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The Coalition of Labor, Agriculture & Business

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Spies, Lies And Sabotage

By Andy Caldwell

I never cease to be amazed at the ability of the democratic party and their sycophants in the media to deceive the American people. For eight months now, this tag team of disinformation specialists have been urging the American people to believe that the Russian government illicitly infiltrated the Clinton campaign to affect the outcome of the election. Yet, these many months later, leaders of the democratic party apparatus, including Congressman Adam Schiff, have admitted that no evidence of this Russian conspiracy has come to light.

There were two good reasons the dems wanted people to focus on this Russian red herring. First, they wanted to distract the people from what was leaked. They wanted people to instead focus on who was responsible for the leaks. That is, instead of focusing on the outrageous content of the emails, released by way of Wikileaks, including those of John Podesta, the Chairman of Hillary's Presidential campaign, they distracted people with the claim of the faux Russian connection.

The second reason they brought up the Russians has to do with their planned attempts to sabotage the Trump administration. It is no coincidence that the dems started this news cycle regarding the Russians about the same time the Obama White House began to illicitly surveil the Trump campaign by way of surveilling the Russians! What we know is that Obama's National Security Advisor, Susan Rice, ordered the illegal unmasking of Trump associates for no apparent reason other than to link these associates with the Russians and leak the same to the media.

To be precise, the Clinton/Obama tag team tried to implicate the Russians for the Wikileaks hacks and implicate Trump as a coconspirator in the process. As a result, they were able to sabotage the appointment of Michael Flynn as Rice's successor! Yet, no proof exists of the Russian connection to the Wikileaks reveal and the supposed proof that Trump and company were speaking with the Russians was illegally obtained as no warrants or proof of wrongdoing was evident to countenance the unmasking. It was therefore the dems, not the Russians, who were certainly involved in a dirty tricks campaign this past election!

The dems intended to tie these two stories together like a millstone around the neck of President Trump's administration to strangle the baby while it was still in the crib. In the opinion of many, this scandal is worse than Watergate! Whereas, Nixon broke into the democratic headquarters to gain intelligence to win an election, the Obama team was illegally monitoring an incoming administration in an attempt to build the potential cause for impeachment!

We know that Susan Rice, who is one of Obama's closest confidantes, lied about Benghazi and now we know she spied on Trump and his team. Hacking John Podesta's emails was never a national security crisis to begin with, but the Obama administration's attempt to sabotage his successor is a bonafide constitutional crisis.

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COLAB

PO Box 7523
Santa Maria, CA 93456

Phone:
805-929-3148

E-mail:
Andy@colabsbc.org

Cash Cows And Whipping Posts

By Andy Caldwell

There are three reasons that California is always ranked as the worst state in the union for doing business. The first is the politicians and activists who abuse and demonize business. Second are the businesses who enable the abusers by buying favors, and alternatively, those who refuse to fight back. The third reason is the disregard and indifference of the general populace who fail to recognize their own standard and cost of living suffers as a result of this situation!

There are several aspects as to how and why the politicians and activists routinely fleece business owners and get away with it. They view businesses in our state as cash cows for their wealth redistribution schemes and convenient targets for stirring up angst and envy. Meanwhile, the citizenry doesn't realize that the resultant costs get passed down to them in the form of lower wages and higher consumer costs.

For example, even though the general population creates consumer demand for products which generate pollution either in the making or the using of the product, it is the producers who get tied to whipping posts for being "big" polluters! All the while, the consumers live in denial that they need and use these products every day.

Here in California, there is a continual assault on the ability of business owners to make a living through the use of the land, equipment, and the business operation they own, including land use restrictions, environmental regulations, the nation's highest taxes and most complex wage and hour laws, along with ex-

treme exposure to frivolous and abusive litigation.

So, how did it get this bad? Why does the business community tolerate this situation? And, when the business community has everything to lose, why are they outspent in terms of time, energy and money? The foremost reason in my opinion is the reliance on lobbyists to represent business interests. The fact of the matter is that nobody in Sacramento is afraid of a lobbyist as the one and only weapon in their arsenal is the ability to ply politicians! As one truthful politician said, "If you can't take their money, drink their booze and sleep with their women, and then vote against their interests, you don't belong in Sacramento!"

The groups that have power in this state, including unions and environmentalists, while they may have lobbyists who speak softly, well, they mostly rely on big sticks! They protest, harass, harangue and intimidate the politicians who won't do their bidding. They put their money where their mouth is and they are committed and adept at swaying public opinion to affect the outcome of elections.

The business community has the means to win by leveraging the access they have to their own employees, customers and vendors! They need to teach these contacts what they have not learned in school or life, namely that which drives the cost of doing business in this state and how that affects all of us as employees, taxpayers, and consumers.

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Jerry Brown's Crumbling Road Show And Legislative Circus

By Katy Grimes

Democrats just passed the largest gas tax increase in California history. The deal is so bad they needed \$1 Billion in payola to buy enough votes to pass it. And shamefully, only 60 percent of the gas tax collected from SB 1, authored by Democrat Senator Jim Beall (D-San Jose), will actually be used for road maintenance and repairs. Environmentalists got plenty of taxpayer-funded payola as well including money for more public transit, and for walking and bicycling projects.

SB 1 does nothing to relieve traffic congestion or expand highway lane capacity. If Democrats and Gov. Jerry Brown are trying to force California's middle class out and small businesses, then it's working.

During a rally Wednesday on the Capitol steps, Gov. Jerry Brown strangely claimed, "This is a fee, a fee for the privilege of driving on our roads that the people pay for, and we've got to keep paying for them. Otherwise, they are not going to work for us. It's just that simple."

"Tax increases don't solve the problem," David Crane wrote in 2015. "In 2012 California voters passed a temporary tax increase known as Proposition 30 designed to generate an additional \$50 billion in revenue over seven years. But as the math makes clear, all that revenue, and more, is being consumed by increases in retirement, health care and corrections spending."

A Real Solution

There were alternatives to raising taxes. AB 96 introduced by numerous Assembly Republicans, would use existing funding, "including revenues attributable to the sales and use tax on motor vehicles, revenues attributable to automobile and motor vehicle insurance policies from the insurer gross premiums tax, revenues from certain diesel fuel sales and use taxes, revenues from certain vehicle registration fees, and certain miscellaneous State Highway Account revenues," the bill language says. AB 96 would also require 40 percent of the revenues to be allocated to the Department of Transportation for maintenance of the state highway system or for purposes of the State Highway Operation and Protection Program, 40 percent of the revenues to be apportioned by the Controller to cities and counties for road purposes pursuant to a speci-



fied formula, and 20 percent to fund projects in the State Transportation Improvement Program that create measurable reductions in traffic congestion. The bill would require the California Transportation Commission to adopt performance criteria and metrics for expenditure of certain of these revenues, and would impose various requirements on cities and counties in order to receive apportionments."

