



Weekly Update
Oct. 26 – Nov. 2, 2026

Fire Codes – Hot Item

Property owners interested in building on land located on dead end roads could be in for some serious heartburn. Item 20 on the October 20 San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors agenda read: “Request to approve the re-establishment and update of the Fire Code Board of Appeals.”



Regulations have become so strict that some property owners could find their property entirely unbuildable and thus essentially worthless. Without an appeals process, property owners may find themselves with no options. The big question is how much discretion an appeals board would have.

A Fire Code Board of Appeals is usually made up of retired fire professionals. In other words, specialists who understand both the meaning of the codes and why they were put into effect.

The appeals board would provide prospective builders who have been denied a permit the opportunity to get a second chance.



We need to avoid making dead end properties worthless.

The issue that many have with this approach is that the appeals board wouldn't include elected officials who represent the public and are therefore more accountable. There is a strong desire among many representatives of builders and building associations to shift the final appeal process to the Board of Supervisors.

Here is the current code section that establishes the Board of Appeals:

Fire Board of Appeals

- The California Fire Code and State Minimum Fire Regulations (CCR Title 14) allow for local jurisdictions to implement appeals boards. They also provide a process for review after any determinations have been made by the local Fire Chief/Fire Marshal.
- In San Luis Obispo County, CA Fire Code Section 112 (Board of Appeals) was adopted on November 4, 2025.
- State Minimum Fire Regulations took effect January 1, 1991, and have been updated periodically by the Board of Forestry.

The appeals board is required to adhere to the fire codes and is not allowed to make exceptions or waive requirements. Any successful appeal would hinge on misinterpretations of the codes in the original determination by the Fire Chief:

Fire Code and Title 14 Requirements

California Fire Code Section 112

General – Appeals board is to be appointed by the governing body.

Limitations – The Fire Board does not have the authority to waive requirements of the code.

Qualifications – Board members have experience and training pertaining to fire code. (112.3)

The biggest issue of concern is whether a secondary ingress/egress road could be created on dead end properties. Other forms of mitigation would be very limited but should be considered. One aspect of the fire code is the distance of the dead-end road, which apparently is not something that can be mitigated.

San Luis County Fire Chief John Owens presented the situation to the BoS at the October 20 board meeting and said their goal was always get to “yes” with the permitting process, but that many aspects of the codes are not flexible.

Among the issues discussed was the difference between building a single-family home/ranch verses a convention center. This was a bit frustrating to hear because sadly, it’s unlikely that anybody will be attempting to build a convention center in our county in the near future and if anybody did, they would likely do the research before buying property that would have restrictions.



San Luis Obispo County Fire Chief John Owens

Here are the codes that allow for an appeals board and the staff recommendations that such a board be formed:

Fire Code and Title 14 Requirements

State Fire Minimum Regulations Title 14 – 1270

General – Where an exception to the regulations is not granted by the Fire Chief/Fire Marshal, the applicant may appeal such denial.

The local jurisdiction may establish or utilize an appeal process consistent with existing local building (16.10.070) or planning department appeal processes.

Staff Recommendations

- Approve re-establishment and update of the Fire Code Board of Appeals.
- Designate the Fire Code Board of Appeals as the final decisionmaker on applicable Fire Code appeals.
- Provide direction regarding final appeal authority, as necessary.
- Direct the County Clerk to notice vacancies and initiate recruitment.

It seemed that everybody was comfortable with the establishment of the board with the exception of permits for those applicants on dead end roads. In that case, the request from the building sector was for a process involving the Board of Supervisors.

It was pointed out that a request had been made in 2023 for staff to review and report on how other rural counties were dealing with the situation. But that apparently such work had never been completed.

COLAB remarks pointed out the serious ramifications should property owners be left with worthless property or severely devalued. Our concern is that some may have mortgages exceeding the value. Another is that if property owners essentially abandon their property, weed abatement and pest control would probably end. Lastly, property tax revenues would likely end for those parcels that have been deemed unbuildable.

Certainly, safety is the highest priority, and we appreciate the efforts of fire professionals who work to diminish risk and protect people and property. We hope that reasonable solutions can be found for those who are property owners who find themselves on the wrong side of regulations.

After nearly an hour of deliberation, the BoS chose to adopt the recommendation with the caveat that staff complete the review and report within six months of other rural county approaches, and the issue would be revisited at that time.

Fall Forum

The COLAB Fall Forum, held on October 21 at Thousand Hills Ranch in Pismo Beach, was a tremendous success. Guest speaker Jon Coupal, President of the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association, shared his expertise about taxes in general and especially the impact of Propositions 43, 42 and 41.

The 100 or so attendees who braved the rain were treated to good company, fine refreshments and a great deal of insight. We appreciate their attendance.



COLAB President Jeanne Helphenstine brings the event to order.



Former Congresswoman and Central Coast Taxpayer Association President Andrea Seastrand introduces Jon Coupal.



Howard Jarvis Taxpayer Association President Jon Coupal talks taxes and urge's support of Props 41, 42 and 43.



Lots of fun conversation.



Yummy!



Plenty of fine refreshments. Thanks to Debbie and Steve Arnold for the Vintage Cowboy wine.



