

## POLICY WATCH – September 2019

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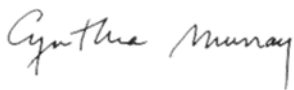


With September drawing to a close, the pace always seem to quicken as we try to squeeze in all that we want to get done in 2019. In this issue, we share the good news about NBLC's poll on extending the SMART train sales tax which confirms that we need this green transportation to continue to help us with our traffic and cutting greenhouse gas emissions. We also provide our endorsements in the upcoming Novato City Council election this November.

Almost two years after the devastating fires in the North Bay, we continue to see long term impacts. In this issue, we look at how our education system is being negatively affected by the fires and other natural disasters related to climate change. We also offer how you can continue to help in the ongoing recovery efforts.

Our Leaders of the North Bay Awards event always sells out. This year's event will be no different. If you want to attend, please don't wait to purchase your ticket. Sponsorships are still available, too!

Best,



Cynthia

### NBLC Poll Show Support for Extending SMART Tax

**POLL: 69% OF SONOMA AND MARIN COUNTY VOTERS SUPPORT A 30-YEAR EXTENSION OF THE SONOMA-MARIN AREA RAIL TRANSIT DISTRICT (SMART) ¼ CENT, VOTER-APPROVED, SALES TAX**

***Data also shows SMART has a very positive image overall and is most popular among its riders***

Nearly 7 in 10 voters in Sonoma and Marin Counties support extending SMART's 1/4 cent sales tax for an additional 30 years, according to a North Bay Leadership Council poll released today.



By a 69% to 21% margin, Sonoma and Marin County residents both registered and likely to vote in next year's March primary election say they would support a ballot measure extending the SMART ¼ cent sales tax an additional 30 years. Democrats (58% of poll respondents) overwhelmingly support the extension 77% to 15%, while Republicans (19% of respondents) support it 60% to 30%, and Independents (17% of respondents) back it 54% to 28%.

"It doesn't matter what sub-group of the electorate you look at, voters across-the-board support the 30-year ¼ cent sales tax extension for SMART," said North Bay Leadership Council's President and CEO Cynthia Murray. "Voters know the SMART train is an intelligent green transportation alternative that has reduced greenhouse gas emissions, taken cars off of Highway 101, and is a valuable public asset that should continue to be taken care of and invested in."

The poll shows SMART enjoying high name recognition and favorability. SMART's total name identification among all voters is 88%; with a favorable/unfavorable rating of 59% to 15%. SMART is most popular among its riders: 88% of riders rate SMART favorably, 90% say they are satisfied using the train, 60% give SMART an excellent or above average job rating; and by an 87% to 8% margin support the 30-year extension of the ¼ cent sales tax.

"Voters who know SMART best, and ride the train, like SMART best," said Murray.

Over the past two years SMART trains have carried 1.4 million passengers, over 5,000 who require wheelchair access, and 133,000 bicycles. If the existing sales tax is renewed, without increasing the rate, it would generate \$40 million annually, allow SMART to restructure its construction debt saving taxpayers \$12 million a year, and fully-fund rail operations from Larkspur to Windsor for 30 years.

*This poll was fielded September 5-10, 2019 by The Wickers Group LLC among 500 residents of Sonoma County and Marin County both registered and considered likely to vote in next year's March primary election. At .95 confidence level this data carries a margin of error of +/- 4.35%. A 52% female/48% male quota was enforced for this study.*

## **NBLC Endorsements for Novato City Council Race**

North Bay Leadership Council members have made the following endorsements in the Novato City Council race for this November's election. The two candidates are balanced, committed to housing and economic vitality, and highly qualified to serve on the Council. They are both seeking to fill seats being vacated by current Councilmembers.

Novato recently changed to district elections so the endorsements are per district:

District 1: Susan Wernick

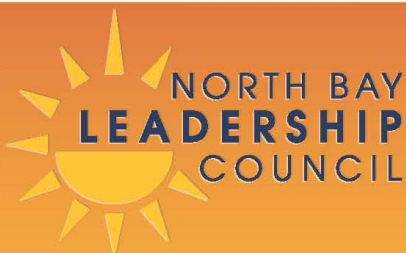
District 5: Amy Peele

Please remember to register to vote and exercise your vote on election day!



Leaders of the North Bay Awards Luncheon Tickets Going Fast!

# LEADERS OF THE NORTH BAY AWARDS LUNCHEON



**November 1, 2019**  
**11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.**  
**DoubleTree, Rohnert Park**



Keynote Speaker:

## Mirna Mejia

Winner, NBLC's Youth Power Speech Contest

Mirna has a great story to share about being an immigrant and how that has affected her and her family. She entered the U.S. at the age of 5 in hopes of a better life and future. Mirna's dad was the focus of a fight to prevent his deportation, in which Mirna played a huge role in rallying support for him to remain in the U.S. with his family. Don't miss Mirna's talk about saving her dad from deportation and finding her passion in life while doing so!

