

**March
2025**

Santa Barbara County

**Volume 13
Issue 3**



COLAB

The Coalition of Labor, Agriculture & Business

**Inside the March
Issue:**

Reliving the Grapes Of Wrath; The Central Coast Sequel	2
While 'Trump-Proofing' CA, Gov. Gavin Newsom Asks Congress For \$40 Billion In Fire Relief	3
What Blows Up In Goleta Doesn't Stay In Goleta	4
Stop County Supervisors From Giving Themselves A 48% Raise!	5
Are Building Reforms Too Little, Too Late?	6
The Dirty Details On The 48% Raise For County Supervisors	7
Public Servants vs. Politicians	8
Playing DOGE-Ball With County Supervisors	9
Elon Musk And The Dog Days Of DOGE	10
Good Riddance To The CFPB	11

COLAB

PO Box 7523
Santa Maria, CA 93456
Phone:
805-929-3148
E-mail:
Andy@colabsbc.org

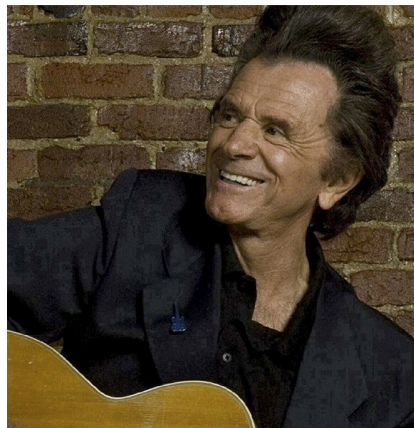
COLAB'S

34th Annual Dinner Celebration! Saturday, April 26, 2025

At the Fabulous Chumash Casino Resort

With Comedians

Gary Mule Deer & Greg Warren



Open Bar, Surf & Turf Dinner and A Great Comedy Show!

Reserve Early For Best Seats!

\$1,350 for a table of 10 guests.

\$135 per person.

Reserve Tickets Online at www.colabsbc.org

Or by Mail at:

COLAB PO Box 7523 Santa Maria CA 93456

Reliving the Grapes Of Wrath; The Central Coast Sequel

By Andy Caldwell

I have kept an article on my desk since 2008, so that every time I come across it, I will be reenergized to fight for the Americans who work the land to feed us, house us, clothe us, and create the energy we need to live in modernity. The article, entitled "There is A Sorrow Here That Weeping Cannot Symbolize," is from the 2008 Fall Edition of *Range* magazine, written by **J. Zane Walley**.

Walley recalls **John Steinbeck's** "The Grapes of Wrath," which "laid bare the suffering and oppression of the farmers and the hollowness of the American dream" as it captured the plight of thousands of farmers who lost everything they had during the Dust Bowl at the hands of banks and big farm interests.

Walley observed an even greater dispossession beginning in the 1990' having to do with a "rural cleansing," albeit this time the farmers and ranchers, as well as others who make their living off the land, were having their livelihoods destroyed by regulatory agencies, dubious science, special interests, and obscenely rich foundations. That is, farmers, miners, ranchers, loggers, and other resource providers lost their jobs and the use of their land and water, in the name of "saving the planet" for, in Walley's words, "spotted birds, lizards, and insignificant fish."

Walley writes that Steinbeck's understanding of the unconscionable defilement of rural America reaches beyond his grave. "There is a crime here that goes beyond denunciation," Steinbeck wrote. "There is a sorrow here that weeping cannot symbolize. There is a failure here that topples all success."

I have been thinking about the novel, the column, and the phenomenon lately because this crime that goes "beyond denunciation" is happening on the Central Coast right now. Why do I believe we are living in the sequel to *The Grapes of Wrath*? I am seeing private equity companies come into the region to buy up farmland and production facilities because they have enough capital to speculate on the value of the land in the long run whether it continues in agriculture or ultimately gets converted to housing. The land, which in some cases has been in the same family for 100 years is for sale because the next generation realizes that farming is an all-risk-and-no-reward proposition which creates a sorrow they can better live without. That is, as one farmer told me, "I had to sell rather than risk losing everything I own."

While it is no surprise that farms in Goleta, Carpinteria, and Santa Maria are being converted to



Home of
"Santa Maria Style" Banking[®]
 (805) 922-2900
www.yourcbsm.com

Member
FDIC

TOTAL HOUSING
 LENDER

housing, unless you drive Interstate 5, you may not realize that a significant chunk of California's inland valley – the most productive ag land in the world – is simply going back to desert because its water supply has been cut off. Moreover, throughout the state, forests have become so dense, weakened, and diseased that we now have over 130 million dead trees on our hands just waiting to go up in flames, all because forests can no longer be actively managed by logging companies.

Santa Barbara County Production Being Shut Down

Piling on to our farmers and other resource providers are various laws and regulatory agencies that are tying up land and water in red tape while threatening them with ruinous regulations. The usual suspects include the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, the State Groundwater Management Act, the County Air Pollution Control District, the State Department of Pesticide Regulations, the California Air Resources Board, and the County Board of Supervisors to name a few. Altogether, they have created a situation that is causing farmers and ranchers and others to "get out while they still can."

(Continued on page 20)

While ‘Trump-Proofing’ CA, Gov. Gavin Newsom Asks Congress For \$40 Billion In Fire Relief Funds

By Katy Grimes

Congress and the Trump admin should tell Gov. Newsom to clean up his own state – then offer special federal tax break directly to the fire victims

In what can only be described as arrogance and chutzpah, nearly two weeks after signing legislation to authorize \$50 million to fund litigating the Trump administration over California’s un-American and unconstitutional leftist policies and laws, Governor Gavin Newsom sent a letter Friday to Congress asking for \$40 billion in fire relief funds.

The two funding bills Gov. Newsom signed appropriated \$50 million to “Trump Proof” California.

It would surprise no one if Congress and the Trump administration told Newsom to pound sand.

As the Globe reported February 7th:

California Governor Gavin Newsom signed legislation Friday authorizing a \$50 million legal slush fund to “Trump-proof” the state against the President.

However, Gov. Newsom says the funding is not to be used for “immigration related legal services,” but the bill actually does as the Globe reported:

“SBX1-2 amends the Budget Act to add funding for Legal Services, including \$25 million for legal assistance for Californians and immigrant communities.”