That's what a legislative solution looks like.

SB 1 is just a scam perpetrated on California taxpayers.

Here's the detail of what this tax increase will cost you:

- SB 1 will raise the base excise tax on gasoline by 12 cents per gallon, bringing it to 30 cents. Another variable excise tax will be set at 17 cents.
- Diesel fuel and biodiesel will increase the state excise tax 20 cents per gallon from 16 cents to 36 cents a gallon. A diesel-only sales tax which is charged in addition to the state and local sales tax rates, will increase from 1.75 percent to 5.75 percent, going up four percentage points.
- Electric car owners will pay a \$100 annual fee, after 2020, and only on new electric vehicles.

(Continued on page 19)

In Honor Of Two True Patriots

By *Andy Caldwell*

On May 11, I have the honor of serving as the emcee at an event honoring the publishers of the Santa Barbara News Press, Wendy McCaw and Arthur von Wiesenberger. There are numerous reasons these two business and community leaders, philanthropists and patriots deserve to be recognized, more than can be covered in the space of this column, nonetheless, I would like to share a few personal observations.

My history with the Santa Barbara News Press goes back 46 years as I delivered the paper in my youth. Then, and now, I consider the paper to be the finest on the Central Coast, bar none, because of its comprehensive coverage of the news, in addition to the numerous features highlighting the people and the places that make our region so special.

My next experience with the paper came in the early 1990's. A group of local business owners, farmers, ranchers, and industrialists felt our county government, with its penchant for overreach and overkill, was hurting our local economy in ways too numerous to mention. The Coalition of Labor, Agriculture and Business, my employer, was formed to fight back, in part, by way of educating the community about what was going on.

That proved to be no easy task due to the fact that the News Press was then owned by the New York Times, and the staff was in a New York State of mind, if you get my drift! The staff was predisposed to reflect and defend the values of the progressives who were violating the rights of the citizenry to the detriment of us all. Thankfully, all that changed, when Wendy McCaw bought the paper. She fired some of the most biased reporters I have ever had the misfortune to work with! As somebody who was at the meetings being covered in the paper, I witnessed firsthand how some of the reporters were spinning the news. I was aghast at what was, and what was not, reported.

Wendy McCaw has been faithfully and dutifully fighting a battle in the courts to have the right, as the publisher, to manage the overall content and direction of the paper, which is her right as the owner. Conversely, some of the former staff members of the paper would have us believe the owner only has a right to determine what was on the editorial page while the "professional journalists" have the right to practice



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their craft without interference from the publisher. That is akin to a chef at a restaurant telling the owner they had no say as to what is going to be on the menu!

Two more things need to be mentioned. First, in this day of the internet, it is extremely difficult to keep local newspapers profitable. The dedication, sacrifice and commitment to keep this paper in print is therefore greatly appreciated. Second, the Santa Barbara News Press was one of the first and only papers in the nation to endorse Donald Trump. As prescient as that turned out to be, the intolerant left in this country and community give no honor for the courage of convictions which run against the current. We are about to address that!

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What Will Be Left In Your Wallet?

By Andy Caldwell

Our politicians in Sacramento claim they are doing you a favor by raising taxes!

The first mammoth tax increase, supported by the Governor, would raise an estimated \$50 billion over the next ten years to be used for transportation infrastructure improvements and maintenance. The second, and larger tax increase, comes by way of State Senator Hertzberg. It presumably entails a revamping of our tax structure by shifting our tax burden to a tax on services. The estimated impact? \$123 billion per year!

The Governor's plan to address the nearly \$100 billion backlog in infrastructure improvements and maintenance is to be accomplished by way of higher taxes on gas and diesel fuels, a new annual transportation improvement fee (read that as an increase to the vehicle registration fee), and a new fee of \$100 per year on zero emission vehicles.

Specifically, gas taxes would rise 12 cents per gallon. Diesel fuel would be impacted in two ways: an increase in the diesel excise tax by 20 cents a gallon, and an increase of the diesel sales tax to 5.75%. The additional transportation improvement fee would be prorated depending on the value of your vehicle.

What is missing from this proposal by the Governor and the Democratic Legislature is any accountability for the status quo! Cal Trans's budget is already \$50 billion per year and the department is notoriously inefficient. Voters already approved several transportation bonds over the years and most localities, including Santa Barbara County, also voluntarily raised our local sales tax to augment road construction and

maintenance efforts, including for our state highways and freeways! Moreover, why make this move before we know the details of President's Trump's trillion-dollar infrastructure plan?

Senator Hertzberg's proposal would create an additional set of taxes on services, ostensibly to offset our state's over-reliance on taxing income. Consumers would be taxed for the value of labor under the proposal, including services provided by doctors, lawyers, real estate agents, construction, car washes, and even banking! Virtually everything would be on the table!

Senator Hertzberg's bill promises that the state, in exchange, will eventually lower at least some taxes on corporations and the middle class to make the shift more palatable, but I for one, don't believe that will ever happen! The fact is, the state needs all this money for pensions and they need it fast!

The insult to injury? Senator Hertzberg states in his proposal that this new tax on services is necessary because the California economy has shifted away from an agriculture and manufacturing economy to a service-based economy. What the Senator won't admit is that the regulatory climate and exorbitantly high taxes is what forced this transition and the resultant loss of jobs and revenue. Additionally, the Senator says California needs to make this shift in anticipation of the revenue and administrative implications of federal policies. Could that have anything to do with California's intention to become a sanctuary state and the threatened loss of billions in federal funds?

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Food And Water Scaremongers

By Andy Caldwell

I attended a meeting that was sponsored by three organizations: Food and Water Watch (FWW), and two flunkies, The Santa Barbara County Action Network, and Safe Energy Now North County. The purpose of the meeting was to garner support for a campaign against so-called big oil and big ag who they pose as colluding together to risk the safety of our water, food, and air for filthy profits. Moreover, these organizations would have us believe that Governor Jerry Brown, who could scarcely be more anti-business, has been bought off by ag and oil interests.

