October 2024

Volume 12
Issue 10

Santa Barbara County COLAB

The Coalition of Labor, Agriculture & Business

Inside the October Issue:

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County Deceptively Mandates What They Can't Sell

By Andy Caldwell

County Can't Sell What the Public Isn't Buying

County supervisors are "encouraging" new construction (and major renovations) to go all-electric. In fact, they used the word "encouraging" five times in describing a new plan to save the planet now that a federal court has ruled that municipalities like the County of Santa Barbara can't forbid new construction from allowing natural gas hookups as that is the purview of the federal government. So, instead of a prohibition, the board of sups (**Das Williams**, **Laura Capps**, and **Joan Hartmann**) are trying to fool the public by stating that they are only going to "encourage" businesses, farmers, and residents to go all-electric.

The truth is something else altogether. Because people don't want to buy what the county is selling, the supervisors are in essence making the public "an offer they can't refuse." Either that, or the county board and its staff don't know the difference between a suggestion and a mandate. The proposal by the county will require the public to request an exemption from the ordinance for some uses including agricultural uses (buildings and water wells), emergency backup generators, non-residential cooking and clothes dryers, and a few other uses. For the record, having to ask for an exemption from an ordinance indicates the ordinance is not merely being "encouraged"; it is being mandated.

Mandating that the Poor Remain Poor

So, how does the county plan to get around the federal court's ban on forbidding gas-powered appliances and the like? They are going to rely on their ability to exceed a state mandate that requires a certain amount of energy efficiency in every new building. Specifically, if an applicant wants natural gas hookups, they are going to have to pay out some big bucks to reduce the energy footprint of the building to offset the ghg emissions generated using natural gas. In other words, county officials plan to make it so expensive to use natural gas that only the wealthy will have that option.

What bothers me most about this ordinance is not the attempt to bamboozle the public into believing they are simply being "encouraged" to go all-electric, nor is it the fact that once again county supervisors have completely ignored the costs to the public of this mandate. No, what bothers me the most is that every single person in America is already free to go all-electric without the county's "encouragement." That is, any citizen is free to buy electric appliances, vehicles, solar panels, and battery storage devices, and in more cases than not, they can receive rebates and tax breaks to help pay for the same.

Do you remember the principle espoused in the Declaration of Independence that "just governments must derive their power from the consent of the governed"? County supervisors don't give one whit about the concept of consent. Even though climate change has been preached to us non-stop for some 30 years, their efforts to "encourage" people to give up on natural gas (and other fossil fuels) as a reliable, affordable, and safe fuel source has fallen on deaf ears. Since they can't convince people to do what they want them to do, they are relying on coercion *sans* the consent of the governed. Hence, this action on their part indicates that their actions are unjust.

The beauty of using natural gas is that the delivery of the same is not subject to blackouts, power safety shut offs, or storms that down power lines. Natural gas is also more affordable and abundant than electricity.

Please make a note of the hypocrisy of these three liberal supervisors. They regularly wring their hands over the plight of the poor, yet constantly serve to increase the cost of living upon those who can least afford it by way of their elitist green agenda.

Newsom's ABX2-1 Will Artificially Create A Fuel Shortage Crisis By Limiting Distribution Of Fuel

By Katy Grimes

'Artificial gas shortages, playing politics with fuel, negligence' – Newsom admin driving oil industry to extinction

Why is gas more than $5 gallon in California and not across the country if "Big Oil" is so greedy?

California Governor Gavin Newsom called for a special legislative session after accusing California's oil refineries of price gouging. The governor claimed that "Gas price spikes on consumers are profit spikes for oil companies, and they're overwhelmingly caused by refiners not backfilling supplies when they go down for maintenance."

"Why would the people serving the people of California do something that would benefit the people of California?" a Capitol friend asked after the Petroleum & Gasoline Supply Committee passed Gov. Gavin Newsom's ABX2 to impose new mandates for oil storage requirements on oil refineries in California.

The hearing was held right after Thursday's press conference by California Fuels and Convenience Alliance, small businesses, and small family-owned businesses opposing Governor Newsom's attempt to control fuel pricing.

"Last week, under the demand of Governor Newsom, the California State Assembly began their special session on fuel and energy costs, discussing ABX2-1 (formerly known as SB 950)," the CFCA said. "This bill under review will give the California Energy Commission (CEC) more authority to impose new mandates for oil storage requirements on oil refineries in California."

"California is on the verge of an energy crisis with the push for electrification by 2035," said John Kabatek, California State Director, National Federation of Independent Business. "The regulation requirements in ABX2-1 will artificially create a fuel shortage crisis due to limiting the distribution of fuel."

"This will unavoidably increase the demand, causing prices to increase."

