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

Weekly Update
Aug 24 - 31, 2026

You Are Now a Santa Cruz Taxpayer

In other words, some of the tax dollars that you have paid to San Luis Obispo County are now on their way to Santa Cruz County. You might be asking yourself, why would our county (which is struggling financially) send my tax dollars to Santa Cruz County?

The short answer is to make Supervisor Gibson happy. $25,000 of your tax dollars are now going to some political activist employed by Santa Cruz to fight offshore oil drilling, and that gives Gibson the warm fuzzies. The funds are for participation in the Local Government Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Coordination Program.

You may be asking yourself whether there really is a threat that offshore drilling may be expanded off the California coast. The answer is: highly unlikely. While the Trump administration is opening up the opportunity for new leases off the California coast, there has been no interest from the oil industry to negotiate such leases.

Here in San Luis Obispo County, there are two big factors preventing offshore drilling. The first is that most geologists believe there is little to no oil under the seabed of our coast. The second is that San Luis Obispo County voters approved Measure A in 1986 which prohibits the development of onshore support for offshore drilling. Without support from utilities such as receiving terminals and hubs to transport the oil, it is impossible to make offshore drilling work along our county's coast. Been that way for 40 years and will continue forever unless voters decide differently.

The vote to send your tax dollars to Santa Cruz was 3 – 2, with Supervisors Peschong and Moreno opposing. Both stated that with Measure A in place, we don't need to keep fighting against something that isn't happening and that the tax dollars are needed here in our own county for our own services.

Gibson's justification for sending your money to his friends in Santa Cruz was that the evil Trump administration is plotting and scheming to plaster our entire California coast with oil rigs which will scare away all the tourists. Odd, coming from a former oil industry geologist who should know a thing or two about how that industry works.

It appears he knows very well how the political consulting business works – he is keeping it well funded for some Santa Cruz political activist saving us from a very

big very bad very invisible boogie man. If (when) Gibson or his colleagues are forced to deny funding requests
from legitimate San Luis Obispo County programs, we hope this little transaction will be remembered.

In COLAB's testimony against the cash giveaway, we suggested that supporters hold a fundraiser instead. They could raise money, increase awareness and keep local taxpayer funds local – where they are needed most.

As a fig leaf, Supervisor Paulding did request an accounting of how the funds are spent. It would be great if a detailed report was forthcoming, but we wouldn't be surprised to see a vague description of lobbying trips to Washington DC complete with expensive hotel and meal costs.

Slightly Hazy Cannabis Report

Item 3 on the Aug 19 BoS agenda read: Submittal of a report of the tax compliance audits of operators subject to the County Commercial Cannabis Business Tax Ordinance for the period July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025. The item was on the consent agenda and therefore had no discussion.

Previous discussions at the BoS indicated that we have 6 or 7 cannabis producers in the county, but we are unclear whether some may have consolidated. It is unfortunate that this report only covers 4 producers and has no explanation as to whether this is representative of the entire cannabis tax income to the county.

It is also unfortunate (irresponsible?) to note such a large variation with producer number 4 but give no details about the significant difference between what was reported and what was discovered under audit.

County of San Luis Obispo
Commercial Cannabis Business Tax Audits
Summary of Monetary Audit Findings

		TAXABLE REVENUES				AMOUNT DUE BY AUDIT FINDINGS			
Establishment *	Period Under Review	Reported	Audited	Difference	% of Reported Amount	Taxes/Fees Due/(Refund)	Penalties**	Interest**	Total Due/(Refund)
1	FY 2024-25	395,224	395,400	176	0.0%	11	-	-	11
2	FY 2024-25	432,039	431,439	(600)	-0.1%	(36)	-	-	(36)
3	FY 2024-25	172,808	172,808	-	0.0%	-	-	-	-
4	FY 2024-25	215,957	520,820	304,864	-	18,292	-	-	18,292
		$ 1,216,028	$ 1,520,468	$ 304,440		$ 18,266	$ -	$ -	$ 18,266

* Establishment names have been removed for purposes of confidentiality.
** The County will not assess penalties and interest on additional taxes due for the first cannabis audit if paid within thirty days of final report date.

