

POLICY WATCH – June 2015

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June is jumping! NBLC is excited to be a part of a new coalition of business and ag organizations formed to help with the public outreach on the urgency and importance of saving water. We hope to make our water supply more sustainable as we understand the effects of climate change and that less water requires changing our attitudes and habits about water. Stay tuned for ways to reduce water use and ensure that there is water available for the environment, economy and the people of the North Bay.

NBLC is also excited about employers doing more to produce much-needed housing in the North Bay. The housing summit showed us that there are many ways we can increase our housing supply if we work together. All employers can help their employees and customers have better housing choices whether it be a workshop for first time homebuyers, rental assistance, providing housing on worksite and more.

Job openings are increasing, often because of a talent shortage. NBLC is again hosting Algebra Academies in three North Bay cities to help close the achievement gap for Latino students and help make them college and career ready. That's one way to increase the talent pool – offer more educational opportunities!

Best,



Cynthia

NBLC Joins Public/Private Partnership to Conserve Water

North Bay Leadership Council, Santa Rosa Chamber of Commerce, Sonoma County Alliance and the Sonoma County Winegrape Commission have joined with the Sonoma County Water Agency to form a partnership to support a campaign, in conjunction with water agencies, districts and cities throughout the North Bay, to raise awareness of the need to conserve and practical tips on how to lower water consumption. Each Partner will utilize resources within their respective organizations to help achieve these five goals:

1. Assist the Sonoma County Water Agency and the regional Sonoma Marin Saving Water Partnership in galvanizing public attention with urgency messages on how to take simple, effective conservation actions during the hot months of 2015 by learning and implementing water conservation techniques in the workplace and at home.

2. Communicate with members of their respective organizations about best practices, water restrictions and rebate programs available.
3. Work within each organization to encourage members to distribute drought campaign materials and challenge their members to take action internally with their company or organization to promote water conservation through direct actions and education efforts.
4. Use campaign style approach to instill a sense of urgency, change of behavior and momentum so the actions of these hot months become normal everyday behavior so conservation becomes as normal as recycling.
5. Publicize how business and agriculture are working to lower water use, promote success stories as well as the facts about actual water consumption versus common myths.

NBLC members are well aware of the drought that is continuing to plague the state. In looking at the increasing urgency to respond to the shortage of water, there is a need and an opportunity for NBLC members and their employees to lead through education and advocacy, as well as by example, to help address the drought. NBLC is uniquely able to reach both Marin and Sonoma Counties in this effort.



It is apparent that climate change is playing a role in this drought and must be a factor in developing long term strategies for a “new normal” where California has less water than in the past. The drought is not a onetime event that we must endure and prevail through. Scientists predict that the state will likely have drier weather going forward, coupled with more extreme temperatures, the hotter days further depleting the little water available. In addition, the drier weather and hotter temperatures are leading to increased threats of wild fires, which also put reservoirs and the state’s power infrastructure at risk.

The water agencies and districts are charged with getting the public to conserve more water or face stiff fines. The public needs to be informed of the severe water problems in the North Bay, motivated to conserve and make long-lasting behavioral change. Behavioral change is a key outcome that is needed – we protect our water supply by making permanent changes to our use and reuse of the water supply.

NBLC to also ready to work with the Fire Departments to help minimize fire risks and encourage landscaping changes that are more fire resistant, as well as drought resistant.

Workforce Housing Program Launched by NBLC

Following up on NBLC’s North Bay Housing Summit, NBLC members have adopted a rigorous program to help get more housing built in the North Bay. This program includes advocating for:

Workforce and Affordable Housing Projects:

We will create a network of likeminded people to write letters of support, go to hearings, write letters to the editor, and reach out to their networks in support of projects that will provide needed housing.



Housing Elements, Junior Accessory Units, Zoning changes, etc.:

We will monitor, comment and advocate for county and city housing elements that reflect the need for more housing and support new ways to create more housing like second units or Junior Accessory Units.

Legislation:

We will support legislation that removes barriers to creating more housing of all types and creates sustainable funding sources at the state and federal levels; we will also seek legislation to create a State Appeals Board that will give housing creators recourse to get projects that meet all city/county requirements approved.