Indeed.

As the Globe recently reported:

Gov. Gavin Newsom's California Energy Commission regulators announced earlier this month proposed government controls of the petroleum industry, ostensibly in order to combat future energy price surges. This followed Chevron Oil company's announcement that it will be moving its headquarters to Houston Texas from San Ramon California.

As the California Legislature was wrapping up its 2023-2024 session at the end of August, Gov. Newsom threatened to call a special session if lawmakers didn't pass his Venezuela-Like price controls proposal of the oil and gas industry.

According to Newsom, who is sounding more like Hugo Chavez:

"The state has found that, when refiners limit gasoline supplies, prices spike at the pump and create massive profits for Big Oil. Today, Governor Gavin Newsom announced a new, first-in-the-nation proposal to further prevent price spikes and save Californians money.

Newsom's proposal would authorize the California Energy Commission (CEC) to require that petroleum refiners maintain a minimum fuel reserve to avoid supply shortages that create higher prices for consumers. If this proposal had been in effect in 2023, Californians would've saved upwards of $650 million

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When Money Is No Object

By Andy Caldwell

The great economist, **Friedrich Hayek**, warned us about the "fatal conceit" of central planners who demonstrate "how little they know about what they imagine they can design." This quote explains the agenda of CA progressives which has been delivering one fatal blow after another to our economic freedoms resulting in sky-high inflation, debt, and deficits, not to mention the impacts of crime, energy costs, artificial water shortages, and the like.

Progressives in California have created myriad laws, regulations, and mandates, aimed at controlling fossil fuel production, the water available to farmers and urbanites, limits on greenhouse gases that affect manufacturing, industry, and transportation, along with restrictions on how electricity can be generated, not to mention controls on land use and marine resources. There is not one area of our lives that they are not trying to plan (read: *control*), even though politicians making these decisions know virtually nothing about "what they imagine they can design."

The latest example has three Santa Barbara County Supervisors (**Das Williams**, **Joan Hartmann**, and **Laura Capps**) considering a proposal to raise the minimum wage for farm workers up to $26 per hour. Let's point out the obvious: none of these supervisors have ever been involved in farming. In fact, as far as I know, none of them have ever worked in the private sector. Hence, collectively the supervisors have zero first-hand knowledge of the cost of land, labor, fertilizer, farm equipment, water, electricity, fuel, trucking, or any of the other inputs a farmer must pay out to bring a crop to market. Additionally, they have never bothered to calculate the cost to farmers and ranchers having to do with their policy failures that serve to undermine flood control protection, weed abatement, frost protection, and fire prevention.

Unfortunately, much of this collective ignorance is willful. That is, the county has collected zero data on the profit margins of the various crops grown in our region, or the cost of the regulations, mandates, and fees they themselves have imposed on the private sector because the supervisors believe their social justice and environmental agendas are worth every penny of *other* people's money. Contextually, our county supervisors don't pay their own staff a minimum wage of $26 per hour, but somehow, they believe farmers could possibly raise the minimum wage some 60% for their workers. How is the $20 minimum wage working out for the fast-food industry and its customers?

Most people in America are struggling mightily with food prices, which have never been as high as they are today. Why are food costs so high? Our local farmers are being asked to cut back on water, fertilizer, and herbicide uses. They are forced to replace *all* their equipment with electric vehicles, and their labor costs are already the highest in the nation due to current minimum wage laws, along with limitations on overtime. Then there are the regulatory limits on production facilities which led our largest winery producer to move to another county. Incidentally, did you notice that our county supervisors are suing a farmer for a flood that damaged homes, even though the homeowners themselves are suing the county because they believe the cause of the flood was the failure of a county-owned flood control basin?

Let's talk about another example of the fatal conceit of these supervisors. These same three progressive supervisors just adopted the county's climate action plan on a 3-2 vote. While the county counted the costs of this plan on their own operations (over $300 million), the cost associated with forcing farmers – and everybody else for that matter, including you dear reader – to go all electric was purposely *not* considered in their deliberations.

Why not?

The problem here, despite the warnings of Britain's late, great, Prime Minister **Margaret Thatcher**, is progressive politicians don't think they will ever run out of *other* people's money!

A Troubling Preview Of Harris' Housing Policies

By Steven Greenhut

By cutting its borrowing rate by a half percent on Wednesday, the Federal Reserve has provided some potential relief for wannabe home owners. The cut will lower mortgage rates and signals a sense that inflation is slowing a bit. With rising inventory and pricing dips in many U.S. markets, perhaps more Americans can finally afford a property even though median home prices remain at a daunting $412,000 nationwide — and above $900,000 in California.