The short-term goal of this effort, in their exact words, is to see three oil companies be denied permits to operate outright by the county board of supervisors. These groups have of course prejudged the merits and impacts of these projects before they have even had the chance to make their pitch before the decision-makers! This has to do with their ultimate goal of wanting all oil to stay in the ground even though this would rob our community of significant tax proceeds, while dispossessing mineral owners of the value of their holdings, and depriving consumers of the thousands of oil byproducts they use each and every day.

A parallel long term goal of these organizations is to obliterate the rights of farmers and ranchers to access the water they own by way of declaring that all water belongs to the people in general. They went so far as to say that growing crops for export is a waste of water! These radicals slyly gloss over the fact that most of the rest of the state, country and world would starve to death if they had to try and grow their own food in the middle of a metropolis, the desert or in the midst of locales subject to harsh winters.

FWW considers the enviros who have been operating here as wimps! Rather than consider project conditions and regulations placed on projects to mitigate impacts as good enough to protect the environment, FWW instead wants these projects declared dead on arrival once they come before decision-makers. They plan on building power here by engaging students, religious groups, and organized labor. They also boasted about how they got Supervisor Joan Hartmann elected as the third vote they need to ensure their success!



The big lie they plan to use to scare the populace? They deceitfully imply that the aquifer, from where drinking and irrigation water comes, is being polluted by the oil industry and that our farmers don't care! The truth is that a mile or so of impermeable rock separates and protects our potable water from the oil bearing formations deep below the earth's surface. After 110 years of drilling for oil in our county, our water supply remains safe to this day despite the fearmongering.

Know this for a fact. The oil-bearing formations deep beneath the earth's surfaces are ancient sea beds filled with saltwater and oil. When oil companies drill here, up to 90% of what comes up is this brackish water mixed with a little oil. The oil companies separate the oil from the water and send the brackish water right back to the zone from whence it came! This brackish water never comes in contact with either our drinking water aquifer nor is it used to irrigate the crops grown here.

Finally, our local farms are family owned. These legacy farming operations will do everything possible to protect their water, land, and the safety of their produce or else they would be out of business.

Andy Caldwell is the executive director of COLAB

After The New Gas Taxes, Just Say No

By Mike Brown

Surprise, surprise – San Luis Obispo County Supervisors Debbie Arnold and Lynn Compton and the Central Coast Taxpayers' Association were absolutely right in opposing the 2016 Measure J countywide sales tax increase. At the time, they said, this is a state responsibility. Let's see if the governor and the legislature actually come up with something before we shoot ourselves in the foot with a new local tax.

And guess what? The legislature just approved a new \$52.4 billion dollar dedicated ten-year transportation funding program (Senate Bill 1). In addition to billions for state highway maintenance, the plan contains dedicated annual funding for local streets and roads.

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, this bill is expected to generate an amount equivalent to \$52.4 billion in transportation revenues over a ten-year period, approximately \$26.6 billion of which would be dedicated for local expenditures and \$25.8 billion for state purposes. Overall revenues are estimated at \$2.78 billion in 2017/2018 fiscal year, \$4.55 billion in 2018/2019, and \$4.88 billion in 2019-20.

Revenues are generally expected to increase annually thereafter, once all revenue sources are fully implemented and specified adjustments are made each year by the CPI, eventually reaching approximately \$6.5 billion by the 2026/2027 fiscal year.

In a somewhat devious and obfuscatory fashion the program is presented as having a ten-year life. But the bill actually does not contain a sunset clause on the new taxes at year ten, or ever. Thus, and unless a future legislature rescinds or modifies the tax increases, they will continue indefinitely.

In effect, the program is not simply a huge \$52.4 billion transportation program for ten years but a massive and unending confiscation of the people's resources. The taxes could generate hundreds of billions over the decades. Worse yet, by adding the new taxes, the Sacramento politicians can use existing revenues, which are also increasing, to fund more staff, more raises, more out of control pension costs, more pet projects and patronage.

Back down here at the county level, imagine, if

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Measure J had passed? SLO County taxpayers would now be double burdened with a new ½ cent sales tax plus increases in the State gasoline tax, diesel fuel tax, and vehicle license fees. Some of the cities already had voter-approved tax overrides, which, had Measure J passed, would have meant that their citizens would be triple taxed.

The county itself, as a government entity, will be better off under the state program than Measure J. The Measure J tax would have provided the County with \$50.1 million over the nine-year life of the tax for its local roads in the unincorporated areas. According

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Let Science Speak

By Aubrey Bettencourt

No matter the crisis, the State Water Resource Control Board (SWRCB), Governor Brown and the Democratic super-majority-controlled Legislature — despite their best efforts — are no match for nature itself as has been demonstrated during six years of drought and now three and a half months of flooding and massive infrastructure failures.

While species continue to evolve and adapt to survive, it seems our elected and appointed water policy makers and managers do not. Continuously throwing good water after bad for nearly thirty years in flawed programs has resulted in a record of failure: Threatened and endangered species dwindle and die, water quality continues to decline (especially in rural and impoverished communities) and ignored and aging infrastructure crumbles alarmingly.

Take for example the case of the unimpaired flows proposal by the SWRCB: The state would demand releasing water from key reservoirs in both wet and drought years and take 40–70 percent of the water flowing in the Stanislaus, Tuolumne and Merced Rivers. The new flow increases would be on top of nearly 30 percent already required to “aid” endangered Chinook salmon migration.

SWRCB’s sister state agency at Cal-EPA, the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), testified in January that the board’s SED proposal was “without evidence, [contained] incomplete scientific information, [was] ill-suited for real-time operations, and [based on] unverified assumptions.”

DWR’s findings were backed up in the *North American Journal of Fisheries Management*, a biosciences journal that published an internationally recognized and independently peer-reviewed 12-year study finding that the SWRCB’s SED proposal would provide no significant overall increase to fish populations and would actually kill or hobble migrating fish from reaching their spawning grounds or the ocean.

Despite strongly contradicting science and expert opinion, together with thousands of critical comments from other authorities and the public, the SWRCB stands poised to approve its flawed and dangerous plan.

The SWRCB — along with elected officials who put them there — appear to deny true science whenever it fails to fit their narrative, choosing instead [Alt]-



science. They hand pick, even finance science of convenience to support their doubling down on restrictions and management schemes that fail, all in an attempt to try to bend nature to their will or force potential partners into submission. In so doing they play political games with our lives, property, health, public safety and our environment.