It is worth noting that there is no retail operation within the unincorporated portion of SLO county – just production. Each city has its own regulations and tax structure.

Oversight Underappreciated

Item 22 on the Aug 18 BoS agenda was a request for approval of a resolution to dissolve the Citizen's Homeless Accountability Commission per the request of the Commission.

We find it tremendously unfortunate that any kind of oversight would be eliminated, but it is especially so with this topic. We are not suggesting any sort of maleficence, but it is a very large category of spending for the county and is always a sensitive subject with people concerned about responsible spending and value for the taxpayer.

Apparently, the committee faced challenges achieving a quorum and became frustrated with the logistics of doing substantive business.

Here are some highlights of the resolution:

WHEREAS, in 2022 the County of San Luis Obispo Board of Supervisors established the Citizens Homelessness Accountability Commission (CHAC); and

WHEREAS, over the course of its work, CHAC produced analyses and annual reports documenting progress, challenges, and system-level opportunities of the County's response to unhoused individuals and its five-year Countywide Plan to Address Homelessness; and

WHEREAS, CHAC members previously met to assess the effectiveness and sustainability of operating as a Brown Act body; and

WHEREAS, CHAC members identified that the formal requirements of a Brown Act have posed significant barriers to the CHAC's ability to carry out its duties; and

WHEREAS, CHAC chair and members affirm that the County has made strong, positive progress in implementing the goals of the County's five-year plan to address homelessness and

WHEREAS, the CHAC chair and members have expressed confidence in the direction of the CNOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors, State of California, that the Board hereby dissolves the Citizen's Homelessness Accountability Commission. I, the undersigned, hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was duly and regularly adopted and passed by the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors in its county's Homeless Services Division and no longer believe a formal oversight body is necessary to ensure progress or accountability; and

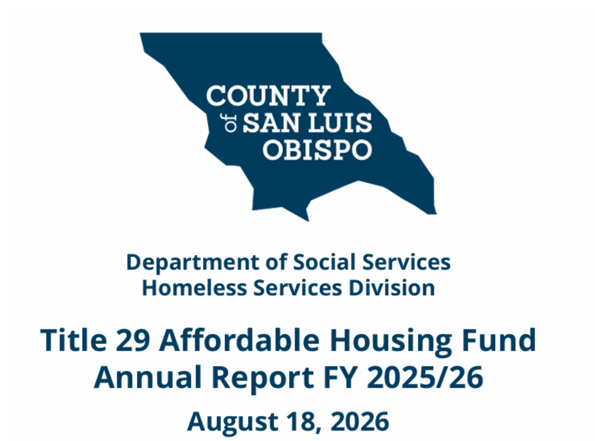
WHEREAS, certain CHAC members have expressed to the County that the CHAC be dissolved and allow the individual members to continue to collaborate on the County's homelessness response through other available avenues.

Assuming that county spending on homeless programs is on the up and up, and that efficiencies and accountability is all good, the oversight board still plays an important role in assuring taxpayers and policy makers that the county's efforts are being well managed.

We hope that a new committee might be formed in the future, and that logistical problems can be solved so that the public can once again be assured that the hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars are under scrutiny.

Affordable Housing Report

The last item of business, Item 29, on the August 18 BoS agenda was to receive and file the Title 29 Affordable Housing Fund Annual Report FY 2025-26. We applaud those who work to create affordable housing projects, and we appreciate their efforts to make them reasonably attractive and complimentary to the surrounding neighborhoods.


COUNTY of SAN LUIS OBISPO

Department of Social Services
Homeless Services Division

Title 29 Affordable Housing Fund
Annual Report FY 2025/26

August 18, 2026


The kind of housing desired by liberals, but opposed here in SLO County

There is no question that the shortage of affordable housing impacts our local workforce, which is a drag on our local economy. It is also clear that creating opportunity for entry level home stability assures a smoother transition to long-term productivity for the workforce.