One bit of good news, of course, doesn't make the housing issue less of a hot-button political topic. This is the first presidential election I recall where housing topped the list of issues addressed by the candidates. Housing is a local and — to a lesser degree — state issue. Beyond adjusting interest rates and promulgating regulations mostly related to low-income housing and lending standards, the feds can't — and shouldn't — really do much about market conditions.

When the federal government does act, it often makes matters worse. It's been the source of much debate, but federal housing and lending policies triggered the 2008 market collapse, as cheap money and subprime loans led to financial catastrophe. In California, prices in some inland areas dropped by more than 50 percent. More recently, federal COVID policies — e.g., stimulus spending and stay-at-home orders that enabled people to work at home — drove up housing demand. Prices soared.

Home pricing is a supply and demand issue. A plethora of environmental rules and local building regulations (urban growth boundaries, Not In My Back Yard sentiments, soaring building fees, etc.) restricted housing construction, thus leading to a run-up in prices on existing supply. Yet instead of recognizing that reality, the feds are at it again — and pushing policies that will only exacerbate the problem by creating unnecessary scarcity.

For instance, the U.S. Department of Justice recently filed an antitrust lawsuit against RealPage, a Texas-based company that provides property management software that helps landlords set accurate pricing. Per a CBS News report, the company "engaged in a price-fixing scheme by sharing nonpublic, sensitive information, which RealPage's algorithmic pricing software used to generate pricing recommendations."

Landlords always seek the best pricing information and use a variety of sources, from real-estate websites to competitive listings. But, you know what, it

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Some Regulations Don't Accomplish Anything

By Andy Caldwell

I kicked up a hornet's nest with my article about the Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District's regulation of Space X and United Launch activities on Vandenberg Space Force Base. The APCD claims my article was full of inaccuracies. For the record, I had a confidential source, who is associated with neither company, who informed me that the APCD was doing what all regulatory agencies do naturally, making projects more cumbersome and expensive than they need to be. Since then, I have obtained official records currently available which corroborate most all the information previously discussed.

The APCD has virtually no authority to regulate mobile sources, like cars, trucks, trains, planes, and marine vessels despite the fact these are the largest sources of air pollution, as these sources are regulated by the state and feds. The APCD does manage emissions from fixed stationary sources, which are relatively puny, such as wineries. Relatedly, the largest wine production facility in the county closed because the APCD would not allow the company to grow by permitting additional tanks used for fermentation. Tellingly, the **Miller Family Wine Company** is moving operations to two other counties in California, neither of which regulate winery emissions at all. Hence, instead of making the wine here, the grapes will now be trucked to Northern California.

How is that going to reduce emissions overall?

It won't.

Regardless, decades ago, the APCD cleverly utilized a loophole to regulate marine vessels which serve operators at Vandenberg. The loophole posits that if the equipment being delivered is necessary for the stationary equipment to operate, then the emissions from the marine vessels get added to the stationary source emissions regulated by the district.

One mistake in my piece had to do with the Annual Report of SpaceX operations in 2023 referencing both permits to construct and permits to operate boat trips. Specifically, the Authority to *Construct* Permit (ATC) 16000 increased the annual boat trips from 12 to 36 per year. The daily hours of operation for the marine vessels were permitted under Permit to *Operate* (PTO) 15704. However, the district has clarified that the Authority to *Construct* permits aren't actually permits for construction projects.

Nonetheless, the Authority to *Construct* 16000 requires, as part of the emission inventory, an annual written report documenting terms and conditions of the permit verifying compliance with the emission limits and other requirements of the permit to construct. The report must include the daily and annual volume of fuel used by the boats, the daily and annual hours of operation for the boats' engines, and the billing vouchers or other data certifying the fuel being used for combustion.

The report also requires that a Global Positioning System report the location and time data for the ship's location in intervals of no greater than every 15 minutes whether the ship is off the Santa Barbara, Ventura, or Los Angeles coastline or in federal waters. The costs to prove compliance, including record keeping and source testing can be extremely expensive. One company I know spent up to $1 million per year proving they were complying with their permits.

The operator's annual permits are based on a total emission inventory. It behooves the operators to limit emissions so that they don't get penalized by the district. The permits specify the routes and number of days the marine vessels may take coming and going to Vandenberg, despite the district's claim that it doesn't regulate the routes taken or eventually force abandonment of the deliveries. That is, the permits can require the vessels to leave our coastal waters temporarily or permanently if they can't dock at the base in a timely manner because of weather and tidal circumstances.

My biggest criticism remains. When United Launch moves their shipments 4500 miles through the ocean from Alabama to VSFB via the Panama Canal, why does the APCD bother to track, monitor, and permit the last 18 miles which represents 0.4% of the emissions associated with the trip?