California Governor Gavin Newsom announced in early December his plan to “Trump-proof” the state against President Donald Trump’s anticipated policies. Newsom called the special session of the Legislature to grab another \$50 million that the state doesn’t have so Attorney General Rob Bonta can spend more time and taxpayer money to file lawsuits against the Trump administration, litigate and “defend” California’s problematic policies, regulations and laws.

In his lengthy 14-page letter to Congress, Newsom boldly proclaims that “the state has stepped up to significantly expedite rebuilding efforts.”

“Make no mistake, Los Angeles will use this money wisely. California will ensure that funds will serve individuals, communities, property owners, and businesses that suffered losses from these deadly fires.”

Newsom says he has “nearly doubled the CalFire personnel budget, and increased wildfire funding tenfold.”

Some would correctly say this is a little late to help the Palisades, Altadena and Eaton fire victims. Others welcome any improvement in Newsom’s attention to the natural disasters he claims are coming more frequently (but did little to nothing about).

Yet, he did sign the two bills to pay for litigation against the Trump administration. And he signed the legislation AFTER the fires. How does that comport with his latest funding request from the President he campaigned against as Joe Biden’s stand-in? Gov. Newsom should have thought of that instead of stroking his own ego with the patently stupid “Trump-proofing” legislation.

Nor has the governor disavowed Senator Scott Wiener’s SB 222, the goal of which is to hold “Big Oil” responsible for natural disasters in California. Wiener’s new bill will allow insurance companies and victims of fires, floods, rain and sleet, wind events, mudslides, and earthquakes to sue fossil fuel companies for damages.

Talk about a real disaster waiting to happen. The governor should be openly campaigning against the destructive bill.

While increasing funding to CalFire, there is no evidence of Newsom actively and aggressively prioritizing actual forest management in wildfire-prone areas of the state.

Newsom has done nothing to provide more water to fire prone areas of the state. And no heads have rolled over the empty reservoirs in Pacific Palisades

(Continued on page 19)



What Blows Up In Goleta Doesn't Stay In Goleta

By Andy Caldwell

Nipomo and Goleta have battery energy storage systems like the one that recently blew up at Moss Landing in Monterey County, and more are planned for Santa Maria and Lompoc and Nipomo (again).

We need to pressure our politicians to let them know that they need to act *now* to ensure public safety is paramount, as these sites present the potential for toxic fires and/or explosions, and that these projects don't just affect the immediate neighborhood where the facility is located. State Assemblywoman **Dawn Addis**, whose district covers Monterey and our North County, has introduced a bill (AB 303) to do just that, albeit her bill may not go as far as the toxic smoke plumes.

In Monterey County, the evacuation zone from the Moss Landing disaster was *eight miles* away, the shelter-in-place zone up to *20 miles* away, and schools were closed up to as many as *70 miles* away! An incident at any one of these facilities has the potential to impact much of the Central Coast.

At a minimum, the entire region should have received the following warnings and instructions that were *buried* online as it pertains to a mandatory evacuation or sheltering in place from battery storage emergencies:

"If you are not subject to immediate evacuation orders but are told to shelter in place, bring your pets inside, close and lock all exterior doors and windows, close vents, and fireplace dampers, turn off heaters and air conditioners, seal gaps under and around the following areas with wet towels, plastic sheeting, duct tape, wax paper, or aluminum foil: doorways and windows, air-conditioning units, stove, and dryer vents. Avoid eating or drinking any food or water that could be contaminated. (As I have said before, it isn't easy being green.)

Toxic-Gas Blast Zones

Wow! And they call this *green* energy? Why hasn't every single household in the region received a set of these instructions? Moreover, one additional instance of gross negligence on the part of SLO County, which approved the Nipomo facility, has to do with the fact that there was no mention, no planning, and no evaluation or concern issued regarding the fact that dozens of farm hands work the fields in the immediate vicinity of this facility.

Unfortunately, both our local and state governments

CHUMASH
CASINO RESORT

Laberinto

Friday, March 14th

KC and the Sunshine Band

Friday, March 28th

Brian McKnight

Friday, April 4th

SOL DE MEXICO

Friday, April 11th

Jo Koy & Friends

Friday, April 18th

ChumashCasino.com

800-248-6274

are completely glossing over the fact that these facilities could create, in terms of environmental regulations, a *significant hazard* to the public or the environment through *reasonably foreseeable* upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment. Monterey County now has a toxic waste site on its hands, while in San Diego, two of their three battery facilities had fires too, one lasting two weeks involving five *million* gallons of water.

The County of San Luis Obispo has completely failed the citizens living in the area between Orcutt and Five Cities, including Guadalupe, as all these communities are well within what I am going to refer as the toxic-gas blast zone. Depending upon wind conditions and inversion layers, for a new battery energy storage facility located in Nipomo, it could be a mere 1,000 feet from the 101 freeway.

Regulation and Control Lacking

(Continued on page 18)

Stop County Supervisors From Giving Themselves A 48% Raise!

By Andy Caldwell



It was strange timing when the county board of supervisors set in motion a 48% raise (\$56,000!) for themselves when on the same 2/11/2025 agenda, they had to eat crow, and lots of it, by awarding a four-year contract for ambulance services to American Medical Response.

As a way of background, AMR and County Fire competed for an ambulance contract that AMR won fair and square. Nonetheless, the supervisors canceled the bid. Then the sups pretended they would have County Fire and AMR share a contract only to pull a switcheroo at the end and sole source the contract to County Fire.

AMR sued and got a 76-page preliminary court injunction against the county because it was blatantly obvious the county cheated AMR out of the contract. Not only that, but the State Attorney General and the State Emergency Management Agency also weighed in because they too believed the county broke the laws governing ambulance contracting. In my 34-year career as a county government watchdog, this was the dirtiest deal I have ever seen.

Moreover, while still in the original bidding process, County Fire *secretly* bought \$3 million worth of ambulances and *hid them* at Vandenberg (COLAB exposed this trickery). Then, while the case was in litiga-

tion, County Fire rented an airplane hangar to store the ambulances for some \$15,000 per month. And finally, the supervisors spent some \$1 million in attorney's fees to defend this debacle.

