

## POLICY WATCH – September 2020

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Would you agree that there is too much happening all at the same time? Does it feel like we are on a crucible this fall? It does for many of us. We need to heed the exhaustion, the anxiety, and the confusion swirling around us as indicators that change is coming and we have a role in shaping that change to be positive. In one of the articles quoted below there is a line that resonates with me by Rabbi Pirkei Avot: “It is not your responsibility to finish the work of perfecting the world, but you are not free to desist from it either.”

In this issue we look at endorsements for the upcoming election – please vote and vote early. And we teach you a new word: solastalgia – a form of homesickness one gets when one is still at home. Read the article to see why that is an effect of climate change.

We also look at some new studies that show that many of the metrics that measure our quality of life in the U.S. are moving in the wrong direction giving us reasons to despair. But while despair is one response, it can't be our only response. We must come together and take collective action to solve these challenges that demand our attention. The only way to feel better is to do more. The next normal is being born – what that is, depends on our actions.

Best,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cynthia Murray".

Cynthia

### **Remember to Vote: North Bay Leadership Council Announces Endorsements for November Election**

North Bay Leadership Council is pleased to endorse the following candidates for their respective offices as follows. We are supporting these candidates because they have shown as incumbents, or in their responses, that they are balanced in their approach to the issues, not beholden to any special interest group, and committed to economic vitality and more housing. Many of the incumbents are now running in district elections for the first time which adds a new dimension to their races.

#### **Candidate Endorsements**

Santa Rosa City Council:

Chris Rogers, District 5

Eric Christensen, District 7

Rohnert Park:  
Jake Mackenzie, District 4

San Rafael:  
Mayor:  
Kate Colin – for all of San Rafael

City Council:  
John Gamblin, District 4  
Maika Llorens Gulati, District 1

Santa Rosa Junior College Board:  
Kerry Rego

Marin Community College Board:  
Phil Kranenburg  
Eva Long  
Stephanie O'Brien  
Stuart Tanenberg

NBLC is also taking positions on local ballot measures and two statewide propositions. That list is below the candidate endorsements.

NBLC is part of the 2020 Tax Moratorium Coalition. We urge you to vote No on ALL tax measures on the ballot for the November election. In this time of uncertainty and chaos, we know two things for certain: people and businesses need help, especially financially, now; and adding to their burden with taxes of any kind is not the help they need.

It is time to take a tactical pause, and assess the changes wrought by the pandemic and the recession including record high unemployment, many businesses failing and major declines in GDP. Like us, government needs to tighten its belt, adjust their spending, and not ask for more taxes without knowing how much taxpayer assistance will be required to fund key governmental priorities going forward. There is a finite capacity to pay taxes. Let's make sure we are being strategic in using our tax dollars by wise spending and rational planning for needs revealed when the dust settles from this crisis.

Our opposition is not targeted at individual ballot measures – we oppose ALL of them. We believe that 2020 is the wrong time to ask the voters for more money. Any additional taxes or extension of taxes should be considered when our economy is better and we have more certainty about the way forward. We are standing strong on our position to protect businesses, farmers, senior citizens, furloughed workers, students and families who are already struggling to meet their basic needs.

When we say, "No, Not Now!" we hear strong agreement that our community needs continued relief for those most impacted by COVID-19, not additional financial burdens brought on by tax measures that either establish or extend taxes. Elected officials should stop levying taxes that may tip the scales to push people into poverty and cause more businesses and nonprofits to close forever, creating job loss and higher unemployment.

Please vote NO on ALL tax measures. For more information, go to [www.2020taxmoratorium.com](http://www.2020taxmoratorium.com)

### **Ballot Measures**

#### **Please Vote YES on:**

**Petaluma Health Care District, Measure CC** - To assure continued operation of Petaluma Valley Hospital as an acute care hospital with 24/7 walk-in basic emergency care for a minimum of 20 years, shall the Petaluma Health Care District enter into an agreement to sell Petaluma Valley Hospital to NorCal HealthConnect, LLC, a secular affiliate of Providence St. Joseph Health, for \$52.6 million, per the terms approved by Resolution 20-05 adopted August 6, 2020.

#### **Please Vote on NO on ALL of the following:**

##### **State:**

**Prop 15** - Taxes such properties based on current market value, instead of purchase price. Fiscal Impact: Increased property taxes on commercial properties worth more than \$3 million providing \$6.5 billion to \$11.5 billion in new funding to local governments and schools.