What difference does that make?

Should California Return To A Part-Time Legislature?

By Jon Coupal

In the waning days of every Legislative session, principles of good governance get tossed aside amid the rush of bills that must be passed by the stroke of midnight on the last day.

Last day chaos is now so commonplace that capitol watchers are typically unfazed by all the hijinks that transpire. Circumventing the process is, unfortunately, just part of the process. But this year set a low water mark for the swamp.

Despite having more than 100 bills to act on before their constitutionally mandated deadline, the Assembly decided to convene at the leisurely hour of 2 p.m. on August 31, a Saturday, the last day of the session. To make matters worse, they didn't even show up on time and when they did, took time out of their busy schedule for group photos.

As the night wore on, it became obvious that legislative leadership would suffer the consequences from their lack of urgency. Rather than look inward, the Democratic supermajority, which controls every step of the process, decided that this was not a result of their own actions but, rather, the need for deliberation and debate. Forgive us, but we were taught that deliberation and debate was an important part of the legislative process.

Assembly leaders moved to limit debate on bills to just 30 seconds per speaker. When Republican Assemblyman Bill Essayli objected, he was told that he was "using dilatory tactics" and would not be allowed to

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Criticism Of Project 2025's Reforms Of Federal Election Commission Is Ill-Informed, Dangerous

By Hans von Spakovsky

Those attacking me for my participation in Project 2025, for which I wrote the chapter on how the Federal Election Commission should be run, reveal their dangerous views approving of government overreach and abusive conduct by government law enforcement agencies.

There's no other way to interpret their criticism of me other than their disagreeing with all of the recommendations I make in Chapter 29 of The Heritage Foundation's "Mandate for Leadership 2025."

For those who don't keep up with the multitude of alphabet-soup federal agencies, the FEC is an independent federal agency run by six commissioners (three Republicans and three Democrats) nominated by the president and confirmed by the Senate. The FEC has civil enforcement authority over the federal campaign-finance laws that govern the raising and spending of money in federal campaigns for Congress and the presidency.

The Justice Department has criminal enforcement authority, which comes into play for knowing and willful violations of the law.

The Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) is byzantine in its complexity, and many of its provisions are confusing, contradictory, or ambiguous. But it's the FEC's job to civilly enforce that law and to issue regulations implementing it.

It's important to understand what the FEC is regulating in what I pointed out in my chapter is "one of the most sensitive areas of the Bill of Rights: political speech and political activity by citizens, candidates, political parties, and the voluntary membership organizations that represent Americans who share common views on a huge range of important and vital public policy issues."

So, what are the reforms my critics are disparaging and denigrating?

As a former FEC commissioner myself, I recommend that the president only nominate commissioners for the FEC who demonstrate a commitment to ensuring that the FEC: 1) does not act beyond its statutory mandate; 2) construes confusing and ambiguous provisions against the government, not candidates and the public; and 3) does not infringe on protected First Amendment activity.

So, my detractors clearly want a federal agency, one with law enforcement authority that can sanction you with civil penalties, which won't pay any attention to the statutory limits on its law enforcement power. They want an agency that will go after you for supposedly violating the law when the law is unclear and it's not possible for a reasonable person to know that their behavior may violate the law.

And they have contempt for the freedoms guaranteed by the First Amendment and think the FEC should not worry about the constitutional protections afforded to every American.

What else did I say that was so objectionable to the detractors of Project 2025 that they label it an "anti-democracy agenda?" I pointed out that while a president does not control the FEC, he does control the Justice Department. It's fundamentally unfair for "overzealous government prosecutors" to "prosecute individuals who are unable to determine if they are violating the law" because the federal law is confusing, contradictory, or ambiguous. The Justice Department should "only prosecute clear violations of FECA."

What is so radical and antidemocratic about that? In fact, it's the contrary view that's radical and antidemocratic and leads to the weaponization of the justice system.

Oh, and here is another recommendation I made that irresponsible critics call a "troubling suggestion."

Imagine the situation you could find yourself in if you

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An Urgent Plea And Call To Action

By Andy Caldwell

"Atlas Shrugged" came to life in the chambers of our county supervisors on Tuesday, August 21, a day that will long live in infamy for the people who produce our food, build our communities, and deliver our goods. County supervisors **Joan Hartmann**, **Laura Capps**, and **Das Williams** set in motion that day two multi-billion-dollar actions that is causing every sector of our economy to writhe in anticipatory agony, especially our farmers.

The two actions? Approval of the county's climate action plan, and future consideration of a $26 minimum wage for farmworkers.

