities, improved sidewalks and bike paths and a wide range of other good, pretty good or even questionable priorities,

Transportation brings to mind improved ways to get where you need to be. That usually includes improved roads, but could also mean bus or train service improvements. Some, however, might want to include subsidized housing developments near transit hubs, bike paths or even pedestrian paths.

So, understanding the spending priorities is important. Another critical factor is whether the new sale tax revenue would be allowed to supplant or divert other spending already in place. As an example, if new sales tax revenue was going to raise \$40 million for a new overpass, does that allow county transportation planners to divert up to the same amount that was already committed to that overpass project and instead spend it somewhere else – thus diluting the impact of the tax.

A half cent doesn't sound like much. If you are buying a pair of sox for \$6.00, you are kicking in an extra three cents. But a \$2,000 refrigerator or a \$40,000 new car will cost a significant amount extra. The question is whether you get a sufficient return on such an investment to make you willing to support the tax?

Going off the politically correct rails for a moment, lets consider one of the most important questions in all of public policy; who wins and who loses? In this case do the consumers who put in the most sales tax revenue get the most benefit, or are their tax contributions getting spread off to other priorities that are of service only to people with other needs or priorities? A bit philosophical, but a good way to determine whether a proposed sale tax is something you can support.

San Luis Obispo County is on financial thin ice. Our spending trajectory is still climbing while our revenue trajectory is meekly struggling and showing signs that it won't keep up in future years. Competition for funding is growing among our many county services. The best way to avoid any new taxes would be to foster new manufacturing and hospitality businesses that would contribute to the economy and tax base. But our housing prices make those kinds of investments unattractive for potential investors who would otherwise love to bring their business here.

For anyone who is concerned and wanting to get involved, let the Board of Supervisors know what your priorities are in the two categories. The language is not yet final, and the biggest priority to the proponents is crafting a measure that

voters will support. Yes, there will be pet projects included as there always are. But with enough feedback, they might inject a little common sense.

Contact information for Supervisors can be found on the roster in the back pages of this publication. Letters, emails and testimony during public comment at board meetings are all effective ways to get your opinions heard. Don't hesitate to bring these issues to the attention of your friends and neighbors as well. The stronger the feedback, the more common sense and accountability we will see in these ballot measures.

Powerful Fall Forum in Four Weeks

The annual COLAB Fall Forum is scheduled to take place on Thursday, October 2, 5:30 – 7:30 at the Pioneer Museum at the Fairgrounds/Event Center in Paso Robles and you are invited.

The topic will be Energy Production in California and will feature a panel of three experts representing different critical aspects of the issue.

Covering an overview of the challenges and policies is Edward Ring, Director of Water and Energy Policy, California Policy Center - a recognized author whose work is often found in the editorial pages in this newsletter.

Covering the electric grid and the opportunities associated is Eric Danials, Senior External & Public Policy Representative for PG&E.

Rounding out the panel will be Ben Oakly, Senior Manager of State and Coastal Issues from the Western States Petroleum Association.

Our Moderator will be Ben Higgins, COLAB Board Member and SLO County community leader.

The subject of Energy Production comes at a critical time as our state legislature is currently grappling with updating our state's Cap & Trade policies. At the same time, PG&E is attempting to extend the life and production of the Diablo Canyon Nuclear plant. These events are happening while "green energy" is struggling to meet expectations. All these subjects impact availability, reliability and of course affordability.

The forum is free to attend and will include light appetizers, beer wine and soft drinks. Please RSVP before September 25th so that we can accommodate you.

Reservations can be made by email at colabslo@gmail.com or by calling 805 548-0340.

Meet elected officials, candidates and community activists while gaining strong insight into the energy industry and how it impacts our state and your wallet.

Hope to see you there.