Governor Jerry Brown is right. There is no going back to the way things were.

Despite Brown’s clear vision statement, he and his appointees stubbornly cling to their dated, obsolete and draconian water policies. To truly move forward, Brown and the SWRCB must stop insisting on using a 1970’s outlook, 1980’s solutions, and 1990’s science, laws and regulatory muscle to address 21st century problems before they condemn those who will live in the 22nd century to living with their mistakes.

It’s past time to let science speak. Seek sound science and real-time data, engage in meaningful cooperation with partners and stakeholders, and incentivize successes proven in the field before rolling out blanket policy edicts.

Our species, our public’s health and safety, our economy and our very way of life in California depends on it.

Aubrey Bettencourt is the executive director of the California Water Alliance, a statewide water policy non-profit that advocates for the water needs of California families, cities, businesses, farmers and the environment..

Bon Appetit Supervisor Janet Wolf!

By Andy Caldwell

My friend Sister Janet, a nun, used to tell the Board of Supervisors what they wanted to hear.

Whenever the staff or public was asking the board for money, she would say, "Give them all they ask for and more"! You could say the Sister was generous to a fault! Well, Sister Janet is now retired, but have no fear, another Janet, County Supervisor Janet Wolf, has been channeling the Sister ever since!

In the 26 years, I have been serving as a watchdog at county budget hearings, the one Supervisor who has stood out from all the rest, for her failure to grasp her fiduciary responsibilities, has been Janet Wolf. When Salud Carbajal, who is himself no spendthrift, was on the dais with her, he would often rebuke her for wanting to spend money the county didn't have by pulling open his desk drawer and say, "nobody put more money in my drawer". She never did get it and she still doesn't get it to this day.

Last week, the county was going through their preliminary budget hearings trying to deal with a \$35 million-dollar deficit. True to form, there wasn't a single budget cut that Supervisor Wolf was willing to concede. And, despite the warnings from staff and her fellow supervisors that the current fiscal storm engulfing the county was only going to get progressively worse over the next five years, Supervisor Wolf still wanted to spend to the end like there is no tomorrow. That is because she is under the mistaken impression that something is going to change regarding county, state and federal finances that will make this all go away. She couldn't be more wrong.

I dutifully informed Supervisor Wolf that the current fiscal crisis is the board's own doing. The shortfall that has engulfed the county is nothing less than an implosion of county finances. Unlike previous fiscal crisis, this one has nothing to do with the outside economy. The stock market and the real estate market are doing fine. The state and federal government's revenues are up. Whereas, the state did cut funding for social services staff, this is not the root of the current problems in the county. The circumstances bearing down on the county have to do with the laws regarding pension plans for existing employees, laws Supervisor Wolf does not support changing!

The overall long term, disabling shortfalls stem from salaries, benefits and pensions the board members handed out while ignoring hundreds of millions of dollars in failing infrastructure. The bill has come due. There is no one else to blame. And, nobody is coming to their rescue!

It is so bad that the executive staff of the county risked telling the board that business as usual is no longer sustainable! These executives have been working on a plan that would serve to reshape county government. One of their suggestions included outsourcing or privatization. Well, guess what? Supervisor Wolf demanded that outsourcing not even be considered! She would rather lay off employees and cut services to constituents rather than allow the unions who financed her political campaigns to lose members to outside contractors! She would rather simultaneously give out raises to county employees with one hand while handing out pink slips with the other!

The technical term for the county's condition? Ouroboros. It describes a snake eating its tail! The county is swallowing itself whole. Saving for, and paying for, the pension costs of employees is forcing the county to lay off current employees, forgo infrastructure maintenance, and abandon constituent services! Bon appetit Supervisor Wolf!

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Elephants On Ice

By Andy Caldwell

If you want to see an elephant skating on thin ice, then I suggest you tune in to this week's preliminary county budget hearings! Because county government provides a bevy of services to every resident in the county, this issue is important to all of us! The ability to keep criminals in jail, take care of the poor, and protect public health is at stake due to a huge hole in the county budget that is only getting worse!

This all has to do with the ongoing pension crisis that is engulfing every government entity in our state, including schools, cities, counties and the state itself. The problem stems from a pension for government employees that guarantees a payout regardless of investment returns. The plan is dependent on hefty stock market returns and the completely insane, ridiculous notion that the market will not correct or crash in the foreseeable future!

For the record, I support early retirement for cops and firefighters due to the arduous nature of their jobs. However, we must find a way to pay for the same. The county takes in most of its money for operations, including salaries and benefits, from property taxes and pass through monies from the state and feds. It makes most of its money to pay for pensions from stock market investments.

So, what happens when you have anti-business politicians in control of county and state policies? And, relatedly, you have state politicians boycotting the best investments due to political correctness? Well, over time, the revenues don't keep up with the salaries and benefits the politicians give to the employees. And, when the stock market eventually tanks, governments are nonetheless required to keep the pension checks coming. Government then incurs billions in debt having to make up the losses from existing revenue streams and/or new taxes.

What I just described is, of course, a vicious downward spiral. If the board of supervisors and our state legislators were serious about the problem, they would change the laws which govern pensions (called the California Rule!) and/or they would start privatizing services to avoid pension obligations altogether. But, year after year, they do neither of these things. Instead, they wrongly plan to recover hundreds of billions in losses dependent upon the

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As bad as this all seems, things are going to get worse! The State of California is on the verge of challenging the Trump administration to a game of chicken with a multi-billion dollar bet on the outcome. By declaring CA a sanctuary state, California is on the verge of losing billions of dollars that come our way for law enforcement and other community programs that rely on federal dollars. One stream of funds that is sure to get cut is the federal reimbursement to jails and prisons for housing illegal alien felons! The sentiment in Washington? If CA wants to protect illegal alien felons from deportation, then let them pay for the cost of incarceration all by themselves!

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Area Beaches Going Black To Nature

By Andy Caldwell

The closest beach to my alma mater UCSD was a nude beach named Black's beach. Well, Santa Barbara is about to get its own black beach, but it won't be a nude beach, it will be a crude beach, as in, crude oil! This has to do with the temporary shutdown of several offshore drilling rigs, and the permanent shutdown and abandonment of Platform Holly.

