



COLAB SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

WEEK OF MARCH 13 - 19, 2016

VOTERS REJECT PASO BASIN WATER MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY GRASSROOTS REBELLION DEFEATS COMBINED MIGHT OF COUNTY, CAMPAIGN FINANCIERS, & STATE BACKERS



The proposed AB 2431 water district was overwhelmingly rejected. Measure A-16, the special tax to fund the district (or the County Flood Control Agency) was defeated by a huge margin as illustrated in the tally boxes prepared by the Clerk/Recorder. Similarly the vote on Measure B-16, the question on whether the proposed district should be formed, was also severely rebuffed.

A-16 SPECIAL TAX ELECTION ZONE			
19 (2/3)	Total		
Number of Precincts	8		
Precincts Reporting	8	100.0 %	
Times Counted	3400/7291	46.6 %	
Total Votes	3396		
YES	753	22.17%	
NO	2643	77.83%	

B-16 PASO ROBLES WATER DISTRICT FORMATION (50%+1)			
	Total		
Number of Precincts	2		
Precincts Reporting	2	100.0 %	
Times Counted	2479/4830	51.3 %	
Total Votes	2477		
YES	644	26.00%	
NO	1833	74.00%	

Government Backed The District: The defeat is even more stunning than the raw numbers suggest. The proponents of the district were backed by the full force of the San Luis Obispo County government, its budget, a dedicated staff cadre, government controlled “advisory”

committees, the City of Paso Robles, other elected officials, the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), the State of California Water Resources Control Board, and the State of California Department of Water Resources. The County budgeted \$350,000 to pay for various aspects of pushing the district formation. It created a new Deputy Director of Public Works who was assigned full time to promoting the district. Some insiders have indicated that the true cost so far is in the \$1 million range. The public, some supervisors, and some supervisorial candidates will demand a full cost accounting.

The Whole “World” Is Watching: County Supervisors Gibson and Hill relentlessly pushed the district through the Board of Supervisors. Even as recently as two weeks ago, Supervisor Gibson was writing threatening commentary in the San Luis Obispo Tribune. He said that he and Supervisor Hill will propose a motion for the Board of Supervisors to take over the basin immediately. Gibson traveled to Sacramento, returned, and said that everyone in Sacramento is watching and the local yokels had better approve the district or else.

Something Needs to Be Done: Separately, retiring Supervisor Frank Mecham also supported the district because, as he said, “something needs to be done.” He repeatedly cited avoiding potential State takeover of basin management as a critical justification.

District Proponents Raised \$486,708 To Conduct The “Yes” Vote Campaign: They hired expert political consulting firms, ran radio ads, distributed signs, mounted slick websites, and sent glossy mailers. Large campaign contributions inexplicably came from Canada, Lodi, and other disparate points. They were able use this money to run their campaign because the County taxpayers bore the burden of funding the district formation process. This freed up the proponents to use their money for electioneering costs. In effect the tax payers also contributed to the private interest “vote yes” campaign. This constitutes an unfair and ignominious disdain for the public by those County Supervisors who supported the district.

The opponents’ organizing group, the Paso Robles Water Integrity Network (PRWIN), reported raising \$20,084 and were thus out financed 20/1.

Election Impact: The vote augers well for 1st district Supervisor candidate John Peschong, who steadfastly opposed the district and who supports the quiet title adjudication process. His opponents, Dale Guston, Paso Robles City Councilmember John Hamon, and Paso Robles Mayor Steve Martin all overtly supported the district personally and politically. The two Paso Robles City officials also voted for the City to officially support the district. They should stop wasting their time and get out of the race now. After all, almost 80% of their potential unincorporated area constituents voted against the district – the key issue in the area.

Similarly, in the 4th District race incumbent Supervisor Debbie Arnold, who is running for a 2nd term, forthrightly and with considerable research and analysis, also opposed the district formation. The Democratic Party put up puppet opponent, and Gibson/ Hill avatar Eric Michielssen also supported the district formation. Again and given the numbers, and recognizing

Arnold's demonstrated strong support in Atascadero, Michielssen should stop wasting everyone's time and money and get out of the race.

