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

Weekly Update
Nov. 23 – 30, 2026

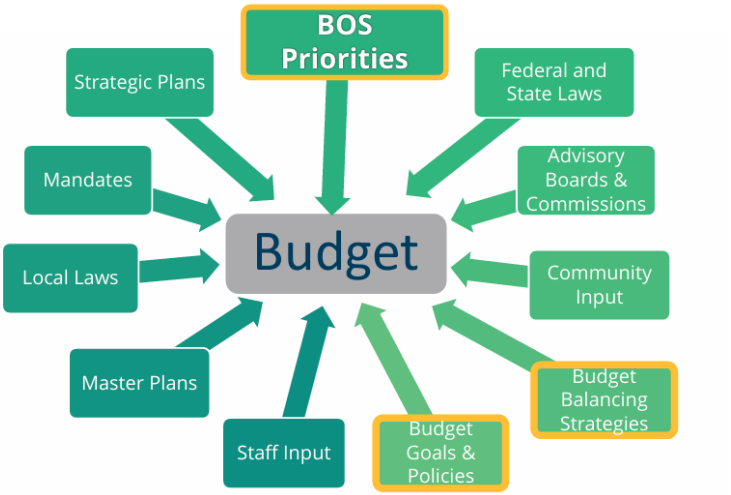
Budget Priorities Once Again

With the 2026/27 nearly $1.2 billion San Luis Obispo County budget now in effect, preparations are underway for the 2027/28 budget. In preparation, county staff have requested (as they do every year) guidance for the BoS' priorities.

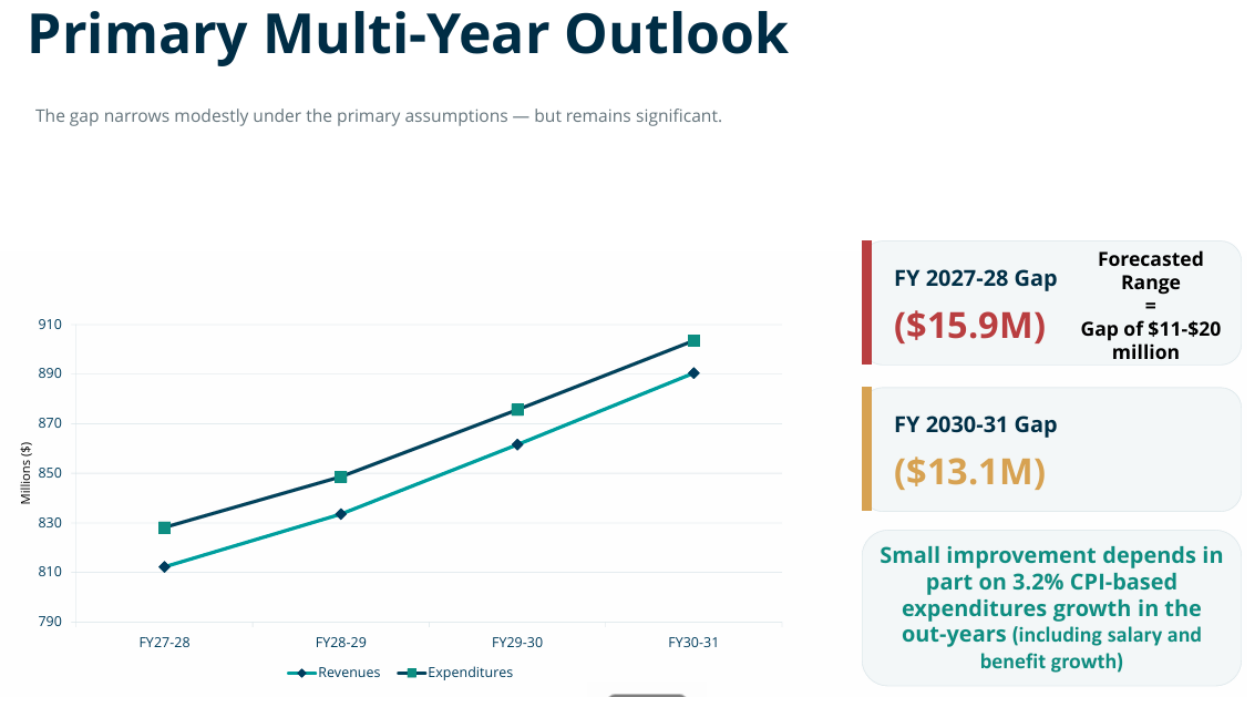
Item 25 on the November 17 BoS agenda read: "Request to approve the FY 2027-28 Budget Goals and Policies and Budget Balancing Strategies and Approaches and provide direction to staff as necessary."

This gives staff guidance as to where to shave a little off or pad a little extra. Unfortunately, roads never seem to get even a little extra…

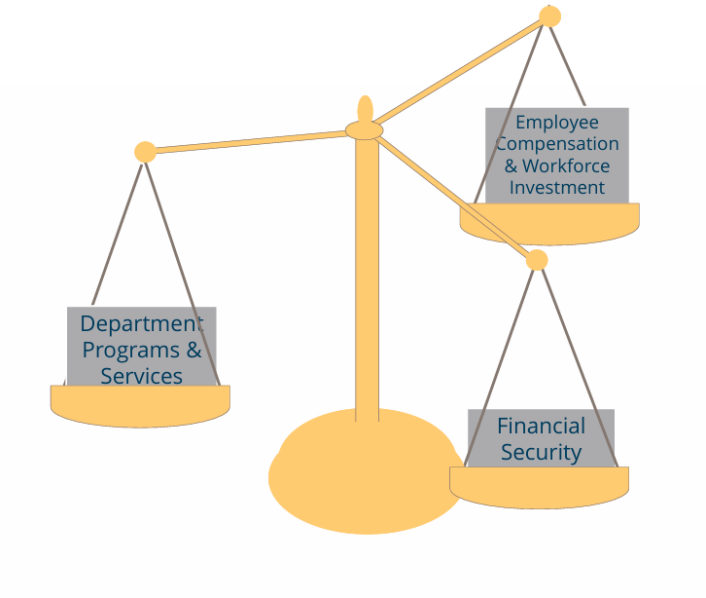
The presentation by staff provides insight to how they crunch numbers and try to fit everything into a limited budget. The following chart illustrates the various, and sometimes conflicting, influences:



As we reported previously, staff analysts have concluded that the current budget could result in a gap of $11 – $20 million by the end of the current fiscal year. The problem is the same old story – revenue is not keeping up with expenditures. In other words, we may be writing checks our bank account can't cover.



The balancing act is complex, with many conditional factors.



Naturally, the process starts with the basics:

Budget Goals and Policies

- Include policies related to:
  - Budget Development
  - Financial Planning
  - Revenue
  - Expenditure
  - Capital Projects

The process then begins to involve the finesse that defines where the budget is going and how it will get there. This is where input from the Supervisors becomes important.

Budget Balancing Strategies and Approaches

- Operational application of Budget Goals and Policies
- In times of financial difficulty
  - –Long-term strategies
  - –Short-term strategies
- In times of financial recovery and growth
  - Balanced growth in spending

One important clarification is included in the request for guidance. We suspect this came about due to the current financial mess that the community of San Simeon is experiencing.