It's a Part-Time Job

Instead of asking for a raise, the supervisors should issue an apology to taxpayers. Regardless, the sups have scheduled a hearing for Feb. 25 to give themselves a 48% raise, meaning their salaries would go from \$115,00 per year to \$171,000 per year for a part-time job, not to mention the associated pension spiking that is going on here. Our representatives in Congress make only slightly more than this: \$174,000!

I know that being a county supervisor is a part-time job because several supervisors kept working in the private sector while they were on the board. For instance, newly elected Supervisor **Roy Lee** owns and operates a very popular restaurant in Carpinteria. The late Supervisor **Joni Gray** kept practicing law while former Supervisor **Peter Adam** helped run his farming company. Furthermore, this year, the board of sups is only meeting 36 times. They typically only meet three times a month on average, and they are off for all holidays, including two weeks at Christmas, not to mention a four-week break every summer.

While they do have a few other meetings they go to each month, the bottom line is they can work as much or as little as they want because each of them have up to four highly paid staff members to take care of constituent calls (SLO County supervisors only have one aide each). Additionally, all supervisor districts include incorporated cities (representing 68% of the population), hence, the sups can often divert calls and complaints to some 40 city council members throughout the county. Finally, the county sups are not technically in charge of the day-to-day operations of several departments in the county which are run by five fellow elected officials who, unlike county supervisors, have professional credentials to qualify for their positions. These departments include the Sheriff, District Attorney, County Clerk-Recorder Assessor, County Auditor Controller, and County Treasurer and Tax Collector.

I don't know about you, but the way I figure, people should run for office because they want to serve the public's interests not their own personal interest. It is sad to say that too many people these days run for

(Continued on page 18)

Are Building Reforms Too Little, Too Late?

By Steven Greenhut

In the wake of the California wildfires, the state and localities are considering some modest reforms — but we'll cheer any progress.

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — It takes a disaster to get California officials to approve even exceedingly modest reforms to its regulatory system. For instance, a recent news report from *CalMatters* focused on the Los Angeles City Council's unanimous decision to consider allowing architects and engineers to self-certify their building projects as a means to speed up rebuilding after the area's devastating wildfires. The vote gave the building department 30 days to report back on options for such a program. Good for the city, but it's bizarre that this was even big news.

Per the city's motion, "The state of California and the city of Los Angeles continue to face an ongoing housing production challenge and housing affordability crisis." Other jurisdictions have "made great advancements in permit streamlining and project approval processes through the use of programs like self-certification." These programs "expedite the issuance of building permits without reducing a building's integrity and still adhering to life and safety requirements."

It's not as if the affordability crisis only emerged after the wildfires. State and Los Angeles officials have struggled with the housing problem for years now. I don't mean to pick on officials for doing the right thing, but how come there's no impetus for considering sensible reforms as a matter of course? Why do we need to consider them only after large portions of the city burn to the ground?

As the city explains, these programs don't reduce building integrity or safety for obvious reasons. "Why shouldn't we be able to self-certify if all the liability rests on us and we're only using licensed professionals?" a former California Building Industry Association chairman told the publication. "When something happens in the field we fix it." In fact, architects and engineers put their license on the line every time they sign off on a project — which is more than one would get from a city inspector.

By the way, the city still can inspect a project once it gets moving. Although the Los Angeles Building Department provides fairly reasonable permit timeframes on its website, the reality is quite differ-



The image features the Unitedag logo at the top left, which consists of a stylized leaf icon inside a circle followed by the text "unitedag". Below the logo is a photograph of several workers in a field, wearing hard hats and safety vests. One worker's hat has "BOSS" written on it. The text "Premier Health Benefits for agriculture." is overlaid in large, bold, yellow and white letters. At the bottom of the image, there is a green banner with white text: "Committed to providing the best health benefits and services for agriculture since 1980." and the website "unitedag.org" in yellow text.

ent. *CalMatters* explains that small residential projects often take "months, if not years."

A 2023 report from the UCLA Anderson School of Management provided data that reinforced the dire situation: "Over the 2010-2022 sample timeframe, approval times comprised roughly 45 percent on average of the nearly four years required to complete a multi-family project in the city of Los Angeles." It noted that if the city sped up the process by only 25 percent, it could boost the amount of housing production from 11 percent to 26 percent.

Not surprisingly, the situation is even worse in San Francisco. Per a *San Francisco Chronicle* column in 2023: "[T]he median time for securing approval to build in San Francisco is 627 days — which puts 50

(Continued on page 17)

The Dirty Details On The 48% Raise For County Supervisors

By Andy Caldwell

On Tuesday, Feb. 25, County Supervisors **Steve Lavagnino, Bob Nelson, Joan Hartmann, Laura Capps, and Roy Lee** will consider giving *themselves* a 48% raise worth \$56,000 per year, for an annual salary of \$171,000. The justification for the obscene raise is to keep up with the salaries of the largest counties in the state, as well as a percentage of the salaries of superior court judges. Lost in all this is the fact that the position of county supervisor was never meant to be a “good-paying job”; it was meant to be a sacrifice of public service rather than self-service. Currently, supervisors earn around \$115,000 per year, which is more than ample considering it is not a full-time job.

Furthermore, if the supervisors go through with this raise, they will be making significantly more than our state assembly and senate members (\$132,000) and they will be receiving nearly the same pay as our U.S. Senators and members of the House of Representatives (\$174,000), all of whom represent many more constituents than do county sups.

The supervisors take umbrage with the contention their work is part-time, even though the proposed 48% raise is an outrage even if they do work full time. Nevertheless, the core function of their job – the one thing they were elected to do – is their Tuesday board meetings that occur, on average, three times per month. During the weeks they meet, they do likely work full time. However, in addition to taking off every fourth Tuesday of the month, they also take off for four weeks every summer, two weeks at Christmas, one week for Thanksgiving, and all major holidays. That means they don’t have meetings for the equivalent of four months per year.