Ultimately Gibson and Hill should take a leaf from Mecham, except in their cases, they should retire early by resigning.

The County Doomed the Proposed District From the Start: Prior to emergence of the State groundwater Management Act of 2014, the Board approved the so-called Paso Water Basin Urgency Ordinance, which effectively placed a 2+ year moratorium on new residential and agricultural development in the basin. The Board found that there was an imminent threat to public safety, health, and welfare. Water district proponents never came forward to vigorously oppose the moratorium. This clearly undermined the credibility of both the proponents and the Board of Supervisors members who supported the district. While monotonously chirping about "local control," the proponents and the supporting Board members drafted a district governing ordinance which is draconianly regulatory in nature. Then, and after the emergence of the State Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), they made the threat of State takeover the centerpiece of their campaign. Ultimately the Board of Supervisors made the moratorium permanent until there is an adopted SGMA groundwater sustainability plan (GSA), thereby further entangling the SGMA issue with the creation of the district. Remember, the original proposal for a district predates knowledge of SGMA. Finally, and as it turned out, the district was designed to conduct a 5-year process to develop a GSA at a cost of \$1 million per year for each of the five years. This meant that it would provide no actual services for at least 5 years.

The Board of Supervisors Drove the District Formation Application: The normal process for applicants for a new district is obtain signatures of 10% of the registered voters who would reside within the boundaries of the new entity and present them to LAFCO in order to demonstrate support. In the case of the Paso Basin proposed district, the Board of Supervisors preempted that democratic process and interposed itself as the applicant (and as noted above at public expense). This was yet another demonstration that the proposed district was not a voluntary expression of community concern but instead a creature whose underlying support and purpose was suspect. The proponents continuously mocked those who raised questions in this regard as irrational conspiracy theorists. Gibson and Hill quickly picked up on this mantra and amplified it in public Board sessions and the media. In the end, their treatment of this issue, actually fortified and deepened the opposition.

Recent Developments: The Sierra Club, North County Watch, and Supervisors Hill and Gibson, in retribution for the peoples' exercise of their democratic vote, are calling for the immediate State takeover of the basin, the imposition of severe rationing, and high fees and taxes. See the letter at addendum A on page 16.



THIS WEEK

**BOS TO HEAR APPEAL OF THE PLANNING
COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE TEMPLETON
MENTAL HEALTH FACILITY**

LARGE EXPENSIVE SOFTWARE CONTRACTS

LAST WEEK

**COLAB DINNER/DANCE CELEBRATES 2016:
THE YEAR OF OPPORTUNITY WITH AN
ENERGETIC & SUPPORTIVE CROWD**

**BOS DIRECTS STAFF TO BUDGET FOR
LAURA'S LAW PROGRAM IN FY 2016-17**

**PLANNING COMMISSION FINISHES PHILLIPS 66
TESTIMONY AND BEGINS QUESTIONS
(NEXT SESSIONS SLATED FOR APRIL 14TH AND MAY 19TH)**

SLO COLAB IN DEPTH

(SEE PAGE 12)

**California Joins the Effort to Persecute, Suppress
Scientific Dissent on Climate Change**

Public Unions and Special Interests Postpone Undermining Proposition 13

THIS WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

Board of Supervisors Meeting of Tuesday, March 15, 2016 (Scheduled)

Item 2 - Purchase of GE Fusion Centricity Practice Solution: Medical Clinic Management Software and Installation Services. The staff report on the consent agenda recommends that the Board authorize a \$635,000 contract to purchase an automated patient record system.