Great boardmembers, great bartenders!

Special thanks to hosts Allan and Cecille Toshiro, COLAB Directors and first-class bartenders Mike Frederick and Tyler Riley, COLAB Director and MC extraordinaire Ben Higgins for the Q&A and former Congresswoman Andrea Seastrand for the great introduction. Also special appreciation to those in attendance who joined COLAB.

Making Waves About Offshore Wind Energy

Offshore wind energy efforts along our coast are either dead or just waiting to be implemented depending on what you read or hear on the grapevine. It could be a

great addition to our grid or a nightmare of expensive high maintenance ocean hazards depending on what you read or hear on the grapevine.



Will the SLO coastline become a wind farm?

How much would offshore wind energy cost? It seems that nobody can put a definitive number on that. Would it be subsidized, how much? It seems that nobody can put a definitive number on that. What would it do to our ports and coastal communities? Again, it seems that nobody can put a definitive explanation to that.



REACT Alliance (Responsible Energy Adaptation for California's Transition)

One organization (that is solidly opposed to offshore wind energy along our coast) is attempting to find answers to those questions. REACT Alliance is hosting a forum on November 7 to address those topics.



What would Avila or Morro Bay look like with offshore wind energy?

While COLAB does not have an official position on the topic, we appreciate any effort to clarify what locals need to know about this important subject. We especially appreciate that Edward Ring, one of our favorite researcher/writers on energy topics will be presenting.



Edward Ring: Energy Expert

Below is a flyer with details about the event. Further details about REACT Alliance can be found at: [React Alliance](http://ReactAlliance.com) | [About — react-alliance](http://About-react-alliance.com)



We emphasize that REACT is an organization that was formed to fight against the establishment of offshore wind energy industrialization of our coast. Their point of view is clear. Their interest in bringing presenters to share factual information is appreciated.

Weather Warning: Be Prepared

With forecasters predicting heavier than usual winter storms due to the “Super El Nino” conditions of the Pacific Ocean, county government is proactively preparing. The Department of Public Works provided a comprehensive report of their preparation efforts at the October 20 BoS meeting. Here are a few highlights.

Clearing flood control channels, fortifying culverts and preparing low water crossings are just a few of the activities that have been underway for many months.

Below are some of the steps that Public Works is taking to ensure the least possible damage from severe storms:

2026-27 Winter Season Prep – Public Works

2) Highlights since 2023

Mapping Audits

- San Miguel
- Santa Margarita
- San Simeon
- Shandon
- Cambria
- Cayucos
- Los Osos
- Garden Farms
- Avila Beach
- Edna
- Nipomo
- Templeton



2026-27 Winter Season Prep – Public Works

2) Highlights since 2023

Storm Reports Analysis

- Low Water Crossings
- Coastal Flood Areas:
 - Cambria
 - Cayucos
 - Los Osos
 - Avila Beach



W8-19

Stream gauges allow safety personnel to better anticipate rising water levels and respond appropriately to the right locations in time.

2026-27 Winter Season Prep – Public Works

2) Highlights since 2023

New Stream Gages

- Tar Springs (AG Creek)
- San Luis Bay Dr (SLO Creek)



Below is a useful website for current storm prep:

2026-27 Winter Season Prep – Public Works

3) Public Works Resources for the Public

- wr.slocountywater.org
- Creek Care Guidance
- Road Closures
- Social Media
- FEMA Maps

We will include additional details on winter storm preparation in next week's Weekly Update.

Make a Difference, Get Involved

Every election season, activists claim “this is the most important election ever” and they are right. This year, like all other election years, is important because it gives the people the ultimate voice in who will represent us, who will give voice to our concerns and who will enact the policies that take us in the direction we want to go.

Obviously, every vote is critical. But volunteering for the party or candidate of your choice is also very important. Even if you have one morning, afternoon or evening to help, you can make a difference.



With one week to go, please reach out to whichever party you support and ask what you can do. Precinct walking (door knocking), phone banks, sign waiving or just networking in your neighborhood or even putting a sign in your yard – it all makes a difference.

Some of our local races could be decided by margins of 20 votes or less.

Volunteering amplifies your voice. It also connects you with like-minded neighbors and connects voters with encouragement to get their ballot in and have their voices heard as well.

Here are the best places to reach out to if you are ready to engage:

San Luis Obispo County Democratic Party

<http://www.slocdp.org>

75 Higuera St Ste 110, San Luis Obispo, CA
(805) 546-8499

Republican Party of San Luis Obispo County

<http://www.rpsloc.org>

North County:

7357 El Camino Real, Atascadero, CA
(805) 541-4010

South County:

1312 E. Grand Ave.
Arroyo Grande, CA
(805) 668-2064

Last Week

Public Safety: Yes or No?