Of course, there is no shortage of activists in this community celebrating good riddance to this platform. They would have us believe that eliminating oil and gas operations along our coast will protect the environment. Nothing could be further from the truth! One can't ignore the consequent impacts arising from the second most abundant natural oil and gas seeps in the entire world located offshore at UCSB's Coal Oil Point. Less drilling means things are about to go back, or should I say, black to nature, in the worst way imaginable!

These seeps have been spewing oil into the waters and vapors into the atmosphere since time immemorial. In fact, the Chumash made use of the oil to waterproof things. The Spanish explorers recorded that the sea and the shore were full of blobs of oil. And when I was a kid, whenever we went to a beach along the Gaviota Coast, we brought chemical agents to remove the tar from our feet.

The only thing that has served to abate the pressure and volume of these seeps, thereby cleaning up the water and protecting our air quality, have been the oil and gas operations that have been drilling off shore

for over 100 years! The air pollution from the seeps equals the pollution from the traffic on the 101 freeway!

I bet you didn't know this oil does not belong to the oil companies! It is owned by taxpayers! The oil companies pay to lease the fields and they pay royalty to our government for each barrel produced. The money that was earned from off shore revenues in state waters were at one time dedicated to building capital projects, including the UC campuses. Furthermore, we built the Santa Barbara County Courthouse with oil money!

Oil companies also pay property taxes to our schools and local government, as oil in the ground is taxed as property. Additionally, the onshore production facilities are some of the most valuable properties in the region. Three of the top ten taxpayers in the county were oil companies before the shutdown of the Plains Pipeline. Because of the shutdown of the Exxon facilities, and now the permanent abandonment of Platform Holly, the county and our schools stand to lose millions in revenue each and every year! Moreover, we will now be forced to pay the Saudi's to ship even more oil all the way from the Middle East, by way of ocean going tankers! How is that the environmentally preferred alternative?

The loss of millions in royalties and taxes, coupled with increased air and water pollution, is no cause for celebration.

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Democrats Doing What They Do Best

By Andy Caldwell

Here is what Governor Jerry Brown told the media after securing enough votes in our State Legislature to raise taxes by over \$5 billion per year for the next ten years: “I appreciate being a Democrat and what the Democrats did. There is a reason why the members of the other party have been going downhill for so many decades. That’s because they are doing nothing. We did something to fix the roads of California. Tonight, we’re building things.”

The hubris, delusion and condescension in his statement is beyond the pale. Of course, if the media in this state were anything but mouthpieces for the Governor and his party, perhaps, the people of California would have a different impression, understanding and appreciation of how irresponsible, trite and dishonest our political class is.

The bottom line? It doesn’t take a hero, savant, or visionary to raise taxes to cover up a problem related to fiscal malfeasance. Any politician with a group of like-minded colleagues who comprise a super majority in the legislature can pull this off on any given day without a vote of the people and that is just what they did. Jerry Brown pushed this tax measure through, before the Easter recess, lest his fellow travelers get cold feet once they heard from their constituents back home.

Brown would have us believe the higher fuel taxes and fees will increase costs for the average motorist by about \$10 a month, which is not true. Consumers will not only pay the higher costs at the pump, they will also pay higher costs for all the products they consume, as all the things we use and need are delivered by trucks and a significant part of this tax increase is on the trucking industry.

The most abject aspect of the tax increase? The \$50 billion proposal aims to address a \$59 billion backlog in deferred maintenance on state highways, and \$78 billion on local streets and roads. It will only raise a pittance of what we need to fix potholes and repair bridges! And, a significant amount of the money is going to be diverted to public transit and biking and walking trails with nothing going to congestion relief!

The truth is Jerry Brown and company aren’t really building anything except in those areas where legisla-


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tors, who held out voting yes until the last minute, received \$1 billion in pork! Perhaps, if our State Senator Hannah Beth Jackson and Assembly representative Monique Limon had done likewise, we would have received the money to finish the 101 widening.

Regardless, because the state is not building new capacity, this measure does little to address our clogged freeways. The legislature is applying a \$50 billion band-aid while our state finances are hemorrhaging due to pension liabilities and misplaced priorities of existing revenue streams. Moreover, this legislation does nothing to address the inefficiencies and overcharges of CalTrans.

When all is said, and done, we will still have the highest taxes, the most congested freeways, and the worst roads in the nation.

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Mexico's Three Blind Mice

By Andy Caldwell

Last week, three blind mice, Congressman Salud Carbajal, Assembly representative Monique Limon, and City Council member Cathy Murillo, among others, participated in an event with the Mexican Consulate addressing the potential of illegal immigrants being deported.

Two things should be made clear from the start of this conversation. First, the primary focus of ICE is deporting illegal aliens who are convicted felons. Second, all these elected officials have sworn an oath to uphold our laws and defend our Constitution. Have these politicians no regard for the safety of their constituents and our immigration laws that they intend to withstand the efforts of ICE to rid our community of murderers, rapists, child molesters and the like?

Let it not be lost on the citizenry that for every convicted felon, there was at least one victim of his/her crime. How is it that these electeds are standing with the Mexican consulate rather than the Trump administration and existing federal law as they pledge legal and moral support at taxpayer expense of illegals who have committed serious crimes?

There are two primary reasons why people come to America without documentation. First, there is obvious opportunity here and second, the conditions in their homeland are less than optimal. Yet, these politicians and their cohorts in various ways berate America as if we are to blame for the circumstances of the people who come here without documentation. They do this without ever addressing the corruption, violence and poverty that drove these people out of their home country.

So, for instance, while the pols made nice with the representative of the government of Mexico, they never bothered to bring up for discussion the drug cartel violence that has resulted in the death of over 100,000 citizens of that country, nor any of the other causes which have driven millions of people here seeking asylum and relief. They also ignore how many of the people crossing our borders illegally are forced to be drug mules for the cartels and how many women are raped along the way. A wall would serve to deter the trek and the resulting violence against the immigrants.

The point here is that the government of Mexico is failing its own people in a myriad of ways but these politicians don't want to talk about that! They would have us believe that it is America that is treating these immigrants in an unjust manner by our requirement that they gain permission to come here in the first place. Yet, our basic immigration laws are universal in nature! How do you think an American citizen would fair trying to get a job or public assistance in Mexico without a visa?