Description	Software Costs	Implementation Costs
EHR Software Licenses	\$200,625	
Vendor Software Interfaces/Products	\$79,375	
Project Management		\$85,800
Training		\$112,500
Data Conversion		\$50,400
Implementation Services		\$84,263
Travel Expenses		\$22,344
Sub Total	\$280,000	\$355,307
Total Vendor Contract		\$635,307

The contract is for software. The full cost of the project is estimated at \$1.043 million. The actual software itself is \$200,000 plus the software that allows application software to connect to the County system, \$79,000. The bulk of the cost is for project management (\$85,800 for the vendor and \$120,000 for the County); training, \$112,000; implementation services, \$84,000; travel expenses, \$22,000; and new hardware \$208,625.

	Countywide Automation Replacement
EXPENSES:	
Fusion Contract	
Software & Svcs-Contractor	628,307
Post Implementation (expensed)	7,000
Total Contract	635,307
Hardware, Network & Equip	208,625
County IT Project Management	120,000
Contingency (15%)	79,431
Total Project Expenses	1,043,363
FUNDING:	
Countywide Automation Replacement	
Fund	1,043,363
Departmental Funds-Public Health	
Total Project Funding	1,043,363

A quick web search shows that about 2/3 to 3/4 of Centricity's current users are not happy. Samples are listed below.

The statement below is from the product's largest user:

Mike from The Oregon Clinic
Specialty: Gastroenterology

Likes Best

As the largest group practice using the GE Centricity software, we have had extensive input and access to development and support.

Likes Least

Although there are trade-offs to most EMRs, we had tweaked and tweaked Centricity over the years. Many back end solutions and custom templates had helped make the limitations of the product livable and stable.

However, due to ICD-10, we were forced to upgrade to CPS 12. This new upgrade is worse than any EMR I've used. Average items on the doctors desktop have surged into the 100-200 range daily due to the unbelievable number of clicks required to accomplish even a simple task. The slowness of the software on any desktop at any location is unbearable. Frequent bugs and crashes are common. But even if these were temporary IT issues, the lack of forethought and workflow optimization is staggering for such a large company with a high-end product.

Recommendations

Stay away if you can at all. Clearly, there are folks that identified many more issues than those I mention. I'd strongly consider reading the reviews only for CPS12 if you are evaluating this product.¹

Stuart from WNC Surgeons

Specialty: Surgery

This group also ranked all rating criteria as 1 out of 5.

Likes Best

Nothing much.

Absolutely terrible.

Ease-of-use 1 out of 5

Functionality 1 out of 5

Product Quality 1 out of 5

Customer Support 1 out of 5

(1 lowest and 5 highest)

¹ ICD-10 is the current international coding system for diagnoses, CPT-12 is the current international coding system for procedures. We do not know if the County is using the current or older versions or how converting from the older versions to the newer reversions would impact this project. Reportedly the product has an ICD -9 to ICD 10 converter table.

Likes Least

The 15 minute logout is terrible and our IT people can't change it. To say the least, it's not intuitive at all.

Recommendations

Try Amazing Charts. I had to leave AC for Centricity when I became employed. There is no comparison. AC is wonderful and easy, Centricity is not. We have more than 50 docs and extenders using Centricity. No one likes it.

Michael from Orthopedic Surgery Specialists

Specialty: Orthopedics / sports medicine

Likes Best

The front desk applications seem to work reasonably well.

Likes Least

The reporting is horrible. After three years, I am still finding reports that don't balance and don't report on the data correctly. A major system like Centricity should have reports that are correct all the time. The users should not have to have a fear that the reports are correct. The only reports I trust for accuracy are the CPA reports in the value added reports. Any report related to patient counts, visits, demographics, and other patient data cannot be trusted to be accurate. We use a VAR, and it sometimes takes them months to get back with the reason why some reports don't balance. One I found last month is a canned report used in MU reporting; they still have not corrected the report nor told me why the report is incorrect. Getting any special report for my use is a nightmare, and I have in fact given up trying anymore. The VAR responsible for our training at the beginning was totally ill-prepared to train us and, in fact, had to eat well over \$25k in training time because they wasted our time and didn't do the job. Since then, they have improved a bit but not to the point where they are good.