What many do have a problem with, however, is the notion that low-income housing can be made affordable by putting an extra financial load on mid-level and higher income housing.
As it is, unless the support for a project comes from private fundraising, affordable housing is really subsidized housing. Whether in the form of grants or other types of government funding, the money always comes from the pockets of the taxpayer. Often, that very same taxpayer may be struggling to meet their own housing needs. Here are the highlights of the report:

Summary of All Accounts

Beginning Balance FY 25-26	Interest Available	Disbursed Allocations	Unspent Allocations	Funds Allocated in the 2026 Action Plan	Remaining Available Funds
$558,321.03	$20,952.95	$108,775.83	$205,734.00	$0.00	$264,764.15

The agency is currently working with 2 organizations developing 5 projects throughout the county. Each is different, and designed to meet different needs within the community. We count 225 units of low income housing all together. Here is a summary of each project:

Rolling Hills III

- Developed by People's Self-Help Housing
- A 28-unit affordable housing community for low-income individuals and families including 7 units for those experiencing homelessness in Templeton
- Action Plan 2024: $89,978
- Pre-Construction
- Estimated Completion January 2029

Arroyo Terrace Apartments

- Developed by San Luis Obispo Nonprofit Housing Corporation
- A 63-unit affordable housing community for low- and very low-income households
- Action Plan 2022: $55,088
- Action Plan 2024: $199,884
- Under Construction, Estimated Completion October 2026

Balay Ko on Monterey

- Developed by San Luis Obispo Nonprofit Housing Corporation
- A 56-unit affordable housing community for low-income seniors in San Luis Obispo
- Action Plan 2024: $228,641
- Under Construction, Estimated Completion October 2026

Monterey Family Apartments

- Developed by San Luis Obispo Nonprofit Housing Corporation
- A 50-unit affordable housing community for low-income seniors in San Luis Obispo
- Action Plan 2025: $69,448
- Under Construction, Estimated Completion December 2027

Cambria Pines

- Developed by People's Self-Help Housing
- A 28-unit affordable housing community for low-income individuals and families including 7 units for those experiencing homelessness in Templeton
- Action Plan 2024: $89,978
- Pre-Construction
- Estimated Completion January 2029

The following chart illustrates the funding available for future projects:

Remaining funds for Future Projects

Fund Source	Beginning Balance FY 25-26	Disbursed Allocations	Unspent Allocations	Accrued Interest	Low, Medium & High-Risk Funds	Remaining Available Funds*
Open to All	$87,398.19	$0.00	$52,152.13	$20,952.95	$0.00	**$56,199.01**
North County	$202,252.43	$88,040.43	$89,978.00	$0.00	$62,104.00	**($37,870.00)**
Central County	$90,588.26	$13,388.67	$17,296.00	$0.00	$46,652.00	**$13,251.59**
South County	$124,427.55	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	**$124,427.55**
North Coast	$53,654.60	$7,346.73	$46,307.87	$0.00	$1,392.00	**($1,392.00)**
Total Amounts	$558,321.03	$108,775.83	$205,734.00	$20,952.95	$110,148.00	**$154,616.15****

*Low, Medium and High-Risk funds have been deducted from the Remaining Available Amount.

Total recommended funding for the 2027 NOFA is $154,616.15 (Open to All funds, Central County funds, South County funds).

Local Sharpshooter Concern

The San Luis Obispo County Department of Agriculture is working to determine if the recent discovery of a Glassy-winged sharpshooter on an ornamental plant in an Arroyo Grande nursery poses a threat to county agricultural production.

A Glassy-winged sharpshooter

The Glassy-winged sharpshooter is an invasive pest that carries Pierce's disease, which is particularly harmful to grapes and some citrus crops. Native to eastern Mexico, the pest is sometimes spread via nursery operations that ship plants throughout the United States.

In 1999, a Glassy-winged sharpshooter infestation was responsible for destroying over 300 acres of grapes in Temecula, California. The resultant setback caused many years of disruption to the wine industry in that region.