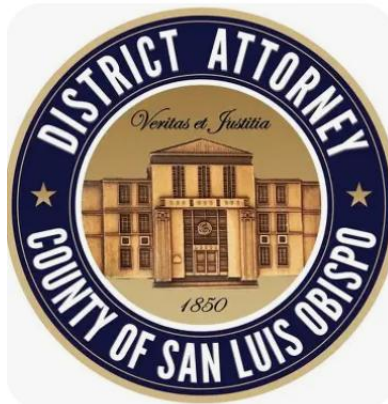
Item 4 on the October 20 San Luis Obispo Board of Supervisors agenda is a step towards finally giving the District Attorney's office some of the staff support they have been requesting and desperately need. The agenda item reads:

Request to 1) adopt a resolution that: a) retroactively authorizes the District Attorney to apply for and accept a grant award from the Federal Bureau of Justice Assistance in the amount of \$726,882 for the period of September 1, 2026 through August 31, 2029, that will offset funding of an existing 0.50 FTE of a Deputy District Attorney IV, and b) delegates authority to the District Attorney or designee to sign any grant agreements, amendments, subcontracts, or documents related to the grant awards/agreements that do not increase the level of General Fund Support required by the District Attorney; 2) adopt a resolution amending the Position Allocation List (PAL) for Fund Center (FC) 132 – District Attorney to add a 1.00 Limited Term FTE Paralegal through August 31, 2029; and 3) approve a corresponding budget adjustment request in the amount of \$167,332 using Special Attorneys Program Grant funds within FC 132 – District Attorney in expenditure appropriation for FY 2026-27, by 4/5 vote.



This item was put on the agenda by District Attorney Dan Dow. With the dramatic increase in fraud, elderly abuse and prosecutions of crimes restored under Proposition 36, the DA's office is facing tremendous pressure to manage their case

load. On top of that, the increase in managing digital data has resulted in a much heavier workload.



According to Dow, “This attorney will now be able to take some of his current local cases to Federal Court for prosecution. (Human Trafficking, drug trafficking, guns, gangs, fraud, environmental cases...) We will take the cases that we can obtain better longer sentences under Federal law.”

Dow went on to say, “My DDA will be our local special assistant united states attorney who can ensure that San Luis Obispo County major crimes that qualify for federal prosecution will be able to have the best possible outcomes for public safety here in SLO County. The savings to our General Fund will free up the balance to fully fund an additional Paralegal which we badly need to address the growing volume of evidence and workload on our Paralegal team for the past 12 years without any additional paralegal staff.”



Dow doesn't give up fighting for justice.

Our Board of Supervisors claims that their top priority is public safety. Yet the majority of the Board rejected Dows request early in the year for more staff positions. Now, they have an opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to

public safety by supporting our District Attorney in this important effort to increase the capabilities of our District Attorney team.

We appreciate Dow’s determination to bring the needed resources to this critical component of our justice system and hope that our entire Board of Supervisors recognizes the importance of this effort.

Unanswered Child Care Questions

Item 5 on the Oct, 20 agenda reads: “Submittal of a resolution endorsing the Uplift Child Care Coalition's Shared Vision Statement for childcare on California's Central Coast.”

Only Mr. Scrooge would oppose quality childcare, and he is busy getting ready for Christmas. But there is a little more to this seemingly innocent and well-intentioned measure.

As we read, we see that the Uplift Child Care Coalition has developed “A Shared Vision for California's Central Coast,” which states that childcare is essential to the wellbeing, prosperity, and future of the Central Coast and should be high-quality, accessible, and affordable for all families”



Well, we like the “affordable” part, but how does that work? Most educators would tell you that our regular K – 12 system is woefully underfunded. So where

would subsidy funding come from to provide the childcare program that will be affordable for everyone? Will it take from other programs, or will it require an entirely new funding stream? Is this another redistribution of wealth program where higher income families pay extra to fund the lower income ones? Are we talking mandatory or voluntary childcare? Will those families choosing different forms of child care (stay at home parents, grandparents/family members, church programs, etc.) still have to pay?



Childcare is great, but not cheap.

According to the coalition's website: "The backbone funding for the Child Care Coalition was received from Uplift Central Coast (Uplift), which is a six-county coalition working to attract investment and expand opportunities for Central Coast residents." It goes on to say, "The mission of Uplift is "to uplift our residents as we uplift our regional economy, growing from within to create transformative opportunities for more than 2 million people across six Central Coast counties."

Here are their graphics illustrating their efforts:



The program has the backing of First 5, which is funded by a 50 cent per pack tax on cigarettes. The tax raises about \$500 million annually, with approximately 20% going to overhead and the balance to programs.



Uplift’s website says: ‘After producing the Regional Plans, Uplift released a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for the Catalyst Predevelopment phase of work. Nearly \$50 million in funding requests from more than 136 organizations were received for the \$9 million that was available for distribution. [36 organizations](#) who were committed to advancing economic resilience, environmental sustainability, and equitable growth across the Central Coast were awarded funding. These organizations, representing all six counties, span diverse industries and address critical needs in areas such as workforce development, aerospace, education and job training, childcare and community development, and climate resilience and sustainable agriculture.’

This is a noble concept, but before the BoS throws support behind it, there should be a far more detailed explanation. We borrow Supervisor Gibson’s nuclear crutch by pointing out that there are “too many unanswered questions”.

Newsom Blows it Again

By now, almost everyone has seen the news that the 9th Circuit Court has unanimously found Governor Newsom’s "No Vigilantes Act," unconstitutional. The decision is a clear win for “the Constitution and for ICE, blocking Gavin Newsom's latest attempt to hamstring federal immigration enforcement. The 9th Circuit ruled that California cannot force federal officers to display identification under threat of criminal prosecution, because the Supremacy Clause bars states from directly regulating the operations of the federal government.”



