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

Weekly Update
Aug 17 - 24, 2026

Very Not Presidential

Somebody forgot to tell Gavin Newsom that indecision isn't very presidential. Chickening out, kicking the can down the road, and basically ignoring one's responsibility does not make one look like a leader.

Feckless

Feckless Gavin Newsom has decided not to decide. He says he's leaving it up to the next governor to figure out whether we should extend the operating permits at Diablo Canyon Power Plant. Despite so much scientific and economic evidence in support of the continuation, Gavin Newsom just chose to sit it out.

Our California Energy Commission, privy to all the data about our energy usage, makes the case that we will not have the base load power needed in the near future if Diablo is shut down. It seems that Newsom couldn’t care less.

The last hurdle, after a great deal of scientific research and physical examination along with hundreds of hours of public hearings, is ranting a 20-year operating extension bill from the state legislature. That bunch of bananas has had all year long to work on a bill to discuss it, to debate it, to analyze it, and to make a decision. They couldn't even get started.

Now our wannabe president is putting an end to the whole process for this year. Hopefully someone in the legislature will present a bill in early 2027 and send it to the new governor. Sadly, it doesn't look like our state senator John Laird or State Assembly Member Dawn Addis will be brave enough to take such an initiative.

They didn't appear to have problems with the 20-year extension when they were advocating that the Coastal Commission require huge handovers of private property in order to get their permits from the Coastal Commission. But since then, they've been dragging their heels and being very vague about whether they support the extension or not.

Supervisor Gibson has been singing the same song. He too was fine with PG&E conveying lands around the Diablo Canyon plant and testified in support. Now that that deal is done, he's whining and moaning about having scientists peer review the findings of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

It's so very noble of Gibson to think that there are smarter people out there to tell us whether the plant is safe. He expects the San Luis Obispo County community to trust him as he does his job as a county supervisor, but he does not trust the scientists and the engineers that work for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Apparently he thinks that some Rent-A-Scientist will have a better understanding of the safety measures that regulate nuclear power.

One bit of good news is that the U.S. Department of Energy just made a payment of $271 million to Pacific Gas and Electric to support continued operation of Diablo Canyon Power Plant. This is in recognition of the significance of the plant and the important role it plays is providing much needed power to the California grid.

Hilton Shows Up

The Friends of the Oceano Dunes recently invited both leading candidates for Governor, Javier Beccera and Steve Hilton, to tour the Dunes and learn about the challenges that the park is facing in trying to abide by huge regulatory challenges as well as fight litigation from deep pocketed environmental groups.

FRIENDS OF OCEANO DUNES
www.oceanodunes.org

One candidate has shown no interest so far, but last week, Steve Hilton spent a morning touring the dunes.

Friends of the Oceano Dunes President Jim Suty and Steve Hilton

Hilton started the day with a helicopter tour of the dunes and the Diablo Canyon Power Plant and followed that with a drive out to the middle of the park. It wasn't the first time for Hilton to visit the dunes. He has vacationed many times on the Central Coast and has enjoyed off-roading with his family there.

The tour was provided by English Air Service in Santa Maria and a small lunch with community leaders hosted by Friends of the Dunes and Eva and Adam Verdin of Old Juans Cantina.

Hilton's remarks after the tour indicated strong support for keeping the Oceano Dunes_State Vehicular Recreation Area open for camping and off roading, and he pledged to appoint common sense members to the California Coastal Commission in order to keep regulations from running amuck.

Hilton is a long time fan of the dunes

It is great to know that at least one candidate is spending time on the Central Coast to better understand the issues that are important to the people of San Luis Obispo County.

What Bear Problem?

It's a curious thing that the County of San Luis Obispo is spending over $1.2 million at Lopez Lake to fortify against bear problems. Yet according to the State Fish and Wildlife Service, our bear population is insufficient to qualify for a hunting season in our county.

State of California
Department of Fish and Wildlife

It's even more curious that Santa Barbara and Kern counties, our neighbors to the south and to the east, both have bear hunting seasons. And in fact, in many places around the state the number of bear tags issued is being doubled because of a growing bear population.

Bear problem…. what bear problem?

Item 11 on the August 4 BoS agenda read: Request to: 1) approve a new project (WBS 380014) in Fund Center 305- Regional Parks Fund, to implement a Safe Coexist Wildlife Protection Project at Lopez Lake Recreation Area; and 2) authorize corresponding budget adjustment in the amount up to $1,264,580 from the General Government Building Replacement Designation (FC 267) to Fund Center 305-Regional Parks, WBS 380014 for the Lopez Lake Recreation Area - Safe Coexist Wildlife Protection Project, by 4/5 vote. The item passed without discussion on consent.

Apparently bears love camping at Lopez Lake

What does $1.2 million buy at Lopez Lake?

We are not in the business of advocating for or against hunting. But hunting is regularly used as a population control method. It would seem that spending over $1.2 million to address the issue would indicate that the population is getting out of control.

Another indicator is the impact to livestock. Local cattle ranchers have voiced growing concern about the loss of calves. San Luis Obispo Agriculture Commissioner Martin Settevendemie acknowledges the frustration in the cattle industry, but his department does not track livestock losses.

As we understand it, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife maintains responsibility for bear population estimates. They also regulate bear hunting, along with other wildlife hunting throughout the state.

Bear hunting is allowed in the counties indicated in gray

There has been dispute in the past about what the bear population numbers are in San Luis Obispo County. The concept of allowing a hunting season here has been discussed in the past, but intervention from groups like Los Padres ForestWatch, and the Humane Society has shut down any formal process.

Perhaps it's time that our county insists that the Department of Fish and Wildlife do an accurate count of our local bear population so that we can all better address what is becoming an expensive issue.