Proposed Policy 34 Clarification

Funding for Independent Special Districts: "As independent special districts are autonomous government agencies fully independent of the County in governance, the provision of services, and funding, the County shall not subsidize an independent special district with County General Fund monies ~~nor should any property tax exchange result in a net fiscal loss to the County~~. The County shall not transfer property tax revenue in connection with annexations, reorganizations, or other jurisdictional changes involving independent special districts unless there is a corresponding transfer of County governmental service responsibilities and the proposed exchange does not result in a net fiscal loss to the County, consistent with applicable law."

The budget process is seemingly never ending. Just about the time the current budget is finished and adopted, the next one gets underway. Here is the budget timeline:

Next Steps



• Early December	Budget kickoff
• Dec – Jan	Departments Prepare & Submit Budgets
• January	Board Priorities (anticipated)
• Feb – Apr	Exec Review & Compilation of Budget
• Feb – Mar	Baseline Budget Update to Board
• May	Introduce Recommended Budget
• June	Budget Hearing
• September	FY 2027-28 Final Budget adoption

A Little Love for President Reagan

An odd thing happened at the November 17 San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors meeting. The entire board, including Paulding, Ortiz Leg, and even Gibson, gave praise via a resolution to President Ronald Reagan. Or at least one of Reagan's policies.

Supervisor Ortiz Leg agendized the resolution in honor of the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA), bipartisan legislation signed into law by President Ronald Reagan. Several members of the immigrant community were there to tell their stories about how this measure changed their lives and how they are so proud to have become Americans.

We appreciate the sentiment and the kind words but point out that the act was a deal with the migrant community designed to provide citizenship to long term migrants while reducing illegal immigration. What was then known as the Simpson-Mazzoli Act was a bipartisan attempt to bring about stricter immigration policies. In exchange for providing amnesty to about 2.7 million migrants, it created a

citizenship verification system and imposed penalties on employers who hired undocumented workers. The bill resulted in employer sanctions**,** legalization for eligible undocumented immigrants**,** and enhanced enforcement**.** It also led to a change in the visa system by creating the H1 and H2 visas.



President Reagan signing the IRCA 40 years ago.

Reagan took a lot of heat from his own party for signing the legislation. He did so with the belief that it would bring both sides of the issue together and would lead to immigration through legal channels rather than illegal border crossings with no documentation. Describing the bill. He said it "*takes a major step toward meeting this challenge to our sovereignty while preserving and enhancing the Nation's heritage of legal immigration."*

So, while the Gibsons of the world are praising President Reagan for his kind and humanitarian approach, they should perhaps be reminded that Reagan sought to restore respect for, and compliance with, our immigration laws. He did so in good faith with assurances from immigration community advocates that the measure would shift immigration to the legal channels that have always existed for those seeking to live in the USA.

By now, we have lost all those leaders who sat at the table and negotiated that historic act. If we are to remember and commend President Reagan for his actions, we should also remember the many immigrant community leaders who supported the process of citizenship requirements and verification. We should hope that their side of the deal is as respected as the President's.

We are a nation of immigrants. We should be proud of that fact. We also provide precious asylum for anybody from anywhere if it is legitimate. But we are also a nation of laws, and we should be very protective of that fact. If we start choosing which laws to respect and which to ignore because we don't agree, our society crumbles.

It's no mystery to anybody in any country that we have a system for legal immigration. That system, whether flawed or not, is designed to provide for a manageable flow and as a protection for society against people intent on doing harm. We ask that those wishing to come respect our laws. If our society wishes, there is a process for changing those laws.

If we are to commend President Reagan for attempting to bring reasonable reform to our immigration system, we should also acknowledge the other side of the deal. Has it been upheld? Would President Reagan be happy today with the deal he made then?

Righting Wrongs

San Luis Obispo County has an unusual but highly effective program available to crime offenders that puts the offender together with their victim to try to bring about both an understanding by the offender of the harm caused, as well as some sort of resolution for the victim.

The program, called Restorative Partners, provides services and programs for those in-custody and for those released from the San Luis County Juvenile Hall, Jail, Honor Farm and State Prisons. More information can be found at: Programs and services for individuals incustody and reentering society It was recognized with a resolution at the November 17 BoS meeting.



Here is the resolution as presented:

WHEREAS, Restorative Justice affirms an approach to justice rooted in restoring human connection, fostering accountability, and promoting healing; and
WHEREAS, Restorative Justice offers people who have caused harm opportunities to take responsibility and make amends and supports people who have experienced harm in reclaiming their voice, dignity, and sense of empowerment; and
WHEREAS, Restorative Justice elevates stories of transformation, encourages meaningful dialogue, and promotes legislation that advances restorative justice; and
WHEREAS, Restorative Partners, founded in San Luis Obispo County in 2011, marks 15 years of transforming lives impacted by crime through healing services and relationships; and
WHEREAS, Restorative Partners provides comprehensive wraparound reentry services, including five recovery homes, permanent housing rental assistance, substance use treatment, workforce development, educational programs, restorative services, and accountability and repair dialogues with youth and adults—helping people rebuild their lives, repair relationships, and strengthen community connections; and
WHEREAS, this work is strengthened by community partners, including the San Luis Obispo County Probation Department, Sheriff's Office, Parole Unit, District Attorney's Office, Behavioral Health Department, Drug and Alcohol Services, County Jail, Juvenile Hall, and California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation; and
WHEREAS, Restorative Justice Week honors these collective efforts to uphold human dignity, repair harm, and build safer, stronger, and more inclusive communities.
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED AND ORDERED that the Board of Supervisors of the County of San Luis Obispo, State of California, does hereby recognize Restorative Partners for its leadership and service and proclaims November 15–21, 2026, as Restorative Justice Week in San Luis Obispo County, encouraging all residents to support restorative practices that strengthen individuals, families, and communities.



Sister Theresa is the founder of Restorative Partners.



Sister Theresa Harpin has been a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet for over 40 years, serving as Pastor, Campus Minister, Musician, and Parish Social Justice Coordinator. She is a Certified Facilitator for the Alternatives to Violence Project, Aggression Replacement Training, and Thinking for a Change Programs.

The following graphics (from Restorative Partners' website) illustrate a few of the organization's accomplishments:





The website goes on to define the goals of the program:

"Our restorative justice approach focuses on mind, body and spiritual transformation, incorporates trauma informed care, addresses responsibility and accountability, and offers accompaniment through reentry mentorship. We also provide clean and sober living homes for men and for women as well as own and operate a home for women who are ready to reunite with their children and move forward with their lives. The goal in all of our transformative work is to reduce violence and lower recidivism by providing a continuum of care from incarceration through reincorporation to our community."

Well, done.

The End is Nigh

The San Lis Obispo County Board of Supervisors has 2 remaining meetings this year. December 8 and 15 mark the final meetings for this term of the BoS. The new term will begin when the newest member of the Board, Jim Dantona is sworn in on January 5, 2027.

Topical Sentiments

Since his name was invoked earlier, and since he had such great a love for the holiday, we thought it would be appropriate to wish you all a fine Thanksgiving by quoting President Reagan on the topic.

One of Ronald Reagan's most notable Thanksgiving statements comes from his 1987 National Day of Thanksgiving Proclamation, where he said:

> **"On Thanksgiving Day, 1987, let us, in this unbroken chain of observance, dedicate ourselves to honor anew the Author of Liberty and to publicly acknowledge our debt to all those who have sacrificed so much in our behalf. May our gratitude always be coupled with petitions for divine guidance and protection for our Nation and with ready help for our neighbors in time of need."**



Happy Thanksgiving


COLAB
San Luis Obispo County
SAVE the DATE
18TH ANNUAL
DINNER &
FUNDRAISER
THURSDAY MARCH 18TH
5:30 PM
MADONNA INN EXPO CENTER
WATCH FOR DETAILS!