Of course, anybody that stayed awake in High School civics class and earned a C- or better already knew all of that. It's a pity that so much court time and taxpayer money went into reaching that decision.



Ninth Circuit Court unanimously rejects Newsom's lame attempt.

The upside to getting the decision is hopefully that local ICE haters will stop annoying the Board of Supervisors and other local elected officials with crazy demands that they tell ICE what it can and can't do in San Luis Obispo County.



Newsom: Not qualified to teach high school civics.

We believe that Newsom knew that his law was unconstitutional but pursued it anyway as both a symbol of his position on illegal immigration (and violent crime) as well as a tool to foment fear and agitation among his cooky supporters.

The "No Vigilantes Act," was a lame attempt to make Newsom look like he could take on President Trump and prevail. Is it true that he cares more about his hair doo than the United States Constitution? Mark this as just another in a long list of Newsom Failures.

TAAG Implodes... Explodes?

The Templeton Area Advisory Group, known as TAAG, has formally requested to be "unrecognized" by the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors. The unrecognition ceremony will take place at the regular BoS meeting on October 20. According to the measure under consideration, "unfortunately, over recent months and year, TAAG has suffered from various challenges which has resulted in a lack of a quorum of board members, inability to attract new members and overall inability to meet on a regular basis".

We are always sorry to see problems with local advisory or community service districts, as they are a strong voice for local control.

What we wonder, whether this is an isolated situation, or are other local boards at risk of going down the same path?

Since the County is the granting authority, should the County take steps to review its many boards and service districts to ensure that they are all functioning at a healthy level. Of course, this would beg the question what if some are not fully functioning? How would the County proceed?

Local control is a critical component of democracy. There are, however, potential fiscal liabilities to districts that are not performing properly. We see a huge cost on the horizon for the San Simeon Community Service District with no clear solutions. Do any other districts have financial shortfalls that could end up as expensive problems for the whole county?



As we watch the demise of TAAG, we wonder what people think they are accomplishing when they get loud, rude and vulgar at public meetings? Does interrupting, pounding on the dais, and making specious demands help to find solutions? Do people who disrespect others really expect others to respect them? Can repeating the same monologue over and over again make misstatements somehow true? Do people using these tactics think they look good or smart by doing so? Do they realize that rather than being intimidating, they look foolish? Does anybody find a ranting and raving presenter somehow compelling?

An Appealing Solution for Bad Appeals?

Yes, yes... back on the broken record of abusive and expensive building permit appeals. Once again, the Los Osos Appeal Armada has sailed. This time they are appealing the Planning Commission's approval of a request by The Towers, LLC and Verizon Wireless for a Conditional Use Permit (N-DRC2025-00037) to allow the construction of telecommunications and public utility facility, consisting of a 70' monopine with (3) 8' antennas, (3) 4' antennas, (3) 3' antennas, (3) rru's, (1) 6' microwave, (4) ovp boxes, (1) gps antenna, required antenna cabling, hcs jumpers, (2) ground mounted radio cabinets, (1) equipment canopy, (1) fiber box, (1) 200a ilc cabinet, (1) manual service light switch timer, (3) service lights, (1) back-up diesel generator, (2) raised concrete pads, cable ice bridge, Utility backboard and multi-meter utility service mounted on concrete pad within a 40'x40' fenced lease area.



The kind of Monopine cell tower that will allegedly harm Los Osos residents.

This, of course is better known as a cell tower. It may be that the appellants don't use cell phones, but it's a sure bet that all their neighbors do. It may not be evident to the appellants, but the system works like this: Cell Towers provide cell service. No tower, no service. Even NIMBYs who use cell phones have to allow towers somewhere in their community. Gotta wonder where they think cell towers should go if not near them?

The appellant complains that the following conditions apply and are important enough to override the permit:

- Documented Health Concerns Associated With Long-Term RF Exposure
- Heightened Risk to Vulnerable Populations
- Environmental and Ecological Impacts
- Property Value, Habitability, and Tenant Retention Impacts

The appellant concludes thusly:

“Approving infrastructure that may expose residents to long-term health and environmental risks without comprehensive review conflicts with our responsibility to safeguard community welfare.”

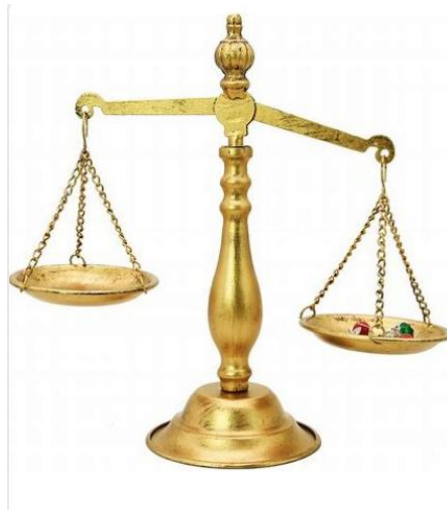
This appeal, like all coastal zone appeals, will cost taxpayers between \$8 – 13,000. If it is anything like the many that have preceded it, no real issues with the rules or procedures of the planning permit process will have been found to have been broken.