Recommendations

Before signing on the dotted line, get into the actual details of what the system provides. Insist that they load a demo database for your use and then take some time to work in the demo database. If they tell you they can't do that until you sign an agreement, go to another program. Make sure the docs in your group are part of the users who experiment with the demo database. Be aware that while the forms in Centricity may be many, they are not very useful. Find out the cost to develop your own forms.

- a. If the software functionality is really good, why does it require so much extra cost to install and make people ready to use it?
- b. The Board should require a live demo projected onto the screen in the Board room.
- c. Did the County visit any current user's sites? If so, where and how comparable were they in terms of number of providers and size of patient base to the County?
- d. Similarly, if the County did visit other user sites, did the interviewers talk to the people who really have to work the stuff – that is non-management doctors, medical assistants, and nurses, coding clerks, and billing clerks? Management is often not a reliable source of real information

because it made the decision to buy the software in the first place. It is thus not inclined to report if it was a mistake.

e. It is essential that the County staff visit another clinic or two who are using the software to best understand the feel and usability of the product.

f. The County should ask for multiple references to talk to front line staff in order to understand if its needs will be met by the application.

h. Which other California counties use the product and what do their front line staffers report (not management)?

g. Did the County staff decision makers visit online websites and read reviews from other users? You would do this for hotels, restaurants, cars and other purchases in your private life. What about a \$1 million decision using public tax dollars?

Item 8 - Request to approve a FY 2015-16 through FY 2020-21 contracts with Tyler Technologies in the amount of \$1,026,866 for software and services to replace the Planning and Building Department's permit tracking system. The County Administration recommends that the Planning Department's current permit tracking system be replaced.

The Department's current permit tracking system (Tidemark Advantage) was purchased in 1997 and implemented over a five-year period. The application was written for the Windows 98 operating system, the support of which was officially discontinued by Microsoft in 2006. Planning and Building Department staff has written custom software to extend the useful lifespan of the application, but this solution has reached its technical limit - operating systems and database servers can no longer be upgraded without breaking the application.

The project is to take 2 years and will actually cost over \$2 million dollars.

FY 2015-16	\$1,513,605
FY 2016-17	\$ 549,310
Total	\$2,062,915

The write-up is not specific about the actual software price versus other services provided by the vendor for training, installation, data conversion and so forth. The related County costs for the project include:

- \$281,000 for additional temporary staff to work on the project.
- \$256,000 for IT Department project staff time.
- \$236, 000 for 1st year maintenance of the new software.

The first two costs seem excessive. The 3rd, cost for maintenance of the new software, is outrageous. How could a vendor charge this huge cost for maintaining the software that it has just sold and installed in the same year it is being installed?

a. If the Tidemark software is so great, why does it cost so much for the conversion.

- b. This is especially relevant because the County is already using an earlier version of Tidemark, so this is really an upgrade.
- c. Since the County is already using Tidemark, why are 6 temporary new employees needed for a year for the conversion?
- d. What is the actual cost breakdown within the proposed \$1.02 million contract? How much for the software, how much for the installation, how much for training, etc.?
- e. Which California jurisdictions, comparable in size and scope of land-use regulation, are currently using the version of Tidemark being purchased by the County?
- f. Did the selection team visit and talk to the front line people? How about the homebuilders, developers, and other critical clients in jurisdictions which use Tidemark?

Item 11- Appeal of the Planning Commission's Approval of a Conditional Use Permit to allow the subdivision of a 4.9 acre site into two parcels of 1.46 acres and 3.44 acres and the construction of a 70,419 square foot behavioral health hospital on Parcel 1 and a 36,503 square foot assisted living facility on proposed Parcel 2, located across from Twin Cities Hospital in Templeton. District 1. The staff report recommends that the Board of Supervisors reject the appeal and approve the project. The hearing is likely to be well attended by people on both sides of the issue and is likely to take some time.