Last Week

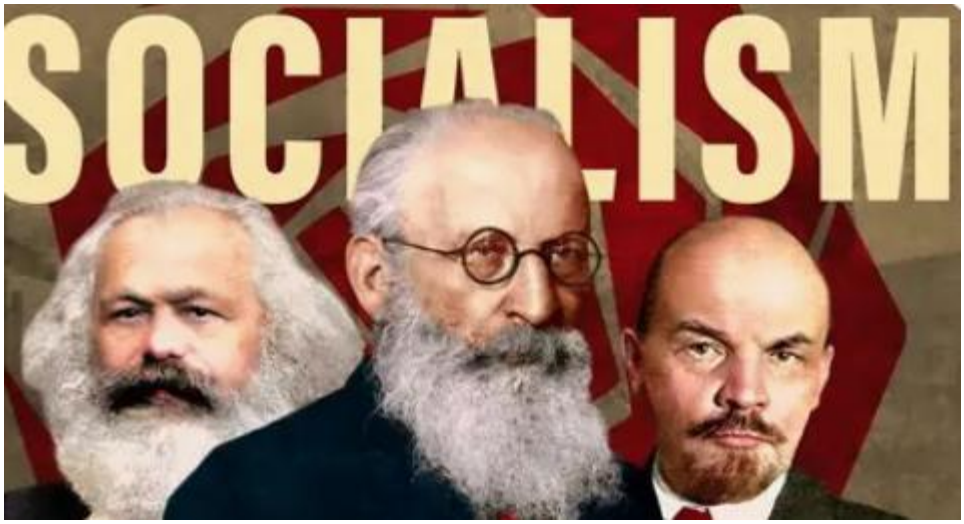
Heavy Bumage

There is not much to say about the election that hasn't already been covered, but there are plenty of questions. Our society apparently is ok with higher taxes, bigger government, more restriction and regulation and class envy driven punishment of success. Is that really what voters want?

It's hard to understand the contradiction that so many people made by declaring that the election was all about affordability and yet voters elected to raise taxes and support candidates wanting more (expensive) government. We are fast becoming a society seeking to mooch off of others. Higher taxes, more services, less accountability and socialism were the true victors in this election. Were those really the goals of the electorate?

The bold lessons from socialism everywhere else it has been tried beg to be learned but are ignored instead. Whether it be California's death spiral or our national infatuation with socialism, it is clear that we are choosing a direction that history has illustrated as complete failure.

Let's stop lying to ourselves. Democratic Socialism is an oxymoron. One cannot survive in the presence of the other.



National heros?

We agree with Vice President Vance when he blames the Iran war for so many voters swerving left and are glad to see President Trump feels the same way. Vance, however, needed to pull up short in his analysis. We would add that the war itself is one issue, but the more confounding part was the President continuously glibly dismissing everybody's concern by claiming he had a deal on his desk, or it will be all over by the end of the week. These claims appeared to be out of touch and became tiring especially as gas prices continued to rise.

As much as it sounds like a crutch, a good deal of the blame also goes to the media. Socialists extolled the virtues of their half-baked ideas completely unchecked. Not a single socialist candidate could provide an example of where their favorite form of government thrived. Yet none of the major media outlets made reference to the 100% failure rate of socialism globally.

Midterm elections are famous for big partisan swings. President Trump will be faced with a new type of challenge – using his diplomatic skills to push back on the socialism tendencies of the left by convincing the public to support his path. Can he do that?

Here in California, we are reminded of the election and subsequent recall of Governor Davis. Will Bupkis Becerra do anything recall worthy? Will he do anything at all? Will conservatives spoil their chances of a recall by going after him too early, lacking a compelling enough issue to attract middle of the road voters?



Will Bupkis Becerra do more of nothing – or will he drive us further into debt?

In San Luis Obispo County, keeping common sense is critical. We will have three incumbent County Supervisors up for reelection. Each will face more liberal tax and spend regulatory loving opponents. The County Sheriff and District Attorney will also be on the ballot and will surely face equally left leaning opponents. Will we see common sense prevail or will we get into resource wasting dust ups that ultimately hand the BoS over to the left?

Deep down, the socialists making all the noise know that they need healthy enough capitalism to survive their money hungry quest for utopia. Their challenge is getting as many golden eggs as possible without killing the goose or alerting the public to their hypocrisy. Will their euphoria and pushy political correctness bring the liberals down next time around? Will the right people be ready to step in?

The only way to find answers to these and so many other questions is to be prepared. June 2028 is 17 months away. The election then will either solidify or repudiate far left politics. Now is a good time to begin getting ready.

Candidates Appreciated

We wish to share our appreciation with all those who were brave enough to step up to the challenge of running for office. Yes, even those with whom we seldom agree.

Some people are natural born public speakers. Some people understand marketing. Some people have really good ideas and some people find themselves in the right place at the right time. It's very rare that anybody has more than a couple of those traits.

Having persistence, commitment and a moral compass, along with any of the above, is a good place to start. Wanting to serve to make things better is a great reason.



However, even with all those things, campaigning for office is not easy. Yet, without a good variety of good candidates, we really don't have good elections.

If you have run, or are thinking of running, we are pleased that you have the desire to make a difference and wish you the best of luck.

Ambulance Update

Some confusion existed around agenda item #11 on the November 3 Board of Supervisors. The item read "Request to receive and file updates on the Ground Emergency Ambulance Transport competitive bid process." That's it. The "receive and File" part of the motion was apparently overlooked by nearly 25 public speakers at the meeting.

Most of the speakers advocated in favor of San Luis Ambulance (SLA), the existing service provider who has done so for 80 years. Others advocated for a competitive bid that would accommodate an "alliance model" where each community throughout the county serves as the service provider and utilizes a contract service with an ambulance company. The general assumption is that that provider would be American Medical Response (AMR).



San Luis Ambulance has done a great job for 80 years.

Many of the speakers delivered compelling arguments. They pointed out strong performance measures, community activities and personal stories of life saving experiences.

The thing is, this was not the occasion to advocate for either continuing the current contract or going out for a Request for Proposal. That was October 2025 when the BoS chose to pursue a RFP. It will again be appropriate when the RFP document has been approved.

In the meantime, the RFP process is being reviewed by the state. According to county staff, the review is expected to be completed in Januaray or Feburary of 2027. However, as Supervisor Peschong pointed out, a new state administration will be seated in Janurary, which could result in a significant delay.
Supervisor Moreno made a motion to create a parallel path to the RFP process which would allow the County Administrative office to conduct an assessment of precisely what would be expected from a new contract and determine how those needs are or could be reflected by the current service provider. The motion passed unanimously. It's unfortunate that when Moreno made a similar motion at the onset of the original RFP discussion, her idea was rejected. That idea might have been a path to achieving the goals that everybody seems to share without going through the current very challenging and uncertain process.



As we understand the next steps, they are that the state will approve a recommended RFP in early 2027. The bidders that respond will be evaluated by a third party (non conflicted) committee of emergency service providers from other areas of the state. It was not made clear whether the BoS will have any discretion over that committee's ranking, or even whether the BoS could suspend the RFP process before it is issued. We would expect that until the formal RFP is released, the BoS should have some discretion.

It is also important to realize that Supervisor Gibson will have left the BoS. His support of the RFP process has been clear, and we would assume he is supportive of the more government-centric alliance system. Where Supervisor Elect Dantona stands is not clear.