**\$95 per person or \$760 per Table of 8**

Special Thanks to Our Sponsors

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Gold Sponsors



Silver Sponsors



## 2019 Honorees

Murray Legacy Leadership Award  
Recognition of a Lifetime of Leadership:

**Ben Stone**

Sonoma Economic Development Board  
(Retired)

United We Stand  
Community Building:

**Ross Liscum**

Century 21 Alliance

Paint the Community Green  
Environmental Stewardship:

**Sutter Santa Rosa  
Regional Hospital**

The Light Bulb Went On  
Innovative / Entrepreneurial Spirit:

**Don Carney**

YMCA

Empowering the Latino Community  
Leadership Within the Latino Community:

**Voces de Cambio**

From Red Tape to Red Carpet  
Leadership in Government:

**First 5 Sonoma County**



Register online at:

**[www.northbayleadership.org](http://www.northbayleadership.org)**

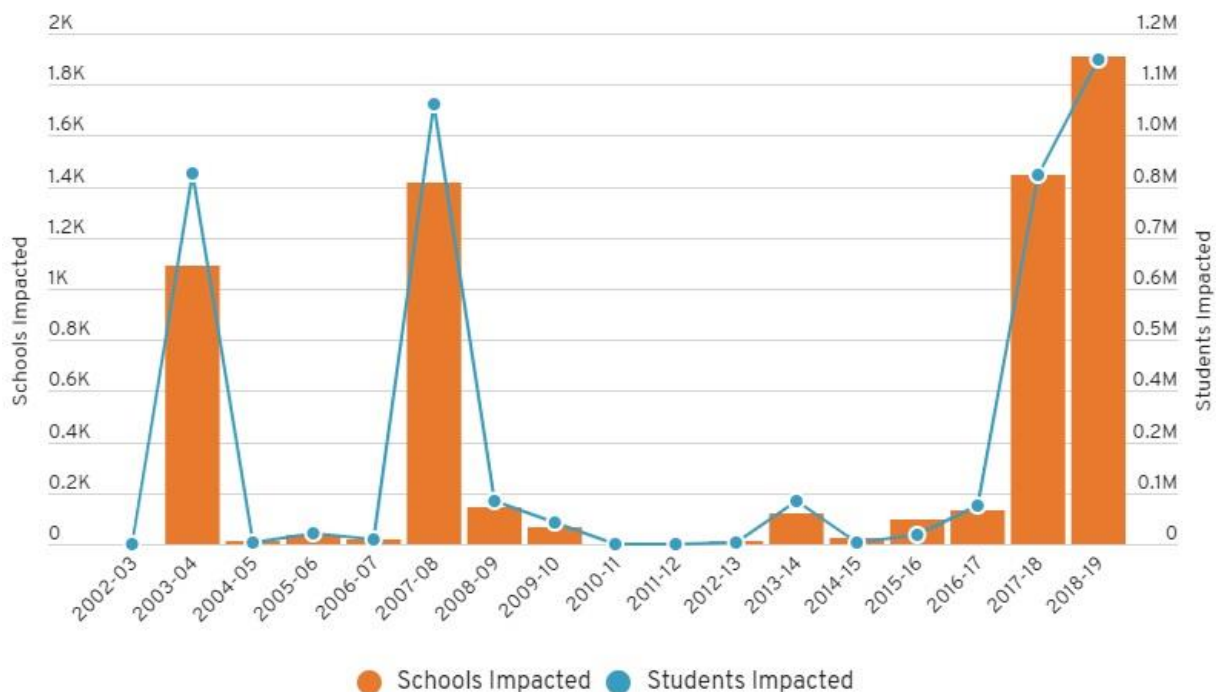
Ticket purchase deadline October 25th. Must cancel 72 hours in advance for a refund.

## Long Term Impacts of Fires on Education

In “What wildfire did to one California town’s schools in four years,” by Ricardo Cano (CalMatters, [Link](#)), we learn important information about the long term impacts of the devastating fires on our children’s education. Cano says, “For generations, fire-prone communities have lived with, worked through and even managed to go to school around the wildfires that come with California’s natural ecosystem. But recent years have been different as climate change has turned brushfires into megafires and megafires into towering infernos, threatening communities — and core institutions, such as schools — in ways that are more traumatic and less intermittent. Since late 2015, wildfires have temporarily shut down thousands of schools statewide, disrupting public education more often, more widely and for longer periods than in years past, according to a CalMatters analysis of nearly two decades of reported school closures.”

### Schools and students in California impacted by wildfire closures, 2002-2019

Wildfires, the leading cause of school closures in the state, kept California students home in record numbers in 2018-19.