TREMBLAY
FINANCIAL SERVICES
— SINCE 1997 —

805.569.1982

888.569.1982

Sounds part-time to me, but don’t take my word for it. Former County Supervisors **Brooks Firestone** and **Mike Stoker** agree it is not a full-time job. Here is what Brooks Firestone had to say:

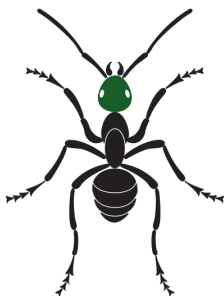
“Andy,

“As a retired Supervisor I am opposed to the substantial raise proposed by the Supervisors. This position is a part time occupation that should be a public service and not a lucrative career.”

Gripping and Grinning Costs Taxpayers \$1,500,000 for Five Supes

Furthermore, you must consider that much of the “work” of a supervisor is by design, not necessity. After all, they are politicians. That is, much of their work is the result of their unwillingness to simplify land-use codes, thereby creating myriad hearings, appeals, and lawsuits regarding development of any kind. They also spend a lot of time “gripping and grinning” – that is, “working” – to see and be seen, which is really nothing less than a form of campaigning. For instance, they attend many community events and non-profit fundraisers to rub elbows, not because they

(Continued on page 16)



O'Connor
Pest Control

“Serving Southern CA since 1952”

Public Servants vs. Politicians

By Mike Stoker

I've often said the difference between a public servant and a politician is that for the politician the position is the best-paying job they have and don't have a real job to go back into the private sector when they lose. The public servant position is the worst paying job they've had, and they do have a real job to go back to the private sector anytime, win or lose.

After watching Tuesday's Board of Supervisors hearing regarding Sable Oil Company's attempt to have the names on its permits changed from Exxon (the prior owner) to Sable (the current owner) it became clear the distinction goes much deeper to the fiber of the character and principle of the elected official.

I think we can all agree that a politician is driven less by principle or by doing the right thing and more by doing what makes him or her look good with more voters at the time. A politician is driven by the polls and what the vote means in the polling; the public servant lives by the well-known quote in Shakespeare's Hamlet, "To thine own self be true." (Translated: you should do what you believe is right, not what *others* want you to do.)

So, with that in mind, I return to this past Tuesday's Board of Supervisors meeting. The Board had to decide whether to approve a name change on the permits with the county moving the prior owner and changing it with the current owner. That seems pretty much of a 'no brainer' right? I mean the Assessor's Office will acknowledge the owner is Sable. That's who they send the property tax bill to and that's who pays the property tax bill. You would think this would be something routine that shouldn't even need to go to the Board of Supervisors for consideration. It would be something you should be able to do 'over the counter.'

But not in Santa Barbara County. Since this county is – depending upon who makes up the majority of the Board of Supervisors – so anti-oil that a special ordinance was passed singling out oil companies and denying them the right to do a name change without demonstrating the financial ability to deal with any adverse conditions that occur from operations...like an oil spill.

Fair enough.

So, Sable went through the process. They applied

for approval of the name change. They provided county staff with all the information regarding their financial ability to respond to adversity, provided their insurance information insuring against calamities and covering should there be any, and provided information showing the net worth of the company to back it up at 2.5 billion dollars. Based on county requirements that Sable clearly complied with, county staff recommended approval as the matter went first to the Santa Barbara County Planning Commission. At the commission, the approval was passed on a 3-1 vote with one of the planning commissioners (appointed by Supervisor **Laura Capps**, who is known for being anti-oil) supporting the name change acknowledging this was not a vote for approving an oil project but a vote dealing with a process issue for an existing 'vested rights' oil operation that the county had a duty to deal with in 'good faith' or face a lawsuit that they would surely lose and subject the county to significant financial exposure. Kudos to that planning commissioner and the planning commission for doing the right thing. So far so good. The process at this point is working the way it should.

Then comes the Environmental Defense Center filing an appeal which automatically brings it to the Board of Supervisors. This is where the system breaks down and we get to see in action how public servants vs. politicians respond.

The EDC sends out notices and urges all their anti-oil constituents to come to the Board of Supervisors hearing to oppose the name change and 'stop Sable

(Continued on page 14)

Support

COLAB

The Coalition of Labor, Agriculture & Business

<https://www.colabsbc.org/join-colab.php>

Playing DOGE-Ball With County Supervisors

By Andy Caldwell

Well, the board of sups approved its 48% raise, worth some \$56,000 per year, and to say they didn't take kindly to the effort by yours truly to defeat the same would be a monumental understatement. They not only attacked me personally, but the board also dishonored the very honorable **Brooks Firestone** who served our county and state for all the right reasons with the "right stuff."

The supervisors took exception to my characterizing their job as part-time (if you exclude grandstanding, politicking, and electioneering) from their so-called list of job duties. And they completely ignored the ire of their constituents that raising their salaries up to \$171,000 in one fell swoop didn't just *appear* to be self-serving, it *was* self-serving.

Let's consider the context of this raise since these politicians, in many cases, raised hundreds of thousands of dollars in the form of campaign contributions for the *honor of serving* as a county supervisor. Then they turn around and complain *the job* doesn't pay enough and the hours are too long?

With this raise, these supervisors have declared themselves overpaid county employees rather than public servants.

Full-Time Pay for Part-Time Work

The real issue here, in the end, is not whether the job is full-time or not, because a raise this big is simply obscene. That is, they don't deserve to earn orders of magnitude above what the average constituent earns, which is \$60,129 (nearly the amount of their raise!), especially during a tsunami of inflation that has too many households paying for their groceries with credit cards, i.e., borrowing the money.

Of course, they didn't compare their salaries to that of their constituents. Oh no, they compared their pay to other California coastal county supervisors, and to their own staff, which is not an apples-to-apples comparison for a multitude of reasons. They also raised the salaries of some staff members and other electeds to \$300,000 per year during this same meeting. Because of the largesse associated with government retirement pensions, most of these "public servants" will be making nearly \$300,000 for the rest of their lives, meaning the rest of us are in essence living in a feudal society/economy.

They are our lords; we are their serfs.



A Bigger, More Expensive, Government

This is all par for the course. These supervisors have done absolutely nothing to control the cost of county government, nor to downsize the same. In a few short years, the county payroll – including salaries, benefits, and pensions – is slated to hit \$1 billion. And to rub our noses in it, the recipients of this bounty continue to claim they are being fiscally prudent.