The challenge for the appellants is that the land is zoned for the proposed uses and there is an existing hospital nearby. The appellants state that they are not opposed to the use but that the version proposed is too large for the community.

Background: The staff report summarizes the key elements of the project.

The proposed project includes the following elements:

1. Proposed parcel map to create a 3.44 acre parcel for the hospital and a 1.46 acre parcel for the assisted living facility,
2. Behavioral Health Hospital with 91 beds,
3. Assisted living facility with 60 beds,
4. Grading of 22,230 cubic yards,
5. Parking for 162 vehicles both underground and in surface lots,
6. A shared parking and access agreement between parcels,
7. A height modification request for a maximum height of 44 feet,
8. A subsurface retention basin.

There is very significant community opposition to the project, including by the Templeton Area Advisory Group. There is also considerable support, mostly from outside the community.

LAST WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

COLAB'S 7TH ANNUAL DINNER FUNDRAISER LIFTS SPIRITS AND CELEBRATES 2016 --THE YEAR OF OPPORTUNITY



The large and boisterous crowd enjoyed a terrific sit down dinner with filet mignon and select SLO County wines, a fun auction, and a rock and roll dance. The crowd went forth energized and committed to fulfill the promise of the year of opportunity in both SLO and Santa Barbara Counties. The generous support of so many public-spirited businesses and individuals enables COLAB of San Luis Obispo to maintain its role as the County's preeminent not-for-profit government watchdog, local public policy analysis organization, and reform advocate.

THANKS SO MUCH TO EVERYONE WHO ATTENDED, CONTRIBUTED, PROVIDED SERVICES, OR WHO WORKED THE EVENT.

Board of Supervisors Meeting of Tuesday, March 8, 2015 (Completed)

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Item 25 - Laura's Law: Mandatory Treatment for Certain High Risk Mental Patients.²

The Board unanimously instructed staff to develop a limited program and include funding in the proposed 2016-17 Annual Operating Budget. The preponderance of the funding would come

² **Laura's Law** is a California state law that allows for court-ordered assisted outpatient treatment. To qualify for the program, the person must have a serious mental illness plus a recent history of psychiatric hospitalizations, jailings or acts, threats or attempts of serious violent behavior towards [self] or others. The word "assisted" skirts the issue and more accurately could be mandated.

from the State Mental Health Services Act tax. This is a special income tax on individuals who make \$1 million or more per year.

Late last year the Board directed staff to investigate the feasibility of the County implementing a program that would require certain high risk mental patients to enter a mandatory treatment program. At that time the staff had pointed out that there were several alternative potential program levels related to intensity and breadth. The controversial issue of the government compelling individual citizens to undergo various forms of treatment was not discussed. Surprisingly, there were few public speakers, and those who did speak were staffers or not-for-profit agency reps in support.

Special Planning Commission Meeting of Friday, March 11, 2016 – Phillips 66 (Completed)

Item 3 - Phillips 66 Rail Spur. The Commission continued to hear public testimony for and against the proposed project. The Commission also restricted the public comment from the traditional 3-minutes per speaker, first to 2 minutes, and then ultimately to 1 minute in order to reach a point where public comment could be closed out and Commission consideration initiated.

The Commissioners will probably need a number of meetings to ask questions and begin to untie the Gordian knot that has been constructed by the staff and opponents. Their challenge will be to remain analytical and objective in the face of overwhelming hysterical opposition, not only by neighbors, but by well-financed and organized state and national anti-fossil fuel and anti-capitalist groups. To resist the matter from simply becoming a popularity contest will require fortitude.