If you are not familiar with **Ayn Rand**'s seminal work "Atlas Shrugged," you soon will be. The novel warned of a day when the producers of the world – who carry the weight of the world on their shoulders – would shrug off the burden, thereby debilitating every segment of our economy and society.

The "Action" Plan

Regarding the climate action plan, the supervisors had their staff calculate the cost of the plan for the first six years of implementation to the county itself, i.e., how much it would cost county operations to go all electric, including replacing vehicle fleets, including heavy construction equipment, along with furnaces, water heaters, etc. The answer is: over $300 million.

So, how much will it cost the private sector?

We don't know because the board admitted that it did not consider or bother to estimate the costs to the private sector, including the cost to every business and every homeowner, every construction company, every trucking company, and every farmer. That is, money is apparently no object.

How can they pass a mandate and not reveal the costs?

I can assure you it is going to cost billions. In fact, the largest trucking company and the largest winery in the county have already closed due to similar mandates being imposed by other agencies.

A New "Minimum" Wage

The second item, the proposed $26 per hour labor rate for farmworkers was suggested by economically illiterate social justice activists. Please consider the fact that the largest sector of our local economy (over $2 billion per year) is agriculture and that agriculture in the form of wineries is also the largest tourist draw to our region (tourism, too, generates over $2 billion per year). Farmers in every sector of our economy have told me in no uncertain terms that a $26-hour minimum wage for farmworkers would cause their immediate bankruptcy and the certain layoff of their entire workforce. The truth is strawberry producers have already been losing money for the past two years and so too have wine grape and flower growers.

This would be the last straw.

Unlike fast-food operators who have a mandated $20-hour minimum wage, farmers do not have the luxury of simply raising their prices and passing the costs on to their customers. The buyers of produce, including grocery stores and restaurant chains, dictate the price they will pay daily based on *global* competition. That is, farmers are price-*takers*, not price-makers. Market prices have not kept up with the costs of inflation for growers, especially in California, as our farmers already have some of the highest labor, water, land, and fuel costs in the country, if not the world.

"Bidenomics": Root Cause of Inflation

Farmers would be taking a double hit with these two board actions. Supervisors Hartmann, Capps, and especially Williams (Williams is a lame duck with a mere four months left in this, his last term) have no business setting a unique minimum wage for any sector of our local economy, least of all the most vulnerable to state, national, and international competition. Moreover, as was pointed out by Supervisor **Bob Nelson**, the county has some 400 of its own employees – nearly 10% of the county workforce – that don't make $26 per hour!

One of the most famous lines in "Atlas Shrugged" is from **Karl Marx**: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs." Our supervisors have decided that due to the inflationary policies they themselves supported (read: Bidenomics!), farmworkers need a "living wage," regardless of their ability to produce associative value for their employers, and the farmers should be able to give it to them, as if money was no object.

•••

Please ask the supervisors to save our farmers by refraining from devastating the entire north county economy here at: https://www.countyofsb.org/1599/Board-of-Supervisors

Limiting Economic Mobility And Loving It

By Andy Caldwell

Conservatives believe the best way for people to become upwardly mobile (that doesn't create inflation) is via equal opportunity which is ultimately dependent upon a person's education, work ethic, lifestyle choices, and the principle of no risk, no reward. Progressives, however, believe government can help people become upwardly mobile by way of redistributing wealth with a focus on guaranteed outcomes regardless of the aforementioned factors.

Thereby, Santa Barbara County Supervisors **Das Williams**, **Laura Capps**, and **Joan Hartmann**, are entertaining a proposal by two activist groups: the Central Coastal Alliance United for A Sustainable Economy (CAUSE), and Mixteco/Indigena Community Organizing Project (MICOP), to create a $26-an-hour living wage for farmworkers. The request is based on a shoddy report which failed to acknowledge that most farmworkers earn well above minimum wage because they receive bonus pay, known as piece-rate (basically a form of profit-sharing), on top of the minimum wage.

Meanwhile, one county supervisor revealed that nearly 10% of the county's workforce does not earn $26 per hour despite the county having a $1.6 billion budget. Moreover, MICOP had a budget of over $10 million in 2022, while CAUSE limped along with a measly $5 million, according to their IRS filings. Where did they get this much money?

The answer to that explains the difference between genuine grassroots movements and artificial turf. CAUSE and MICOP are basically funded by foundations that are not based here locally, including the Irvine Foundation in Orange County that gave these two organizations $3.8 million collectively in 2022. Despite this largess, MICOP and CAUSE don't pay their own workers a minimum wage of $26 either. A recent joint advertisement offered positions starting at $22 per hour!

