



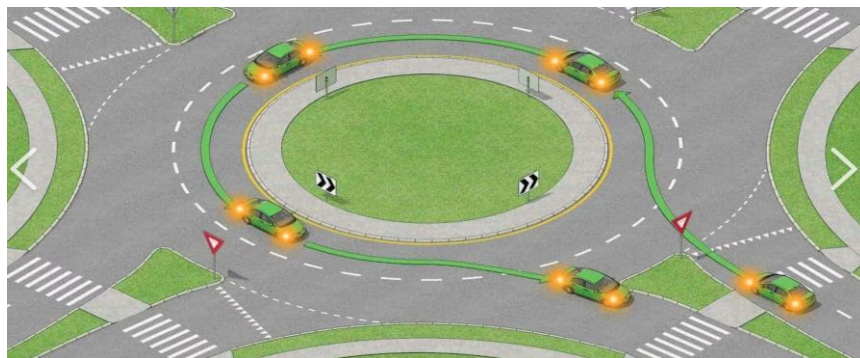
COLAB
San Luis Obispo County

The Coalition of Labor Agriculture and Business

Weekly Update
March 30 – April 6, 2026

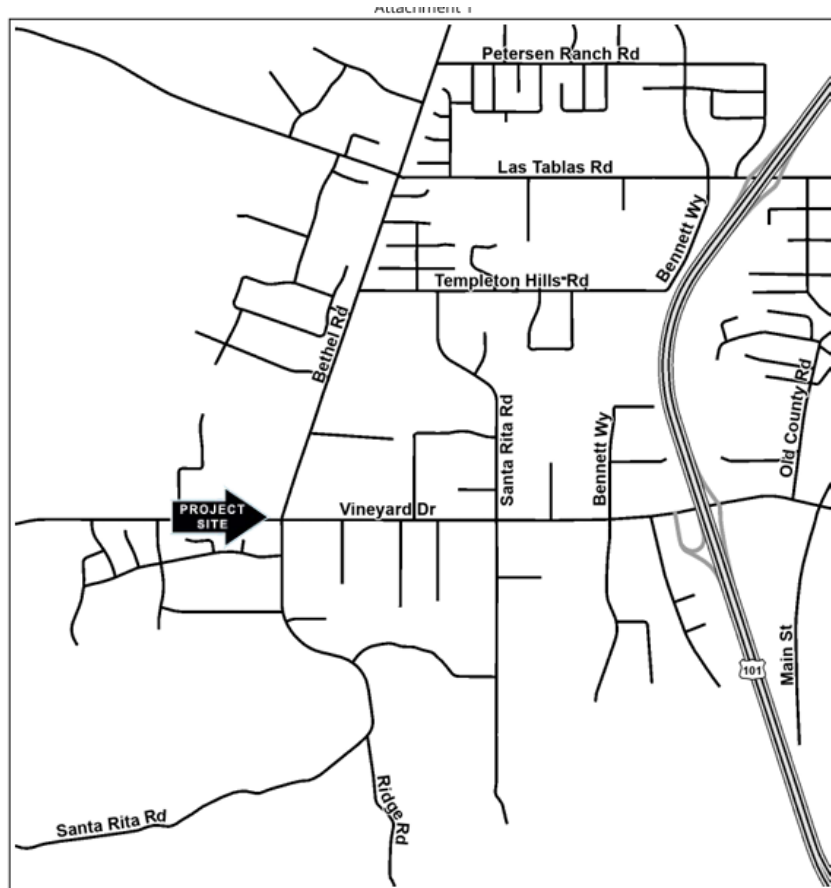
Roundabout Goes Flat

The February 24 Board of Supervisors meeting began with a large crowd of Templeton residents there to speak in protest about a proposed roundabout on Vineyard Avenue. Nearly two dozen residents voiced their concern in opposition to the proposal during public comment. The main thrust of their concern was that two times a day, just before and just after school, there's about a three-minute delay getting through the intersection of Vineyard and Bethel.



They are quite passionate that such a minor delay does not warrant a roundabout at that intersection. County Public Works has designated that intersection as problematic. Public Works says that Vineyard is a thoroughfare or corridor and should not have that kind of delay.

Residents also voiced concern about kids walking or riding their bikes to school and having to navigate a roundabout. Many also expressed concerns about the potential for eminent domain proceedings against the four homeowners who live on those corners. Should a full-scale roundabout be constructed, it would require taking some of each of their properties.



The proposed roundabout location

The current proposal was for a temporary roundabout designed as a demonstration project to illustrate how a permanent project might improve traffic flow. But all the people speaking against the roundabout were convinced that if a temporary roundabout was built, it would almost automatically lead to a permanent project.

Supervisor Peschong was especially adamant against the roundabout and said that he has had many conversations throughout the community with people opposed to the project but not a single one in favor. He referred to it as a solution in search of a problem.



The temporary roundabout would be funded through a federal transportation grant of \$200,000. But the estimate for a permanent roundabout was \$3 million. Many speakers pointed out that three million in today's dollars would probably mean at least six million dollars in two or three years when the roundabout was actually constructed.

Supervisor Gibson was dismissive of the concerns raised by the residents. He pointed out that often roundabouts have a lot of opposition until they're built and then suddenly many people like them.

The rest of the board was more sympathetic and voted to accept the \$200,000 federal grant only if it could be applied to other locations and other projects.