These appeals are too often filed with no merit. They cost needlessly taxpayers, but they also cost the builder who has to deal with the delay, review all the plans and prepare for the meritless hearing.

Our county encourages this wasteful (and vengeful) practice by giving any No-growther a full free ride.

Supervisor Moreno has attempted to reform the process, but the majority of the BoS saw nothing wrong with the situation. We have a recommendation.

Make all appeals liable for costs if it turns out that they have no basis for their filing. In other words, if the appellant can't prove that the permit was granted in violation of one or more planning rules, they are liable.



There needs to be fairness in the appeal process.

Educate all appellants about the need to be specific about what parts of the original permit process was out of compliance. Let them know that subjective claims, opinions and personal impressions are not grounds for a successful appeal.

In the case of a loss, if the appeal doesn't convince at least 2 Supervisors that the appeal is based on factual issues regarding the actual process and/or the rules and regulations of the planning process, the appellant pays (full cost? half cost?). Winning appeals pay nothing.

Would that appeal to our BoS?

Last Call!
Please Join Us on Wednesday Evening
It's Free, It's Fun and It's a Great Program



FALL FORUM



Wednesday, October 21st
5:30–7:30 PM



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

PROP 43 - **KNOW WHAT WE ARE** **PROTECTING AND WHY**

Join Jon Coupal, President of the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association and California's preeminent tax fighter, for a discussion on Prop 43, the "Save Prop 13" ballot measure, and the protections it would provide for California taxpayers.



Jon Coupal
President of HJTA



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

RSVP'S ARE APPRECIATED BY OCTOBER 14TH

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



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

How the DMV Enabled Voter Fraud in California

DOJ Charges 15 in Massive \$2 Billion LA Medical Fraud Case

California's Self-Imposed Affordability Crisis Continues Unabated as Residents Struggle

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

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How the DMV Enabled Voter Fraud in California

Not one lawmaker could answer 'how does a state government provide a document to drive legally, if the person came here illegally?'

By Katy Grimes, October 21, 2026 9:19 am

California's long-term shift from a competitive or Republican-leaning state to a Democratic stronghold has been driven primarily by demographic change through immigration.

In 2018, more than one million illegal immigrants received driver's licenses from the California DMV, which automatically registered them to vote under the new "Motor Voter" program.

Alex Padilla was California Secretary of State.

Back in 2015, Padilla told the Los Angeles Times, "At the latest, for the 2018 election cycle, I expect millions of new voters on the rolls in the state of California," with "new voters" code for ineligible voters. Remember what happened in 2018? AB 60 by former Democrat Assemblyman Luis Alejo, was just one of the many attempts over the past decade to authorize illegal immigrants with driver's licenses. Alejo said AB 60 would reduce fatal crashes and improve public safety. AB 60 followed another law from 2012, AB 2189, which granted California driver's licenses to illegal immigrants who came to California as children.

AB 60 was similar to bills authored by former Assemblyman Gil Cedillo, a Los Angeles Democrat, to give illegal immigrants the legal right to drive in California. Cedillo tried unsuccessfully seven or eight times to get his bill passed, but not without a fight. Cedillo's bill was passed by the Legislature three times, but vetoed twice by then-Gov. Gray Davis.

Davis finally signed one of Cedillo's bills in 2003, and it became an issue during his historic recall election. Davis was hammered on the issue by candidate Arnold Schwarzenegger, who was elected to replace Davis. The Legislature then signed a repeal of the bill, and Schwarzenegger signed it into law.

Republican lawmakers said the 50 individual states should not be writing piecemeal immigration laws, as it is something Congress needs to handle at the federal level.

Not one lawmaker could answer *how does a state government provide a document to drive legally, if the person came here illegally?*

But even before then-Gov. Jerry Brown signed AB 60 in 2013 to require California DMV offices to issue driver's licenses to illegal immigrants, the fix was in.

Longtime Democratic political consultant and lobbyist with deep United Farm Workers ties (he worked with Cesar Chavez), Richie Ross openly boasted of targeting the Latino community's fear of anti-illegal immigration measures, to drive the community even further into the arms of the Democratic Party, I explained in my book co-authored with attorney James Lacy, "California's War Against Donald Trump; Who Wins? Who Loses?"

Ross, and now-State Senator Maria Elena Durazo, who once led the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, a group of self-proclaimed socialist and Communist California labor officials, and Democrat Party operatives created a program in the 1990s to target Latinos and immigrants, illegal and legal, to permanently drive California politics far to the left. They tripled registered Latino voters, increased the Democrat share of that vote substantially, and roughly doubled Latinos' share of total votes cast in California.

This is just one more reason to support Steve Hilton's gubernatorial campaign and promise to **Abolish the DMV** and cut car registration to \$73.

In 2016 I reported:

The California New Motor Voter Program automatically registers all "eligible" California voters to vote when they first obtain or renew their driver's licenses at the Department of Motor Vehicles. "Eligible" no longer means having the right to do or obtain something; satisfying the appropriate conditions. "The goal is to ease barriers to voting, but election-integrity advocates warn that the measure could inadvertently add millions of illegal voters to the rolls given that California allows undocumented aliens to obtain driver's licenses," The Washington Times reported in an article last year.