Economic 101

So, here are a couple of basic economic lessons for our supervisors. If farmworkers want a better paying job, then they need to move up in the company or move to a different economic sector because most of our farmers haven't made a profit in over two years. Thus, any arbitrary and capricious wage hike imposed by the county will result in job *losses* rather than increased wages. What other entry-level sectors are available for these employees, most of whom are immigrants facing language barriers and with little to no education? For the record, most immigrants in America work in sectors other than agriculture, including food and lodging services.

While Supervisors Capps and Williams have relatively few farms in their districts, they do have many hotels and restaurants. However, these two sectors are the bottom dwellers out of all the sectors of our economy. While paying less money, these sectors employ more people than agriculture. Furthermore, a significant number of the people working in these sectors either

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Limiting Economic Mobility And Loving It *cont.*

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live in or commute to the South County, which has a higher cost of living than the north county, which is where most all row crops are found. So, why are these two supervisors not considering a "living wage" for these sectors of our economy (not that I am suggesting it)?

That brings us back to the differences between conservatives and progressives. County supervisors have placed a measure on the November ballot asking for an increase in the transient occupancy tax rate (vote NO on H2024!). Hence, they are seeking to exploit more money out of the lowest paying sector of the economy while doing nothing for the workers in that sector.

Threat to the Quality of Life

A conservative's perspective on this income stream posits that if the county wants more bed-tax dollars, they should allow more hotels and motels to be built. That is, more beds would create more jobs and more revenue. Instead, these supervisors would rather increase the costs to consumers via higher taxes. Ultimately, higher taxes and wages serve to create inflation and less job creation, meaning that one of the greatest impediments to upward mobility are the policies that limit new development.

What if, however, *limiting growth,* which is considered a threat to the quality of life for the local elite, was the overarching purpose of Santa Barbara progressives? Years ago, a former county *planning director* spilled the beans of his mission, "The cost of preserving the high quality of life in Santa Barbara County includes limiting opportunities for others. It limits economic mobility, but that is a legitimate political choice."

The COLAB FOUNDATION

Dear COLAB Members,

Did you know that lessening the burden of government is a bonafide and legitimate function of a charitable endeavor, i.e. a 501c3 tax exempt foundation? Is that not a cause you can believe in and support? Well, thankfully, COLAB now has its own foundation!!!

COLAB can now raise funds from other foundations, as well as, individuals who don't own their own business! That means that everyone who contributes to the COLAB Foundation can write off their contributions.

The COLAB Foundation is a public charity formed to procure funding for the Santa Barbara County Coalition of Labor, Agriculture and Business (COLAB) and other select non-profit entities to advance education and science, combat community deterioration and lessen the burden of government.

Of course, the donations to the COLAB Foundation can only be used to educate the public about the work that COLAB and others are doing in our community, but we have been educating people all along!

The COLAB Foundation!

Donations are tax-deductible as a charitable contribution!

Please send your contribution to:

The COLAB Foundation
PO Box 7523
Santa Maria, CA 93456

Or online at:

http://www.colabsbc.org/COLAB-foundation-form.php

Donations to the COLAB Foundation are deductible IRC 170 as the foundation is an IRS approver 501 C3 charity.

Our EIN is 81-1088586

Should California Return To A Part-Time Legislature?
Cont.

(Continued from page 7)

speak on any bill. When he objected further, arguing that silencing him and the nearly half a million Californians he represents was undemocratic, his microphone was cut.

In the end, several high-profile pieces of legislation were left unaddressed because they ran out of time, which was obviously a self-inflicted problem.

The process is clearly broken and needs reform and, for that reason, we should return California to a part-time legislature. This isn't as crazy as it may sound. Before the passage of Proposition 1A in 1966, California had a part-time legislature. According to the Legislative Analyst's Office, "the Legislature met in general session (at which all subjects could be considered) in odd-numbered years and in budget session (at which only state budget matters were considered) in even-numbered years."

Plus, most states do not have full-time legislatures. In fact, only ten states do: California, Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania, Alaska, Hawaii, Illinois, Massachusetts, Ohio, and Wisconsin. The rest of the states meet part-time, and some states (like Montana, Nevada, Texas and North Dakota) only meet in odd-numbered years.

Ironically, the argument for a full-time legislature is that they have more time to deliberate, make better informed decisions, and that their higher compensation allows them to focus solely on the job of governing. But six of those (California, New York, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Michigan) are among the seven states that lost congressional seats in the 2020 Census. If those states truly governed more effectively, people would flock to them. Instead, they are fleeing.

California's current full-time legislature has not lived up to the promises that "experts" told us would accompany the change. Because we have one-party supermajority rule, apparently there is no need for deliberation. Whether a bill lives or dies is decided in closed door caucus meetings, not in Legislative hearings.