EMERGENT TRENDS - SEE PAGE 15

How to Make Homes Affordable Again

COLAB IN DEPTH SEE PAGE 23

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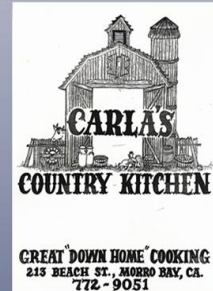
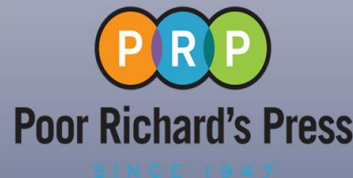
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Breakthrough on California housing could put taller buildings in single-family neighborhoods



BY BEN CHRISTOPHER SEPTEMBER 5, 2025

A bulldozer on the corner of 7th Street and Colorado Avenue in Santa Monica on May 24, 2023.
Photo by Zaydee Sanchez for CalMatters

IN SUMMARY

A powerful California construction union is no longer fighting a bill that would ease barriers to the construction of tall apartment buildings near train and bus stations.

A controversial housing bill that would pave the way for more apartment buildings near major bus stops and train and subway stations across urban California is one step closer to becoming law after its author struck a last-minute deal with a long-time political foe, one of the state's most powerful labor groups.

The State Building and Construction Trades Council, which represents union construction workers, agreed to drop its opposition to [Senate Bill 79](#) in exchange for an amendment that would require some of the projects that make use of the bill to hire union workers.

The bill, authored by San Francisco Democratic Sen. Scott Wiener, would be one of the largest state-imposed housing densification efforts in recent memory. On residential and commercial lots within a walkable half-mile of well-trafficked public transit stops, developers would be allowed to build taller and denser housing — as high as six stories. That would apply in neighborhoods where local regulations restrict new development to single-family homes.

Wiener and backers of the bill argue that the state needs to turbo-charge housing construction to bring down the cost of living in California and that local zoning restrictions are among the barriers to that necessary building boom.

“This is exactly where we should be building more housing, right by our highest quality transit,” Wiener said.

Since Wiener rolled out the bill in March it has become a magnet of controversy. SB 79 only squeaked out of the Senate, clearing the opposition of [two powerful Democratic committee chairs](#) on its way, who largely objected to the fact that the bill did not include larger affordable housing requirements. The trades’ decision to withdraw from the fight significantly boosts the bill’s chances of becoming law.

“You hear from legislators all the time trying to be on the same side as the housing folks and the same side of labor — they don’t like when those sides are split,” said Louis Mirante, a lobbyist with the Bay Area Council, a business group that is backing the bill. “The trades removing their opposition is always helpful when you’re trying to pass a housing bill. That’s pretty cut and dry.”

Backed by “Yes in my backyard” activists, economic development boosters and public transit advocates, the bill has been fiercely opposed by neighborhood preservation groups, critics of market-rate development and a long list of local governments — including most recently, [Los Angeles](#) — who argue that the bill tramples on local prerogatives over what gets built and where.

Throughout that legislative gauntlet, the Trades Council have also been opposed. Not anymore.

“My hope is that this can be the beginning of shifting the dynamic where we’re all locking arms,” said Wiener. “We all want more housing. We all want more construction workers to be part of the middle class and not in poverty.”

Why unions changed direction

Wiener, California YIMBY founder Brian Hanlon and Trades Council president Chris Hannan announced a deal on this morning.

“The labor standards in the amendments negotiated by the State Building Trades will create good jobs, provide training for the next generation of California’s skilled construction workforce, and ensure that this desperately needed housing is built with quality and that workers are treated with dignity,” Hannan said in a written statement.

Unite Here, a union representing hotel and other hospitality workers, also said they would be backing the bill. According to Wiener, future amendments to SB 79 will explicitly exclude hotel development projects from taking advantage of its provisions.

California, epicenter of the nation’s housing crisis, is finally getting a housing agency

Under the terms of the deal, projects over 85-feet tall would be required to hire “skilled and trained” workers — effectively a hire-union requirement — if the developer receives a sufficient number of bids. Projects built on transit agency-owned land would likewise need to meet that requirement or enter into a direct contract with labor unions.

Over the last decade, the trades council has [developed a reputation](#) as a particularly well-organized and unyielding opponent of bills that ease restrictions on residential construction unless they also include broad minimum pay levels or union hiring requirements. The amendments announced today represent a step back from that all-or-nothing position. Most projects over 85 feet, for example, use concrete and steel frame construction, which require a higher skilled labor force that is often unionized anyway.