New Leader for Department of Health

As we recently reported, we have a new Director of the County Department of Health. Suzanne "Suzy" Jed, RN, MSN, began her new role on Aug. 2.

At the time of our first report, little information was available about the new Director. A recent press release from the County provides some details:

"Jed was chosen in part for her expertise in infectious disease prevention, maternal and child health, emergency preparedness, workforce development, and strategic program management. She brings more than two decades of executive leadership experience in public health, healthcare systems, and global health initiatives to the County, having led health programs throughout the United States, Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Most recently, Jed served as Senior Technical Advisor and Deputy Health Office Director for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in the Dominican Republic, where she managed a public health portfolio exceeding $20 million annually. Prior to that, she served as the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) Country Coordinator in South Africa, providing executive leadership for a five-year, $2.2 billion HIV and tuberculosis program that served more than 5.7 million people".

San Luis Obispo County Chief Executive Officer Matt Pontes is quoted in the release; "Suzy's extensive public health leadership experience, combined with her collaborative approach and commitment to improving community health, make her exceptionally well suited to lead our Department of Public Health,"

The press release describes her education and describes her new role: "Jed earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Wheaton College in Illinois and a Master of Science in Nursing from Vanderbilt University. As Director of Public Health, Jed will oversee the County's efforts to protect and promote the health of San Luis Obispo County residents through disease prevention, emergency preparedness, environmental health, health equity initiatives, and community-based public health programs.

The position as Director of Public Health is one of tremendous responsibility. It calls for managing over $400 million in agency funds, coordinating countless divisions and service providers, constant interaction with the sate and federal government and most importantly maintaining the public's trust.

We wish Director Jed the very best in her new position.

Expensive Mystery

Of the many curiosities with the Aug. 18 BoS meeting agenda, none is more confounding than Item 12. It reads: Request to: 1) Approve and execute the retroactive and final Amendment No. 2 to the Special Services Consulting Contract with Mott MacDonald Group, Inc., amending the term of the Contract from June 1, 2026, to December 31, 2026; and 2) Increasing the Contract budget from $788,488 to $828,438 for additional stakeholder engagement services related to the Offshore Wind Operation and Maintenance Infrastructure Studies for Morro Bay and San Luis Bay.

Are we reading the news from an entirely different source than the county? Has it not been widely reported that two of the three main companies persuing operations along our coast, (Atlas Wind), Golden State Wind (Ocean Winds), and Even Keel Wind (Invenergy) have redirected their efforts to different projects? Their main impetus for doing so has been efforts by the Trump administration to close out the leases that these companies need to operate.

The third company that is still remotely viable is Equinor which has several projects around the world. However, given local opposition, the odds of the company achieving any progress off our shores are slim.

With this in mind, our curiosity is piqued. What is the value to the taxpayer to extend the contracting services on a concept that seems all but dead? Is this turning into another High-Speed Rail boondoggle?

Whatta Waste!

Supervisor Gibson has an idea about how to spend your tax dollars: Request to consider a $25,000 contribution to the County of Santa Cruz to support coordination of efforts to oppose offshore drilling and seabed mining, and take related action as appropriate. This is item 27 on the Aug. 18 agenda.

Our county is struggling to cover the cost of many essential programs. Some could still face serious cuts. The BoS refuses to fund important positions in the District Attorney's office claiming it doesn't have the money. We recently learned that the county budget will be short by a large sum due to an oversight in cannabis tax regulation. The state budget is woefully short and could cut funding to many of our dependent service providers. There is no offshore oil drilling on our coast because there is probably no oil, there is clearly no interest from oil companies, and we have prohibited any onshore support services.

With all of that, Gibson found some funding already allocated (for different purposes) and wants to raid it to send our money off to Santa Cruz for some fancy pants kumbaya fight.

It is as ridiculous as that. What is curious is how he feels about offshore wind energy and how he will vote on the previously mentioned $828,438 consultancy contract. How different are the potential problems caused by offshore drilling verses offshore wind energy? Gibson frequently moans about the possibility of our shores dotted with offshore drilling rigs. Why are giant windmills okay when drilling rigs are not. Do they not both present environmental challenges?

How will Supervisors tell legitimate community leaders that they can't provide needed funding when the county wastes money on schemes like this? We hope that the remainder of the board members come to their senses and keep San Luis Obispo taxpayer dollars in our community to serve the projects that we need here.

Another Fuss?

Somebody make the popcorn. The Sheriff haters might put on a show over item 21 on the agenda. It reads: Request to update the Projected AB 481 Equipment to be Acquired in FY 2026-27 and approve the acquisition and use of six (6) additional Lewis Machine and Tool (LMT) 40-MM single shot launchers, increasing the number projected to be acquired in FY 2026-27 from twenty-four (24) to thirty (30), at a cost of $45,462 as included in the FY 2026-27 Adopted Budget, in accordance with Assembly Bill 481.

A 40 mm launcher

AB 841 requires all local enforcement agencies to **adopt** a written "military equipment" use policy, to get governing body approval, and publish annual reports on the use of specified high-powered equipment. The Launchers are considered military equipment. The following is a list that defines what kind of law enforcement tools fall under the mandate:

- Unmanned, remotely piloted, powered aerial or ground vehicles.
- Mine-resistant ambush-protected (MRAP) vehicles or armored personnel carriers.
- High mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicles (HMMWVs), two-and-a-half-ton or five-ton trucks, or wheeled vehicles with breaching/entry apparatuses.
- Tracked armored vehicles with ballistic protection.
- Command and control vehicles.
- Weaponized aircraft, vessels, or vehicles.
- Explosive breaching tools, “flashbang” grenades, tear gas, pepper balls (excluding standard service-issued handheld pepper spray).
- 40 mm projectile launchers, bean bag, rubber bullet, and specialty impact munitions.
- Firearms and ammunition of .50 caliber or greater (excluding standard-issue shotguns), and certain specialized firearms/ammunition.
- Any other equipment designated by the governing body or a state agency.