We hope the parallel approach suggested by Moreno brings some clarity to the process and offers options to the BoS as they continue to wrestle with this very important subject.

Budget Status a Cautionary Tale

Item 23 on the BoS agenda read: Consideration of a report regarding the County's Fiscal Year 2027-28 and Multi-Year financial forecast and provide direction as deemed necessary.

Our main observation continues to be the same: county revenues are being outpaced by expenditures. We are too big for our britches. Not critically so, but we are certainly are not in fine shape.

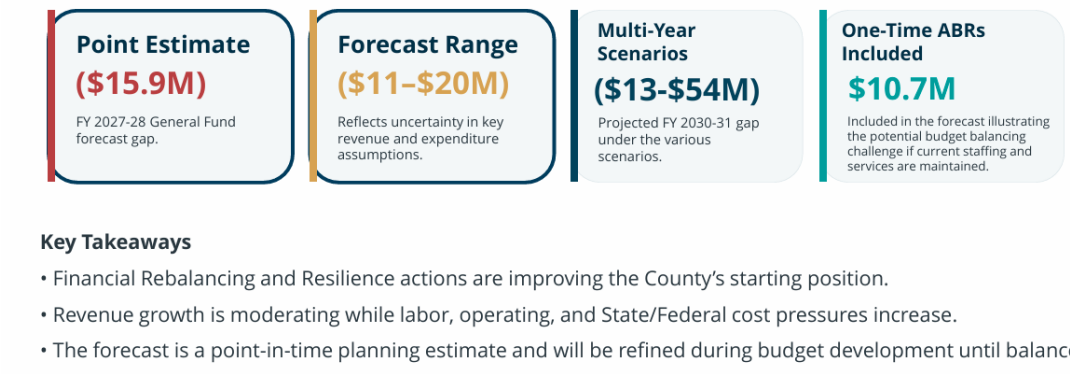
In many ways, the report seemed very much like the one last year at this time. It essentially concluded that our county is at risk of running a deficit of around $15 million plus or minus ish. The forecast was about the same last year, and we ended up finishing the fiscal year with a $9 million surplus.

This does not mean we take the forecast lightly. The forecast is based on a whole lot of assumptions which could be characterized as best guesses.

Some of these variables include state funding and reimbursements primarily in the Health and Human Services categories (but other state funded programs as well) along with federal funding in similar categories.
It also makes projections about labor costs that in many cases have not yet been negated.

One of the federal fund impacts will be the changes to H.R.1 which tightens Medicare eligibility and clamp downs on fraud. With recipients being cut from the program or having benefits trimmed, many will turn to county services to make up the difference. The BoS will have a report on anticipated impacts of the cuts at their November 17 meeting.

Here are some of the details that the Executive staff presented to the board:



While $15ish million doesn't seem like a lot against our nearly $1.2 billion budget, it gets pretty scary when projected out over multi-year scenarios. That said, our state constitution requires county budgets to be balanced and actually carries some liability when budget responsibility is ignored.

FY 2027-28 General Fund Forecast

Point estimate based on currently available information.

Financing Sources

$812.2M

Revenues, FBA and cancelled reserves.

Financing Uses

$828.2M

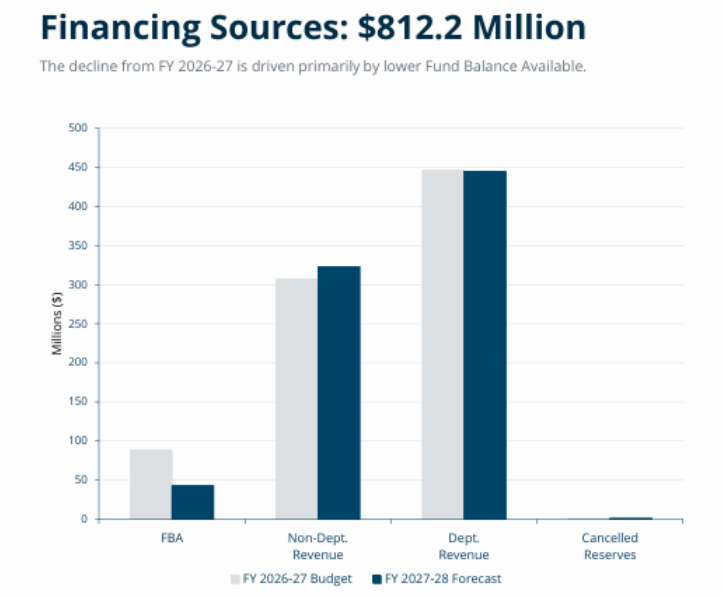
Labor, non-labor, contingencies and new reserves. Includes $10.7M of ABR-supported costs carried forward for forecasting purposes.

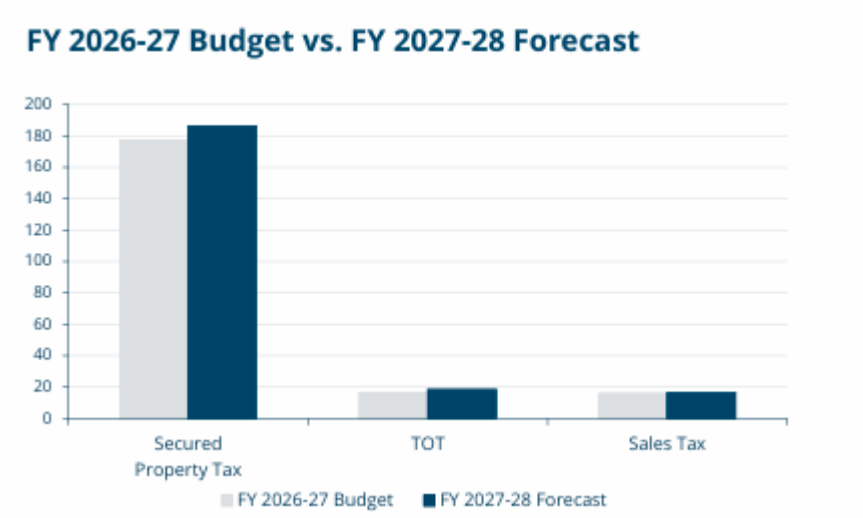
Point Estimate

($15.9M)