Other California housing bills

This isn’t the first time this year that the trades have been willing to take less than a full victory in exchange for dropping their opposition to a bill. When the Legislature was debating a proposal to [exempt most new urban multifamily housing](#) from the state’s premier environmental protection law, the trades accepted a concession that provided wage and hiring requirements for a small subset of projects.

The fact that California YIMBY and the trades council were in direct communication could itself represent a notable political shift in the way that housing bills are negotiated in the Capitol.

“Chris (Hannan) and I really have been spending a lot of time on this bill to the point where, quite frankly, some members of my coalition thought I was chasing at windmills,” said Hanlon of California YIMBY. “This bill here represents not just a deal on the specific language of SB 79, but it’s also a commitment from me and Chris to work together in the coming years to pass legislation to create more homebuilding opportunities in California.”

SB 79 still needs to be voted on by the entire Assembly and then once again by the Senate before the end-of-session Sept. 12 legislative deadline. If Gov. Gavin Newsom then signs it, it would be a particular feat for Wiener, who has tried and failed to pass similar legislation [twice before](#).

“The bill is not guaranteed to pass, but we have more momentum today than we did yesterday,” said Wiener.

How to Make Homes Affordable Again

By Edward Ring

August 22, 2025

A few years ago, former US Senator Phil Gramm published a book that offers important insights into the status of low-income communities in the United States. Titled “The Myth of American Inequality” and scrupulously researched, the book evaluates U.S. household income by quintiles. It concludes that the bottom quintile (the lowest 20 percent) actually has income virtually equal to that of the second-lowest quintile (21-40 percent), when adjusting for the value of government benefits.

The implications of this explain a lot. America’s working poor, those living in households in the second-to-lowest of the five income groups evaluated, have no motivation to work apart from character and pride. If they did not work or performed minimal work, they would fall down to what is ostensibly the lowest category of household income, but once you count the value of the benefits they receive, they would be better off.

The numbers are not subtle. When only considering earned income, household earnings for the bottom quintile are discouragingly low, only \$4,908 per year (2017 data). The second lowest jumps to \$30,931, far higher, followed by the middle at \$66,148, the second from the top at \$112,563, and the top at \$295,904.

These are the numbers that stimulate outrage and provide fodder for the rhetoric of resentment; they are used to justify calls for redistribution. But they hardly tell the whole story.

Mostly making use of data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau, Gramm went on to add the value of government benefits and private charity and deducted the value of federal, state, and local taxes. The results were decisively different from the above. Taking all of these factors into account, household earnings for the bottom quintile surged to \$49,613 per year, only barely eclipsed by the second lowest at \$53,924, with the middle quintile dipping slightly to \$65,631, the second from the top falling to \$88,132, and the top falling to \$197,034.

It doesn't end there. Gramm then dug up the data on "average hours worked per week" and reported 17.3 hours for the bottom quintile, compared to 32.0 hours for the next lowest. Working upwards, the next three were all between 36 and 38 hours. This means the return for the lowest 20 percent is \$55 per hour of work, whereas for the next group of supposedly higher earners, the return is only \$33 per hour of work.

Gramm's book hardly explains everything. When evaluating household income by quintile, he doesn't differentiate between people of working age versus seniors on fixed incomes that include Social Security and Medicare. It isn't clear, however, if that were done, that the proportion of those two groups would differ significantly between the lowest and the next lowest quintile. If seniors were more heavily represented in the second lowest quintile, which is quite likely, it would add *more* weight to his conclusion. This is because the higher the percentage of retired people in any quintile, the more working hours must be turned in by the people still working to achieve the reported average. Either way, the people we are conventionally reminded to regard as the most disadvantaged in the country are actually doing as well or better than the working poor who occupy the next tier on the income ladder.

If you want defining evidence that inequality in America is misrepresented, Gramm's book does the job. Beyond the scope of his book are factors, however, that should be carefully weighed before jumping to conclusions regarding any alleged indolence on the part of America's youth or those Americans who fulfill the stereotype of being inherently disadvantaged. In particular, the cost of living.

The peak year of the so-called Baby Boom was 1946. In 1976, when these '46 babies turned 30 and were starting families, the price of a home was \$50,300, equivalent to \$284,915 in 2025 dollars.