Sheriff haters regularly show up when these subjects arise. They whine and worry about the poor criminals and accuse the Sheriff of wanting to treat violent law breakers badly.

Don’t be harassing the law breakers!

What they don’t seem to understand is that their dear friends, the violent criminals, sometimes have even more sophisticated weapons than the Sheriff personnel. They also forget that their dear friends, the violent criminals, usually don’t hesitate to harm innocent people.

The Future Just Flew In

A few weeks ago, we reported on an expenditure by the county to install a high-tech recharger at the San Luis Obispo County Airport. The justification was that electric aircraft are already in use in many parts of the globe, and they will be coming here soon.

Last week, that prediction became reality when a BETA Technologies ALIA CX300 made a special stop at ACI Jet at the San Luis Obispo County Airport (SBP),

An Electric aircraft at San Luis Obispo Airport

.
According to reports, the CX300 is a fully electric conventional takeoff and landing (eCTOL) aircraft. It flies with zero operational carbon emissions, paving the way for truly sustainable aerospace. At roughly $18 per hour in energy to operate, the aircraft promises game-changing economics for operators. With a 50-foot wingspan and a 200-cubic-foot cargo capacity (or room for 5 passengers), it's built for heavy lifting—specifically targeting organ transport, cargo logistics, and regional passenger travel. It’s whisper-quiet, too.


San Luis Obispo County Airport

The main proponent for adding the charging equipment was Supervisor Gibson, who noted that this aspect of the aviation industry is growing fast, and we need to be part of that growth. For once, we agree with Gibson.

Meet the Top Tax Fighter

Proposition 43, also known as the Local Taxpayer Protection Act, is officially on the November ballot. Voters have an important opportunity to save Prop 13 from all the poor legal decisions and legislated workarounds that have left taxpayers vulnerable. Join us on Oct. 21 to hear how Prop. 43 will continue to protect many new generations of taxpayers from runaway taxes.

Last Week

The Premature Death of a Tax Measure

Whether you were a supporter or were opposed to Measure H, the San Luis Obispo County half-cent sales tax measure, the way that it fell apart and was removed from the ballot is a fascinating story.

The measure was born out of San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG) efforts to achieve self-help status for San Luis Obispo County. Such status would enable the county to qualify for potentially many millions of dollars in state transportation grants. The state requires that the citizens of any particular county tax themselves in order to qualify to get some of that tax money back for transportation projects.

SLOCOG
SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

A similar effort took place in 2016 and failed by around 400 votes. Several of the following election cycles featured local sales taxes in some of our cities, including Paso Robles and Atascadero. This meant that SLOCOG felt it had to put off bringing a new measure to the ballot. Finally, it looked like 2026 would be the magic year.

SLOCOG went out of its way to design a measure that stood up to concerns that community leaders had throughout the county. This included a number of guard rails to ensure that the funds would go specifically to transportation projects and not get squandered on general fund kinds of projects. They also went out of their way to try to achieve an equitable distribution of the anticipated $35 million annually that the tax would raise.

Once the measure was finalized there was some concern about whether it would pass with the two-thirds vote required by statute. At that point a citizens' group formed, called Better Roads for All trying to put the exact same measure on the ballot via signatures. This route would result in a vote requirement of only 50% or simple majority. That group hired a professional consultant to make sure that they had all their I's dotted and T's crossed so that they could qualify with a clean measure. Frustratingly for them, that consultant didn't do the job very well and left off an important bit of language from the petitions that were signed throughout the community. This oversight wasn't realized until the committee had over 12,000 valid signatures. It only required 12,400 signatures to qualify for the ballot.

As a result of the technical error, the Board of Supervisors chose to put the measure on the ballot in the two-thirds vote requirement category. The vote was 3-2, with Supervisor Peschong and Supervisor Moreno voting no. Moreno voiced serious concern that the measure would never pass and it wasn't worth the $580,000 it could cost to put it before the voters. Peschong always opposes sales taxes because of their regressive nature towards low-income earners.

As it turns out, Moreno was prophetic. Once the measure was approved by the Board of Supervisors, the group that put the Citizens Initiative together went to work as an advocacy group. In their research, in putting a campaign together, they discovered that Moreno was correct that in this current economic environment there's no way a tax measure could get a two-thirds vote. They shared their research with SLOCOG who agreed that the measure should not be put before the voters with no chance of passing. SLOCOG then requested the board pull the ballot measure, which they did in a special session on August 5.

So now we wonder, when will the finger pointing begin? We might as well start it off by calling out our own County Board of Supervisors. Several years ago, they chose to take transportation off of their priority list. Since then, they've dedicated a measly $6 million or so annually towards transportation. They haven't even bothered with cost-of-living increases.

So why are we blaming them for the failure (or lack of launch anyway) with measure H? Why should taxpayers be asked to pony up extra tax money to do something that they believe should be covered in their basic taxes to begin with? If the board of supervisors doesn't care enough to put some kind of priority in transportation, why should the voters have to do it as a work around?

At the August 5th special board session, convened just to address the Measure H issue, Supervisor Paulding illustrated the biggest problem we have with transportation funding.

His defensive comments about how the county does invest money in roads were illustrative. He mentioned that the board commits the same level of funding every year that it has for five years. Two problems: the funding was insufficient from the beginning and the cost of doing business has gone up almost double from what it was five years ago.

We agree with Supervisor Peschong's comments that the board needs to put roads back on its priority list and we were encouraged to hear Supervisor Ortiz-Legg agree with him and that she might be willing to do so as well. Supervisor Moreno had the good graces not to say, "I told you so." Supervisor Gibson said nothing but it must have really chapped his hide to be eliminating a potential tax.