While the rest of the country is celebrating what Trump and DOGE are doing, Santa Barbara County supervisors have taken the opposite tack. For example, the federal government and much of the private sector is eliminating DEI programs as wasteful spending; meanwhile the county is about to hire a new DEI "manager" who will add another \$200,000 to taxpayers' yearly burden.

The sups do not deserve this raise – not to repeat myself but *that they voted for themselves* – for myriad reasons. In fact, if anything, they should have voluntarily *reduced* their pay to make up for the abominable job they've been doing. One of those reasons, for example, would include their attempt to cheat American Medical Response out of a contract it won fair and square. The county wasted \$11.1 million dollars in the process, including buying millions of dollars of ambulances it won't ever need.

Coddling Criminals at the County Level

The sups also approved construction of a \$250 million

(Continued on page 12)

Elon Musk And The Dog Days Of DOGE

By James Hirsen

During the 2024 campaign cycle, then-GOP presidential candidate Donald Trump promised voters that when he took the oval office for the second time he would enlist the help of Elon Musk to assist him in riding the federal government of waste, fraud, and abuse.

Musk is the entrepreneur extraordinaire that with his forward-thinking approaches to electric vehicles and rocket technology was able to transform the automobile and aerospace industries.

He is also the individual that was able to take the social media platform Twitter, christen it with the new name of "X," and take it to the level of being one of the most influential platforms ever to exist. In so doing, he not only liberated the media landscape, he accomplished the seemingly impossible.

In 2021 he secured the Time magazine title of "Person of the Year." About Musk, the then-Time editor-in-chief Edward Felsenthal wrote, "Person of the Year is a marker of influence, and few individuals have had more influence than Musk on life on Earth, and potentially life off Earth too."

It's difficult to imagine an equally qualified person that would be willing and able to take on the fiscally challenging responsibilities.

During the campaign, Trump had told the Economic Club of New York that he planned to create "a government efficiency commission tasked with conducting a complete financial and performance audit of the entire federal government and making recommendations for drastic reforms."

Following his historic victory, the president fulfilled his promise and set up a government efficiency commission, with Musk being given the assignment of running it. The Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) was born.

It's just what Trump voters had wanted. And judging from their reactions, it was exactly what the Demo-

crats and the mainstream media feared.

The surprise is how good DOGE has been at exposing the corrupt use of taxpayers' money.

In the decades-old tradition of leftists and fringe radicals, a mind massage of the public psyche is once again in the works. This time propaganda is being disseminated in the form of an endless repetition of a falsely-scripted phrase, which was likely created via focus groups.

Like the past not-so-catchy "existential threat to democracy" slogan that droned on and on in an effort to undermine President Trump's reelection bid, Democrats and their media allies have an old new phrase with which to program people's minds: the equally vapid "constitutional crisis."

However, the real crisis that our country is facing is a fiscal one. A little clarification of the words "deficit" and "debt" is in order, two words that are routinely and unfortunately incorrectly used interchangeably.

In 2024 our nation had a *deficit* (spending beyond our means and having a shortfall in revenue so that we are unable to pay our bills) of almost \$2 trillion.

The deficit amount simply gets added to the national *debt* (the money our country owes), which is currently more than \$36 trillion.

The reality is that President Trump's appointment of Musk to conduct a search-and-disclose expedition of a bloated bureaucratic executive branch is necessary, lawful, and constitutional.

President Trump named Musk in accordance with what Section 202 of Title 18 of the United States Code labels a "special government employee."

Musk's appointment is nothing new. Previous administrations have also had industry experts fill similar roles. Article II of the Constitution grants the president the power to appoint individuals to assist in carrying out the administration's agenda.

(Continued on page 12)



Howard Jarvis
Taxpayers Association
established in 1978

Good Riddance To The CFPB

By Phil Kerpen

The housing crisis and subsequent financial crisis in 2008 was caused in large part by politicizing loan eligibility criteria, advancing social justice objectives over sound economics. Unfortunately, the Dodd-Frank law added even more politicization by creating the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, which has raised costs and pushed many financial services beyond the reach of the consumers it purports to protect.

The CFPB was the brainchild of Elizabeth Warren and the top demand of the liberal advocacy groups funded, ironically, by the billionaire inventor of toxic sub-prime negative-amortization mortgages, Herb Sandler. It was designed to be the most powerful and unaccountable bureaucracy in the federal government. All power was concentrated in one director with a fixed five year term and not subject to removal by the president. There was no budgetary oversight from Congress, with the agency funded by Federal Reserve profits, and no meaningful limits on what it could regulate.

Fifteen years later we can judge CFPB by its results. The number of banks in America, according to the FDIC, has plummeted from 7,500 to 4,500, with regulatory compliance costs falling disproportionately on smaller banks that have been forced to merge into the big guys or go out of business. The St Louis Fed calculated that small banks have triple the regulatory compliance burden of big banks.

So much for punishing Wall Street.

CFPB's mortgage disclosure rules haven't made buying a house any easier or less financially risky – but they have added to the pile of paperwork and substantially increased closing costs. The \$25 billion "robo-signing" settlement, for instance, sent at most 6 percent of the total proceeds to victims. Probably less. And the settlement resulted in many mortgages being sold to non-banks with little expertise and lots of incompetence.

A lot of the money CFPB collects in fines and fees ends up in a slush fund called the Civil Penalty Fund to be funneled to left-wing social justice groups.

The agency even tried to do the one thing Congress expressly prohibited it from doing – regulate auto-lending. This bizarre and extremely expensive regulation was overturned by a Congressional Review Act resolution in Trump's first term, but it was an early example of weaponized wokeness, using a computer model to guess the race of borrowers based on their last names and zip codes and then punishing auto dealers for computer-simulated racial discrimination.

Under Biden, the CFPB kicked its regulatory activities into hyperdrive. They banned arbitration clauses to open up vast new opportunities for trial lawyer class-action lawsuits. They banned short-term lenders from setting up automated repayments – with a substantial negative effect on the availability of short-term loans that forced people who could no longer qualify for loans to instead overdraw their checking accounts or incur credit card late fees. Then they tried to regulate

(Continued on page 13)

THE ANDY CALDWELL SHOW

KSMA RADIO
NEWS • TALK
1240 99.5

KZSB RADIO
FROM HERE-FOR HERE
1290 96.9

K-NEWS
98.5
The Power of Information

Listen to Andy Live Monday Thru Friday 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM



Sanctuary Cities Were Always Anti-American *Cont.*

(Continued from page 9)

dollar trash digester that doesn't work. This boondoggle is a disaster for ratepayers who will be stuck paying for the facility for decades to come. By reducing their compensation, the sups could at least have contributed to helping pay for the debacle.