The peak year for Generation X births was 1970, and in 2000, when these '70 babies turned 30 and were starting families, the price of a home was \$212,100, equivalent to \$396,979 in 2025.

Today, a 30-year-old, born in 1995, on average can expect to pay \$512,800 to own a home. A recent analysis by economics blogger Nathan Halberstadt illustrates the consequences of the disproportionate rise in home prices. In 1976, nearly half of all people over 30 in America were married and lived in a home they owned. Today, that percentage has fallen below 15 percent.

Halberstadt also compiles data on the ratio of median home price compared to median household income. In 1976, the median home price was barely twice the median household income. Today, the median home price is more than four times the median household income.

The generational shift away from home affordability happened somewhere between late boomers (who faced rising home prices and ridiculous interest rates) and early Generation X'ers (who saw home prices surge further even as interest rates declined).

But why? What happened?

Attempting to answer this uncovers what may be the motivation for true inequality in America—which may be defined as the inequality of making less if you work than if you don't work and collect more government benefits instead, and the generational inequality of facing a cost for home ownership that is prohibitive for young people today compared to being far more achievable up until the mid-1970s.

To begin with, the population in America has grown from 218 million in 1976 to over 340 million today. It isn't clear whether these census numbers take into account over 10 million (that's the low estimate) "unauthorized" immigrants

who entered the U.S. in the last ten years. That's a lot more people who want to buy a home. But wouldn't the supply have kept up with demand?

Not really. Also taking off in the 1970s was the environmentalist movement, which initially was oriented toward solving urgent problems—genuine, deadly pollution of our air and water. Over the past 50 years, as these challenges were largely solved, new priorities emerged and hijacked environmentalism. Excluding “open space” from suburban development, along with additional building restrictions to address the “climate emergency,” has made it much more expensive not only to get permits to build new homes but also to produce the materials necessary to construct homes.

Finally, more than ever, this politically created shortage of affordable homes has incentivized hedge funds to move into the housing market. This causes two problems for anyone wanting to own their own home. First, mass purchases by institutional investors bid up the price and create an increasingly manipulable and less affordable market for individual buyers. They also drive up the cost to rent. Second, it creates an incentive for politically powerful investment funds to lobby for increasingly severe environmental restrictions on home construction and creates an incentive for them to lobby for more immigration. Reduce supply, increase demand, and realize higher rental income and capital gains as the prices for housing go up and up.

As Gramm makes clear in his book, the system of incentives for working people in America is broken. When taking government benefits into account, people who do minimal work in the formal economy will have higher household income than people who work full-time and more. This not only creates an incentive to work less, but it also makes working under the table a rational choice. The fact that housing prices have now been artificially inflated out of reach for most Americans only adds to Gramm's point: working people have never had less incentive to be productive. The system is broken.

All of these systemic disincentives are the result of political choices, and all of the solutions to fix them are bipartisan. Don't blame the older generations. Don't blame interest rates, which are not that high by historical standards. Look to the underlying causes.

Americans are being pushed out of work in order to create a dependent class. It's a business model for government bureaucrats, NGOs, and politically

connected private sector contractors. At the same time, Americans at almost all levels of income are locked out of a housing market that has been manipulated by environmentalist restrictions, unregulated immigration, and increasingly, by trillion-dollar hedge funds that have discovered an appetite for single-family homes.

You can rail at “boomers,” but that accomplishes nothing.

Real solutions will take hard work. Here they are:

Shrink government headcount and shrink government services. Deregulate housing. Defund NGOs. End subsidies and make private sector contractors compete with each other to, for example, build homes. Stop illegal immigration and enforce reasonable restrictions on legal immigration. Get environmentalism right-sized and refocused on genuine environmental challenges. And get hedge funds out of the housing market.

Edward Ring is the Director of Water and Energy Policy at the California Policy Center, which he co-founded in 2013. Ring is the author of Fixing California: Abundance, Pragmatism, Optimism (2021) and The Abundance Choice: Our Fight for More Water in California (2022).