To be fair, the county has had some serious and expensive storm repair work that has been done over the last three years to recover from the 2023 storms. And some of those costs have been significant. But much of that comes from FEMA and the state.

Our Board of Supervisors will take every opportunity possible to yammer on and on and on about housing. They're always happy to discuss homeless issues. They spend countless hours talking about coastal issues. They gleefully clap their hands when bicycle trails are opened up. But when it comes to roads, they're dour and ominously quiet.

Measure H was essentially a get out of jail free card for the board of supervisors. It allowed them to easily supplant money that they should be putting towards roads into other pet projects. That's what killed a lot of the support that Measure H should have otherwise had. It's expensive to live in San Luis Obispo County and a half-cent tax adding on to everything else probably doesn't mean a whole lot to most people. But it sure is aggravating to know that the tax dollars that should be going to roads are going to other things. And taxpayers were expected to dip into their pockets even deeper to cover those things that should be covered by basic tax revenues.

Supporters of Measure H say they're going to bring it back when they think things will be more favorable. The most favorable aspect that we can see is having a board that's already dedicated to doing something with transportation. Not just sitting back and letting SLOCOG and the taxpayers come up with the revenues and the solutions to make our roads safer and easier to use.

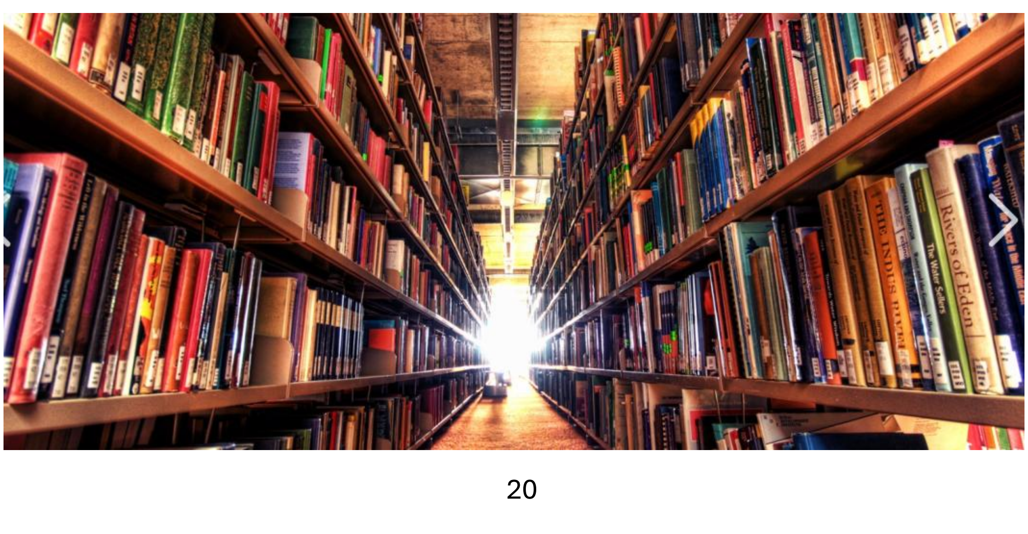
Don’t Try to Shush Templeton Library Supporters

Sometimes local elected officials are put in a position where it's a no-win situation. A group of Templeton residents recently attended the County Board of Supervisors meeting and made a case for funding for their local library. They made some very persuasive arguments and made it very difficult for any of the supervisors to ignore their requests.

However, the only way to accommodate Templeton's wishes for library funding is to cut library funding from some other community.

It seems that many years ago the county chose to close a library branch in Templeton. Apparently, there were promises made that the library would be reopened in short order and that funding would be guaranteed for that library. Sadly, there's no written record of those promises.

Templeton community members got tired of waiting for the county to reopen a library and they took the initiative to open one on their own with local community support. For a couple decades now, that library has been functioning as a community center, a homework location for school kids, and of course a resource for books and literature.



Unfortunately, some of their significant local funding is running out and they are turning to the county to help keep the doors open in their own community library.

Aside from the frustration that the Templetonians feel about the (undocumented) betrayal from the county, they are also quite irritated that a portion of their property tax is dedicated to library funding, but they can't get any of that returned to Templeton.

The county library system points out that the Atascadero Library is seven miles away from Templeton and is frequently used by Templetonians. They also point out that many people throughout the county are much further than seven miles from their nearest library.

The Templeton Library is a source of pride in the community

San Luis Obispo County Library System's website can be found at: [Library - County of San Luis Obispo](). Its description of its services reads as follows:

The San Luis Obispo County Library was established in 1919 under authority of the County Free Library Act. The Library is a San Luis Obispo County department operating under the authority of the County Board of Supervisors. Today the library provides service to residents of 6 of the 7 incorporated cities and the unincorporated areas of San Luis Obispo County, a service area that extends over 3,000 square miles. The Library offers circulation of books, magazines, newspapers, government publications, and other special publications, and also offers downloadable media of all types.

Following the remarks of the 6-8 Templetonians who requested help from the Board of Supervisors, there was discussion among the board members that a library bond might be appropriate.

It's impossible to predict the outcome but we give the Templetonians extra points for their organized presentation and their reasonable request.

Cannabis Tax Problems Persist

The discussion about the cannabis tax at the Aug 4 BoS meeting was an interesting look behind the scenes of how they do business. Frequent readers may recall that the tax is automatically scheduled to increase by two percent annually in June unless the BoS intervenes. This is part of the language that was passed in 2018 when the local initiative legalized pot locally.

For the last few years, the board has consistently voted to keep the tax at six percent. This year, however, the June deadline to waive the tax increase came and went without notice. Those preparing the budget have been instructed never to presume board actions, so they budgeted for the 8% tax revenue. Now with the board going back to 6%, they have to adjust the revenue figures and fill in the gap that was left with the lower tax revenues from cannabis.