They do not make informed decisions. In the supermajority, you vote as you are told – or else. They routinely pass bills they have not read with fiscal impacts they do not know.

As for being a full-time legislator, recall the observation of William F. Buckley about preferring to be governed by the first two thousand names in the Boston telephone directory than by the two thousand faculty members of Harvard University.

Citizens with real jobs, who have skin in the game and will share in the consequences of their actions, are preferable to professional politicians. Or, as the argument against Proposition 1A ends, "[p]rescribing laws which other people are to be forced to obey can never be a primary occupation for any man who loves liberty."

Jon Coupal is president of the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association

Criticism Of Project 2025's Reforms Of Federal Election Commission Is Ill-Informed, Dangerous *Cont.*

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have two different federal agencies disagreeing completely on what the law allows. One agency tells you that what you are doing is perfectly legal, but another tells you that what you are doing is illegal. That second agency then criminally prosecutes you for taking an action that the other agency advised you was legitimate and not a violation of the law.

Sound like a nightmare? It's a nightmare that can happen, since enforcement of federal campaign finance law, as I noted earlier, is divided between the FEC and the Justice Department.

My "troubling suggestion" is that the president should direct the Justice Department "not to prosecute individuals under an interpretation of the law with which the FEC—the expert agency designated by Congress to enforce the law civilly and issue regulations establishing the standards under which the law is applied—does not agree."

How is that antidemocratic? Why is that troubling? Why would anyone believe, as the critics of Project 2025 apparently do, that putting a candidate, a member of the public, or anyone else who participates in the political arena into such a quagmire is a sound way of running the government or a fair way of exercising its law enforcement powers?

Only those who believe in giving federal law enforcement agencies unlimited power to control the political playing field that's an essential element of the democratic process would take that view.

Their real fear is that if Project 2025 is implemented by a new president, it will restrict the overreach of powerful government agencies and bureaucrats, making them accountable to voters and the leadership they elect to run the executive branch, and pulling them back from interfering in the everyday lives of Americans. That is what permeates all of the unjustified, hysterical broadsides launched at the project.

Everything I wrote in my chapter on the FEC is common sense to anyone except the jaded power-hungry elites in Washington and their political comrades in the national media.

Hans A. von Spakovsky, Manager, Election Law Reform Initiative and Senior Legal Fellow, Meese Center for Legal and Judicial Studies, The Heritage Foundation

A Troubling Preview Of Harris' Housing Policies *Cont.*

(Continued from page 5)

doesn't really matter what some online source says. It's just an estimate. One might figure out the "right" price and then list a house for rent — only to find dozens of applicants or a lack of interest from anyone. Market demand determines the price. These are simply tools. They don't "fix" prices.

In her campaign, Democratic nominee Kamala Harris has outlined a national agenda to lower housing costs. Some of it is on point, albeit somewhat outside of federal authority. For instance, she called on efforts to "cut red tape and enable more home building to bring down housing costs." Her plan also calls for tax incentives for building starter homes, an expansion of an existing tax incentive to build rental housing, and a new federal fund to promote "innovative" housing construction. I'm generally in favor of tax breaks and credits, but against federal expenditures.

Her plan to provide $25,000 in taxpayer-funded down-payment assistance to first-time buyers will be costly and inflationary. Our debt-soaked budget can't handle yet another giveaway, and it will end up being a lottery for some lucky beneficiaries. But it will drive up housing prices. All of a sudden, I imagine that homes will magically rise in price by around $25,000, market permitting. But — and perhaps I'm being charitable here — at least part of her plan focuses on incentives.

But given the Biden administration's attacks on RealPage, it seems clear that Vice President Harris will focus heavily on her prosecutorial instincts by filing lawsuits against private companies. Delve into her housing plan and it calls for something like what DOJ is doing: "Stop rent-setting data firms from price fixing to raise rents to double digits." She also vows to take on "corporate and major landlords" and to "stop Wall Street investors from buying up and marking up homes in bulk."

Her model echoes San Francisco's proposal to ban the use of artificial intelligence in determining rental rates. As the American Consumer Institute opined, "The rise in rent prices is driven by complex market factors such as inflation, interest rates and supply-demand dynamics — not AI algorithms. Scapegoating technology for broader market issues is misguided."

San Francisco's strict rent controls have led to a 15 percent decline in available rental stock, according to a 2018 study from the National Bureau of Economic Research. I've reported on 52,000 vacant San Francisco homes and apartments, which are largely the result of the city's tenant laws that discourage people from renting out apartments to strangers. Owners fear that if they rent them out, they'll never be able to remove the tenants.