Source: School closures reported to the California Department of Education / CalMatters database

Cano says, “Reports filed with the state since the 2002-03 school year, which is as far back as those records have been kept at the California Department of Education, showed that, over the past 17 years, wildfires accounted for more than 60% of the school days lost to closures. About half of those closure days have



occurred since 2015. Last school year alone, wildfires forced more than 1,900 schools to cancel days — sometimes weeks — of classes, interrupting the education of more than 1.1 million students, or about 1 in 6 California schoolchildren. Some schools have closed for wildfire as many as five times in the last four years.”

“Educators say the situation,” says Cano, “which has largely been dealt with county by county, is crying out for comprehensive solutions, from statewide requirements that schools make up at least some of the days lost to closures to formal, ongoing budget protection for fire-prone districts. And, they say, more must be done to address ongoing trauma. ‘We are now seeing these impacts of not just children,” Mary Sakuma, the Butte County superintendent said, “but their entire families in crisis really struggling with the aftermath of all of this.’”

“In California, school districts that close for emergencies can request waivers from the state that essentially protect schools from taking a financial hit in their attendance-based funding for having to temporarily shutter,” said Cano. “Schools are not required to report closures to the state, but are incentivized to do so if they don’t have built-in emergency days to make up the lost instruction and want to avoid losing funding. And schools that receive state-approved attendance waivers are not required to make up those days of lost instruction. Nor are schools required by the state to budget extra days in their academic calendars in case of emergencies.”

Cano found, “Though academic research — much of it focused on snow days — indicates that students can lose a day or two of instruction without much damage to test scores, studies show longer absences do make a difference, especially for disadvantaged students. In districts hardest hit by recent wildfires, CalMatters found, some closures morphed into prolonged periods of decreased attendance. Of the 320 schools that lost 10 or more instructional days to recent fires, more than half had chronic absenteeism rates higher than the 11% state average. In 80 of these schools, more than one-fifth of students were chronically absent in 2017-18.”

“If we’re supposed to teach 180 days and we keep erasing five or six days out of every school calendar, we’re not giving our students a competitive educational advantage that they deserve,” said Steve Herrington, superintendent of the Sonoma County Office of Education. “That to me is a direct impact of climate change issues that we’re dealing with.”

Cano says, “Santa Rosa teacher Zoe Miller understands that kind of upheaval. On Oct. 9, 2017, a Monday, she fled with her husband, two sons and their pets from the Tubbs Fire, which eviscerated California’s wine country, displacing 1,500 students and 250 educators in Sonoma County alone. Her home was destroyed, along with those of four other teachers and staff members and 56 students at Piner High School, where she teaches. More than 200 other students and staff either had to evacuate or were left living in damaged houses. Some students coped well, Miller recalls. Some grew tired of talking about it. Some of her 120 students that year weren’t directly affected. Some became chronically absent.”

Then came the 2018-19 school year with no normalcy on the horizon. “Sixteen months later, some of our students are still struggling,” Miller told lawmakers tearfully in February, testifying at a Capitol hearing. Her students weren’t the only ones.

Cano says, “By the end of the 2018-19 school year, she’d exhausted not only her own time off, but the personal days colleagues had donated to her and others at Piner who’d lost their houses. Her youngest boy, 11, was angry about the entire situation and had been acting out. There were continuous difficulties

with their bank. The builder kept asking for more money, and 19 months after the fire, the Millers were unsure if they could even finish paying. She struggled to remember whether she taught the end of World War II to one of her world history classes. Miller and her family lived out of boxes in rental houses for nearly two years. "I literally got to the point where I felt like I can't face dealing with this — I can't," Miller said. "There were times when I would just go sit in the bedroom and cry."

Cano reports, "A 2018-19 survey by Sonoma County's education office found that about 3,000 students and more than 400 educators were still showing signs of increased anxiety, stress, depression, behavioral problems, or decreased academic performance resulting from the Tubbs Fire. Across the county's schools, there'd been an increase in suicide attempts and referrals for mental health over the past two years, according to Herrington, the county superintendent."

On the two year anniversary, let us remember those who are still struggling and how much they still need our help to recover from their losses. And let's work together to help our educators give the impacted students the education they need to succeed in life.