It was noted that both Santa Barbara and Monterey counties have lower tax levels than we do. Several cannabis producers who spoke expressed frustration at trying to compete with the illegal cannabis market. They are particularly confounded that this minor clerical error means that they have to pay three months at the higher tax rate.

When Supervisor Ortiz-Lag asked about changing the effective date of the tax increase, she was reminded by Justin Cooley of the auditor tax collector's office that since the law was passed by voter initiative, the only way to change it would be to go back to the voters. He also mentioned that each percentage of the tax equates to about $100,000 of revenue.

We can't fault the people in the business, but it is amazing how when pot growers wring their hands and talk about the burden of high taxes, people seem to listen. When other businesses talk about the same issue, nobody seems to care.

Opportunity Zone for Cal Poly

Item 10 on the August 4 Board of Supervisors agenda called for recognizing the recent adoption of one of the census tracts surrounding Cal Poly San Luis Obispo as a federal opportunity zone.

Among the Whereases and Therefores is the following language:

WHEREAS, the federal Opportunity Zones 2.0 program authorizes states to nominate eligible census tracts for designation by the United States Department of the Treasury to encourage private investment through federal tax incentives;

WHEREAS, the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz) invited local jurisdictions to submit recommendations for eligible census tracts, with recommendations due July 20, 2026;

WHEREAS, Census Tract 06079010903 encompasses the California Polytechnic State University main campus and serves as a regional center for higher education, workforce development, research, innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic development;

Census tract map for the new Opportunity Zone

The following list includes those kinds of projects that are considered appropriate for opportunity zones:

- Aerospace & Defense (Aircraft, Shipbuilding, Space, Defense & Satellites)
- Childcare
- Clean Economy (Batteries, Wind, Solar, ZEV, Critical Minerals, Hydrogen, Carbon Management)
- Creative Economy
- Education & Skilled Workforce
- Financial & Professional Services
- Healthcare
- High-Tech (Semiconductors & Microelectronics, Hardware, Software & Services, Artificial Intelligence, Fusion, Robotics, Quantum)
- Housing
- Infrastructure (Broadband, Transportation Infrastructure, Transmission & Distribution, Water)
- Life Sciences (Medtech, Pharma/biotech)
- Manufacturing (Advanced and/or Precision)
- Tourism & Outdoor Recreation
- Transport & Logistics
- Working Lands & Water (Agricultural Production, Food Processing, Agtech & Farm Equipment, Bioeconomy, Blue economy/tech)

We are all for tax incentives and programs that make investment and innovation more viable. However, we can't help but wonder that if this particular census tract deserves extra help, why not all census tracts?

Congratulations to Cal Poly and we hope many good things come of this achievement.

A Good Idea Doesn't Get Choked by Red Tape

The last item on the agenda for the August 4 Board of Supervisors meeting was a hearing to adjust requirements for a housing project;
A request for authorization to process an application by Monarch Dunes LLC to amend the Monarch Dunes Specific Plan (County File Number: LRP2026-00006). The proposed amendment would increase the maximum allowable lot coverage for attached single-family dwellings in specific sites from 54% to 65% or 2,970 square feet, whichever is less. Exempt from CEQA.

The request seemed entirely reasonable. The builders simply sought to have slightly more square footage in some of the homes so that they could rearrange some of the lots to accommodate ADUs. Should they be part of the project in the future.

The Monarch Dunes housing project

The board saw no issue with making a slight adjustment and granted the request.

We applaud the board's decision but wonder why just a week earlier, when Supervisor Moreno asked for a simple, minor adjustment to low-income housing codes, they couldn't seem to find their way to approve another simple common-sense approach.

Public Comment from the Comfort of Home

The new zoom call-in feature for commenting during Board of Supervisors meetings is working fairly well. Most public commenters dialing in are able to make their point. We have had a couple of wannabe comedians demonstrate why they'll never make it in that field.

zoom

Again, this is a nice opportunity for people who don't want to or are unable to attend in person just to get their three minutes of messaging through.

We encourage anyone who has a point to make to the Board of Supervisors to try it. The standard rules for public commentary apply. The three-minute rule is always in effect unless there is a very crowded agenda at which time those three minutes may be trimmed to two or even one minute. Here are the details.

It's a great way to have your opinion heard while avoiding the parking hassles of downtown SLO.

Zoom Link:
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86117844410?pwd=NPlyUIE3AGQqP8LRJXYURPqCijsvnQ.q9SDQ7CaxjwBaAo9
Telephone: +1 786 635 1003
Meeting ID: 861 1784 4410
Passcode: 486471

An Opportunity to Meet the Candidate

COLAB does not endorse candidates running for office. However, we are very supportive of opportunities for voters to learn more about candidates and issues – especially in person. In this case we have learned that one of our candidates for governor, Steve Hilton, will be holding a town hall meeting in our community. We would encourage anyone interested in the governor's race to attend.

The Town Hall meeting is free. We understand there is also a small separate fundraising event with Mr. Hilton's visit to our community. Anyone interested in supporting his candidacy should call the campaign for details.

RSVPs are requested. Visit the following address to respond.
[Paso Robles Town Hall with Steve Hilton]

COLAB
San Luis Obispo County

FALL FORUM

Wednesday, October 21st
5:30–7:30 PM

Thousand Hills Ranch
550 Thousand Hills Rd.
Pismo Beach, CA

SAVE PROP 13 - KNOW WHAT WE ARE PROTECTING AND WHY

Join Jon Coupal, President of the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association and California's preeminent tax fighter, for a discussion on the "Save Prop 13" ballot measure and the protections it would provide for California taxpayers.