Grape plants affected by Pierce's Disease

The San Luis Obispo County Department of Agriculture reports the following on its webpage: Out of an abundance of caution, County agricultural staff conducted comprehensive visual inspections of all plant material at the San Luis Obispo Costco location. Inspectors examined plants for GWSS eggs, nymphs, and adults and found no evidence of the pest. In addition, insect detection traps were deployed on the property and throughout the surrounding shopping center to support ongoing monitoring efforts.

For more info, see: "https://www.slocounty.ca.gov/departments/agriculture-weights-and-measures/department-news/county-investigation-detects-no-glassy-winged-sharpshooter-in-san-luis-obispo"County Investigation Detects No Glassy-Winged Sharpshooter in San Luis Obispo - County of San Luis Obispo

Change at REACH

REACH (Regional Economic Action Coalition) founding CEO Melissa James is stepping down in her role but will remain active with the organization. James helped to create REACH eight years ago.

REACH actively works with business and community leaders to promote and facilitate economic development that benefits the central coast. Their “goal is to transform the quality of life on the Central Coast through an unprecedented regional pursuit of inclusive economic prosperity.”

Melissa James, founding CEO of REACH

We like REACH because it is the most active economic development effort in our county, and in our region, looking to the future to anticipate smart potential that drives jobs, grows our economy and secures community wellbeing. This means understanding the potential and working to identify and connect the pieces needed to achieve such potential.

REACH sometimes comes under criticism because it receives some public funding from San Luis Obispo County. However, the funding is a small portion of their overall budget, and the county spends little else on economic development. The question about the value to the taxpayer is valid, but few have alternatives to suggest.

James will be assisting in a nationwide search for her replacement. She will assist with training and then shift to an advisory position. We wish her well in her new role.

You Are Invited to the Fall Forum

Last Week

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.

Emergent Trends
Page 32

Newsom's Energy Wrecking Crew

Gov. Newsom Wails About Assaults on the Free Press, then Signs 'Stop Nick Shirley Act' into Law

COLAB in Depth
Page 37

California's Housing Shortage Has a Washington Fingerprint

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

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Newsom’s Energy Wrecking Crew

The CA Energy Commission has become a machine for higher bills, slower housing, fewer fuel options, and the next mandate

By Richie Greenberg, August 20, 2026

Governor Gavin Newsom does not set California’s electricity rates from a high podium. He does something more devious: He personally staffs the California Energy Commission (CEC).

Gavin installs loyalists, treats the controversial results as if they fell from the sky. The five-member CEC board is his wrecking crew.

David Hochschild is the chairman. J. Andrew McAllister writes the building codes. Siva Gunda runs the forecasts and the fuel-market retreats. Noemí Gallardo leads site selection. Nancy Skinner, who authored the oil-profit law as a senator, now sits on the commission that delayed it.

After seven-plus years, this is not some magical independent watchdog agency that seemed to have wandered off. It is Newsom’s board.

Start with the state’s energy regulations. California households pay roughly twice the national average for electricity, in the mid-30 cents a kilowatt-hour against about 17 elsewhere. The extra cost runs into the tens of billions a year. California’s commercial and industrial customers get hit even harder.

Data centers and factories look at these rates and build somewhere else.

Newsom’s energy commissioners keep signing the plans and the standards that make those horrendous prices stick.

Then look at our homes. Every three-year Title 24 cycle, Commissioner McAllister’s building codes add another layer of regulations: rooftop solar, electric-ready panels, heat-pumps. The 2025 code, coming in force January 1, 2026, makes heat pumps the required path for both space heating and water heating in new single-family homes in every climate zone up and down the state. Gas furnaces and gas tankless water heaters are gone.

Existing homes get squeezed too – from electric-ready rules, air-district zero-NOx water-heater mandates, and upcoming sales limits. Your kitchen and water heaters are being redesigned so gas becomes the expensive exception.

The CEC commission calls it an energy budget. The buyer calls it a higher mortgage.

Light Bulbs? CEC's Title 20 made selling a standard incandescent illegal by 2018. Then they regulated LEDs. Then AB 2208 banned screw-base CFLs in 2024 and pin-base CFLs and linear fluorescents in 2025.