Silly Fuss

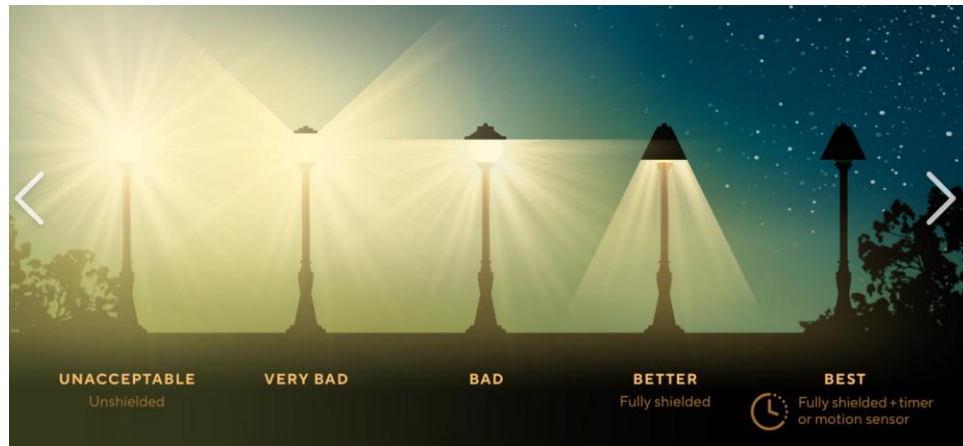
Item 39 on the board agenda started out as a language clean-up item that didn't look like it would bring about much discussion or debate. However, it turned a little awkward near the end. The measure read as follows.

Hearing to consider an amendment to the Inland and Coastal Land Use Ordinances to: [A] Amend Section 23.04.320 Outdoor Lights and 22.10.060 Exterior Lighting and Sections 23.11.030 and 22.80.030 Definitions for light source; [B] Amend Sections 22.70.060 and 23.01.060 to increase noticing radius requirements to 1,000 feet for projects located outside of urban and village reserve lines, and 1,000 feet for energy storage facilities; [C] Amend Sections 23.08.094 and 22.34.050 to require approval by a majority of votes for the granting of a permit, lease or authorization for construction, installation or expansion of onshore support facilities for offshore gas and oil activities in compliance with Measure A; and [D] Expand school district housing in the Public Facilities Land Use Category to the Coastal Zone. (County File Number: LRP2025-00012). (Planning and Building)

There were four parts making up the motion. They were:

- Lighting – updating lighting standards
- Public Hearing Noticing – expanding noticing radius for energy storage facilities and projects outside of urban and village reserve lines
- Measure A – clean up for consistency with existing legislation
- School District Housing – expanding inland use standards to Coastal Zone

The lighting matter was of no concern to the BoS. It received no pushback or substantive discussion.



The Measure A cleanup didn't raise an eyebrow either. This despite a few local politicians continuing to blivate and thump their chests while claiming that they have put on their big boy pants and bravely stood up against the threat of thousands of offshore drill rigs that would otherwise cover our coastline. Measure A, which passed in 1986, requires that construction of any onshore support infrastructure be put to a vote of the people, thus making it highly unlikely that any drilling offshore of San Luis Obispo County will ever occur – even if there was oil (there isn't) and even if our entire shoreline wasn't protected by marine preserves that prohibit drilling (which it is). So much for the phony heroics!



The controversy came with the discussion of the 1,000 foot notification requirement for certain construction projects.

First, Supervisor Paulding went out of his way to push for the 1,000 feet notification to apply to battery energy storage facilities. This, because of the controversy over the Caballero battery facility built in Nipomo which he insists he had nothing to do with.



We can't disagree with the need to notify neighbors when such a facility is being planned, but we can't help but wonder if 1,000 feet is enough? Can being 1,000 feet downwind of a battery storage fire be safe?

Nobody voiced concern about that, or the school district housing element.

However, as the discussion was wrapping up, supervisor Ortiz-Legg made a request on behalf of Avila Beach, which is in her district. She made the point that because the village is surrounded by hills, is in a compact area serviced by one road for ingress/egress and that because every large-scale construction project impacts the entire community, she requested that the 1,000-foot noticing requirement be applied to the entire community.

This brought about an odd response from Paulding saying that if Ortiz-Legg got the 1,000-foot notice, he would want the same for Nipomo.



Avila Beach

While Ortiz-Legg’s request seemed reasonable, in the end Paulding’s demand killed any hope. The measure passed without the special carveout for Avila Beach.

County Parks Master Plan

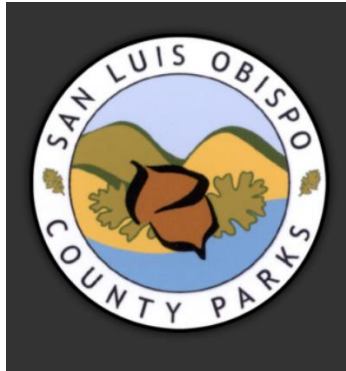
Parks are an important part of any community. As John Muir said: “Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul.”

Parks serve as recreation centers for old and young, places of solitude, community gatherings and relaxing open space that break up urban environments or opens up space for exploring. They also serve as land preservation and conservation.

So, they are of value to the community they serve.

San Luis Obispo County Parks and Recreation feel the need to have a master plan in order to better manage our parks system. Item 36 read: Request to receive,

review and file the status update on the development of the systemwide Parks and Recreation Master Plan. (Parks and Recreation)



While having a clear vision of success for a given department is a good thing, we wonder how much time and money is going into the effort. Have they hired consultants and how much are they paying? How much staff time is diverted from running parks to devising power point presentations?

We ask, because their presentation put a strong emphasis on funding – with heavy hints that they don’t have enough.

The report began with a timeline for the development of the master plan. Here is a graphic presentation of that timeline. The process is about a third of the way finished:



The following graphic represents the prioritization of their efforts in the preparation of the master plan:



Gathering the necessary data to guide their decision-making process looks like this:



To date, they have a basis for some of the data driven assumptions. Those assumptions are as follows:

Overall high satisfaction!