Opponents repeatedly stress that the *statistical chance* of a bad accident (large spill in a sensitive area, fire, or explosion) is not relevant to the issue. They say *any possibility*, whatsoever, of a large scale incident constitutes “an unmitigatable Class I environmental impact” which, in turn constitutes a reason for denying the project. Again and if this is true, how could any hazardous industrial large scale industrial project ever be approved? Applications for nuclear power plants, oil refineries, chemical plants, plants that manufacture artillery shells, sea ports which handle oil and other petroleum products, and on and on, would all have to be denied because a large incident would have a Class I unmitigatable environmental impact. Thus the Commission is being asked to require that the project have absolutely no chance of an incident which would have a negative environmental impact. Setting such a standard would be unreasonable, arbitrary and capricious to the extreme. To assert that the environmental impacts outweigh the benefits of industrial civilization is absurd. If the argument is then made that the necessary production facilities of industrial civilization are okay, but should be located somewhere else (Carson, Long

Beach San Pedro, Richmond, Bakersfield etc.), the proponents are being elitist, unethical, and discriminatory.

The Commission has set April 15th and May 19th for the next sessions. The hearing is closed, so there will be no further public comment.

SLO COLAB IN DEPTH

In fighting the troublesome, local day-to-day assaults on our freedom and property, it is also important to keep in mind the larger underlying ideological, political, and economic causes and forces.

California Joins the Effort to Persecute, Suppress Scientific Dissent on Climate Change

By *Hans von Spakovsky*

California Attorney General Kamala Harris has joined New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman in trying to prosecute ExxonMobil for supposedly lying to its shareholders and the public about climate change, according to the [Los Angeles Times](#). The Times reported that Harris is investigating what ExxonMobil “knew about global warming and what the company told investors.”

Neither Harris nor Schneiderman recognizes the outrageousness of what they are doing—which amounts to censoring or restricting speech and debate on what is a contentious *scientific theory*. In fact, they want not just to stop anyone who questions the global warming theory from being able to speak; they want to *punish* them with possible civil sanctions or even criminal penalties. As I said [before](#) about Schneiderman, Harris needs a remedial lesson in the First Amendment.

Perhaps we should investigate what Harris “knows” about global warming or climate change, which Harris (and Schneiderman) treats as if it is a proven, unassailable, incontrovertible fact. However, as the Heritage Foundation’s Nicolas Loris has [pointed out](#), “flaws discovered in the scientific assessment of climate change have shown that the scientific consensus is not as settled as the public had been led to believe.”

According to Loris, leaked emails and documents from various universities and researchers have “revealed conspiracy, exaggerated warming data, possibly illegal destruction and manipulation of data, and attempts to freeze out dissenting scientists from publishing their work in reputable journals.” Furthermore, the “gaffes” that have been exposed in the United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

reports “have only increased skepticism” about the credibility of this scientific theory.

These investigations are reminiscent of the old Soviet Union, where Joseph Stalin persecuted those who he thought had the “wrong” scientific views on everything from linguistics to physics. Besides sending them a copy of the Constitution so they can review the First Amendment, residents of both New York and California might also want to include a copy of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s book, “In the First Circle,” in which he outlined the Soviet government’s suppression of dissenting scientists and engineers.

What makes this even worse is the fact that other public officials also want those who question this scientific theory investigated, prosecuted, and punished. According to the Times story, these include Rep. Ted Lieu, D-Calif., and Rep. Mark DeSaulnier, D-Calif., who have sent letters to U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch and the Securities and Exchange Commission “calling for federal investigation of securities fraud and violations of

Hans von Spakovsky is an authority on a wide range of issues—including civil rights, civil justice, the First Amendment, immigration, the rule of law and government reform—as a senior legal fellow in The Heritage Foundation’s Edwin Meese III Center for Legal and Judicial Studies and manager of the think tank’s Election Law Reform Initiative. [Read his research.](#) This article first appeared in the on line January 21, 2016 edition of the Daily Signal, a publication of the Heritage Foundation

racketeering, consumer protection, truth in advertising, public health, shareholder protection or other laws.”

But then, criminal investigations of climate change dissenters have been also called for by academics and other officials, among them former Vice President Al Gore. Maybe these politicians and their allies would favor passing a modern version of the Alien and Sedition Act perhaps renamed the Global Warming Sedition Act. Just like the 1798 law, it could punish “false, scandalous, and malicious writing” against the climate change theory.