Is there any question how this was done? First Gov. Jerry Brown signed a bill into law allowing illegal aliens to obtain official California drivers licenses. He did this despite that the California DMV is unable to differentiate between U.S. citizen and non-citizens when automatically plugging them into voter rolls. The real goal wasn't to provide identification to those who are in California illegally; the goal was to automatically register them to vote.

The California New Motor Voter Program even protects ineligible voters from criminal prosecution with this Get Out of Jail Free Card: "if a person who is ineligible to vote becomes registered... (and) attempts to vote in an election... the

person is presumed to have acted with official authorization and shall not be guilty of fraudulently voting... unless the person willfully votes or attempts to vote knowing that he or she is not entitled to vote.”

California was a crucial state for both Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton, but the election was called for Clinton minutes after the polls closed, before millions of provisional ballot votes were counted. One week later, more than 2.6 million votes were still uncounted in California. Adding to the suspicious outcome, based on pre-primary election polling, the media didn't do any exit polling because the results would have shown that Sanders likely won California. A civil rights attorney had even filed a lawsuit before the primary to force the media to publish their exit polls. But the media instead opted not to even do exit polls, in order to get around the order.

Following the hanging chads incident in Florida in the 2000 presidential election, Congress passed the **Help America Vote Act in 2002**, which mandated sweeping reforms, including a statewide voter registration system that would eliminate ineligible voters. But California failed to comply, and for 12 years was the only state that was still not compliant with the act.

In 2014, newly elected Secretary of State Alex Padilla, a Democrat, announced upon being elected that he planned to have California compliant within the year. A 2014 report by the **Election Integrity Project** titled, ***The Doors Are Wide Open For California Election Corruption***, found California's election system had serious vulnerabilities, no centralized computerized, no statewide voter registration list, poor National Voter Registration Act list maintenance, non-compliance with statutes protecting lawful voters, and suspected voting fraud. The report also found key election officials were roadblocks to election integrity. “Whether this stems from negligence or design, or a misguided central focus on ‘voter experience’, the result is the same: Corruption. The injury to lawful voters is patent,” the report said. We believe the problem is with **Vote Cal**,” Election Integrity Project co-founder Linda Paine said in a June interview. “It's the same problems all over the state.” The left has been at this for a long time.



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.

DOJ Charges 15 in Massive \$2 Billion LA Medical Fraud Case

The largest substance-abuse treatment fraud case in DOJ history is part of a broader takedown targeting body brokers, kickbacks, and medically unnecessary procedures

By Megan Barth, October 22, 2026

Federal agents raided a Tarzana mansion and arrested multiple suspects Thursday in a sweeping takedown of Los Angeles-area health care fraud schemes that allegedly bilked government and private programs of nearly \$2 billion, according to the Department of Justice and exclusive reporting by the *California Post*.

The Justice Department charged 15 defendants, including six medical professionals, in schemes that collectively involved more than \$1.8 billion in fraudulent claims. These included the largest substance-abuse treatment fraud case ever prosecuted by the department—more than \$1.6 billion billed for sham rehabs—plus \$134 million for unnecessary atherectomy procedures that injured patients and more than \$138 million across three hospice schemes for patients who were not terminally ill. An additional defendant faces charges in a roughly \$270 million Medi-Cal pharmacy fraud case. Eight defendants were arrested Thursday.

California Post exclusive coverage showed FBI agents and SWAT teams cutting the security gate at the \$2 million, six-bedroom Tarzana home of chiropractor Hany Malek, 61, scaling fences, deploying flash-bangs, and taking him into custody. Neighbors described a high-flying lifestyle with luxury vehicles; authorities had flagged him as armed and dangerous. Malek allegedly posed as a physician, diagnosing patients who did not have arterial disease so that cardiothoracic surgeon Harold Tabaie, 78, could perform repeated, medically unnecessary atherectomies—invasive procedures using a bladed catheter—billing Medicare under false provider names and offering kickbacks. Data analytics identified Tabaie as an extreme outlier in such billing.