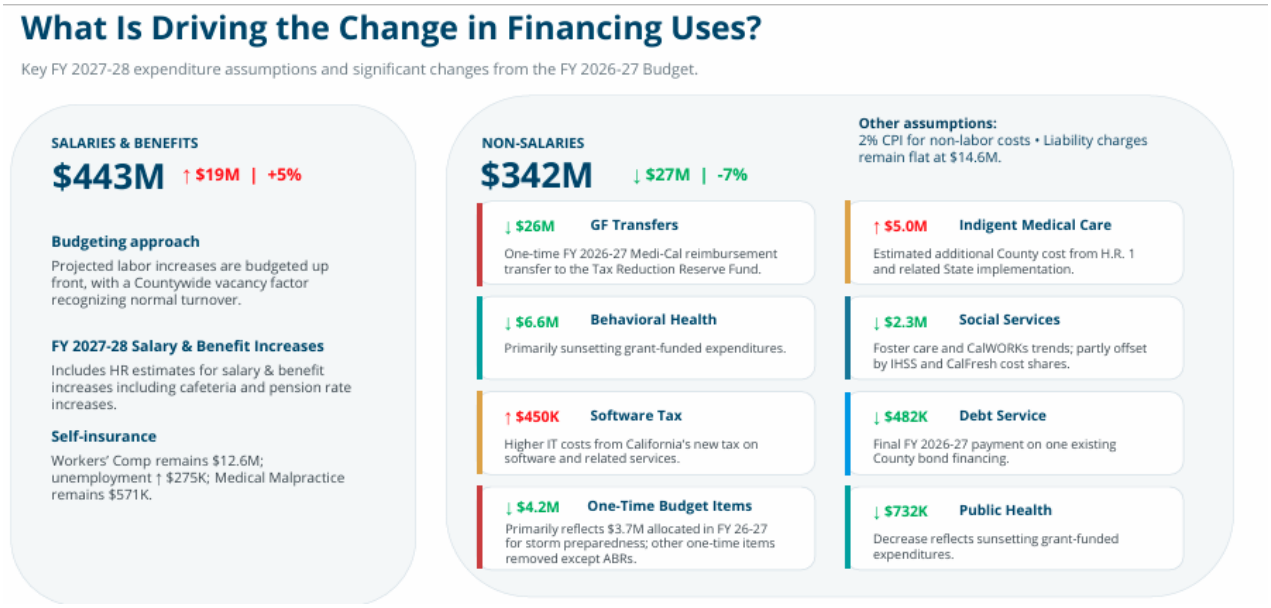
Forecast General Fund gap, inclusive of ABRs.

The graph below illustrates the growing gap between the current year budget verses the revenue forecast.





Main drivers for budget increases are listed below: As we mentioned, personnel salaries and wages are subject to negotiations. Predictability is never strong in this category, so educated guesses are the best that can be done.

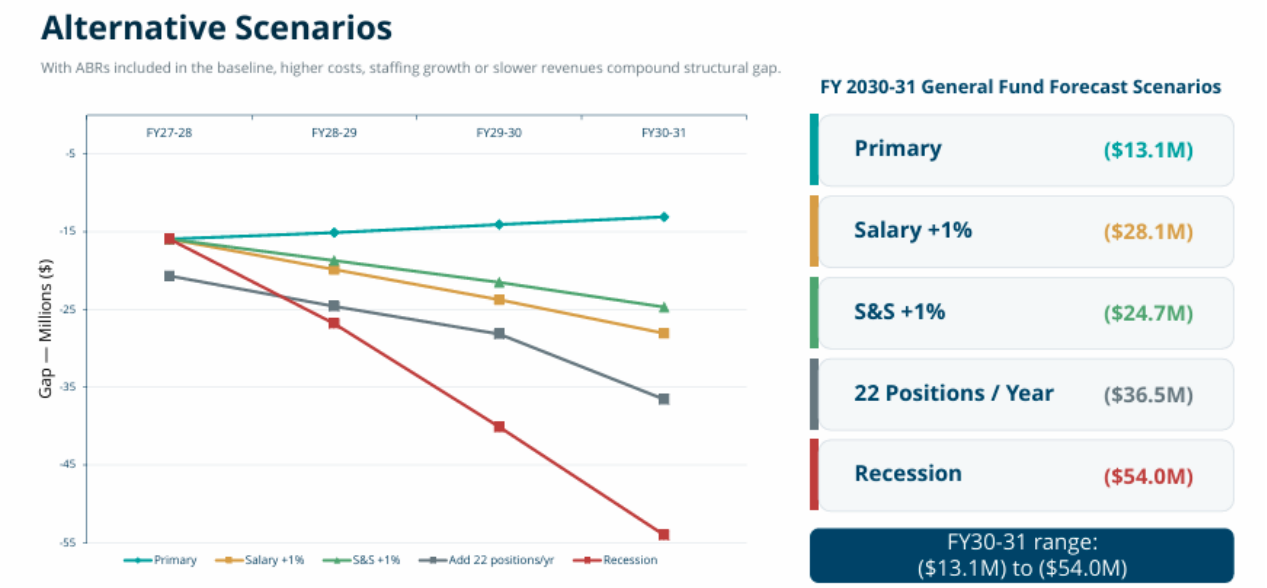


Even less predictable are the state and federal governmental funding sources. Technically, the state is also required to have a balanced budget, but politicians long ago learned tricks to manipulate the budget process to reflect a balanced budget when it was in fact way into the red. Of course on the federal side, all they do is print more money.



Re-emphasizing our point that we are spending more than we're bringing in, the following two graphs show how spending is outpacing our revenues.





Short of finding new ways to increase revenues, there really is no alternative for county government except to run as lean as possible. The problem there is that county leadership may balk at the idea of trimming budgets. It's far more popular to be Santa Claus than Scrooge. This is a particularly big deal considering there are three members of the Board of Supervisors up for re-election in 17 months.

The 27-28 budget cycle has already begun. Listed below is the timeline that will be followed to develop that budget.



We will keep you apprised of developments as they occur during this budget process. Expect some very difficult times for those depending on county support for their programs.

ICE Haters Again

It was no surprise to see a couple of ICE haters show up and make a fuss at the BoS meeting when an item came up regarding a grant that the Sheriff department received for upgrading their internal security systems.

The ICE Haters accused the Sheriff Department of using the updated security to somehow ruin the lives of the poor woebegone violent offender migrants who are not legally in our country.



Typical SLO ICE Hater

When it was explained that the security system upgrade was entirely for internal use applicable to all day-to-day activities, and had absolutely no connection what so ever to the direct handling of inmates (legal or illegal), the ICE haters continued to cackle and moan about the evil and illegal activities going on at the jail and how allowing ICE to arrest violent criminals as they are released from the jail is a horrible, terrible thing. One hater, in her diatribe, said that ICE is an illegitimate agency.



As usual, with no regard to the Supremacy Clause of the United States Constitution (or the recent 9th Circuit Court decision upholding that clause), they demanded that our Board of Supervisors tell ICE that they can't operate in San Luis Obispo County.

As they angerly yacked on about the awful treatment of violent illegal migrants, we were reminded of a recent story in Cal Coast News that enumerated some of the offenses of the people the ICE haters are so desperate to protect. Here is the list of noteworthy San Luis Obispo arrests from that October 19 story:

ICE arrests in San Luis Obispo, including charges

- Lam Le – homicide, assault
- Juan Marin-Hipolit – homicide
- Miguel Pere – homicide
- Chue Vue – homicide, assault weapons charges
- Jose Rod Odriguez Erazo – homicide, driving under the influence
- Marcelino Martinez Francisco – homicide, vehicular manslaughter
- Francisco Martin Esteban Roda – homicide
- Rafael Gamez-Sanchez – homicide

- Francisco Meza Cardena – assault, domestic violence
- Omar Estrada Catala – rape, strongarm
- Carlos Fernando Urre – sexual assault, robbery
- Eulises Castro Rodrigue – drug trafficking
- Juan Salgado Aguirr – false imprisonment, assault
- Esau Ballestros Diaz – vehicle theft, burglary
- Herwar Pineda Rio – robbery, vehicle theft
- Olueaseun Okuw – fraud
- Carlos Marbal-Pere – shoplifting
- Gabriel Guevara Moreno – molesting a child
- Ociel Del Carmen Calixto – burglary, vehicle theft
- Noe Tapia Sandova – assault, weapons
- Cristian Pardo Tirad – burglary
- Ruth Aleman Lopez – larceny, drug trafficking, assault
- Cristian Melgar Cermen – burglary
- Xian Ou, larceny, fraud
- Jesus Chavez-Radill – burglary
- David Maldonado Gonzales – child molestation
- Alejandro Dimas Ruela – sexual assault
- Jose Martinez Riz – vehicle theft
- Luis Aguilera-Martinez – burglary, larceny
- Norberto Arguelles Re – burglary, vehicle theft
- Felix Antoino Cru – extortion, threats
- Joel Esquivel Cruz – assault
- Jesus Garcia Alej – assault
- Gabriel Netz – arson, larceny
- Nestor Hernandez Sanchez – drug trafficking, vehicle theft
- Genaro Cortez Beltra – assault, false imprisonment
- Daniel Hernandez Sanchez – assault, robbery, violence
- Fabian Khamo – robbery, battery
- Walter Omar Castillo – sex assault, larceny, rape

We wonder how many of the above offenders would have been invited for Thanksgiving dinner at the homes of the ICE haters had they not been (thankfully) removed from our community.