The bottom line is that the state attorneys general of New York and California are not acting like levelheaded, objective prosecutors interested in the fair and dispassionate administration of justice. They are instead acting like Grand Inquisitors who must stamp out any heresy that doubts the legitimacy of the climate change religion. They are treating an unproven scientific theory as if it is a creed than cannot be questioned, probed, examined, or doubted.

Public Unions and Special Interests Postpone Undermining Proposition 13

BY JON COUPAL ON MARCH 4, 2016

The late songwriter Jim Croce listed a number of imprudent actions in his “You

Don’t Mess Around With Jim.” Along with staying out of Jim’s way, he included the

admonition not to tug on Superman's cape or spit into the wind. Croce might have added to his list the foolishness of taking on Proposition 13.

Promoters of an initiative to impose a \$6 billion annual surcharge on both business and residential, property, for the stated purpose of fighting poverty, have abandoned the effort. A measure sponsored by former Board of Equalization member Conway Collis and funded largely by an order of the Catholic Church, the Daughters of Charity, will not appear on the November ballot, as was expected.

It is unclear to Prop 13 defenders why the effort was halted. Some suggested that the governor intervened, convincing backers that too many measures on the ballot would risk rejection of propositions he favored. Others suggest the all-powerful teachers union threatened to oppose the measure because Collis failed to include a payout to education. But it cannot be overlooked that initiative backers may have become discouraged because Proposition 13 remains extremely popular with the general public and voters are very wary of any effort – no matter how benevolent it may sound – to undermine Prop 13's protections. Californians like the safeguards it provides by limiting annual property tax increases, allowing local voters to decide tax issues and requiring a two-thirds vote of the Legislature to increase state taxes, a threshold that has not proven to be insurmountable.



Still, dismantling Proposition 13 will continue as a major industry in political circles. The special interests looking to pry more money from taxpayers, whose burden already ranks the sixth highest in all 50 states, will say and do almost anything to disable or eliminate Proposition 13's taxpayer protections.

To undermine support for the tax limiting measure, tax raisers try to persuade voters that Proposition 13 is unfair. The "evil rich" and businesses do not deserve these protections, they say. Or, as is the case with the Collis initiative, they appeal to voters' compassion by pointing to a sympathetic population like "widows and orphans" that will benefit from the proceeds of breaking down Proposition 13.

These special interests, including the unions representing government employees — that the Department of Labor says are the highest paid in all 50 states — will continue to use misinformation and disinformation to try to convince voters to turn their wallets inside out because they know if they are candid

about their goal to raise taxes, their efforts will be as productive as tugging on Superman's cape.

Taxpayers will need to remain vigilant because as long as the tax raisers believe

there is the possibility they can put their hands on more taxpayer money, their deceptive efforts to destroy Proposition 13 are certain to continue.

About the Author: Jon Coupal is president of the [Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association](#) — California's largest grass-roots taxpayer organization dedicated to the protection of Proposition 13 and the advancement of taxpayers' rights.

THE WAY THEY WERE



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Addendum A

The letter to the Editor of the San Luis Obispo Tribune below provides a foretaste of the push, which is coming to annihilate the vote of the people to reject the Paso Robles water district proposal. See the paragraph highlighted in yellow on the next page

The letter was first published in the March 11, 2011 Tribune opinion section.

By Andrew Christie and Susan Harvey

If you wanted to pinpoint the moment when the fate of the [failed Paso Robles groundwater management district](#) was foretold, you could go back five decades, when the Supreme Court affirmed the fundamental principle of “one person, one vote.”

Or you could just go back to the Feb. 18, 2014, meeting of the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors. At that meeting, the chief consultant to [Assemblyman Katcho Achadjian's](#) Local Government Committee described the facts of life when it comes to legislation authorizing the formation of special water districts:

“The general trend over the last hundred years I would say ... is to move away from landowner-based districts and voting ... and toward resident voting, or one person per parcel, one person per vote.”