Parks are widely used, with local parks and trails forming the backbone of everyday recreation

Greatest importance: **access to natural areas, coastal amenities, trails, and local parks**

Maintain and improve existing parks and facilities

Sensitivity to fee increases and direct user costs

Limited funding and resource constraints - we need to find new approaches

Unincorporated communities rely on the County for close-to-home parks, recreation opportunities, and a sense of community

What the report didn't mention was exactly how the budget that is so wanting is actually managed. There was no figure on how many parks the department manages, nor how many employees it has to manage those many parks.

There was no data indicating exactly how much it costs to run the parks, or how much revenue park fees generate.

This brought us to visit the County Parks website which is found at: [Parks & Recreation - County of San Luis Obispo](#). Unfortunately, while the site is full of great information, little was available for how the department is actually run. The pages listing fees for various services and programs left most of the actual fee information blank. Again, we are left wondering about the total inventory of what the Parks and Recreation actually manages.

We are impressed by the variety. Lakes, camping, aquatics, fishing, golf, trails, dog parks, wedding sites and gathering sites are just some of the services offered. But we are left wondering about the actual nuts and bolts of the department.

A quick look at the current San Luis Obispo County Budget gives us these figures for a 24-employee count. It is unclear whether employees running special seasonal programming are included in the data:

222 - Parks and Recreation - Community Parks

Permanent

907	ACCOUNTANT I OR II OR III	1.00
914	ACCOUNTING TECHNICIAN	1.00
2203	ADMIN ASST SERIES	1.00
8795	ADMIN SERVICES MANAGER	1.00
8892	ADMIN SERVICES OFFICER I OR II	0.00
242	DIRECTOR OF PARKS AND RECREATION	1.00
1203	PARK OPERATIONS COORDINATOR	1.00
1223	PARK RANGER AIDE OR I OR II OR III	9.00
1210	PARK RANGER SPECIALIST	3.00
1251	PARKS SUPERINTENDENT	1.00
2802	PLANNER I OR II OR III	1.00
884	SECRETARY II	1.00
603	SR PLANNER	1.00
928	SUPV ADMIN CLERK II	0.00
1204	SUPV PARK RANGER	2.00
Permanent Totals		24.00

According to the 2025/26 county budget, the department currently costs taxpayers a little more than \$6.5 million. Again, this is not reflective of the revenues from fees.

Summary of Total Budget and General Fund support for General Fund Departments

Fund Center	General Fund Support		Total Budget (Expenditures)		
	FY 2025-26 Recommended GFS	GFS Change from FY 2024-25	FY 2025-26 Recommended Budget	Budget Change from FY 2024-25	% Change from FY 2024-25
222 - Parks and Recreation - Community Parks Fiscal and Administrative	5,564,381	(282,136)	6,658,993	(399,997)	-6%

We love our parks and recognize their role in our community. We are hopeful that this interim report sought only to inform the BoS of their progress towards achieving a useful master plan, and that future reports will provide much more fulsome data about how the department is doing the most with the budget that it has.

We also hope that the master plan that is finally adopted has a level of ability to adjust according to available resources and changing community needs. Master plans are great for establishing priorities and setting goals but should not limit or restrict the vision of leaders five or ten years into the process who have differing management approaches.

Fundraising Dinner Gratitude

The March 26 COLAB FUNDRAINING DINNER was a great success. As our only fundraiser of the year, we rely on the generosity of so many people, and they all came through in a big way. From attendees buying single tickets to those buying tables, the turnout was truly heartwarming.

The famous auction may have been the best in our 17-year history. Auction item donors offered fantastic goods, services and experiences. Donors responded with vigorous and generous bids. Auctioneer Todd Ventura and his crew, aided by

Supervisor John Peschong and Andy Caldwell, kept the room on the edge of their seats.



Auctioneer Todd Venture stirs up the crowd



The Ventura crew found a room full of generous bidders



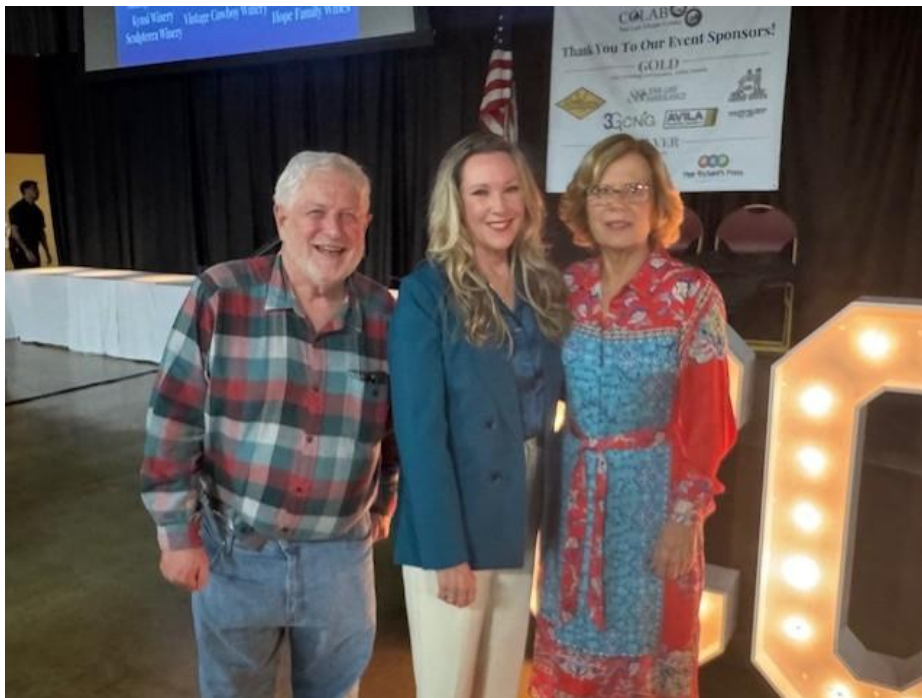
Supervisor John Peschong narrated the great items up for auction

The food was excellent as always. We are so very appreciative of the several wineries that donated excellent product for the tables. The bar was as popular as ever. Socializing was so lively that it took a half dozen requests to get people seated for the start of the program. Molly Pasutti of the Estero Bay Republican Women Federated gave a rousing rendition of the national anthem following a stirring flag presentation from the Future Farmers of America. COLAB veteran Mike Brown gave a touching invocation.