CEQA modernization:

We will continue to press for the modernization of CEQA to remove a key barrier to new housing construction.

Reduction in permitting fees:

We will seek to have permitting fees for workforce/affordable housing reduced to remove the exorbitant costs that prevent affordable pricing for housing.

Convene Action Teams and develop scope of work based on priorities:

Our Call to Action was answered at the North Bay Housing Summit. We have three Action Teams: Build It Now, Fund it Now, and Fix It Now. We will convene these teams, set priorities and develop a scope of work for the coming year to build more pressure on the elected officials to support housing and removal of barriers

Foster Green Building and Design, and New Housing Types:

In addition to high density, NBLC will seek out support for new housing types that are cheaper to construct and/or more sustainably built to help meet goals for more sustainable communities. Ensuring that new housing projects are an asset to the community and well-designed is also a goal.

NBLC Employer-Assisted Housing Program

Companies in the North Bay are having trouble attracting and retaining the workforce they need. Employers are seeing positions remain open, higher recruiting bills, and more churn in their workforces. The retirement of the Baby Boomers and shortage of talented employees who wish to bear the high costs of living in the North Bay are leading employers to use new recruiting tools. One of them is adding new, innovative employee benefits packages. Employer-assisted housing (EAH) is a growing strategy that can help employers stand out among their competitors. Through EAH programs, employers promote workforce housing solutions for their workers. These programs can offer one or more of a variety of benefits, such as homebuyer assistance, rental assistance, education and counseling. Employers have found EAH to be a cost-effective, manageable way to attract and retain quality employees.

As home costs continue to outpace wages, too many median-income families are priced out of homes near their workplaces. Research shows that many two income working families in the North Bay spend more than half their incomes on housing, or cannot afford to live in the North Bay at all. According to a

public opinion survey conducted by Peter D. Hart Research Associates and Public Opinion Strategies, working families in high- and moderate-cost real estate markets like ours worry about the shortage of affordable homes even more than they do about rising health care costs.

NBLC has introduced an EAH program for its members and their employees. This program offers a menu of options for the company to offer. While NBLC members vary in size and resources, we believe that each member can play a role in helping their employees find sustainable housing. EAH programs can meet the needs of employees and companies alike. The programs increase staff satisfaction while also improving an employer's bottom line. Higher morale leads to greater productivity. Likewise, less turnover and reduced recruitment and training expenses result in considerable cost savings. As an added benefit to the community, EAH programs also are linked to increased local investment in home construction. Accessible, affordable homes are vital to the health of our region's businesses, families and communities.



EAH programs can also be a part of an organization's Corporate Social Responsibility or Corporate Citizen programs when it includes the goals of cutting employees' commutes and thereby, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and new construction of homes using green building practices. Giving employees better housing options and stable places to live also help achieve triple bottom lines goals.

In 2013, Met Life's study of employee benefit trends, they found that controlling costs ranked number one. In their 2015 study, Met Life found that there was a big change in the rankings. Now employers ranked employee benefits objectives directly pertaining to employee factors such as retention as extremely important. In fact, 41% of employers ranked retention as their top employee benefits objective, potentially indicating a growing war for talent. This is not surprising given the lowest unemployment rates since the beginning of the financial crisis in 2008.

We urge North Bay companies to consider adding EAH as an employee benefit. Working together we can provide more workforce housing in the North Bay.

Job Openings Rise to Record

David Harrison writing in the Wall Street Journal, "Job Openings Rise to Record (June 10, 2015)," said, "The number of job openings rose to the highest level on record in April, the Labor Department said Tuesday, in the latest sign of health in the labor market. The U.S. had 5.4 million job openings in April, up from 5.1 million in March and the highest level since the department began conducting the Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey, known as Jolts, in 2000. The number of hires stood at 5 million, a slight dip from March. The share of workers who voluntarily quit their jobs dropped slightly in April but remained at 1.9%."