You could also say the doom of the proposed landowner-based district was sealed the year before by the forced compromise that created its Rube Goldberg structure but was unable to obscure the essential fact of its design: Elections to fill the majority of seats on the board would forever be decided based on the amount of acres owned by voters. District board members with a financial stake in irrigated agriculture would rule the basin and dominate all decisions regarding the disposition of its water in perpetuity; those not thus involved would be consigned to a perpetual minority. This was deemed “local control.”

The “compromise” that began the long, strange trip of the “hybrid” water district at the end of 2013 was simply a capitulation, with one side of the fight conceding to the basin’s agricultural interests on their primary demand: acreage-based control over any water district that would be created.

The most elaborate and confusing ballots in the county’s history were mailed out.

For that reason alone it should have proceeded no further. Instead, over the next two years, legislation was drafted, received the blessing of the Board of Supervisors and went to Sacramento, where, in its first committee hearing, it garnered 150 letters in opposition versus 10 in support.

Again, the writing was on the wall, but the [bill authorizing creation of the hybrid district](#) was rammed through, over the objections of North County Watch, Sierra Club California, California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation, the Planning and Conservation League, California Teamsters Public Affairs Council, Defenders of Wildlife, Center for Biological Diversity, Clean Water Action, Food and Water Watch, Southern California Watershed Alliance, California Coastal Protection Network, and Community Water Impact Network. We advocated instead for a district “where residents are treated equally regardless of the amount of lands owned.”

Finally, the most elaborate and confusing [ballots](#) in the county's history were mailed out to myriad classifications of voters. Corporate ag interests, outspending district opponents by more than 5-to-1, rolled out big money to persuade residents that an acreage-based water district was a great idea. Thanks to the voters — ironically engaging in the democratic process that the proposed district sought to evade by its design — the long and winding road finally reached its predictable end.

Now that this hopelessly compromised and convoluted exercise is over, here's the best thing that could happen next: **The State Water Resources Control Board steps in to implement the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act and immediately requires (A) well metering and reporting of usage over the basin by the 12 percent of the basin's water users who use 90 percent of the water, and (B) cutbacks from those users between 5 percent and 15 percent. If that happens, the basin will quickly start seeing signs of recovery, which will be felt first by rural residents who have been watching their well levels fall.**

Then we could have a discussion about why that took so long.

Andrew Christie is the director of the [Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club](#). Susan Harvey is president of [North County Watch](#).



Coalition of Labor, Agriculture and Business
San Luis Obispo County
"Your Property - Your Taxes - Our Future"
PO Box 13601 - San Luis Obispo, CA 93406 / Phone: 805.548-0340
Email: colabslo@gmail.com / Website: colabslo.org

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

MEMBERSHIP OPTIONS:

General Member: \$100 - \$249 q \$ _____ Voting Member: \$250 - \$5,000 q \$ _____

Sustaining Member: \$5,000 +q \$ _____

(Sustaining Membership includes a table of 10 at the Annual Fundraiser Dinner)

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

MEMBER INFORMATION:

Name: _____

Company: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____ Email: _____

How Did You Hear About COLAB?

Radio q Internet q Public Hearing q Friend q

COLAB Member(s) /Sponsor(s): _____

NON MEMBER DONATION/CONTRIBUTION OPTION:

For those who choose not to join as a member but would like to support COLAB via a contribution/donation.

I would like to contribute \$ _____ to COLAB and my check or credit card information is enclosed/provided.

Donations/Contributions do not require membership though it is encouraged in order to provide updates and information.

Memberships and donations will be kept confidential if that is your preference.

Confidential Donation/Contribution/Membership-q

PAYMENT METHOD:

Check q Visa q MasterCard q Discover q Amer: NOT accepted.

Cardholder Name: _____ Signature: _____

Card Number: _____ Expiration Date: _____ Billing Zip Code: _____

TODAY'S DATE: _____