The Countdown is at 3

With only three more Bos meetings to go before his retirement, we find ourselves wondering what more Supervisor Gibson has up his sleeve as he finishes out his 19 year run in office. We also wonder who we will have as an example of extreme out of step thinking, rudeness for public servants or long-winded circular soliloquies.

Most of all, we wonder what he will do to maintain his liberal bonafide's without COLAB picking on him from time to time.



Gibson always has a point to make … eventually.

We will venture a guess at his next vocation. He would fit right in as a member of the California Coastal Commission, but we don't see a path there. He would make an energetic advisor to the Newsom for President campaign, but that may be a little too uncertain. He might take some role with the County Supervisors Association of California, but his unfriendly disposition may hold him back there. So, our prediction, based on nothing but speculation, is that he joins forces with his close friend Tom Fulks in the political consulting business. They say doing what you love isn't work, and Gibson would certainly love electing more liberal big government types. After all, we all aren't paying our fair share in taxes and fees, so what would be better (in his mind) than electing more tax hungry (mis)representatives?

This Weekly Update will be on Hiatus Next Week, but Will Return on November 23.


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Emerging Trends
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Chronic Multiyear Deficits:' California Legislative Analyst's Office Releases 2027-28 Fiscal Outlook

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How Satire Exposes Truth in the Age of Applause

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Can Governor Newsom Legally Commute Death Penalty Sentences?

The Governor's discretion is based 'on conditions the Governor deems proper'

By Chris Micheli, November 21, 2026

On November 5, 2026, Governor Gavin Newsom announced plans to commute all 548 California death row prisoners' sentences to life in state prison without the possibility of parole. Since then, a debate has ensued whether the Governor has a legal right to do so. And, just recently, a lawsuit was filed to challenge his blanket commutation.

According to the ACLU, "Newsom is not alone in commuting death sentences. Since 1976, seven governors and former President Joe Biden have commuted all or most death sentences in their jurisdictions, based on systemic circumstances not specific to any individual. These commutations were granted in states like Maryland and Illinois by governors of both political parties."

So, can Governor Newsom legal commute death penalty sentences? We start our analysis with the California Constitution. Article V, Section 8(a) states in full:

(a) Subject to application procedures provided by statute, the Governor, on conditions the Governor deems proper, may grant a reprieve, pardon, and commutation, after sentence, except in case of impeachment. The Governor shall report to the Legislature each reprieve, pardon, and commutation granted, stating the pertinent facts and the reasons for granting it. The Governor may not grant a pardon or commutation to a person twice convicted of a felony except on recommendation of the Supreme Court, 4 judges concurring.

(Sec. 8 amended Nov. 8, 1988, by Prop. 89. Res.Ch. 63, 1988.)

Under the California Constitution, Governor Newsom has the authority to commute death sentences to life in prison without parole, though cases involving multiple

felony convictions require approval from a majority of the justices of the California Supreme Court.

How does commuting sentences work in California? Governor Newsom can unilaterally commute sentences for condemned prisoners convicted of a felony in connection with a single incident, which is about one-third of the current death row cases. The word "may," which is discretionary, is used Section 8(a). As a result, the Governor has the authority to grant a commutation after sentence, with one exception (impeachment).

In addition, the Governor's discretion is based "on conditions the Governor deems proper." As a result, these conditions can be objective or subjective based upon the Governor's discretion. Once the Governor's decision has been made, then he or she must report each commutation to the Legislature, "stating the pertinent facts and the reasons for granting it." This final requirement could be interpreted as requiring the Governor to review each commutation. However, he could use the same reason(s) for all of the commutations.

For prisoners with more than one felony conviction (about 70% of the cases), at least four of the seven justices on the California Supreme Court must approve the commutation before it can be actually granted. Governor Newsom has not had any of his commutation applications denied by the state's high court during his eight years in office. We will see if that statistic remains intact after the Court's review of 382 applications. However, considering his current rate of success, we can assume that at least four justices will likely approve all of his requests.

Remember that a commutation changes the punishment from death to life without parole in state prison. The commutation does not release prisoners nor overturn their convictions, nor do the commutations repeal California's death penalty statute nor stop prosecutors from seeking new death sentences in future cases.

Following the Governor's announcement earlier this month, prosecutors, law enforcement groups, and victims' families filed a petition with the California Supreme Court seeking to block the commutations, arguing Governor Newsom abused his power and bypassed legal requirements.

This lawsuit is unlikely to succeed because the Governor's clemency power (like the President's) is constitutionally established and Governor Newsom is following the required process by submitting multiple-felony cases to the state's high court.

The reason for this prediction is that California's courts have historically treated the Governor's commutation power as broad and only constrained by separation of

powers principles, while twice-convicted inmates still require state Supreme Court agreement.

For example, in *Procedures for Considering Requests for Recommendations Concerning Applications for Pardon or Commutation* (2018) 4 Cal. 5th 897, the California Supreme Court explained its constitutional role when reviewing clemency requests involving twice-convicted felons. The state's high court explained that the clemency power rests with the Governor and that the court does not decide the substantive merits of whether mercy should be granted.

Rather, the court's only role is to evaluate whether there is sufficient support that granting clemency would not be an abuse of power, rooted in separation of powers and historical safeguards against untoward influence. As a result, the only basis for the lawsuit to be successful is whether the high court would view the actions of Governor Newsom as an "abuse of power." Again, from my perspective, that outcome is doubtful because of the broad grant of authority given to him by the state Constitution, and that a his commutations are based "on conditions the Governor deems proper," which is also consistent with Article V, Section 8(a).



Chris Micheli
Chris Micheli is an attorney and lobbyist with Snodgrass & Micheli, LLC, as well as an Adjunct Professor at McGeorge School of Law.