I acknowledge that there is a strong case to be made to permit foreign labor access to America, including that which would benefit our farmers. And, I honestly don't condemn the people for wanting to come here by any means possible. I also concede it is not realistic to deport every illegal alien in this country. However, we must create a legal program that facilitates permits for the workers that does not strain our economy, including the social safety net, our schools and our housing stock, and we must do everything in our power to protect ourselves from criminals and terrorists who should never have gained access to our country in the first place.

It is high time that our politicians start working together to address the problems we face here in our country rather than exploiting the fears and apprehensions of the populace, all the while doing nothing to hold accountable the failed states who are the impetus of the immigration problem.

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The Never Ending Hokey Pokey Beach Scuffle



By Andy Caldwell

County staff, without prior authorization, spent one million dollars trying to once again shore up Goleta beach, after a recent storm. This was the latest in a series of measures which have cost taxpayers over \$10 million as Mother Nature continues to wreak havoc with the beach, the park, and the parking lot. Moreover, vital infrastructure is also threatened, not the least of which is Highway 217, the main thoroughfare serving UCSB.

Whereas, I have supported defending the beach, due to its popularity, I believe using concrete and big rocks is the only way to overcome and compensate for the ravages of Mother Nature and that is a good thing. Unfortunately, not everyone feels the same way, including the Coastal Commission which has been playing a very expensive game of hokey pokey (put the rocks in, take the rocks out) with the county for the past decade. Then, there are some radicals who support letting the beach wash into the ocean. They called that plan "managed retreat". The problem with their approach is that they ostensibly believe the retreat can be managed! It can't!

Considering the county supervisors' policy requiring full cost reimbursement for certain services rendered to the public, why is it then, that they won't charge for parking at Goleta beach, including commuters who park there in order to avoid parking fees at UCSB? These user fees would help the county pay for the work necessary to preserve the park. And, after all, the City of Santa Barbara charges for beach parking and so does the State of CA. Come to think of it, the county also charges for parking at Jalama beach. Further, why doesn't the county charge Goleta Sanitary District, CalTrans and UCSB for the costs associated with protecting the beach since the infrastructure they rely on is threatened by these continuous wave-action erosion problems?

This brings us to a discussion about environmental activists and the politicians who do their bidding here in Santa Barbara. One would tend to believe, based upon their rhetoric, that environmentalists value going back to nature, that is, they want things restored and/or preserved in their natural state. In that regard, they don't support projects that make big changes to the physical landscape nor do they countenance actions which disrupt the patterns of nature. Further, they are dead set against pollution of any kind.





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The fact is, Goleta Beach constitutes a manufactured environment. The reason we keep having problems there, requiring the use of bulldozers and cranes, is because Mother Nature insists on a reset! Not to be deterred, the Board of Supervisors approved a plan to use non-natural geotiles to shore up the beach, only to watch them get washed away in the tide. Funny thing is, there was no press conference as to the threats to sea life from these missing geotiles nor was there any apparent attempt to retrieve every last bit of the debris from the ocean. Can you imagine if an oil company or a developer, other than the county, were having these sorts of problems?

The bottom line? The county no longer has the money to play hokey pokey! They must either bring in the concrete trucks and permanently protect the beach or let it wash away.

Hypocrisy is defined as the claim or pretense of having standards, values, beliefs and motivations which one does not actually have and the practice of engaging in the same behavior as the people you criticize. Dishonesty is deceitfulness in someone's character or actions. There is obviously a very fine line between hypocrisy and dishonesty. How do you judge the Board of Supervisors in this matter?

First Published in the Santa Barbara News Press

Fish And Taxpayers In Hot Water

By Andy Caldwell

It is safe to assume that most Americans agree with the original goal of the Endangered Species Act, namely, that we will do everything within our power to ensure that no species goes extinct. Unfortunately, the authority of the Act was expanded to protect various subspecies of the species even if the species itself was not endangered! An example? Flies and weeds are on the endangered species list even though we have no shortage of either in this world. Moreover, the Act has morphed into a mechanism to control the use of land and water.

Locally, we are protecting Santa Barbara County Tiger Salamanders, a sub-species of tiger salamanders, which is a subspecies of salamanders. But, wait, there is more! Within Santa Barbara County, we are protecting the next level of sub-species by protecting so called meta-populations of Santa Barbara County Salamanders! The claim is that each population of salamanders who frequent different ponds are themselves unique sub-species too! All this, even though you can buy buckets of Tiger Salamanders to use as fish bait (they call them waterdogs) in places like Minnesota. Regardless, our local farmers can face prison time for disturbing this "endangered" species.

Now, I have been telling this story for a long time, but nobody in Santa Barbara seems to care as there are no South County restrictions arising from salamanders. But, brace yourselves, another abuse of the Act is going to cause your water bills to go even higher and your water supply to be reduced even more than was the case during the drought!

This all has to do with the goal of the Federal government to restore steelhead trout runs on the Santa Ynez River. The feds are in the process of issuing a new biological opinion that is going to take away a vast amount of water from the South County and waste it on a cold-water fish who will have a tough time surviving in an artificially constructed warm river habitat that leaks like a sieve! We are also expecting a huge waste of money (paid by ratepayers) to be spent trapping and trucking fish around Bradbury dam!

A little history is in order. Before Bradbury Dam was constructed, the Santa Ynez River was famous for

steelhead trout runs primarily because upwards of one million fish per year were planted in the river to enhance the run! When Congress authorized the construction of the dam, to provide water to the South County, they acknowledged the trout run would end. In the meantime, ratepayers in the county paid back the feds for the cost of the dam construction, having no idea that decades down the road, the feds would come back and act like they own the water! Today, the feds consider the best use of the water is for the few fish that remain left in the watershed. Think about that the next time you order "endangered" trout in a restaurant!

Please contact Congressman Salud Carbajal and ask Congress to save the water for you!

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The Real Encyclopedia Brown

By Andy Caldwell

Often, when I am sitting in county budget hearings, I feel like I am aboard the Poseidon, the ship in the movie that was flipped upside down in the water! It is hard to get your bearings, especially when other people are pretending this is the only way to sail!