## **Rebuild Northbay Foundation Wants to Help!**

Rebuild Northbay Foundation was founded to help with the long term needs of the North Bay fire recovery. They want to help people and organizations active in this recovery by providing grants to assist in those efforts. Here are the types of grant applications they seek:

### **Type of Grants:**

- Neighborhood Impact (supports 5 or more households)
- Project Support & Coordination
- Mini-Grants (\$5,000 and under)
- Sponsorship (Event Support)
- Capital Gifts: Improving infrastructure in fire affected areas
- Disaster Preparedness
- Research



For more information, go to <https://rebuildnorthbay.org/community-grants/>

If you wish to make a contribution to the Foundation, go to <https://rebuildnorthbay.org/donate/>

## **Marin Housing Summit II Report**

The impetus for organizing a housing summit grew from a conversation of housing advocates on the need for cross-organizational collaboration to maximize our impact of increasing housing in Marin. In early 2019, the Housing Crisis Action Group (HCAG) and the Marin Environment Housing Collaborative (MEHC) envisioned a housing summit to establish a coalition. HCAG works to create, build, and preserve much-



needed housing in Marin by bringing together organizations to form a diverse coalition of the numerous housing advocacy groups to help build the political will for Marin County to say "Yes" to housing. MEHC works to collaboratively promote public support for projects that advance affordable housing, environmental integrity, and social justice.

The initial Housing Summit took place June 27, 2019 and was followed by a second meeting on September 4, 2019. Both meetings took place at the Marin County Office of Education

Community Room. During Housing Summit I, participants identified three top goals to address Marin's housing crisis: increase affordable housing, enhance tenant's rights and protections, and create transit-oriented development.

Over 50 participants representing over 42 organizations focused on housing attended the second convening. Advocates divided themselves into three groups to develop strategies to achieve the goals identified in the first summit. Strategies were prioritized based on their likelihood of meaningfully impacting the housing crisis, available resources, and feasibility of implementation. Participants identified measurable outcomes for each strategy by considering what success would look like, brainstormed action items to leverage our individual agendas towards more effective housing advocacy, and identified group leads and next steps.

Each of the three goals now has a working group focused on collaborating for the next year. The Housing Summit will reconvene in six months on February 4, 2020, to discuss their progress.

## Members in the News

### **Sutter Embarks on \$173 Million Expansion of Santa Rosa Hospital**

Sutter Santa Rosa Regional Hospital last week broke ground on a \$173 million hospital expansion and renovation intended to relieve crowding in a hospital that has seen rapid growth in the number of patients it treats since it opened only five years ago.

### **Sonoma State University and Santa Rosa Junior College – Roseland Educational College Pledge**

On Sept. 12th, leaders from Roseland, SSU, and SRJC gathered to publicly sign the College Partners Pledge.

### **Redwood Credit Union CEO Sees Opportunities in Branch and Digital Banking**

After 16 years of steady growth despite natural disasters and an economic downturn, Brett Martinez has more he wants to do as the leader of Redwood Credit Union.

### **Canine Companions for Independence CEO Reveals Path Toward Meeting Huge Demand for Assistance Dogs**

After years in leadership positions at for-profit companies, Healdsburg native Paige Mazzoni sought an opportunity to enter the world of nonprofits.

### **St. Joseph Health Care's Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital Goes VR; Solano County's NorthBay Healthcare, Anthem Blue Cross Ink New Deal**

St. Joseph Health says virtual reality is proving successful in reducing pain and anxiety at Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital.

### **Ultragenyx Pharmaceutical to Apply to Feds for Expanded Use of a Key Drug**

Novato-based rare disease drug maker Ultragenyx Pharmaceutical Inc. (Nasdaq: RARE) announced Tuesday it is collaborating with Japanese firm Kyowa Kirin to apply for expanded use of one of its drugs, Crysvisa.

### **Sonoma Raceway to Host High Speed Blood Drive, Sept. 9**

Sonoma Raceway will partner with Vitalant (formerly Blood Centers of the Pacific) to help save lives one ride at a time during a High Speed Blood Drive on Monday, Sept. 9.

### **Sonoma State University Music Hall Donor, Energy Department Ink Artificial Intelligence Deal for Biomedical Research**

Former Citigroup CEO Sandy Weill of the Weill Family Trust and U.S. Department of Energy Secretary Rick Perry have signed a memorandum of understanding to apply DOE-fueled artificial intelligence capabilities to advance transformative scientific opportunities in biomedical and public health research.

### **CSU to Roll Out Delivery of Immigration Legal Services for Students and Employees**

The California State University (CSU) today announced a systemwide plan for the provision of immigration legal services for CSU students and employees.

### **Keysight Technologies Again Certified by Great Place to Work in 2019**

Keysight Technologies, Inc. (NYSE: KEYS), a leading technology company that helps enterprises, service providers and governments accelerate innovation to connect and secure the world, announced the company is now certified as a great workplace by the independent analysts at Great Place to Work®. Keysight earned this credential based on extensive ratings provided by its employees in anonymous surveys completed in June 2019.

**Read more online at** [www.northbayleadership.org/news](http://www.northbayleadership.org/news)



### **Who We Are**

Over twenty five 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 54 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](mailto:info@northbayleadership.org)

[www.northbayleadership.org](http://www.northbayleadership.org)