First they pushed adoption of CFLs. Then they outlawed it.

Amazon will not ship ordinary bulbs to a California address.

This week, the CEC unanimously approved the nation's first replacement-tire efficiency standards. Starting in 2029, replacement tires need CEC "rolling-resistance" and "wet-grip" numbers, manufacturer reporting, and a state rating system.
After they went for your house, your heater, and your light bulbs, the CEC went after the spare.

How about power generation? It was the same story in reverse. Fountain Wind, a 205 megawatt plant in Shasta County, used the "fast track" the state's Sacramento legislature created so the CEC could override local construction blockage. After years of delay, Newsom's commission voted unanimously to kill it – claiming dozens of "unmitigable" impacts. The same people who demand more wind just showed project developers the fast track is a trap.

Diablo Canyon Power Plant as well: California's last nuclear plant still puts out about 9 percent of the state's power around the clock. Official policy was to shut it in 2025. Then the margins looked ugly and Newsom signed on to keep it through 2030. The CEC had to write the annual reports explaining why the plant they had treated as a relic was suddenly "prudent." The Nuclear Regulatory Commission licensed the plant into the 2040s. Newsom's CEC authorized a mere five years – and is kicking the next extension down the road.

Gasoline? Newsom signed SB X1-2, handed the CEC power to cap refining profit margins and penalize "excess" profits. He declared he had beaten Big Oil. Nancy Skinner (the Tire Tyrant) wrote the law. Then Phillips 66 shut its Los Angeles-area refinery and Valero sought to idle its Benicia refinery – about 18 percent of in-state capacity. The commission paused the penalty until 2030 to restore “investor confidence.”

Punish the industry until it leaves. Then panic about dropping supply.

Newsom hides behind the CEC’s letterhead. The statutes are accepted as “the law.” The CEC commissioners have “independent duties,” it’s claimed.

Governor Newsom chose the CEC chair, the building code writer, the site lead and the vice chair. The tire rule, the dead wind farm, the nuclear plant scramble, and the refinery debacle – all are on his watch.

The CEC is not an agency enshrined in California’s state constitution- it was created by statute in 1974 and can be abolished or restructured the same way – through ordinary legislation or a Governor’s reorganization plan, because it is not a constitutional agency. Gubernatorial candidate Steve Hilton has vowed to reorganize and combine the CEC with other existing state regulatory agencies to streamline regulation.

The CEC is unlike anything else in the country. No other state has built an independent energy commission with this much reach. It controls utility-scale power planning and sites. At the same time, it writes broad efficiency standards for the products we buy every day – refrigerators, air conditioners, computers, and now tires.

California does not need another climate sermon. It needs to say the quiet part: Newsom’s Energy Commission has become a machine for higher bills, slower housing, fewer fuel options, and the next mandate. He hired them. He kept them. The wrecking crew is his.

Richie Greenberg
Richie Greenberg is a long-time San Francisco resident, political commentator and former Republican candidate for mayor. He was founder and media spokesman for the recall of DA Chesa Boudin. Follow him on X @greenbergnation and richiegreenberg.org

Gov. Newsom Wails About Assaults on the Free Press, then Signs 'Stop Nick Shirley Act' into Law

'California Passes a law making it a crime to report a crime'

By Katy Grimes, August 23, 2026

California Governor Gavin Newsom signed the "Stop Nick Shirley Act," Assembly Bill 2624, by Assemblywoman Mia Bonta (D-Oakland) into law Saturday August 22, 2026. Bonta claims her bill is about "privacy for immigration support services providers."

Gov. Newsom two days ago screeched on X about unfair attacks on the free press: "A free press cannot function under constant threats and retaliation from the government. Reporters must be free to hold those in power accountable — without fear of retribution. The assault on the free press must end!"

And then he signed the "Stop Nick Shirley Act" into law.

Republicans nicknamed the bill the "Stop Nick Shirley Act" for independent YouTuber and citizen journalist Nick Shirley after he exposed Somali daycare fraud in Minnesota.