'Chronic Multiyear Deficits:' California Legislative Analyst's Office Releases 2027-28 Fiscal Outlook

Under the LAO forecast, existing commitments exceed revenues

By Katy Grimes, November 18, 2026

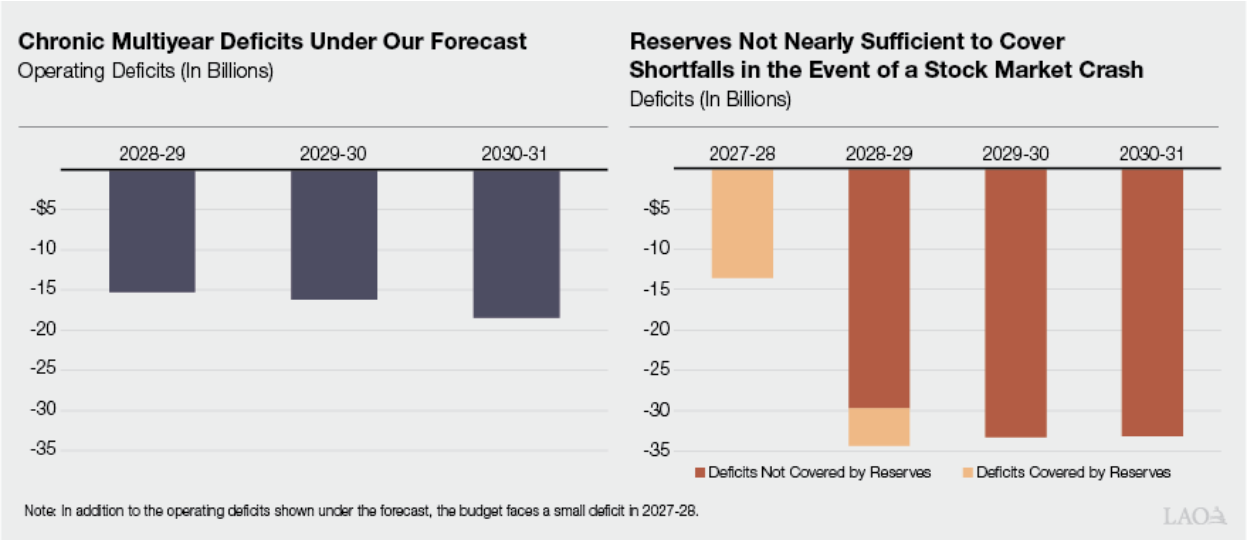
California's nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office just released its 2027-28 fiscal outlook.
A few highlights:

- Chronic multiyear deficits
- Reserves not nearly sufficient to cover shortfalls in the event of a stock market crash
- Existing Commitments Exceed Revenues
- Budget Resilience Has Already Been Depleted
- Crash Scenario Would Require Significant Actions Over Several Years

Gavin Newsom is leaving quite a legacy.

This is the fifth consecutive year the LAO has identified multi-year budget problems. Recent revenue strength has improved the near-term picture relative to prior outlooks, but constitutional requirements (Proposition 98 for schools/community colleges and Proposition 2 for reserves/debt) absorb much of any upside, and spending commitments continue to outpace sustainable revenue growth. The report also notes limited remaining budget resilience (rebuilding reserves, residual debt, fewer easy one-time cuts).

In the stock market crash scenario, personal income tax falls substantially to about $112 billion in 2027-28 versus $141 billion in the base case, producing much larger gaps even after lower Proposition 98 and Proposition 2 requirements.



Specifically, the LAO reports:
Stock Market Poses a Serious Risk to Revenues. Since 2023, the state budget has been the beneficiary of an extended stock market boom. Even now this boom

appears to be resulting in continued strength in income tax collections. That said, while the stock market's recent run has been great for many investors and the state budget, it now appears to have advanced to a dangerous stage. The risk now facing state revenues is that this boom, like many in the past, will abruptly end in a bust.

This Fiscal Outlook Meaningfully Incorporates This Risk. The state must decide how much revenue it can depend on having to pay for current services to Californians who rely on them. We view building a state budget around revenues that do not incorporate the meaningful danger of a market downturn as unduly risky. As such, our *Fiscal Outlook* explicitly incorporates this risk in two ways. First, to offer some insurance against a stock market downturn, our revenue forecast is somewhat weaker than suggested by recent collection trends, but still well above where it would be if a market crash occurred. This is the forecast we recommend policymakers use as a starting point to reduce the likelihood the state makes commitments it will be unable to afford in the future. Second, to gauge the state's preparedness for a stock market downturn, we present an estimate of the state's budget condition under a scenario where the stock market peaks at the end of this year and crashes over the course of 2027.

Under Our Forecast, Existing Commitments Exceed Revenues. Under our forecast, there is a small deficit of $2 billion at the end of 2027-28. Starting in 2028-29, however, deficits would be considerably larger, as shown on the left side of the figure. Although these out-year deficits have narrowed from the ones we projected a year ago—mainly due to the artificial intelligence (AI)-driven stock market surge and ongoing reductions enacted in this year's budget—deficits persist because the underlying imbalance has not been fully resolved.

This is particularly concerning:

Reserves Not Nearly Sufficient to Cover Shortfalls in the Event of a Stock Market Crash. If the current AI boom is a speculative bubble that ends in a bust, there will be severe budget shortfalls. As the right side of the figure shows, under this scenario, annual deficits would exceed $30 billion. If something like this scenario occurs, the state's reserves and borrowing capacity will be insufficient, almost certainly necessitating sizeable ongoing cuts or revenue increases within a couple of years.

Senate Republican Leader Roger Niello (R-Fair Oaks) issued a statement today in response:

"The new administration will have to face reality. The stock market returning to more normal levels is a matter of when, not if.

Bringing the state budget into balance in a way that works in good times and bad will help us avoid the pain of making even more drastic changes to Californians'

everyday lives. Otherwise, when the market eventually corrects, the consequences of today's budget problems will catch up with us."

This is my shocked face:





Katy Grimes

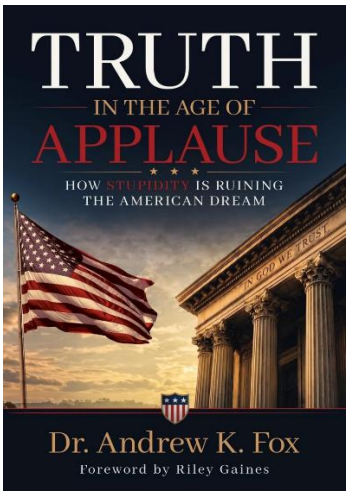
Katy Grimes, the Editor in Chief of the California Globe, is a long-time Investigative Journalist covering the California State Capitol, the co-author of California's War Against Donald Trump: Who Wins? Who Loses? and a contributor to "Taxifornia 2016."

A California native and Navy mom, Katy lives in Sacramento, CA.

How Satire Exposes Truth in the Age of Applause

The obvious answer is that we must preserve reason if we are to maintain a free society

By A.J. Rice, November 19, 2026



To say that Dr. Andrew Fox's journey into the American Dream has been unique is like saying that Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–1859)—the French political thinker best known for *Democracy in America*—was more than a tourist. But unlike de Tocqueville, who was welcomed with open arms, Fox's story belongs in a revised version of *Foxe's Book of Martyrs.* Thankfully, he's written another book that's a worthy read in the lexicon of humanity's battle against tyranny.

Truth in the Age of Applause: How Stupidity Is Ruining the American Dream explores how a free society teaches its citizens to stop thinking independently and rewards conformity over conviction.

Recently on my show, Dangerous Laughter, Fox drew on his own experience as an immigrant who chose to become a legal citizen in 1999. After eight years as a volunteer chaplain for the Austin Fire Department, he was dismissed over a personal blog post expressing his Christian beliefs, including his opposition to transgender men participating in women's sports. His subsequent case, *Fox v. City of Austin*, became a four-year legal battle that cost his defenders roughly $800,000 and ultimately vindicated his First Amendment rights.

The irony of an immigrant seeking America's promise of freedom experiencing persecution for expressing his conscience isn't lost on him. "How high on the

American Dream list," he asked, "was getting into a four-year legal fight for an unpaid job?"

Unfortunately for Andrew, the promise of America felt like a betrayal, colored by his own experience growing up as an adopted child. Perhaps that sense of rejection was a catalyst for him drawing a line in the sand, accepting the crucible of confrontation.