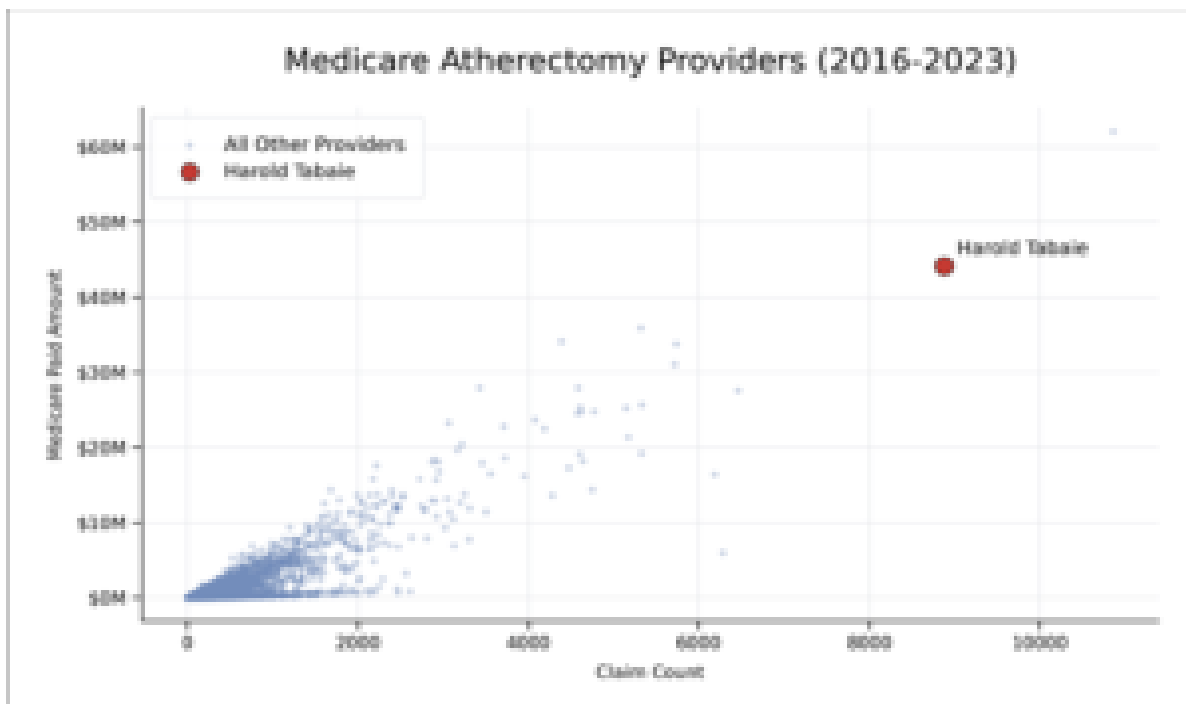


Chart depicting how Dr. Harold Tabaie was an extreme outlier for atherectomy procedures billed to Medicare in the United States from 2016 through 2023 (Photo: DOJ)

In the massive substance-abuse scheme, Nathan Young, 39 (also known as “Pablo”), and his father David Young, 71 (also known as “Sancho Lopez”), both of Los Angeles, along with body brokers Honey and Cody Phipps of Texas, allegedly trafficked vulnerable people—including the unhoused and those attending support groups—from around the country. They offered free flights, money, housing, cars, gift cards, marijuana, cigarettes, and drugs, then recycled patients through facilities. Premium patients with high-reimbursing insurance received hotels and dinners; others were housed in cramped, unsanitary “trap houses.”

The Youngs allegedly directed staff to drug patients “to knock the client out” if they tried to leave, coach false symptoms, and bill for Zoom “therapy” sessions patients did not have to attend. Text messages detailed instructions to keep high-value patients by offering drugs so billing could continue. Once in California, many promises proved illusory.

Hospice schemes involved operators such as Geoffrey Jimenez, Richard Keech, and Armani Raffi, who allegedly enrolled non-terminal Medicare beneficiaries, used kickbacks and marketers, fabricated certifications, and billed tens of millions while patients were often unaware they had been placed in hospice or received little or no care. Non-death discharge rates far exceeded national averages.

Assistant Attorney General Colin M. McDonald of the National Fraud Enforcement Division said the charges included “the largest sober home fraud scheme the Department has ever prosecuted” and schemes uncovered through data analytics. “If you steal health care dollars from the American taxpayer or abuse your position to harm patients, we are coming for you.”

First Assistant U.S. Attorney Bill Essayli for the Central District of California called it “especially egregious when doctors and other health care professionals, who pledged to do no harm, resort to petty greed and criminality. The cases announced today represent billions of dollars in intended losses. Every dollar drained out of our private and public health insurance systems is one less dollar available to those who truly need it.”

The takedown continues a federal crackdown under the Trump administration’s **White House Task Force to Eliminate Fraud** and the National Fraud Enforcement Division. It follows freezes of more than \$1 billion in California Medicaid funds over hospice and related fraud, suspensions of hundreds of LA-area providers, and earlier operations such as “Operation Never Say Die.”

California Globe has repeatedly **documented** the scale of the problem. In March, **our reporting** detailed how hospice fraud exploded in Los Angeles County after the state’s “crackdown,” with 742 flagged providers, \$105 million overbilled in a single year, ghost offices, and a 1,500 percent surge in providers since 2010 against far slower growth in the senior population.

In May, the Trump administration **froze** \$1.3 billion in Medicaid funds to California specifically over hospice fraud, noting prior state audits and the inadequacy of Sacramento’s response.

In August, HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. **accused** former HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra of gutting program-integrity staff from 80 to six, enabling billions in theft—including Los Angeles hospice billing for nonexistent patients at \$6,000 a month.

State efforts under Attorney General Rob Bonta have included charges in a \$267 million hospice ring using stolen identities, yet federal officials and independent reporting have continued to identify Los Angeles as an **epicenter**, with providers clustered at vacant addresses, zero-patient operations still billing, and vulnerable populations exploited for both hospice and substance-abuse claims. The schemes announced Thursday underscore how body-brokering, kickbacks, false certifications, and data outliers have diverted resources from genuine care for the addicted, the terminally ill, and seniors.