Bonta, wife of California's Attorney General Rob Bonta, claims it does not fine or jail journalists simply for "uncovering" Democrat fraud.

However, her bill will fine citizen journalists a minimum $4,000 for exposing fraud inside "Immigration Support Service Providers" – illegal services to illegal aliens.

Bonta's bill would impose huge civil sanctions on independent investigative reporters for "harassing" what Bonta calls "immigrant services" workers who, in fact, are providing taxpayer-funded goods and services to illegal aliens. It is designed to use as a weapon to intimidate and punish journalists who dissent from mainstream views.

AB 2624 is reminiscent of AB 2098 from October 2022 when Gov. Newsom signed a bill to censor California doctors accused of "Spreading COVID Misinformation" during Covid. Assembly Bill 2098 put unconstitutional restrictions on free speech by medical professionals, and subjected them to disciplinary actions by the Medical Board of California if they did not adhere to the "approved COVID treatment consensus."

Even before AB 2098 went into effect, it was already used as a weapon to intimidate and punish doctors who dissented from "mainstream views." However, the bill was ultimately ruled unconstitutional and the governor and COVID "experts" were defeated over their law to punish doctors for "Covid Misinformation."
California legislators are trying to make investigating fraud illegal, as Elon Musk correctly noted on X.

Within days of announcing her new bill, Ms. Bonta claimed "Right-wing agitators, ineffective legislators, and Trump loyalists are intentionally spreading significant misinformation about Assembly Bill 2624."
Assemblyman Carl DeMaio (R-San Diego) calls it what it is:

CENSORSHIP: The "Stop Nick Shirley Act" that makes it illegal to post videos of fraud against taxpayers is now law. Democrats decided to stop independent journalists from investigating fraud instead of stopping the fraud.

DeMaio should know. On Wednesday, Assembly Democrats censored him on the floor of the Assembly during debate over Bonta's bill.

"California Democrats don't care about freedom of speech. They silenced @carldemaio when he attempted to debate the Stop Nick Shirley Act bill. Who is next?" I posted to X.
It is curious that Gov. Newsom signed the Stop Nick Shirley Act into law given that it is an unconstitutional attack on free speech… something he claims to care about, but only for people in his tribe.

Governor Newsom, what was that you were saying about "a free press?"
Assemblyman Carl DeMaio just announced Sunday morning that he is asking the US Department of Justice's Office of Civil Rights to intervene to block implementation of what he says is a "blatantly unconstitutional" law.

DeMaio said AB 2624 also imposes stiff financial penalties on citizen journalists for posting videos – and the final version of the bill even removed exemptions for journalists under the California Shield Law (Evidence Code – EVID § 1070).

The Office of Civil Rights is currently challenging a number of California state laws and policies in court for violating constitutional rights.

"Newsom and California Democrats have a bad record of repeatedly imposing unconstitutional laws – only to be stopped by the US DOJ and the courts," DeMaio noted. “But the damage is done because while we fight in court our constitutional rights are being infringed upon.”

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.

California’s Housing Shortage Has a Washington Fingerprint

A bill with sponsors from both parties, in both chambers, that costs Washington nothing to implement fairly should not need three decades to become law

By Jay Rogers, August 20, 2026

I landed in California in 1990, the tail end of the Reagan afterglow, when the state still felt like the reward at the end of the road trip. Three decades later I’ve got two sons who will be hunting for their first home in a state where “starter home” has become a punchline. What’s standing between them and a house isn’t just price. It’s their parents’ generation, sitting tight in homes we can’t afford to sell.

Blame Washington. Specifically, blame a tax rule Congress wrote in 1997 and then forgot existed.

Under Section 121 of the tax code, a homeowner can exclude up to $250,000 of capital gain on the sale of a primary residence from federal tax, or $500,000 for a married couple filing jointly, so long as they've owned and lived in the place for two of the last five years. Congress set those numbers in the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997 and never touched them again. No inflation adjustment. No update for the fact that home values have exploded since Bill Clinton was in office. The same year Congress locked in that $500,000 ceiling, Titanic hit theaters and the Spice Girls owned the charts. My oldest son wasn't even born yet. The exclusion is old enough to buy the house it's punishing you for selling.