Originally, a fire chief asked Fox to reestablish a chaplaincy program after a 15-year hiatus to help first responders process traumatic emergencies and to provide a confidential place to seek help and solace.

"So, you're very intimately connected with these people," Fox shared. "And they've invested trust in you, and there are volumes of things that will go to the grave with me."

He explained "It took me two years to earn my way in, into that paramilitary organization. So, I was thrilled with that kind of world. And after two years, my feet are under the table, building the program," Fox related.
Fox used satire through his personal blog, "Willy Woke & the Chocolate Factory," to address a serious question: What happens to women's (yes, *we* actually know what a woman is) hard-won athletic opportunities when males are allowed to compete in women's events?

Drawing on the long history of the fairer sex rising from exclusion in the ancient Olympics to their growing presence in modern competition, Fox argued that those achievements deserve protection. Most sane people would agree.

Unfortunately, not everyone is sane, or at least courageous enough to tell the empress that "she" has a penis. His criticism, grounded in his Christian convictions, brought consequences beyond online debate. According to Fox, opponents pressured Austin officials to remove him from his volunteer chaplaincy, and he was pressed to publicly repudiate his position.

My friend's answer was unequivocal: "No, not a chance."

"There are some battles where it's gonna carve the rest of your life out if you give in," he told me. Abandoning his position under pressure would have meant allowing officials to dictate which convictions he could publicly express.

During our interview, I played video footage showing French diners calmly sipping drinks in the foreground as Palestinian-waving barbarians burned and plundered

their city just behind them. What's going on currently in France is the opposite of the kind of courage that Fox has in spades.
"They're making AI cat videos while the world ends around them," I said. "Where's Charles Martel? Where are the Normans? Where's Charlemagne? Where's Charles de Gaulle? There's no one there. There's the apathy that you can sit there and have left-wing kooks pouring out into the streets, being backed up by basically third-worlders that were brought in from Syria or Algeria, wherever the hell they came from."

"France has had at least five to seven revolutions in its history," responded Fox. America's only had one, in 1776." And what is France on, their fifth republic or some nonsense like that? Fox argued that America needs to look at France and say, "We will not allow this into our country."

"We know it's here, but we've got to do something about that," he said. "You've got to help people find national identity. Pulling down all kinds of statues and monuments is not the way forward. You've got to honor those things."

For Fox, the issue extends beyond border security. "It's not just about borders. It's about assimilating those people," he said, adding that, if the fee were right and the government were listening, he would teach foreigners how to speak English in the United States.

I agreed, pointing to France's history of revolutionary violence, from the Jacobins, Robespierre, Marat, and Danton to the execution of the royal family and the storming of the Bastille.

"This is in their DNA," I added. "They've been schizophrenic since then. That's why Napoleon had to take control."

Turning to the World Wars, I suggested that France had lost many of its "alpha males" in the trenches of World War I and the blitzkrieg of World War II. "So, who's left? Is this the bloodline of the Hammer of the Franks?" I asked. "The men that are left are not the descendants of the people that died in World War I and II, because they never made it home to procreate…So, who's out there? Pepé Le Pew? The brie eaters?"

Fox responded, "With the greatest respect—or maybe not any respect, France was very quick to surrender and allow the jackboot to march through Paris. They put up the least resistance."

Fox—as if channeling his inner Richard the Lionheart—shared that he refused to repudiate his beliefs and began searching for legal representation. An attorney eventually directed him to Alliance Defending Freedom, which took his case and supported him through a four-year legal battle.

According to Fox, the dispute ended in a settlement that included financial relief and a written acknowledgment of his First Amendment rights. "It took four hours of mediation between my attorneys and theirs to write one paragraph," he recalled. Fox also found support and encouragement in Riley Gaines, whose legendary defense of women's sports aligned with the convictions that had brought him into conflict with the city. A mutual connection arranged their introduction, and they remained in touch throughout his ordeal.

When Fox later asked Gaines to write the foreword to *Truth in the Age of Applause*, she agreed. "She didn't need to, but she did, and it's added great weight to that book," he shared. "She is an absolute voice for what is, what the ancients would call the good, the beautiful, and the true, [to] keep women in women's sports."
Then Fox turned to another person willing to stand against conformity, Deitrich Bonnhoeffer. "He used the word stupidity in the Second World War because he was one of the singular voices, a theologian, Lutheran pastor, and he went up against Adolf Hitler…He said to the German people, 'Look, you're smart, you're intelligent, you're rational, you're logical, you're reasonable…But he said, 'You're going along with Adolf Hitler's ideology, the Third Reich, the Nazi Party,' which we know to be an absolute terror and evil. He said, 'You smart people are abdicating on your cerebral moral judgment and just going along with the ideology."

"So, after my journey with the city of Austin and everything that went down with the woke world there is the same kind of stupidity….you got a governor in, in, on the East Coast saying, 'Let's change mother to gestating parent.' What are you gonna do on Mother's Day, A.J.? Say to your mom, 'Happy gestating person?' She'll slap you on the face. She'll kick your rear end."

"You've got them wanting to abort babies the day before they're born…candidates that approach Sharia law in Egypt and the Middle East that wanna have seats on the Senate…juries full of white women that think Lindsey Clancy's innocent."

For Fox, the madness spreads when people surrender their own judgment and mistake public approval for proof of rightness. But something doesn't become true because a crowd cheers for it, and it doesn't become false because the crowd demands your head—or your unpaid chaplaincy.

“Look, AJ, if truth needs applause, it’s no longer truth. It’s a performance. And if society is based on a performance, then it will lose sight of its reality.”

Fox compared that loss of perspective to wandering through a forest. “You were lost some time ago when you were not paying attention to things that were being said on the media, being published, being broadcast, and you didn’t apply your own moral judgment again to say, ‘Hey, this is wrong.’”

So, what should readers take away from his book? His answer is refreshingly brief: “Stop being afraid.”

“You nip it in the bud right at step one,” he said. “Use words. Go back to the eloquence and the persuasion of words…Could we not reason together?” he asked.

That’s a fair question for a country founded by people who argued their case for liberty in writing before pledging their lives, fortunes, and sacred honor to defend it. Keeping that liberty requires Americans willing to exercise their judgment, speak their convictions, and withstand the tantrums of the Left. The obvious answer is that we must preserve reason if we are to maintain a free society.

And if the self-appointed guardians of acceptable thought can’t take a joke, that’s no reason to stop telling one.

“So, retain your humor,” Fox said, “and don’t be afraid.”



A.J. Rice
A.J. Rice is host of the Dangerous Laughter podcast, and author of the new #1 political satire bestseller, The Curse of the Bearded Lady: How the Trans Mafia Whacked American Sanity. He serves as President & CEO of Publius PR, Editor-in-Chief of The Publius National Post.
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916-651-4017 Sacramento
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senator.laird@senate.ca.gov

State Assembly Member Dawn Addis
916-319-2030 Sacramento
805-549-3001 District
assemblymember.addis@assembly.ca.gov

SLO County Supervisor Bruce Gibson
805-781-4338 District
bgibson@co.slo.ca.us

SLO County Supervisor Heather Moreno
805-781-4339 District
hmoreno@co.slo.ca.us

SLO County Supervisor Dawn Ortiz-Legg
805-781-5450 District
dortizlegg@co.slo.ca.us

SLO County Supervisor Jimmy Paulding
805-781-4337 District
district4@co.slo.ca.us

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