Then, there is the county's \$400 million maintenance deficit on roads, buildings, and parks. It is only going to get worse because this board reneged on a promise made by previous boards to continue paying down this deficit every year by diverting 18% of the general fund revenue growth that comes primarily from local property taxes. That maintenance money has gone instead to fatten the paychecks of the supervisors and county staff. Thank them next time you lose a tire in a pothole.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this board has gone off the rails when it comes to public safety. We elect the Sheriff of the County to run our jail, but he can't do that optimally because the county supervisors have gone soft on crime as it pertains to incarcerating criminals. They are doing this in one of two ways. First, by insisting that people accused of serious crimes not be held in jail on a pre-trial basis (against the advice and consent of the sheriff). Second, and worse, they are severely downsizing the capacity of the old south county jail without replacing that capacity by building enough new units at the north county jail.

Apparently, the Board of Supervisors would rather handcuff the sheriff than restrain criminals, while they themselves fleece the taxpayers.

Elon Musk And The Dog Days Of DOGE *Cont.*

As a result of his role as a defense contractor, Musk already holds high-level government security clearances. The rocket and satellite technology that he oversees has been used by the Department of Defense as well as many other departments of the U.S. government. And his Starlink satellite internet system has been invaluable in helping to assist domestic disaster relief efforts.

Democrats have been ignoring voters' pleas for a more efficient and honest government. A recent survey conducted by McLaughlin & Associates indicated that 79% of the participants wanted Washington's reckless borrowing and spending to be curtailed.

The DOGE quest for efficiency also includes serious efforts to reduce regulations. During President Trump's first term, he had ordered that two old regulations would be eliminated for every new regulation created. His new approach in his second term is that for each new regulation, 10 regulations must be identified for elimination.

This appears to be the first time that an administration is actually scrutinizing the entire executive branch in earnest.

Why all the hysteria, anger, and crocodile tears from so many in the Democrat Party, federal offices, government agencies, liberal media, and activist organizations?

It's only logical that the president, who is the chief executive of the executive branch, has the right and the duty to examine how agencies of the executive branch of government are spending federal dollars.

Certain parties are acting as if they want bureaucratic abuses to remain secret.

Guess it's okay to sit back and enjoy the histrionics as long as we pray for DOGE's success and our beloved country's future.

James Hirszen, J.D., M.A. in Media Psychology, is a New York Times best-selling author, international business attorney, news analyst, cultural commentator, and social media scholar

HAMON
OVERHEAD DOOR
COMPANY Inc.

Good Riddance To The CFPB *cont.*

(Continued from page 11)

overdraft fees and credit card late fees.

This chain of regulating everything might sound good, until you realize that this is precisely why small banks are disappearing and big banks are increasingly putting fees on everything. Good luck finding a free checking account anymore if you don't carry a hefty balance. The result is a two-tier banking system, and those struggling financially are getting denied access to more and more critical financial services.

Fortunately, the CFPB's unaccountable structure is also its Achilles heel. The Supreme Court ruled in 2020 that the provision that said the president can't fire the CFPB director is unconstitutional and Trump has swiftly fired Biden's director, Rohit Chopra and installed Russ Vought as the interim director.

The lack of any funding from Congress allowed Vought to inform the Federal Reserve that the agency's funding draw for next quarter is zero dollars. Economist EJ Antoni points out that since the CFPB is supposed to be funded by Fed profits, and the Fed has been operating at a huge loss, the agency legally must be zero-funded. So Vought is on firm ground.

Congress should also do its part, ideally by formally repealing the agency, but Democrats are likely to filibuster. What they can't filibuster are Congressional Review Act resolutions, which are privileged and can permanently repeal the agency's most expensive and destructive midnight regulations from last year. Whatever rules Congress doesn't repeal, Vought should formally rescind. And then close up shop.

Phil Kerpen, President of American Commitment, nationally syndicated columnist, chairman of the Internet Freedom Coalition, and author of the 2011 book "Democracy Denied"

**I FOUGHT
THE LAW
AND I WON
WITH PLF.**

JOIN THE FIGHT

Patrick.
Supreme Court Winner.

PACIFIC LEGAL
FOUNDATION
PacificLegal.org

Public Servants vs. Politicians *Cont.*

(Continued from page 8)

Oil from producing oil.' Their followers – believing the call to action – show up at the hearing, all believing the vote to oppose the name change means they stop oil production. A couple hundred strong having been misled by their own leaders testify against the name change. The hearing went on for six hours with Sable and their supporters responding.

In my capacity as President & CEO of the Santa Barbara County Taxpayers Advocacy Center, I testified that the hearing was a sham. I told the board that this wasn't about whether to approve an oil project, it was about approving a name change for an oil company that had bought another oil company that had their operations approved decades ago, had legal 'vested' rights, and that every Supervisor knew that even if they disapproved the name change they would do nothing to stop Sable from producing oil because they knew they legally were dead in the water if they did.

At the end of the day, the Supervisors voted. Supervisor Lavagnino and Nelson acknowledging the same points I've raised, voted yes to uphold the Planning Commission, and approve the name change. Supervisors Lee and Chairwoman Capps, wanting to look like heroes to the environmentalists who attended the hearing and who like lambs believed their attendance would matter, voted no. In their reasoning, Chairwoman Capps even mentioned the vote was nothing more than symbolic and acknowledged they could not stop Sable from producing oil, meaning the oil Sable will soon be producing will be produced on county permits that say the owner, operator, and guarantor is Exxon. (Is that absurd or what?)

Here's where I get to play Nostradamus. Supervisors Lee and Capps, perhaps because County Counsel didn't in executive session advise them strongly enough that the county still faces significant risk of a lawsuit they would lose, believed it all ends with the hearing ending Tuesday. After all, why would Sable file a lawsuit when they can do what they want anyway and start producing oil? Why in the world with a company with a net worth of 2.5 billion dollars care if their permits are in the name of the company that sold the oil operations to them? Why would Exxon with a net worth way beyond 2.5 billion dollars care if their name stays on the permit as the owner and operator when it is a completely different company?