Ben Higgins was masterful in his interview of guest speaker Katy Grimes. We learned more about Gavin Newsom than we even suspected. Katy was a wonderful speaker and thoroughly enjoyed hanging out with COLAB. We hope to see her again in the future.



Ben Higgins asks compelling questions of Katy Grimes



Katy Grimes with COLAB veteran Mike Brown and President Jeanne Helphenstine

Andrea Seastrand, as President of the Central Coast Taxpayers Association, presented the 2025 Hero of The Taxpayers Award to Katy Grimes for her work exposing fraud and abuse by our state government.

This event wouldn't have been possible without the dedicated support of many volunteers. Each and every person who pitched in made a big difference.

Perhaps the most humbling aspect of this great evening was the feeling in the room that we are one big family. The enormous level of participation from many different industries, and the great level of support all contributed to a jovial atmosphere that reminded us that COLAB is an important and appreciated part of San Luis Obispo County.

In an ironic twist, we had a minor medical situation just before the start of the program. One of our sponsors, San Luis Ambulance, responded quickly and aided in a positive conclusion that was hardly noticed by guests.

We are especially appreciative of all of our sponsors for the evening:





Again, our most sincere thanks to all who participated.

Last Week

SLO Ag by the Numbers

California agriculture is facing growing challenges on many fronts. The cost of fuel, limited access to water for irrigation, increasing labor expenses, competition from foreign countries and unreasonable compliance overhead are all contributing

factors in many cases, these challenges are becoming insurmountable for small family farms.

This is important because agriculture is a key component of the San Luis Obispo County economy. According to a report published in 2019 by [Martin Settevendemie](#), SLO County Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer, San Luis Obispo agriculture contributes \$2.54 billion to our local economy. However, that was the most recent comprehensive study of its kind. The ensuing seven years have brought new challenges, new interests in various crops as well as both expansion and reductions in ag land.

Item 4 on the March 24 San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors agenda reads: “Request to authorize a budget adjustment in the amount of \$38,300 from the Unclaimed Gas Tax Interest Trust account to Fund Center (FC) 141-Agricultural Commissioner Special Dept. Expense account to purchase a Crop Report Plus agricultural economic analysis by 4/5th vote.”

According to Crop Report Plus, “state law (Section 2279 of the California Food and Agriculture Code) requires every county to report the annual value of agriculture, but traditional crop reports capture only gross production values. These numbers, unfortunately, reflect only a portion of agriculture’s total value.

Policy makers and the public stand to benefit from deeper analysis of agriculture’s economic “value.” For example, how much employment does agriculture support? What is the economic value of local food processing? What economic ripples do agricultural production, processing, and employment create through economic multiplier effects? Where does agriculture rank in comparison to real estate, construction, health care, and other county industries?”

Without clear data, policy makers can only make their best guess when addressing an issue. Unfortunately, such guesses often miss the mark by a wide margin when it comes to something as specialized as agriculture.

The following graph comes from the 2019 Crop Report Plus. It is a summary of the findings.

FOR 2017, SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY AGRICULTURE:

...contributed a total of 2.54 billion to the local economy, including:

- 1.79 billion in direct economic output, representing 7.0% of the county's total economic output.
- \$758.4 million in additional economic output in the form of expenditures by agriculture companies and their employees
- This equates to just over \$6.97 million per day.

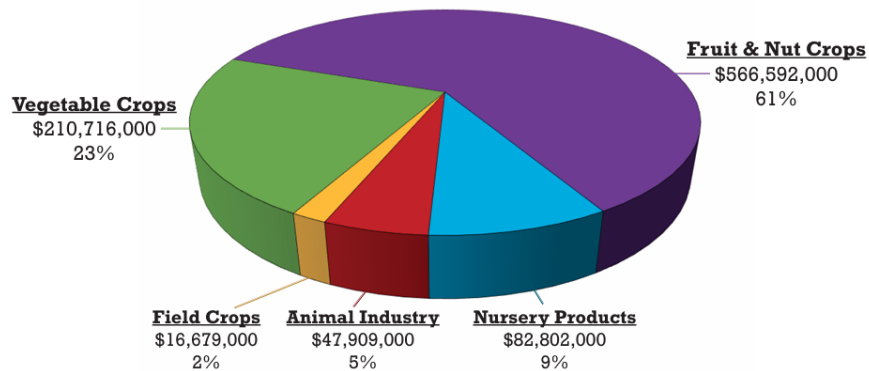
...provided 13,393 jobs, including:

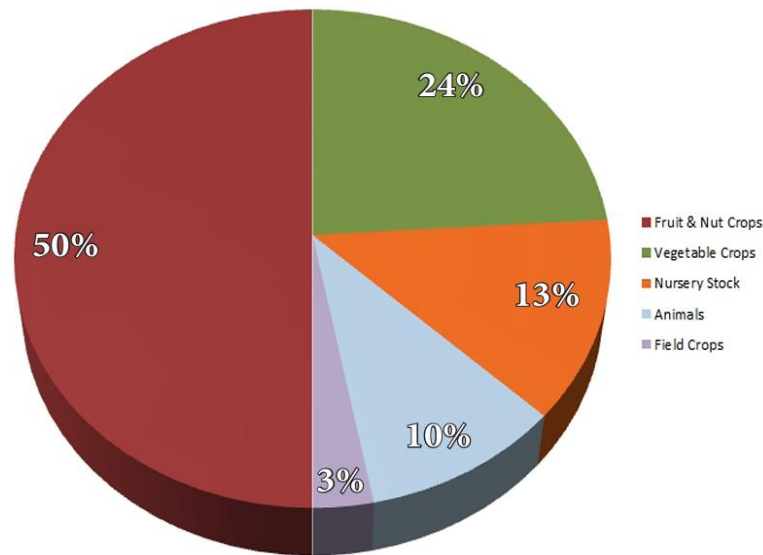
- 10,651 direct employees, or about one out of every sixteen jobs in the county.
- 2,743 additional jobs attributable to expenditures by agriculture companies and their employees.