Washington DC Sparkles Once Again; Sacramento is a Perpetual Disaster

Sacramento has a lot to learn, starting with rail service to the airport

By [Katy Grimes](#), September 2, 2025

I was just in Washington D.C. over the Labor Day holiday. I didn’t just fly in to [Dulles International Airport](#) and wait for an Uber, I took the [Metrorail](#) train from Dulles into Alexandria, VA.

It was fabulous. It was clean, open, well lighted, and the Metro staff was friendly – particularly when I asked for directions where to change trains. Passengers were

also friendly. And riding into the Alexandria Metro station was a breeze. The King St. Old Town station even has what Virginians call “Kiss-and-ride,” a drop-off, pick-up area for cars and rideshare services.

“Metrorail provides safe, clean, reliable transit service for more than 600,000 customers a day throughout the Washington, DC area.” I learned that the DC Metrorail is the only rail line in the country that consistently serves more than 10% of the area residents. “The system is the second busiest in the United States, serving 98 stations in Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia. The Metrorail system has six color-coded rail lines: Red, Orange, Silver, Blue, Yellow, and Green. The layout of the system makes it possible to travel between any two stations with no more than a single transfer.”

I was visiting family. We went to the farmers market held downtown at Alexandria City Hall. We took in a Washington Nationals baseball game – they lost to the Tampa Bay Rays. Nationals Park baseball stadium sits on the Anacostia River in the Navy Yard neighborhood of Washington, D.C. We parked a distance from the ballpark. The streets were clear, there were no homeless encampments, and no passed-out bodies on sidewalks, or drug addled vagrants harassing people trying to get somewhere.

There was no vomit or evidence of human excrement on the sidewalks I walked on. There were no drug addicted vagrants hanging out in front of businesses.

The D.C. police were friendly.

And the National Guardsmen walking around the streets were friendly and very pleasant. Visitors were even taking photos with them.

We walked everywhere, got coffee and food, we went to parks, and to the waterfront park, where at last we encountered one clearly mentally ill homeless vagrant.

Sacramento has a lot to learn, starting with rail service to the airport. *(Don’t get me started on California’s High Speed Rail corrupt catastrophe – another article for another day.)*

In 1987, Sacramento Regional Transit launched the 18.3-mile Light Rail, connecting northeastern and eastern corridors with downtown. The light rail train system mostly destroyed the bus service, which used to take you nearly anywhere you needed to go in Sacramento County. Instead, the bus service became the feeder for Light Rail which crosses over and disrupts major thoroughfares causing long traffic jams.

SacRT has been promising train service to the airport since... well... years.

Light rail service has been extended 8 times since its inception, including the 2012 Green Line to the River District, supposedly eventually extending the Green Line to the Airport. Regional Transit calls it “A Vision for the Future.”

It’s been 13 years for this vision for the future.

“The Green Line to the Airport is a bold and visionary project that would connect downtown Sacramento to North Natomas and the Sacramento International Airport by light rail—offering a clean, reliable, and sustainable alternative to driving along one of the region’s most congested corridors,” Sac Regional Transit says.

“Bold and visionary.” That’s what losers say when they can’t complete something successfully, or at all.

Sacramento Light Rail has 43 miles of light rail, and 53 light rail stations. DC Metro serves 600,000 customers a day, serving 98 stations in Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia. My route from Dulles International passed the Pentagon.

Sacramento Light Rail claims “an average of 22,100 weekday daily boardings as of the second quarter of 2025.” What about “passengers”? Most of those 22,100 daily boardings are twice-daily commuters – a trick RT has used for years to boost rider numbers. So, if it is 11,050 passengers, that may explain the empty Light Rail trains I see every day.

Washington D.C. has 689,545 residents and encompasses 68.35 square miles.

Sacramento County has 1,584,104 residents and encompasses 994 square miles.

Should Sacramento politicians ever get their feculence together, we should have twice the beautiful, functional train transit DC has.

Sacramento still has homeless encampments lining our city streets, spilling over into intersections, in city parks, and along our rivers. And Gov. Gavin Newsom has spent \$38 Billion on homelessness. Shouldn’t all of California’s drug-addicted homeless vagrants be living in luxury condos by now for that price?



Katy Grimes

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

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