I have had the good fortune to call Michael Brown a friend and a mentor. Mike was the CEO of Santa Barbara County when I met him. He retired a few years back, after a stellar 42-year career as a city and county manager. He is a virtual encyclopedia when it comes to government finances and management. He now serves as my colleague as he is the government affairs director of the COLAB in San Luis Obispo County. Here is what he had to say about this year's Santa Barbara County budget process:

"From the standpoint of policy and organizational values the County is frozen in the obsolete (though trendy) policy paradigms of "sustainability", social "equality", and "consumption." They are like fish in water. A fish does not know that there are other realms without water. First and foremost, the County officially conceives of itself as a provider of consumptive societal goods which it characterizes as Broad Policy Goals. Those goals are 1) effective and responsive government; 2) safe and healthy community; 3) economically vital and sustainable community; 4) high quality of life for all residents; 5) accessible, open, citizen-friendly government; and 6) community that fosters safety and well-being of families and children.) There is nothing intrinsically wrong with these broad goal statements but they really don't tell you anything. Thousands of jurisdictions have the same

goals.

A problem is that, as utilitarian goals, they focus the organization on expanding the services and products (and hence the budget) as its highest value and reason for existence. This misses the ultimate and most important guiding purpose. As we have pointed out repeatedly, the unique and animating historic genius of the American Constitutional system was and is that its key purpose is to protect people from their government.

The Constitution and its derivative state and local laws recognize that on a practical level, government exists to insure freedom, safety of persons and property, legal stability, public order, and the general welfare in society. Its very distinctive character is that it recognizes that governments themselves have always been and always will be the greatest threats to those very purposes. Accordingly, the County would do well to adopt a statement such as 'Protect liberty, personal security, private property, and freedom while promoting individual responsibility, strong families and economic opportunity' as its overarching purpose and organizational value, against which substantive policy and organizational values are measured. This underlying theme should be the standard of the Board, management, and employees."

I couldn't agree more with Mike Brown's assessment and cure. Unfortunately, righting the ship is going to be no easy task. It might have to sink first.

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After The New Gas Taxes, Just Say No *Cont.*

(Continued from page 7)

to SLOCOG estimates, SB 1 will provide the county an average \$13.2 million per year, which over nine years, is \$118.8 million.

Under the State SB 1 formula the cities will gain less than they would have received under Measure J. For example, the City of San Luis Obispo will receive \$14.2 million over nine years under the state program. It was to have received \$20.2 million under the Measure J program.

Similarly, the City of Paso Robles will receive \$9.5 million over 9 years from the SB 1 allocation. It was slated to receive \$13.9 million under Measure J. The other cities will receive proportionally less. These differences are primarily due to the state allocation formula having a stronger weighting for lane miles than Measure J. This benefits the county.

On the other hand, the state program contains a number of urban oriented greenhouse gas reduction, complete streets (lights, benches, trees, bike lanes, etc.), urban design and construction programs, and transit type projects tailored for cities. These should be right up their alleys – figuratively and literally.

An interesting and ironic side light is that the portion of the 12 cent per gallon increase attributable to gasoline for boats and off-highway vehicles will be transferred to the State Parks and Recreation Fund to be used for off highway vehicle and boating programs. The lefties who supported the tax can be thanked for helping secure the future of the Oceano Dunes Vehicle Riding Area.

Sample annual expenditures are outlined below:

- \$1.49 billion for state highway maintenance and rehabilitation.
- \$1.48 billion for local streets and road maintenance and rehabilitation.
- \$769 million for transit purposes.
- \$400 million for state bridge and culvert repair and maintenance.
- \$300 million for trade corridor improvements.
- \$250 million for congested corridor improvements.



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- \$200 million for “local partnerships” for local agencies that have adopted local sales tax measures for transportation purposes.
- \$100 million for the active transportation program.
- \$82.4 million for regional transportation improvement plans.
- j) \$27.5 million for interregional transportation improvement plans.
- k) \$25 million for local planning grants (SB 375 planning).
- \$25 million for freeway service patrols.
- \$7 million for transportation research at state universities.

Of course these funds don’t come for free. The new law increases a number of transportation-related taxes and fees on the general public, business, and agriculture as follows:

- Gasoline excise tax: \$0.12 a gallon
- Diesel excise tax: \$0.20 a gallon
- Diesel sales tax: 4% a gallon
- Road improvement fee for zero-emission vehicles, as defined: \$100 a year
- Transportation Improvement Fee (TIF): the fee will be based on the market value of the vehicle with the fee range described below:
 - \$25 per year for vehicles with a market value of \$0

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After The New Gas Taxes, Just Say No *Cont.*

(Continued from page 17)

to \$4,999

– \$50 per year for vehicles with a market value Of \$5,000 to \$24,999

-\$100 per year for vehicles with a market value of \$25,000 to \$34,999

-\$150 per year for vehicles with a market value of \$35,000 to \$59,999

– \$175 per year for vehicles with a market value of \$60,000 and higher

The wording requires that the tax rates and fees specified in this bill be adjusted annually based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Keep in mind that prior to SB 1 passing, California already had some of the highest taxes and fees in the nation related to transportation:

Gas tax: California already had the nation’s 7th highest “gas pump” tax at 56.6 cents/gallon (November, 2016). But add in the unique 10-12 cent CA “cap and trade” cost per gallon, and California is in the top 3 states (with PA and WA). National average is 48.9 cents. Yet California has the 9th worst highways.

Cap and trade tax: California has now instituted the highest “cap and trade” tax in the nation – indeed, the only such U.S. tax. Even proponents concede that it will have zero impact on global warming.

Fines and fees: California driving tickets are incredibly high. For example, the fine for a red-light camera ticket is \$490. In the next highest state (Washington)



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the fine is \$124 – \$250. In most states it is around \$100.

Transportation costs: California has the second highest annual cost for owning a car – \$4,112, or \$370 higher than the other 49 states’ average.

Mike Brown is the government affairs director of the Coalition of Labor Agriculture and Business (COLAB) of San Luis Obispo County. He had a 42 year career as a city manager and county executive officer in four states including California



Jerry Brown's Crumbling Road Show And Legislative Circus *Cont.*

(Continued from page 3)

- The package also creates an annual vehicle licensing fee ranging from \$25 for cars valued at under \$5,000, to \$175 for cars worth \$60,000 or more.

Republican Senator Sells-Out

Republican Senator Anthony Cannella sold his soul to the devil with the gas tax vote Thursday, in exchange for \$500 million going to his district, and whatever promises made to him personally from Gov. Jerry Brown. Cannella, demonstrating how tone deaf he is, posted on Twitter Thursday, "I think I'm going to stay off social media today."

This betrayal of low-income families, the working poor, middle class and small businesses throughout the state, shows once again just how indifferent so many in the Legislature are to the real world.