Of course, GOP candidate Donald Trump hasn't presented a consistent alternative message. When he was president, Trump and his Housing and Urban Development secretary, Ben Carson, penned a Wall Street Journal op-ed that depicted efforts to reduce zoning restrictions as a war on suburbia. More recently, he rightly called for reducing zoning restrictions in a Bloomberg interview — but then reverted to form and promised to ban illegal immigrants from obtaining mortgages.

The good news is that the candidates are at least talking about the housing crisis. The bad news is that most of what they propose — and some of what the current administration is doing — will only make matters worse. It would be nice if they addressed the real problem for the housing crunch rather than scapegoating private companies and landlords. .

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Newsom's ABX2-1 Will Artificially Create A Fuel Shortage Crisis By Limiting Distribution Of Fuel *Cont.*

(Continued from page 3)

in gas costs due to refiners' price spikes."

No mention in Newsom's proposal of California's highest-in-the-nation gas taxes…

As Ed Ring reported for the Globe this week:

…much of the high price for gasoline in California is caused by higher taxes. In July 2024, when the average price per gallon in California was $4.49, state taxes, fees, and programs added $1.23 to the price, along with another $0.18 of federal excise tax. The cost of crude oil added $2.04 and "industry costs and profits" added $1.04. Included in that last number are not only refinery operating costs, but also distribution and marketing costs.

California's state government collects corporate income tax on oil company profits, which adds to the $1.23 they collect in direct taxes and fees on a gallon of gas. So one may ask, since our governor is so concerned about California's consumers getting gouged at the pump, why the amount the state collects on every gallon of gasoline is grossly in excess of not only industry profits (before taxes), but profits plus total operating costs. Who, then, is gouging who?

As the Globe has asked repeatedly, "If the 'Big Oil' companies are so greedy, why are they only greedy in California and not greedy in every state?"

NFIB's Kabatek brought the receipts:

- ABX2-1 prioritizes fuel supply over worker and community safety by delaying necessary maintenance.
- This bill requires CEC approval before crucial refinery turnarounds, potentially endangering workers and nearby residents by making safety a secondary concern.
- Concerns go beyond the small business owners at the end of the oil industry supply chain.
- The family-owned fuel and convenience stores that CFCA represent will be impacted first, specifically the unbranded smaller locations.
- Every business owner that relies on product and services being delivered through a consistent supply chain will feel the added weight of increased costs.

Lastly, the bill fails to address California's unique summer and winter gasoline blend requirements, potentially resulting in unusable reserves during periods of high demand.

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Newsom's ABX2-1 Will Artificially Create A Fuel Shortage Crisis By Limiting Distribution Of Fuel *Cont.*

(Continued from page 16)

How are the refineries expected to hold back a supply of our unique blend for our state, supply 90 percent of Nevada's oil, and nearly 50 percent of Arizona's, all while keeping the price of fuel at an affordable dollar per gallon? Kabatek asked.

As the Globe reported last week, "Arizona gets nearly half of its gas from California. The vast majority of Nevada's gas – 88% – comes from California."

"The governors of Arizona and California co-signed a letter last week to California Gov. Gavin Newsom urging him to back off of his legislation to add new regulations on the state's refiners. They say forced supply shortages will result in higher gas costs in the three Western states."

"Arizona and Nevada will suffer with us," said Alessandra Magnasco, Governmental Affairs and Regulatory Director, California Fuels and Convenience Alliance.

"ABX2 does nothing but disrupt the supply chain for businesses relying on deliveries of goods and services," said Johnnise Foster-Downs, Vice President of Public Policy, California Asian Pacific Chamber of Commerce. She said the Legislature be promoting ways to assist minority-owned businesses, and not be left to deal with the fallout.

Julian Canete, CEO, California Hispanic Chambers of Commerce said they represent 850,000 hispanic-owned businesses.

Newsom's Venezuela-like state proposal would:

1. Obligate California's petroleum refiners to demonstrate resupply plans and arrangements to the CEC that are adequate to address the loss in production from refinery maintenance.

2. Authorize the CEC to require petroleum refiners to maintain enough fuel inventory to stabilize fuel supply.

3. Impose penalties on refiners who fail to follow these requirements.

The Globe reported in August the California Energy Commission proposal of Government control of the petroleum industry:

"The State of California would purchase and own refineries in the State to manage the supply and price of gasoline," wrote the study's authors, with the scope of the initiative ranging from "one refinery to all refineries in the state."

"Small business thrives when the supply chain is stable," Kabatek said. That is true, which makes many question if Gov. Newsom is actually trying to destroy California's small businesses.

"Let's be sensical and realistic with a pathway to lowering fuel and energy prices," Kabatek said, wrapping up the press conference. There is no need to fast-track market disrupting regulation that we will all be paying for down the road."

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