...had a medium level of resilience to economic shocks, as measured by its Shannon-Weaver Index of 0.52. Resilience has increased slightly since last checked in 2011.

The following two graphs are from the 2019 and the 2013 reports and are presented to illustrate the changes that occurred in that 7-year period:

Figure 1: Distribution of San Luis Obispo County Farm Production
Source: 2017 Annual Report, San Luis Obispo County Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures





Source: 2011 San Luis Obispo County Crop Report and IMPLAN

1. DISTRIBUTION OF SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY AGRICULTURE BY PRODUCTION VALUE - 2013

The last graph represents overall economic effects of SLO County agriculture in 2019:

TYPE OF EFFECT	DIRECT		INDIRECT		INDUCED		TOTAL	
FARM PRODUCTION SECTOR								
	2013	2019	2013	2019	2013	2019	2013	2019
OUTPUT EFFECT (\$ MILLIONS)	\$736	\$900	\$186	\$191.5	\$194	\$233.1	\$1,116	\$1,324
EMPLOYMENT EFFECT (# JOBS)	12,276	8,196	1,908	750	1,681	780	15,864	9,726
LOCALLY SOURCED, VALUE-ADDED PROCESSING SECTOR								
OUTPUT EFFECT (\$ MILLIONS)	\$559	\$886.2	\$141	\$212.2	\$57	\$121.7	\$758	\$1,220
EMPLOYMENT EFFECT (# JOBS)	3,343	2,454	941	748	497	465	4,781	3,667
TOTAL VALUE OF AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY								
OUTPUT EFFECT (\$ MILLIONS)	\$1,296	\$1,786	\$328	\$403.6	\$251	\$354.8	\$1,874	\$2,544
EMPLOYMENT EFFECT (# JOBS)	15,619	10,651	2,849	1,498	2,178	1,245	20,645	13,393

With big changes, such as Paso Water Basin sustainability and the new fallow program coming into effect, having a clear picture of what is happening in this vital segment of our economy is critical. We encourage BoS members to be supportive.

Sales Tax Measures Progress

Agenda item 15 reads: Submittal of a resolution to approve the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG) Final Transportation Expenditure Plan. We are hearing chatter that the SLOCOG plan may be struggling to win the 2/3rd general election votes necessary to pass. This news has led some to believe that the BoS will not vote to put it on the ballot because it would be a waste of resources for something that is doomed from the start.

SLOCOG's position is that they have not yet had the opportunity to do advocacy for the measure, and that they believe they can raise awareness and support.

In the meantime, a "citizen initiative" (formed because such a measure only requires a simple majority to pass) is underway. According to Garrett Olson, President/CEO of the San Luis Obispo Chamber of Commerce, organizers have already got 3,600 valid signatures towards the required 12,400 valid signatures that would qualify the measure for the November general election ballot.

The Chamber is one of the main sponsors of the citizen initiative.

The citizen effort has one more month to gather the remaining 8,800 valid signatures. This means that they will have had to get around 18,000 signatures in total to overcome those that are not valid.

The citizen effort has hired a consultant and a professional signature gathering firm. The cost per valid signature for this process is \$14. According to Olson, the

firm believes it is on track and will deliver the necessary number of valid signatures.

Both measures feature the same language and accomplish the same thing.

The SLOCOG measure is called “Local Roads First”. The citizen initiative is called “Better Roads For All”. For more details on the proposals, here are links to each:



[Local Roads First | SLO County | San Luis Obispo County, CA, USA](#)



[About – SLO Better Roads](#)

Being a “self-help” county has some very real advantages. Being at the top of the list for high sales taxes has some real disadvantages. If one of these sales tax measures is on the November General Election ballot, will local voters have enough faith in the system to invest more tax dollars, or will they say enough is enough?

Intelligently Regulating Artificial Intelligence

With artificial intelligence entering so many aspects of our life, it's really no surprise to find that it's also being used heavily in government. Item 18 on the BoS

agenda reads: Request to approve the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Acceptable Use Policy.

While we're pleased to see county leadership attempting to keep the use of AI within reasonable parameters, we remain skeptical about how tightly the controls can be exercised.

According to the staff report, “The purpose of this policy is to define the scope in which Generative Artificial Intelligence (“AI”) may be utilized by County of San Luis Obispo (“County”) employees, contractors, volunteers and vendors (“County Workforce”) to improve processes and enhance services to County residents, while ensuring compliance with existing laws, regulations, and policies.”



Finding efficiencies, duplication and even governmental fraud are all useful tools that have come from AI. That said, AI can also be used as a cheat or crutch for individual policy makers incapable of sufficient original thought. When that happens, human perspective and common sense can be lost. What may seem logical to a machine processing data points could end up being entirely impractical or unfair.

Detection of the use of AI is very difficult. The natural question with such a policy is how will it be enforced?

According to the policy draft: “Any violation of this policy may be cause for discipline up to and including termination. County Workforce may use Generative AI only for the uses listed in Exhibit A, Approved AI Uses, and only if such use is

consistent with the terms of this policy, including the legal and regulatory compliance requirements.”

The following initial AI uses are approved, as long as a person checks and approves the results before they are shared, published, or used:

- Creating or editing emails, letters, reports, or other publications;
- Coding or debugging software;
- Mocking role-based conversations for training;
- Performing research;
- Outlining or summarizing information;
- Recording and transcription of meetings;
- Searching data and extracting information;
- Categorizing documents; and
- Automating processes.