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.

California's Self-Imposed Affordability Crisis Continues Unabated as Residents Struggle

Federal policy decisions do not make our gas prices \$2 higher than the national average; Sacramento does

By Diane Dixon, October 22, 2026



Everyone is talking about it, but is anyone doing anything? California has an affordability crisis. This is no surprise to anyone in this state who pays bills, taxes, fills up their gas tank, or buys groceries. While America as a whole faces tough inflationary times, California is outpacing the rest of the country in cost-of-living increases. Our day-to-day lives are affected far more by actions and decisions in our state capitol than by those in Washington, D.C.

Case in point: California's average **gasoline price** is \$6.39, the highest in the nation. This is due to California's exorbitant state gasoline taxes and regulations. Federal policy decisions do not make our gas prices \$2 higher than the national average; Sacramento does. The Governor refuses to make any meaningful change to state policy to lower the cost of gas and has only ever offered piecemeal and temporary relief, such as allowing the use of the cheaper winter blend. For years now, Republicans in Sacramento have proposed meaningful change; for example, I have repeatedly introduced legislation that would **temporarily suspend** the state gasoline tax and halt annual increases. However, each attempt has been unanimously blocked by the Democratic supermajority.

Beyond the highest fuel rates, we also have the highest state income tax in the nation at 13.3% (and an additional 1.1% on wage income), totaling 14.4%. California also has the 7th-highest **sales tax of any state**.

The only area where California ranks lower is property taxes, where the **rate stands at 0.7%** and ranks 32nd among all 50 states. This isn't a result of good governance from Sacramento, but of Proposition 13, passed by voters in 1978, which restricts the State Legislature from increasing property taxes. Subsequent attempts to repeal Prop 13 have failed every time. Be assured that if Prop 13 is ever repealed, the California exodus of homeowners fleeing to other states will be even greater than what we have seen over the past decade.

California's affordability crisis can be traced to a number of misguided state policies; however, none better illustrates how Sacramento can drive up the cost of living than the 1970 California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). After over 50 years, this policy is now little more than an intentional obstacle to new housing construction, development and a key contributor to California's current housing shortage and the high cost of property. Amongst other unnecessary mandates, the law requires duplicative environmental reviews and public disclosure for all new development projects. The policy has been nothing short of disastrous for anyone trying to build just about any new development or home in the state. A project that

would take months in Arizona or Nevada would take years and tens of thousands of additional dollars in California.

CEQA has become a tool for anyone with a grievance against a project to file frivolous lawsuits with the sole intent of imposing delays and increasing litigation costs until a project is financially infeasible. Environmental activist groups regularly abuse this process by stalling a housing project for years, even decades, over an arbitrary concern. An entire ecosystem of professional CEQA advocates – trial lawyers, environmentalists, labor groups – now live off the thousands of annual lawsuits and legal actions that have resulted in costs being passed on to homebuyers, estimated to add an average of \$75,000 per new home. When the government interferes in the homebuilding process, prices increase, demand slows and eventually we have a housing crisis. It is simple arithmetic.

It is indisputable that CEQA hinders the ability of builders to create affordable housing and even the supermajority party agrees. Every legislative session, I see dozens of Democrat led bills that create exemptions or loopholes here and there within CEQA. For example, AB 130 and SB 131 from last year loosened CEQA regulations on narrowly defined infill housing, advanced manufacturing, wildfire mitigation, and the costly and wasteful high-speed rail project. These exemptions conveniently benefit the districts of the bills' authors, letting them chalk up a policy win for re-election while leaving the rest of the state without the relief it needs. This November, we have an opportunity to reduce the strain that CEQA has placed on homebuilders. Although not perfect, Prop 45 is crucial to expedite the tedious, lengthy environmental review process for building homes across California and to resolve lawsuits challenging project approvals. This would not only apply to housing projects, but also to water infrastructure projects, hospitals and schools, allowing for the cities and counties to be better served. Cutting the red tape and bureaucracy that has slowed down the approvals process for these major infrastructure projects will provide incentives to add to the demand of housing and over time ease the burden on California's high cost of living.

To add more of a burden to taxpayers and citizens in the state, California has been a magnet for illegal immigration because our state rewards those who have broken the law to enter our country. Illegal immigrants are offered taxpayer-funded medical benefits, social services, and educational opportunities, often provided with translation services in the individual's preferred language, also paid for with tax dollars. Immigration enforcement questions aside, this unquestionably adds hundreds of millions of dollars to the state budget deficit

The high inflation we are experiencing has increased the cost of living, the cost of doing business, and the cost of just about everything in our lives in California, and no doubt some of that comes from bad decisions made in Washington, D.C.

But the Democrats in Sacramento want to make you think that Washington is solely to blame for all of our financial woes. This couldn't be further from the truth. California is at a crossroads. Voters can keep kicking the can down the road and vote for the same leadership that has put us in this position for the last two decades, or they can choose a different path and begin the slow road to recovery for the *Golden State*.



Diane Dixon

Assemblywoman Diane Dixon spent 40 years in the private sector as a business executive before being elected to the Newport Beach City Council in 2014, where she served two terms as Mayor, and the California Assembly in 2022.

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