Nostradamus time and news flash. I predict the county still gets a lawsuit slapped on it by one of the two companies, and that in the near future County Counsel will take the matter into executive session and strongly recommend the county settle and approve the name change or subject the county to substantial financial exposure, and the supervisors will come out of that executive session and at least three supervisors, hopefully four, will vote to approve the name change. The same name change that two voted against last Tuesday.

What a waste of time for so many people. What a waste of taxpayer money for so much staff time spent on this matter and still to be spent. What a disappointment. Only in Santa Barbara County.

Welcome to what happens when public servants act like politicians.

Mike Stoker, business, environmental, and agricultural attorney, President & CEO of the Santa Barbara County Taxpayers Advocacy Center-SBCTAC and author of "Inside Trump's EPA"



Nutrien
Ag Solutions™

***The One Name In Crop
Production Inputs***
***1335 W. Main St.
Santa Maria, CA. 93454
(805) 922-5848***



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

The Dirty Details On The 48% Raise For County *Cont.*

(Continued from page 7)

have “work” to do there.

But that is not the worst of it. The dirty little secret of most county supervisors? They hire their former campaign manager as their chief of staff. That way, they can keep them gainfully employed with a six-figure salary in between campaign cycles. Then, of course, when it is time to run for reelection, both the sup and the executive assistant will work nearly full-time campaigning. Do you want to pay them \$85 an hour to ride in a parade, to grip and grin, to see and be seen? Should we pay them when they are campaigning?

Drop Off a Letter and/or Send an E-Mail

Californians are numb to the fact that too many of our electeds comprise a highly paid professional class of politicians (it is not that way in most other states). They go from one office to another because being a politician is their career choice, which becomes more about power, control, and influence, rather than public service. Yet, who can say that the CA professional political class is doing a good job running this state at any level of government? It is not by accident that we are mired in debt, bloat, failing infrastructure, regulatory red-tape, hazards such as fires and floods that are abated elsewhere, and the highest living expenses in the country, including for housing, water, electricity, and fuel. All these problems are the result of policy failures. Moreover, in the last ten years, 576 CA politicians have been convicted on federal corruption

charges!

For all these reasons, please voice your opposition to the 48% raise by contacting these county supervisors before Feb. 25:

Supervisor Roy Lee at: roylee@countyofsb.org

Supervisor Laura Capps at: lcapps@countyofsb.org

Supervisor Joan Hartmann
at: jhartmann@countyofsb.org

Supervisor Bob Nelson
at: Bob.Nelson@countyofsb.org

Supervisor Steve Lavagnino
at: steve.lavagnino@countyofsb.org

COLAB

The Coalition of Labor, Agriculture & Business

<https://www.colabsbc.org/join-colab.php>

Family owned and operated by Cheryl & George Bedford

**COLAB Members, we are here
for you! Always have been, always will be!**

We want to sell you your next vehicle and the next one too!

Dare to compare!



*The home of...
True Value, Up
Front LOW Pricing!*

CHEVY • BUICK
SUNSET
A U T O C E N T E R

1300 North H Street • Lompoc

805-736-7577

sunsetautocenter.com



Are Building Reforms Too Little, Too Late? *Cont.*

(Continued from page 6)

percent of projects at risk of losing funding due to delays. The outcomes speak for themselves. In 2021, San Francisco issued permits for just 2,000 homes, and in 2022 there was similarly anemic building activity. By contrast, Seattle — a city of comparable size — issued more than 10,000 permits.” The city is so bureaucratic the governor signed a law (Senate Bill 423) that provides special oversight of the city’s building-approval process. It’s too early to know if that will speed up approvals, but I’m guessing it will just result on a few reports.

San Francisco might be the worst offender, but bureaucratic hurdles delay construction across the state. “In April, the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area permitted more housing than all of California, meaning that on a per-capita basis DFW permitted five times as much housing as the Golden State,” reported Kenneth Schrupp, which might explain why “the median house in Dallas goes for \$459,000, compared to over \$900,000 in California.”

In fairness, laws such as SB 423 and others have streamlined the building process by creating a “by right” approval system that lets builders bypass subjective planning commission and city council reviews. But all such bills are narrowly targeted at the types of high-density, multi-family projects that progressives prefer. Those new laws, while worthwhile, have not led to significant new building starts mainly because of their limited nature.

The state needs widespread approval reform — as well as reform of the fee structure that lets localities force builders to pay for costs that aren’t directly related to the new projects. Gov. Gavin Newsom was right to exempt Los Angeles wildfire rebuilding projects from the onerous California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the Coastal Act, but the state needs



3580 Orcutt Rd. Santa Maria
937-3702

2650 Main St. Morro Bay
772-8103

more than an executive order and needs to apply such exemptions everywhere.

The Legislature is considering many wildfire-related bills in the current session, which mostly just nibble around the edges. It needs to set its sights on permanent, widespread relief for all Californians. It needs to do so now rather than wait for another disaster.

Steven Greenhut is Western region director for the R Street Institute and a member of the Southern California News Group editorial board. Write to him at sgreenhut@rstreet.org

TESTA Catering

Full Service Culinary and Bar Catering

The Premier Caterer in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties

Since 1983

“Locally Owned by Martin & Debi Testa”

What Blows Up In Goleta Doesn't Stay In Goleta *Cont.*

(Continued from page 4)

The facility in Goleta and the regions beyond are in an even denser community area just beneath the Storke Road/101 overpass, meaning thousands of homes could be immediately affected in the event of a fire. That also means both first responders and evacuees will be faced with absolute gridlock and chaos in each of these communities as the 101 would have to be closed in both directions in the event of an emergency.

The Goleta facility has a Tesla "Megapack" system. At Moss Landing there are two different battery systems onsite there. The one that just blew up was not a Tesla system but a second system that caught fire a few years ago did employ the Megapack system. While the Megapack fire in 2022 at Moss Landing burned for about 10 hours, another in Australia involving a Megapack system in 2021 required a response of 150 emergency personnel.