The proposed policy covers a wide variety of regulated applications including: Accuracy and Verification, Confidential Information, Identification of Confidential Information, Secure AI Software, Reporting, Intellectual Property, Intellectual Property, Public Records Act Compliance, Compliance with Other Laws and Vendor and Contractor Compliance.

The final paragraph of the policy draft covers sanction for noncompliance. It reads: “County Workforce members are responsible for knowing and complying with the terms of this policy, including any amendments or additions to Exhibit A (Acceptable Uses) and Exhibit B (Department-Specific Confidential Information). Any violation of this policy may be cause for discipline up to and including termination.”

We commend county leadership for taking on the important but seemingly almost impossible task of controlling the use of AI within county government and are reminded of this quote by Stephen Hawking:

“Everything that civilization has to offer is a product of human intelligence; we cannot predict what we might achieve when this intelligence is magnified by the

tools that AI may provide, but the eradication of war, disease, and poverty would be high on anyone's list. Success in creating AI would be the biggest event in human history. Unfortunately, it might also be the last”.

Get to Know Your Candidates

The June 2 Primary Election is about 10 weeks away. With the Governor race at the top of the ticket, we hope that voters will be motivated to actually turn out and participate. An even higher hope is that voters might pay a little attention and learn something about the candidates beyond the soundbites that make up campaign ads.

This is especially true for “downticket” races. Your vote is important to every candidate, but voters often stop after choosing their favorite statewide races. This means that local races are usually decided with a much smaller voter universe. It is not uncommon for local races to have just 15 or 20% of the voter participation that those at the top of the ticket get.

This is how local races are occasionally decided by single digit margins.

One of the best opportunities for gaining true insight about candidates is attending or watching a forum. In person forums are naturally the best because candidates usually hang around after, offering an opportunity for voters to meet them in person and ask follow up questions.

When attendance in person is not possible, many forums are now posting their program online. A good way to learn about forums is to follow candidates on their social media sites. Most will post announcements about forthcoming forums as well as other in-person activities.

Two forums are scheduled in the coming weeks.



The first is presented by the San Luis Obispo Farm Bureau. It is a Supervisor Candidate Forum which will be March 31 at 5:00 pm at Farm Bureau offices in San Luis Obispo. All four candidates will be there with a live audience. It will also live-stream the event. For more information, visit: [San Luis Obispo County Farm Bureau - Home Page](#)



Another important race will be featured at a San Luis Obispo Chamber of Commerce forum. This event features candidates for the 30th Assembly District (currently held by Dawn Addis). Challenger Shannon Kessler is running a serious campaign that could bring about a big upset.

The District 30 Assembly Candidate Forum event will be held on Friday, April 17th at The Pavilion at SLO Ranch from 10am-11:30am. This event will likely have around 40 community members in attendance. This innovative forum features 5 minutes per candidate to open and introduce themselves to the whole group. Then candidates break into a more conversational format, where they will rotate to different tables and have about 15 minutes at each table to have an unscripted conversation and give the attendees an opportunity to ask the candidate questions. For more information, visit: [Home | San Luis Obispo Chamber of Commerce](#)

Even if you have decided who you support, it is good to go and support your candidate. It isn't easy stepping out into the public eye and discuss issues that can

be controversial. It is very reassuring for the candidate to look out into the audience and see voters who have their back.

Dedicate a few hours over the next couple of months to get engaged, meet candidates and learn something new about how our community works.

We thank these and other organizations that sponsor such forums. It is an important community service.

We wish to thank in advance the nearly 600 COLAB supporters that will be attending the 17th annual fundraising dinner on Thursday, March 26. We promise all of you an exciting evening with great food, a fascinating speaker and an open bar. An important (and fun) part of the evening will be the raffle, the paddle raise and the spectacular live auction.

If you have forgotten to get your dinner tickets, give us a call at 805-548-0340. We will try to fit you in.

We wish to offer a very special note of appreciation to our event sponsors. You are the

best – Thank You! Here is the list. Please let them know how fortunate we are to have their support:



Poor Richard's Press

S I N C E 1 9 4 7





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Last, but not least, we thank California Globe Editor in Chief and Investigative Reporter Extraordinaire, Katy Grimes for her tremendous insight and commentary.



Guest Speaker Katy Grimes

Emergent Trends
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**Report: California Roads And Highways
Rank Second Worst in Nation**

**Governor Newsom Threatens Lawsuits
Against 15 Cities and Counties Over
Housing Mandates**

COLAB in Depth
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**Sanctuary Officials Should Face Personal
Liability for the Crimes They Enable**

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Report: California Roads And Highways Rank Second Worst in Nation

Since 2018, we've been told that Californians spend \$843 annually on vehicle repairs caused by poor road conditions

By Katy Grimes, March 29, 2026

A new study finds California has the second worst roads in America, ahead of only Alaska. I can validate this having just traveled 600 miles by car in California on Interstate 5, Highway 101, State Route 152, and many local boulevards, thoroughfares and roads in between.

Californians pay the highest gas taxes in the country, yet are forced to drive over deep potholes, deteriorating highways, crumbling shoulders, bumpy surfaces, damaged roads, patchwork fixes, uneven pavement, and deeply cracked asphalt.

California's government is clearly broken—but so are our expensive tires, along with our bank accounts.

“California's highway system now ranks 49th out of 50 states in overall condition and cost-effectiveness, Reason Foundation's 29th Annual Highway Report finds,” Baruch Feigenbaum, senior managing director of transportation policy at Reason Foundation and lead author of the report detailed in the Orange County Register. “Only Alaska, which faces harsh winters and many geographic challenges that drive up costs, ranks worse overall.”

California has no excuse. Transportation funds have been “borrowed” for decades by the governor and legislature and reassigned to the General Fund, rather than used to repair and improve the state's highways, roads and infrastructure.