Jon Coupal
President of HJTA

BEER, LOCAL FINE WINES, AND HOT & COLD APPETIZERS WILL BE SERVED

RSVP'S ARE APPRECIATED BY OCTOBER 14TH

THERE IS NO CHARGE FOR THIS INFORMATIVE EVENT!
colabslo@gmail.com | (805) 548-0340

Driving note: *Thousand Hills Road is off Price Canyon Road. The entrance is somewhat hidden around a bend and may come up suddenly. Continue approximately one mile to the red-roofed barn on the right.*

Emergent Trends
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REPORT: Xavier Becerra's HHS Funneled Nearly $80 Million to CAIR and Terror-Linked Islamist Groups

Hoping for an Energy-Intensive Future

COLAB in Depth
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Gavin's High Speed Rail Disaster

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REPORT: Xavier Becerra's HHS Funneled Nearly $80 Million to CAIR and Terror-Linked Islamist Groups

The Council on American-Islamic Relations' California chapter received the largest share among Islamist groups, collecting $42.2 million in HHS-originated funding to provide legal and social services to Afghan refugees

By Megan Barth, August 14, 2026

A significant portion of nearly $80 million in U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) grants to organizations with documented ties to terrorism and extremism flowed to California, according to reporting from *Just the News* drawing on a Middle East Forum (MEF) audit.

Just the News reported that HHS provided nearly $80 million to 14 organizations linked to terrorism and extremism. The Council on American-Islamic Relations' California chapter (CAIR-CA) received the largest share among Islamist groups, collecting $42.2 million in HHS-originated funding to provide legal and social services to Afghan refugees. Much of the money was routed through the California Department of Social Services.

The MEF report found that 87 percent of the identified funding—approximately $68.5 million—occurred between 2022 and 2025, grants approved under the Biden-Harris administration. Xavier Becerra, the former California attorney general, served as HHS Secretary from March 2021 to January 2025 and oversaw the department during the period when the bulk of these awards were made.

Just the News detailed CAIR's history of ties to terrorism, including its designation as an unindicted co-conspirator by federal prosecutors in a case involving financial support to Hamas, the FBI's decision to end contacts with the group over those concerns, and the fact that multiple board or staff members have faced terrorism-related charges or denials of entry. CAIR has publicly condemned terrorism, including by Hamas, yet the documented money trail challenges their continued condemnation.

In a statement to *Just the News*, CAIR-CA said: "All contributions and grants that CAIR-CA receives are fully reported, accounted for, and used strictly for their intended purposes, subject to rigorous internal and external auditing and reporting. This transparency is why both private and public funders have worked with us and continue to do so. We are proud to serve and defend the rights of American Muslims and immigrants—communities that greatly enrich our nation and contribute to its economic success."
Other groups receiving HHS funds included ICNA Relief ($10.6 million), which MEF links to an Islamist movement responsible for violence in South Asia, and the Muslim American Society's Sacramento chapter ($90,000), described by a federal appeals court as an "overt arm of the Muslim Brotherhood in America."

Gregg Roman, executive director of the Middle East Forum, told Just the News: "Washington took the most vulnerable people on earth, refugees who fled the Taliban, and delivered them into the hands of the organizations most likely to radicalize them. That is not compassion. That is a recruitment pipeline built at public expense, and every official who signed these awards owns it."

HHS under current Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has launched a debarment investigation into CAIR over alleged grant abuses and terror links. In June, letters were sent to California Gov. Gavin Newsom citing concerns about funds sub-granted to CAIR-California. The *Just the News* report also covered separate State Department partnerships with World Vision involving billions in assistance, despite prior concerns about terror ties involving that organization's affiliates.
The pattern of substantial federal and state pass-through funding via the California Department of Social Services is not limited to CAIR-CA.

As the *California Globe* previously reported, Catholic Charities Diocese of San Diego saw its revenue more than sextuple from $11.5 million in 2019 to nearly $80 million by 2023, a surge fueled almost entirely by federal dollars for refugee and migrant services. Audit records show tens of millions in HHS-originated refugee and entrant assistance funds passed through CDSS to the organization for programs including migrant hotel wraparound services, Afghan Support and Investment, Refugee Cash Assistance, and related supports.
The *Just the News* report also covered separate State Department partnerships with World Vision involving billions in assistance, despite prior concerns about terror ties involving that organization's affiliates.
Neither Gov. Gavin Newsom nor former HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra has issued a public response to the Just the News report or the June 2026 HHS letter regarding the CAIR funding.

Megan Barth
Megan Barth is the Executive Editor of The California Globe and former, founding editor of the Nevada Globe. Specializing in investigative reporting, her work has appeared in national and local news. The highlights of her career include interviewing President Donald Trump, Vice President J.D. Vance, and FBI Director Kash Patel. When she isn't editing, writing, or talking, you can find her hiking and relaxing in Northern Nevada.

Hoping for an Energy-Intensive Future

Rationing power does not produce an industrial base, a modern health system, or a mechanized farm sector

By Vijay Jayaraj, August 13, 2026

For campaigners of the net zero agenda, "climate action" must come first, even if it means throttling the energy lifelines for billions of the poor. The data say something very different. A sweeping analysis by Kevin Dayaratna and Kat Miller, "Energy Abundance and Human Flourishing: A Data-Driven Global Analysis," shows what history has already taught us: No nation has ever overcome poverty without first burning, drilling, or mining its way to energy abundance.

Affordable, Reliable Energy – and Plenty of It

The record is that prosperity and energy use rise together across nations, with no exceptions. Countries that consume only a few hundred to a few thousand kilowatt-hours per person struggle with subsistence incomes of $1,000 to $3,000 a year; those with per capita consumption of tens of thousands of kilowatt-hours, like the United States and Norway, enjoy vastly higher earnings.