Big Boost in Job Openings

The number of job openings, hires and quits, seasonally adjusted (in millions)



Source: Labor Department | WSJ.com

The talent shortage is growing and has several implications. The increase in open positions portends the need to increase wages. Joel Naroff of Naroff Economic Advisors said, "If firms are to fill all those openings, they will have to start attracting workers from other firms or occupations, and the best way to do that is by raising wage offers." And the tightening of the job market definitely has the attention of Janet Yellen. Federal Reserve officials closely follow the Jolts report.

NBLC Launches Fifth Year of Algebra Academy Program



NBLC's top public policy priority is education. As leading employers, NBLC members know the importance of having a well-educated, skilled workforce in the North Bay. NBLC started its Algebra Academy program five years ago to help close the achievement gap for Latino students; make them more college and career ready; pique their interest in science, technology, engineering, and math; and give students the opportunity to explore a variety of careers in North Bay workplaces. This year, NBLC's academies are in two cities: Novato and Petaluma. We partner with local school districts and employers in each city to bring life-changing experiences to the students and help them prepare to become part of the 21st Century workforce.

The students are hosted each day at a business worksite. They learn algebra for the first two hours and then see math and science applied in the various workplaces. This year, the host organization include: Kaiser Permanente, Redwood Credit Union, Ellis Creek Water Recycling Facility, Labcon, SMART, X2NSat, US Coast Guard, Small Precision Tools, Wells Fargo, Buck Institute for Research on Aging, 10,000 Degrees,

Novato Sanitary District, W. Bradley Electric, Novato Community Hospital, Sonoma Raceway, Veolia Water, College of Marin and Santa Rosa Junior College. NBLC thanks all of our sponsors and supporters: College of Marin, Santa Rosa Junior College, Marin Sanitary Service, Wells Fargo, Redwood Credit Union, Sonoma Raceway, Bank of America and Kaiser Permanente.

In the past five years, we have seen students delight in discovering the connection between math and science and the career possibilities that they didn't know existed. Students give the academy program high marks, appreciating the jumpstart in learning Algebra before they enter their freshmen year and the ability to experience the exciting professions available to college graduates. For more information on NBLC's Algebra Academy program, please visit our website: www.northbayleadership.org.

Members in the News

Burr Pilger Mayer Employees Raise Funds for Nepal Relief

Inspired by our commitment, "Because People Matter," BPM employees joined together to help the individuals affected by the disaster.

BioMarin CEO Jean-Jacques Bienaime Awarded EY Entrepreneur Of The Year(R) 2015 Award in Northern California in Health and Life Sciences

BioMarin Pharmaceutical Inc. (Nasdaq:BMRN) today announced that EY awarded BioMarin CEO Jean-Jacques Bienaimé the EY Entrepreneur Of The Year® 2015 Award in the Health and Life Sciences category in Northern California.

Autodesk Project Ignite Brings Innovation, Creativity and Maker-Based Learning to the Classroom

Responding to the President's call to action to create a Nation of Makers, and as part of a White House event kicking off the National Week of Making, Autodesk, Inc. (NASDAQ:ADSK) is announcing Autodesk Project Ignite, a free* and open learning platform that builds the skill and confidence of young learners through creative, hands-on design experiences focused on the latest technology trends like 3D printing and electronics.

American AgCredit Reports Earnings of \$99m and \$39m in Cash Dividends

American AgCredit, a farmer-owned financial cooperative, today announced net income of \$98.9 million for the 2014 calendar year along with a cash dividend distribution of \$39 million to its shareholders

Sonoma Raceway to Launch the Inaugural STEM Gravity Race Car Challenge

What if you were challenged to design a fast car, powered by gravity, and Sonoma Raceway officials would be coming to your school to test it in a qualifying round to determine which cars would race at the track on NASCAR weekend?

Read more online at www.northbayleadership.org/news



Who We Are

Over twenty years ago, business leaders founded the North Bay Leadership Council on a simple premise: We can accomplish more by working together. Today, the Council includes 45 leading employers in the North Bay. Our members represent a wide variety of businesses, non-profits and educational institutions, with a workforce in excess of 25,000. As business and civic leaders, our goal is to promote sound public policy, innovation and sustainability to make our region a better place to live and work. For more information: Call

707.283.0028 / E-mail info@northbayleadership.org

www.northbayleadership.org