“Given the money California generates from drivers, it should have a better road and highway system,” Feigenbaum said.

“The Legislative Analyst’s Office found that state sources of transportation funding, primarily fuel taxes and vehicle fees, brought in over \$14 billion in 2023-24. Yet, California’s urban arterial road pavement condition is 50th, the worst in the nation. Not much better, the state’s urban Interstate pavement condition ranks 48th out of 50 states. California also ranks 47th in rural Interstate pavement condition and 39th in rural arterial road condition.”

Since 2018, we’ve been told that Californians spend \$843 annually on vehicle repairs caused by poor road conditions. It’s as if no one wants to report the real cost in 2026. Whatever it is, it is higher than the national average.

“Tire blowouts, rim damage, and suspension wear are common expenses for drivers navigating damaged streets and highways,” Rate My Roads **reported** in 2025. **According** to the California Legislative Analyst’s Office, the 2025-2026 Budget includes roughly \$31 Billion for transportation and one billion for transportation-related programs in 2025-26, including for the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), California State Transportation Agency, local streets and roads (shared revenues), California Highway Patrol (CHP), Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), and High-Speed Rail Authority (HSRA). This is less funding than the 2024-25 transportation budget of \$35.3 billion.

Transportation Expenditures Summary

(In Millions)

	2023-24 Actual	2024-25 Estimated	2025-26 Enacted
Total	\$29,295	\$35,353	\$30,889
By Department/Program			
Caltrans	\$14,674	\$15,404	\$16,123
Local streets and roads	3,526	3,656	3,718
High-Speed Rail Authority	1,787 ^a	1,492 ^a	798
California Highway Patrol	3,159	3,308	3,328
Transportation Agency	1,699	7,007	2,383
General obligation bond debt service	1,690	1,772	1,955
Department of Motor Vehicles	1,503	1,484	1,468
State Transit Assistance	1,246	1,208	1,090
Transportation Commission	8	11	10
Board of Pilot Commissioners	3	9	11
High-Speed Rail Authority OIG	1	3	4
By Funding Source			
Special funds	\$19,059	\$23,103	\$21,610
Federal funds	6,166	6,712	6,976
General Fund	2,580	4,275	2,205
Bond funds	1,490	1,262	97

^aBased on High-Speed Rail Authority's expenditure reports.

Caltrans = California Department of Transportation and OIG = Office of the Inspector General.

“Given the high gas taxes and vehicle fees they pay, Californians deserve higher-quality roads and bridges than they are getting,” said Feigenbaum. California “is the most populous state, has the nation’s busiest road network, and faces higher construction costs than most states. But those realities make it even more important to use transportation funding efficiently.”



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.

Governor Newsom Threatens Lawsuits Against 15 Cities and Counties Over Housing Mandates

Newsom: 'Every community needs to address homelessness and create new, affordable housing — period, full stop'

By Megan Barth, March 26, 2026

Governor Gavin Newsom announced on Wednesday that California is prepared to file lawsuits against 15 cities and counties for failing to comply with state housing mandates, issuing final warnings and threatening legal action if they do not comply within 30 days.

The move comes just weeks after the U.S. Supreme Court denied Huntington Beach's appeal in its long-running fight to preserve local control over housing development – a defeat chronicled by *The California Globe* as yet another blow to charter cities resisting Sacramento's top-down mandates.

In the video accompanying his post, Newsom stood at a podium flanked by service corps members and declared that non-compliant jurisdictions would face lawsuits

from the state. The 15 entities receiving notices are: Atwater, Avenal, California City, Corcoran, Escalon, Half Moon Bay, Hanford, Kings County, Lemoore, Merced County, Montclair, Oakdale, Patterson, Ridgecrest, and Turlock.

“If local governments fail to respond in the next 30 days, the state of California will go to court to make sure they follow the law,” Newsom posted. “Every community needs to address homelessness and create new, affordable housing — period, full stop.”

Notably missing from the list is Marin County. As we reported, Newsom’s home county of Marin is enjoying a moratorium on affordable housing building requirements until 2028. Dan Walters of the *Fresno Bee* noted, “For at least another decade, therefore, Marin’s residents can smugly assume that their bucolic lifestyles will not be marred by having more neighbors who don’t make as much money and, you know, just don’t fit in.”

The enforcement action stems from the state Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) and targets cities and counties that have allegedly fallen short on their “housing elements” – state-required plans mandating zoning for affordable units across all income levels.

This latest crackdown builds on a broader suite of state laws overriding local zoning, including SB 79 (Wiener-D), the “Abundant and Affordable Homes Near Transit Act.” Signed by Governor Newsom on October 10, 2025, and set to take full effect on July 1, 2026, SB 79 applies primarily to eight “urban transit counties” with significant rail infrastructure (Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, Santa Clara, San Mateo, San Francisco, Alameda, and Sacramento).

The bill overrides local zoning restrictions in designated areas to make higher-density, multi-family housing an “allowed use” near major public transit stops. It aims to accelerate housing production in transit-rich locations, reduce vehicle miles traveled, support public transit ridership, and address the state’s housing shortage by promoting transit-oriented development

Failure to adequately plan and rezone — including accommodating laws like SB 79 — triggers HCD notices, builder’s remedies, funding losses, and lawsuits from Attorney General Rob Bonta.

This isn’t Newsom’s first rodeo.

The California Globe has repeatedly documented the governor’s aggressive campaign against local governments that dare push back.

Most notably, in February 2026, the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear Huntington Beach’s appeal, upholding lower court rulings that dismissed the city’s lawsuit challenging the state’s housing mandates. As a charter city, Huntington Beach had argued it retained authority over municipal land-use decisions, but the high court’s denial forced the city to adopt a compliant housing element within roughly 120 days and zone for more than 13,000 new units.