Then there is public health, where the report argues the link to energy extends beyond correlation to cause and effect. You cannot refrigerate a vaccine, sterilize a surgical suite, or run a dialysis machine on carbon credits. Global life expectancy climbed from 32 years around 1900 to over 73 years today, while American life expectancy rose from 49 to nearly 80.

Today, the gap between poor and rich nations remains stark: Life expectancy in Somalia and Chad is below 60 years, while that of Norway, Japan, and Switzerland is above 80. Following a similar arc for child mortality, nations using little energy lose more than one in 10 children while the death rate in energy-intensive countries is one-tenth that.

Industrial output is even more tightly tied to energy, as per capita production rises from a few thousand dollars a year in poor countries to tens of thousands for richer nations.

While some advanced economies exhibit an apparent "decoupling" of output from energy, the report says that this is largely because of efficiency gains and structural shifts from manufacturing to services, not a reduced need for energy itself. In the U.S., real GDP (gross domestic product) grew almost tenfold between 1950 and 2024, while primary energy use rose less than threefold. This means each unit of energy now supports over three times as much output as it did 75 years ago.

The agricultural sector provides another compelling testament to energy's power. American corn yields are nearly 11 metric tons per hectare compared to a global average of under 6, a gap created by using artificial fertilizers, irrigation pumps, and mechanized equipment, all of which require hydrocarbons. Without natural gas-derived fertilizer and diesel fuel, the American bounty vanishes.

None of this should surprise anyone who has watched India, Vietnam, or Bangladesh pull hundreds of millions out of poverty over the past 30 years. They did it the same way Britain and Germany did it two centuries earlier – with coal, then oil, then natural gas, and eventually a broader mix that includes nuclear and hydro.

The Future Will Be Energy-Intensive

Global electricity demand is set to surge again, driven primarily by Asia. In the United States the demand will come predominantly from AI data centers, advanced manufacturing, and vehicle electrification. Projections show 2% annual growth in American electricity demand through 2030, half from data centers.

If a wealthy, energy-saturated economy like the United States still needs a substantial expansion of new generation, what does that imply for nations that have not yet electrified half their villages?

The critical point is that developing nations are seeking not marginal improvements but rather fundamental, dramatic transformations in living standards. This necessitates massive investments in infrastructure, industrialization, and agricultural modernization – all energy-intensive.

Here is the uncomfortable truth some Western policymakers avoid: A family in Lagos or Lahore cannot reach the living standards of a family in Ohio on rooftop solar panels and battery banks. Rationing power does not produce an industrial base, a modern health system, or a mechanized farm sector. All need whatever mix of coal, gas, oil, hydro, and nuclear can be built the fastest and most affordably.

Vijay Jayaraj

Vijay Jayaraj is a Science and Research Associate at the CO2 Coalition, Arlington, Virginia. He holds a postgraduate degree in energy management from Robert Gordon University and an M.S. in environmental sciences from the University of East Anglia, both in the U.K., and a B.S. in engineering from Anna University, India.

Gavin’s High Speed Rail Disaster

The federal government pulled its money because the project violated terms and conditions of federal funding

By Katy Grimes, August 14, 2026

California’s high-speed rail project has no operational trains and no high-speed track laid on the actual alignment, as of August 2026.

Gov. Gavin Newsom has blown $18 billion on California High Speed Rail and the project is about to run out of money.

California’s High-Speed Rail boondoggle is now estimated to cost taxpayers $231 billion, up from its original $33.5 billion price tag in 2008 when voters passed Proposition 1A. It is 2026, and still there are NO trains running.

Gov. Gavin Newsom. (Photo: Kevin Sanders for California Globe)

In Gov. Newsom's first State of the State address in 2019, he announced the high speed rail project, as planned to go from Sacramento to San Diego, "would cost too much and take too long. There's been too little oversight and not enough transparency," Newsom said. However, rather than scrapping the entire project, he doubled down on stupid, and keeping a segment from Bakersfield to Merced in the Central Valley.
The very next day, President Donald Trump demanded the California Governor return the $3.5 billion it received from the federal government for the "disaster" high-speed rail project. "California has been forced to cancel the massive bullet train project after having spent and wasted many billions of dollars,"
Trump tweeted. "They owe the Federal Government three and a half billion dollars. We want that money back now. Whole project is a 'green' disaster!"
The 2018 High Speed Rail planning options did not include a Merced to Bakersfield route, but did have a Fresno to Bakersfield option at a cost of approximately $2.55 billion. "We'll connect the revitalized Central Valley to other parts of the state, and continue to push for more federal funding and private dollars,"" Newsom said. "But let's just get something done."
"For those who want to walk away from this whole endeavor, I offer you this: Abandoning high-speed rail entirely means we will have wasted billions of dollars with nothing but broken promises and lawsuits to show for it," he added. "And by the way, I am not interested in sending $3.5 billion in federal funding that was allocated to this project back to Donald Trump."

California's High Speed Rail Scheme
"If it is built, California's High-Speed Rail would be the largest public works project in state history. That fact alone appears to be intoxicating to state officials, in a perpetual quest to have California be the first state to do anything," **I reported in 2011.** That's how long California's High Speed Rail has served only as a jobs program and a really bad joke on California voters and taxpayers.
"Even though high-speed rail has become nothing more than a pipeline project for grabbing big money and a big lie, Gov. Jerry Brown signed the rail bill Wednesday, sealing California's economic fate. Because of the illegitimacy of the project's intent, California taxpayers will be left holding the bill."

I wrote that in 2012. Since then, the only thing that has changed is California Governor Gavin Newsom is now responsible for this High Speed Swindle.
The bill Brown signed in 2012 authorized $5.8 billion to start construction of only one high-speed rail line in the Central Valley, and included $2.6 billion in state rail bond funds, along with $3.2 billion in federal funds.