Senator Cannella's public deal "was successful in securing \$400 million in funding for a commuter rail line that will connect his district to job centers, and a \$100 million investment in an expressway connecting commercial and industrial areas through an integral part of Merced," his press statement said.

Sen. Jeff Stone posted a probable explanation for Cannella's betrayal, on Facebook:

All republicans stuck together on one of the highest tax increases in State of California's history...

EXCEPT State Senator Anthony Cannella.

Why? He was reportedly promised a \$500 million dollar train in his district to connect to the Bay Area BART system.

What does he do in addition to being a State Senator?

He is a civil engineer that owns a civil engineering firm.

Of course, the train system will need to be designed before built by some firm.

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The Sausage Making Exposed

"SB 1 represents the largest gas tax increase in Cali-

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ifornia history, at a time when small businesses and working families are painfully struggling to make ends meet," said Tom Scott, NFIB California State Executive Director. "This tax hits middle-class and lower-income families hardest, while California has the highest poverty rate in the nation. Although we agree there is a dire need to invest in our roads and infrastructure, in a recent survey, 90% of NFIB members said they oppose raising new taxes to do this. Over the last six years, Sacramento has received \$36 billion in new tax revenues, but not a single new dollar has been invested in our roads. Governor Brown and Democratic legislative leadership need to fix their budget priorities in order to fix our roads."

Who This Tax Increase Will Hurt

"A low-wage worker today earns less than a similar worker would a generation ago," according to the California Budget & Policy Center (formerly the California Budget Project), which says it researches how state policy affects low-and middle-income Californians. "Even as the economy grows, that's not resulting in an increase of their hourly wages, and so over time the value of their wages has eroded."

California Budget & Policy Center also says their work "is grounded in the fundamental belief that government should work to improve the lives of the people it serves."

Accordingly, the CBPC offers these statistics:

- Statewide, nearly 6 million people (15.3 percent),

(Continued on page 20)

Jerry Brown's Crumbling Road Show And Legislative Circus *Cont.*

(Continued from page 19)

including almost 2 million children (21.2 percent), lived in poverty in 2015, based on the US Census Bureau's official poverty line, which is about \$19,000 in annual income for a family of three.

In 11 counties, more than 1 in 5 people lived in poverty in 2015. This includes four counties — **Fresno**, **Imperial**, **Merced**, and **Tulare** — where more than one-quarter of all residents lived in poverty.

- In 21 counties, more than 1 in 5 children lived in poverty in 2015. This includes five counties — **Fresno**, **Madera**, **Merced**, **Tulare**, and **Yuba** — where more than one-third of all children lived in poverty and another eight counties where between one-quarter and one-third of all children lived in poverty.

Sen. Cannella represents the residents of **Fresno**, **Madera**, **Merced**, **Monterey**, **San Benito** and **Stanislaus** counties, but apparently has little concern for those living in households earning less than \$19,000 annually.

Regroup and Counterattack

Now that the gas tax has been passed, Republicans have a chance to show strength and grit, and push a bill insisting on 1) a forensic accounting of the state's missing transportation and infrastructure funding, and 2) demand quarterly reports on the new transportation funding going forward. 3) Republicans can and should require an independent accounting firm perform the forensic accounting, as well as prepare the quarterly reports.

Californians should be repulsed by the lawmakers who voted for Senate Bill 1 in exchange for the inevitable cushy high paying appointment on some spurious board or commission, gifted by the Governor and Democrat leadership.

Had SB 1 been a sincere, solid transportation bill that funded road and highway repairs and maintenance without raising taxes (again), we would not have witnessed the deal-making and quid-pro-quo (*something for something*).

"We also cannot ignore how almost exactly one year ago, the same politics in Sacramento rushed the \$15 minimum wage hike through the legislature in one

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week," Tom Scott with the NFIB said. "However, the 50 cent per hour pay bump minimum wage workers got with SB 3 last year will instantly be erased by the tax increases in SB 1."

A few Notable Statements From Republicans Who Did Not Vote For SB1

- "California is already spending \$419,000 per mile on road construction as opposed to Texas at \$177,000, and California has wasted \$3.5 billion on less than one mile of High Speed Rail track," said Sen. Andy Vidak (R-Hanford). "Jacking up gas taxes and registration fees will harm the working poor, unemployed, and struggling middle class families in the Central Valley and frankly it's just throwing good money after bad. This is a scam.
- "Asking taxpayers to pay hundreds of dollars a year in more taxes when we've not spent one dime more on transportation from the general fund in years makes no sense," said Sen. Jeff Stone (R-Temecula). "We have plenty of money ... we just need to spend it on the right priorities. If we had

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Jerry Brown's Crumbling Road Show And Legislative Circus *Cont.*

(Continued from page 20)

used the transportation money that was supposedly guaranteed under Proposition 42 on actual transportation projects, we wouldn't be have to reach, once again, into the wallets of California families to pay for the mistakes this Legislature and Governor have made by wasting taxpayer dollars on programs we can't afford," Stone said.

- "I think about CEQA-driven housing prices, green energy mandates pushing our electricity rates up 50-percent above the national average, and now this bill will jack up the cost of owning and driving a car," said Sen. Ted Gaines (R-El Dorado).
- Sen. Steve Glazer (D-Orinda), voted against SB 1, said his constituents were against higher taxes as proposed by a 2-1 margin.
- One Assembly Democrat, Assemblyman Rudy Salas (D-Bakersfield), did not vote for SB 1. "The families I represent drive too far to jobs that pay too little," Salas said. For his honor and loyalty to his constituents, fellow Democrats kicked him in the gut. "You sold them out," Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez-Fletcher, a Democrat from San Diego, told him, adding that other Democrats had made the brave decision to support the bill. According to Lorena Gonzalez-Fletcher, he is expected to side with lawmakers over his constituents.

Vomit-Worthy Statements

"Senate President Pro Tem Kevin de León (D-Los Angeles), who negotiated the package with Brown and other Senate and Assembly leaders, said the state's roads have suffered from decades of neglect and must be addressed," the LA Times reported. "This is a courageous step for many legislators, but you can't stand on the sidelines and be a naysayer," De León said. "You can't say no, no, no, no, no, no to everything."

"Tonight we did something," Gov. Brown told reporters. "There's real money **and people can afford it**...It helps bring jobs. It helps bring prosperity." (emphasis mine)

The left must destroy California in order to transform her into a socialist state.

Katy Grimes, Investigative Reporter and Senior Correspondent at FLASHREPORT



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