Here's the mechanism, because it matters more than the outrage. Say a married couple bought a house in the late 1990s for $300,000, put $150,000 into it over the years in documented improvements, and sells it today for $1.6 million after $100,000 in selling costs. Their gain before any exclusion runs about $1.05 million. Subtract the $500,000 joint exclusion and they're still on the hook for federal tax on roughly $550,000, on top of whatever California's Franchise Tax Board takes, since the state taxes that gain as ordinary income up to 13.3%. That's not a wealthy family who is cashing out a mega-mansion. That's a couple who bought a normal 3 bed/2 bath house a long time ago and watched the market do what California's housing shortage always does to prices.

New data from the real estate analytics firm Cotality bears this out. One in four California home sellers now realize more than $500,000 in gain when they sell, enough to exceed the exclusion before they've paid a single closing cost. That's not a rounding error. That's a quarter of the sellers in the largest housing market in the country running into a tax wall built for a very different economy.

The predictable result is what economists call the lock-in effect, and what I'd call common sense. If selling your house triggers a tax bill in the mid five figures or worse, you don't sell. You stay put, your empty-nest four-bedroom stays off the market, and the young family that would have bought it goes looking somewhere else, usually somewhere less expensive and further from work. Inventory that should turn over every seven or eight years sits frozen for two decades. Multiply that by a few million homeowners and you've got a housing shortage that Sacramento didn't cause but sure isn't fixing either.

Congress actually has a fix sitting in committee, and it's the rare bill that draws support from both sides of the aisle without anybody having to hold their nose. Rep. Jimmy Panetta, a California Democrat, and Rep. Mike Kelly, a Pennsylvania Republican, introduced the More Homes on the Market Act in the House back in February 2025. It would double the exclusion to $500,000 for single filers and $1 million for joint filers and then index both figures to inflation going forward so Congress never has to relive this fight. A Senate companion followed in December, led by Texas Republican John Cornyn with Colorado Democrat Michael Bennet, Montana Republican Steve Daines, California Democrat Adam Schiff, Wyoming Republican John Barrasso, and Arizona Democrat Mark Kelly signed on. Both bills remain stuck in their respective tax committees, which is where good ideas in Washington go to gather dust while Congress finds time for whatever's trending. To be fair, this isn't a free lunch, and the critics raise a point worth taking seriously. Doubling the exclusion reduces federal revenue, and some will argue it mostly helps long-tenured owners who are already sitting on substantial equity. Fine. But "sitting on equity" and "having cash" are not the same thing, and a tax code that punishes you for turning illiquid home equity into a smaller house and a paid-off mortgage isn't protecting anyone from anything. It's just protecting the status quo, which in California's housing market means protecting scarcity. And the fix doesn't give anyone a windfall. It excludes gain, not sale proceeds, and taxable gain still starts with your sale price minus your costs and your adjusted basis. Keep your receipts for that kitchen remodel and that new roof. They count.

There was never a policy reason to freeze this number for thirty years. Congress just never got around to unfreezing it, the same way Congress never gets around to a lot of things that would actually help ordinary families instead of donors. A bill with sponsors from both parties, in both chambers, that costs Washington nothing to implement fairly and asks nothing of taxpayers except a fair shot at their own equity, should not need three decades to become law.

My kids don't need Congress to hand them a house. They need the people who already own one to be able to sell it without Uncle Sam treating a Reagan-era tax bracket like scripture. Pass the More Homes on the Market Act, index it, and get out of the way. The market will do the rest, the way it always does when Washington stops standing in the way.

Jay Rogers
Jay Rogers is a financial professional with more than 30 years of experience in private equity, private credit, hedge funds, and wealth management. He has a BS from Northeastern University and has completed postgraduate studies at UCLA, UPENN, and Harvard. He writes about issues in finance, constitutional law, national security, human nature, and public policy.

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