"But California will have to borrow every dime of that state money to build the high-speed boondoggle."

“Voters were deceived by the original ballot summary and language in **Proposition 1A** from 2008, but the state’s lawmakers seem to find that fact inconvenient. And, the entire project is lacking in private, public and debt funding to complete even the most minor operating segment.”
While Newsom inherited an already troubled project, he has continued and defended it, secured additional state commitments, and publicly attributed federal funding cuts to political factors.

It is a major infrastructure failure with billions in cost overruns, delays that look like gold bricking, scope changes, and absurd optimistic early assumptions.

As I explained in 2012, the governor, legislators and the High Speed Rail Authority were (and still are) violating the law:

Prop. 1A states, “The high-speed train system shall be planned and constructed in a manner that minimizes urban sprawl and impacts on the natural environment.” But the impact of the rail system may actually create suburban communities around train stations within reasonable distances from urban areas and higher employment areas. The train system will dissect both urban and rural communities which will be problematic, as well as a serious violation of the “natural environment.” The trains will travel through densely populated cities, but also through sensitive agricultural and natural areas in the state.

The train system will dissect both urban and rural communities which will be problematic, as well as a serious violation of the “natural environment.” The trains will travel through densely populated cities, but also through sensitive agricultural and natural areas in the state.

Other areas of the high-speed rail law are being violated as well:

* The California High-Speed Rail Authority must have all of the the funding ahead of time, before any construction starts on a new segment.
* The high-speed train system must operate on its own entirely, and in the black. That means operating profitably, and includes caveats of no government subsidy. The plan relies heavily on a projection of 100 million users by 2030, a notion that was created with manipulated data, and is absurd.
* Prop. 1A stipulates 11 requirements that must be met before funds can be released for the construction of a “corridor” or “usable segment.” Specifically, some of these requirements include actual high-speed train service, ridership, revenue projections and planned passenger service.
* The success of any legitimate transportation system must be based on connectivity. “For each corridor described in subdivision (b), passengers shall have

the capability of traveling from any station on that corridor to any other station on that corridor without being required to change trains," the law states. "Stations shall be located in areas with good access to local mass transit or other modes of transportation." This means that, unless there are extensive connecting rail systems already in place in the high-speed rail destinations, cab companies, limo services and car rental companies should be lining up to rent space in the train stations. Commuters will not have the necessary train and bus systems to transfer to with the existing plan.

The law also calls for certified EIR's for each segment of the system. Instead of dealing with the environmental issues, Brown tried to suspend the California Environmental Quality Act guidelines for the project. But that move brought about several lawsuits, which have held up important parts of the entire project.

In "**California's Electric High Speed Rail: No Power, No Money, No 'High Speed,'**" we speculated if the high-speed trains will be powered by windmills, solar panels, cooking oil and algae since California's electricity grid can't even power the state on a hot day reliably without asking electric car owners to please refrain from plugging in.

In May, Assemblyman Carl DeMaio (R-San Diego) spoke in the California Assembly about the High Speed Rail "FRAUD COVERUP" in Assembly Bill 1608 by Assemblywoman Lori Wilson (D-Suisun City):

FRAUD COVERUP: Instead of stopping the massive fraud happening in state programs at your expense, CA Democrats are covering it all up by passing AB 1608 to allow the High Speed Rail project to hide evidence of fraud from the public! I confronted them on the Assembly Floor with the receipts!

"The only legislation that should be coming to this floor regarding the High Speed Rail Boondoggle Project is a law that would cancel the project as quickly as possible and try to mitigate the massive financial losses that taxpayers have suffered," DeMaio said.

California voters approved **Proposition 1A in 2008**, the "Safe, Reliable High-Speed Passenger Train Bond Act for the 21st Century." Here are some details:

*** $33.5 billion cost.** They approved a total cost of $33.5 billion for a high-speed rail system. The $33.5 billion was to be made up of a combination of 1/3 federal funds, 1/3 state funds and 1/3 private funds. Importantly, the investment from California taxpayers was limited to a $9.95 billion bond.

*** S.F. to L.A.** Voters approved a system connecting San Francisco to Los Angeles, with a trip time of two hours and 40 minutes, at a cost of $55 per ticket. But the plan has veered sharply inland from San Francisco to Los Angeles, over to the Central

Valley, with a leg from Fresno to Bakersfield. And the cost of the trip jumped to $105.
Even ridership numbers have been toyed with. Voters were told that there would be a ridership of 95 million passengers by 2030. Ridership estimates have decreased nearly three times since 2008, and they are still absurdly inflated. In the new report, they're estimated to be as high as 36 million passengers by 2060 (page 5-17). That's about a third of the Prop. 1A promise.
* **Bond repayment.** Repaying high-speed rail bonds will cost the state's General Fund $647 million per year for 30 years, or approximately $20 billion for the $9.95 billion bond.
So California has spent $18 billion on the High-Speed Rail project with no operational high-speed service, costs have massively exceeded original projections, and the project faces a near-term cash crunch.

It's well past the time to pull the plug.

Katy Grimes
Katy Grimes, the Editor in Chief of the California Globe, is a long-time Investigative Journalist covering the California State Capitol, the co-author of California's War Against Donald Trump: Who Wins? Who Loses? and a contributor to "Taxifornia 2016."
A California native and Navy mom, Katy lives in Sacramento, CA.

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Reminder: The last page of this newsletter has a membership application. Please join COLAB.

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202-224-3553 DC
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Senator Adam Schiff
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https://www.schiff.senate.gov/contact/

Representative Salud Carbajal
202-225-3601 DC
805-546-6348 District
carbajal.house.gov/contact

Representative Jimmy Panetta
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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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General members will receive all COLAB updates and newsletters. Voting privileges are limited to Voting Members and Sustainable Members with one vote per membership.

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