Our earlier coverage exposed how Newsom and Attorney General Rob Bonta celebrated a “major win” in December 2025 after prevailing in the Huntington Beach case, with city councilmembers and local leaders decrying the erosion of local control.

The pattern is clear: Sacramento sues, courts side with the state, and cities either capitulate or face mounting legal bills funded by taxpayers.

Critics, including Huntington Beach officials and conservative lawmakers, have long argued these mandates — and layered laws like SB 79 — ignore practical realities such as skyrocketing construction costs, environmental constraints, infrastructure deficits, and the fact that billions in state spending on homelessness have produced more tents, not homes.

Despite Newsom’s \$37 billion-plus homelessness budget (boondoggle), official counts show the crisis worsening, with audits revealing poor tracking, missing funds, and little accountability.

In 2019 when Governor Newsom took office, California had roughly 134,000 homeless people living on the streets, amounting to one-quarter of the nation’s total homeless population. He managed to increase the “unhoused” population to nearly 350,000— the size of California’s 11th largest city.

Yet Newsom’s latest announcement frames non-compliant localities as the villains, even as his own policies — heavy regulation, CEQA abuse, and tax-and-spend governance — have driven housing costs into the stratosphere and prompted a net exodus of Californians.

Cities on today’s list span the state, from the Central Valley to the coast, many already grappling with their own fiscal pressures and resident opposition to high-density, low-income projects that strain schools, roads, and public safety.

As one Huntington Beach leader noted in prior *Globe* reporting, the state’s “one-size-fits-all” approach tramples charter city rights enshrined in the California Constitution.

Today’s warnings suggest Newsom is undeterred by that precedent — or by the mounting evidence that his housing crusade has done more to enrich developers and bureaucrats than to deliver actual affordable homes.



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.

Sanctuary Officials Should Face Personal Liability for the Crimes They Enable

Seven of the 10 safest U.S. cities cooperate fully with federal immigration enforcement; sanctuary policies correlate with higher recidivism among criminal aliens

By Jay Rogers, March 27, 2026

In 2025, local officials across the United States refused to honor 17,864 ICE detainer requests – a figure entered into the congressional record during House Judiciary Committee testimony on March 4, 2026. Each declined detainer represents an individual already flagged by federal authorities with criminal convictions or pending charges. Among those released: 31 suspected homicide offenders in California alone, according to a February 5, 2026 Department of Homeland Security report. The constitutional question is not whether these officials acted in bad faith.

The question is why they bear no legal consequences when Americans die as a result.

To be precise about what a detainer means: ICE had already identified these individuals as unlawfully present and flagged them with criminal convictions or pending charges. Sanctuary officials were not protecting dreamers who overstayed student visas. They were releasing convicted murderers, rapists, child predators, and gang members – knowingly, and without legal consequence.

That is not compassion. That is complicity.

The constitutional framework here is not ambiguous. Federal supremacy over immigration enforcement was reaffirmed in *Arizona v. United States* (2012). When a local official adopts a sanctuary policy that conflicts with federal immigration law, he is not exercising principled federalism. He is nullifying federal statute, and doing so with taxpayer dollars. The Framers were not ambiguous about which government controls the nation’s borders, and no amount of local sanctimony changes that. The accountability gap is real and measurable. Laken Riley. Kate Steinle. An endless roster of American families burying children whose deaths were preventable. According to the Department of Homeland Security, seven of the ten safest U.S. cities cooperate fully with federal immigration enforcement, while sanctuary policies correlate with higher recidivism among criminal aliens. The data are not ambiguous. The choices are.

In November 2025, I wrote and submitted the Safe Streets and Sovereign Borders Act to members of Congress. The March 4 House Judiciary hearing provides the ideal moment to advance it. The Act closes this accountability gap not through rhetoric but through three legally calibrated mechanisms tied directly to the constitutional authorities that sanctuary jurisdictions have been flouting.

First, it revokes qualified immunity for any official who knowingly enforces a sanctuary policy that subsequently enables a covered crime – murder, rape, human trafficking, DUI homicide, or gang violence. The days of hiding behind ‘local policy’ as a complete civil defense are over. If your deliberate choice foreseeably released the offender, you answer in civil court.

Second, it establishes criminal accomplice liability under 18 U.S.C. §2. Knowledge of the risk is inferred the moment a jurisdiction ignores the Attorney General’s formal notice of non-compliance. Where a covered crime results in death or serious

bodily injury, the responsible official faces an additional ten years of federal exposure.

Third, it conditions Byrne Justice Assistance Grants and federal highway funding on certified compliance with detainer requests. The Spending Clause of the Constitution provides Congress with precisely this authority. Jurisdictions that choose sanctuary choose it without American taxpayer subsidy.

Critics will call this draconian. They will invoke due process, cite immigrant communities, and reach for every rhetorical fire extinguisher available to avoid the central question: if a public official knowingly releases a convicted violent criminal who then kills an American citizen, why does that official bear none of the legal consequences the rest of us would face for the same foreseeable harm? There is no satisfying answer to that question, which is precisely why the opposition will not attempt one.

The families of Laken Riley and Kate Steinle did not have the option of hiding behind a policy memo when tragedy arrived. Neither should the officials whose deliberate choices made those tragedies possible. The Safe Streets and Sovereign Borders Act does not ask sanctuary officials to abandon their principles. It simply asks them to assume, for the first time, the legal consequences of exercising them.

Pass it. Enforce it. Make it personal – because for the families burying their children, it already is.



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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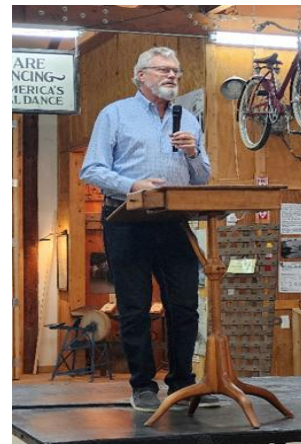
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