Finally, we have serious concerns that the first responders have not been properly trained and equipped for a fire at any of these facilities. The standard practice is to let lithium battery fires burn themselves out because putting water on them can make the fire worse, while they do use water to keep other batteries from heating up.

A county supervisor in Monterey County said it best: this technology is beyond our ability to regulate and beyond the ability of the industry to control.

You have been warned.

Please warn others.

Stop County Supervisors From Giving Themselves A 48% Raise! *Cont.*

(Continued from page 5)

office for all the wrong reasons.

Some people want power.

Others want to be career politicians.

I certainly don't want candidates to run for the money or because they need a job. Do you? Instead, we need to reemphasize here the concept of public service.

Contact Your Supervisor

One last thing, for the purpose of justifying this *obscene* salary hike, the county supervisors are comparing themselves to eight of the largest counties in the state, including Los Angeles County, which has a population of some 10 million people, and a \$30 billion budget.

Please contact your county supervisor and tell them you don't support them giving themselves a 48% raise. Time is of the essence as they are scheduled to vote on this on Feb. 25.

Supervisor **Roy Lee** at: roylee@countyofsb.org

Supervisor **Laura Capps** at: lcapps@countyofsb.org

Supervisor **Joan Hartmann** at: jhartmann@countyofsb.org

Supervisor **Bob Nelson** at: Bob.Nelson@countyofsb.org



722 West Betteravia Rd.

Santa Maria, CA 93455 805-922-1262

www.GermanAutoSM.net - www.facebook.com/germanautosm

While ‘Trump-Proofing’ CA, Gov. Gavin Newsom Asks Congress For \$40 Billion In Fire Relief Funds *Cont.*

(Continued from page 3)

and Los Angeles during the January fires.

The Globe has suggested lawmakers hold a special legislative session to figure out how and why fire hydrants were dry as fire fighters fought the Palisade wildfires, rather than spending time and money on “Trump-proofing” California.

The Globe was in Pacific Palisades February 7th when President Trump’s Special Envoy and White House representative on the ground in California, Ric Grenell, met with fire victim residents, and representatives from federal, state and local agencies to get the ball rolling for cleanup, and so those whose homes did not burn down could gain access to them without the red tape they were already mired in.

Grenell also stressed that any federal funding coming to and through the State of California would have strings attached. And it should.

Also remember that while the fires were still burning, Gov. Newsom said Jan 13th, on rebuilding Pacific Palisades, he has a team “looking at reimagining L.A. 2.0. We’re just starting to lay out. I mean, we’re still fighting these fires, so we’re already talking to city leaders. We’re already talking to civic leaders. We’re already talking to business leaders, with nonprofits. We’re talking to labor leaders.”

Let’s hope the \$40 billion doesn’t go for Newsom’s reimagining L.A. 2.0.

In 2020, Gov. Newsom vetoed Senate Bill 182, a fire mitigation bill for local governments, passed by both houses of the California Legislature. The governor said, “Wildfire resilience must become a more consistent part of land use and development decisions...” “HOWEVER it must be done while meeting our housing needs.”

Let’s hope Congress and the Trump administration tell Governor Newsom to clean up his own state. And then offer a special federal tax break directly to the fire victims. This is something LA County should also be doing anyway – offering a property tax moratorium to fire victims. Why should they be paying property taxes on ashes?

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?

Andy Caldwell Thanks You!



He’s a government watchdog, taxpayer, business and traditional values advocate, and the Executive Director of COLAB.

–Andy Caldwell



AWARDED 24 TIMES!

Winner

Best Environmental Watchdog
Best Take-It-To-The-Man Local Activist

The only local talk show to cover the entire Central Coast! Andy is Live Monday thru Friday from 3pm to 5pm. Streaming Live on KSMA

KSMA RADIO
NEWS • TALK
1240 | 99.5

Reliving the Grapes Of Wrath; The Central Coast Sequel *Cont.*

(Continued from page 2)

The largest winery production facility in the county closed; it couldn't increase production because of regulations that put a cap on fermentation out of concerns for greenhouse gas emissions. The largest trucking company in the county closed because the State mandate forcing the electrification of the fleet wasn't repealed by President Trump in time to keep them afloat. Countless families have divided up and sold part of their ranches to pay inheritance taxes so that the next generation could keep a little fragment of the old homestead. Over 50% of the grapes grown in this county have been ripped out because the industry can't market its product and properties as can vintners in SLO county. Flower growers were put out of business because our federal government cut a deal with Colombia enabling that country to flood our markets with duty-free flowers. That was years after the California Coastal Commission put the kibosh on more greenhouses in Carpinteria. And now, sheep and goat herders, who often used their flocks to reduce fire risks on our hillsides, are being forced to cull their herds because CA passed a law requiring the herders to be paid 24 hours per day while they stay with their flocks.

I am afraid the Central Coast is slowly but surely going the way of two other areas of the state that once had prime farming ground, namely, the San Fernando Valley and Orange County. As I have testified numerous times over the years, there are two ways you can "preserve" agriculture. On the one hand, you can support farmers according to their needs as it affects water, labor, nutrients, equipment, etc., or you can preserve ag by attempting to freeze-frame it so that urbanites can enjoy the views of rural vistas. However, the latter is a means of preservation akin to preserving a relic in a jar of formaldehyde.



WE HELP OUR CLIENTS SUCCEED BY LOWERING THEIR TOTAL COST OF RISK

Not understanding the risks that affect your business, or underestimating the potential impact of those risks, may be the biggest risk of all.

Tolman & Wiker Insurance is now AssuredPartners of California, part of AssuredPartners, one of the largest and most capable insurance brokerages in the United States. With offices in Ventura, Los Angeles, Santa Maria, Bakersfield, Salinas, and Agoura Hills, the AssuredPartners of CA team brings our clients best-in-class Risk Management and Employee Benefits capabilities, through our laser focused local and regional service teams. With origins dating back to 1923 in Ventura, California, AP of CA now has over 160 employees who place our clients' priorities at the center of everything we do. Our leading-edge approach to providing proactive risk advice and proprietary resources allows us to serve clients throughout the U.S. and global insurance marketplace.



(805) 922-7301

www.assuredpartners.com

1525 E Main Street
Santa Maria, CA 93454

DOI LICENSE #0M07762