**Prop 21** - Allows local governments to establish rent control on residential properties over 15 years old. Local limits on rate increases may differ from statewide limit. Fiscal Impact: Overall, a potential reduction in state and local revenues in the high tens of millions of dollars per year over time. Depending on actions by local communities, revenue losses could be less or more. Will reduce new housing construction when more housing is desperately needed.

##### **Sonoma County:**

**County of Sonoma- Measure DD - Mental Health, Addiction, and Homeless Service Sales Tax**- A new 1/4 cent tax for 10 years (2021 - 2031), costing taxpayers \$260 million.

**County of Sonoma- Measure O - Go Sonoma Transportation Sales Tax Measure:** A new 1/4 cent sales tax for 20 years (2025 - 2045), costing taxpayers \$520 million.

**Cloverdale, Measure R - 3% utility users' tax**- Current 3% utility users' tax is scheduled to end in 2023. The proposed measure strikes the current end date and allows this tax to continue forever.

**Cotati, Measure S - 1 cent sales tax**- Current 1 cent sales tax set to end in 2023. The proposed measure strikes the current end date and allows this tax to continue forever.

**Healdsburg, Measure T - 1/2 cent sales tax**- Current 1/2 cent sales tax set to end in 2023. The proposed measure strikes the current end date and allows this tax to continue forever.

**Petaluma, Measure U - 1 cent sales tax**- A new 1 cent sales tax with no end date, allowing it to continue forever.

**Santa Rosa, Measure Q - 1/2 cent sales tax**- A new 1/2 cent sales tax until 2031. Combines two existing 1/4 cent sales taxes that aren't set to end until 2025 and 2027.

**Sonoma, Measure V - 1/2 cent sales tax**- Current 1/2 cent sales tax set to end in 2022. The proposed measure strikes the current end date and allows this tax to continue forever.

##### **Marin County:**

**City of San Rafael, MEASURE R:** San Rafael Emergency Preparedness and Essential Services Protection Measure. LOCAL SALES AND USE TAX MEASURE - INCREASE BY 1/4% for 9 years

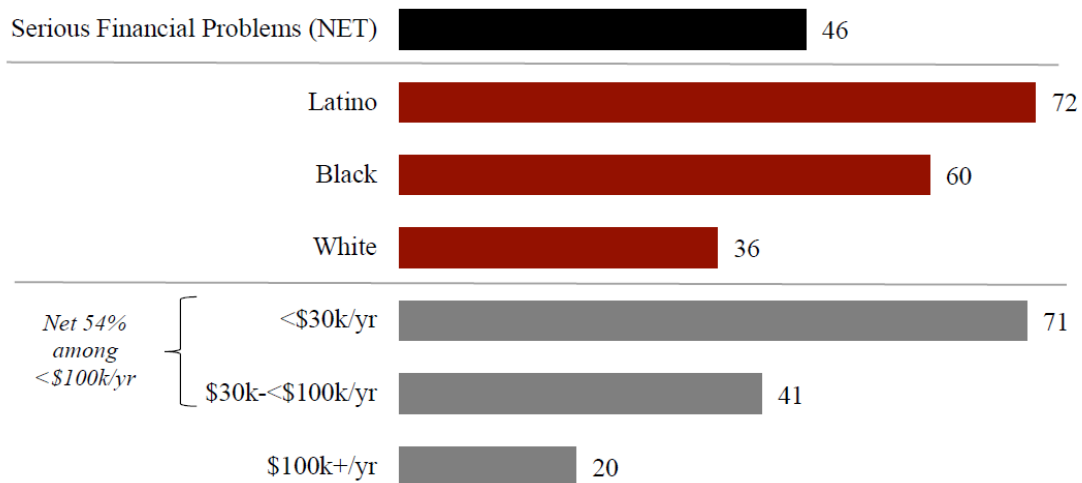
Please make sure that you are registered to vote and vote early this year. This may be the most important election of our time and a high voter turnout is imperative to ensure that the voice of the voters is heard loud and clear. If you are voting by mail, remember to mail your ballot very early so the slowdowns in mail delivery do not delay your ballot being received by the Registrar of Voters in a timely manner. Your vote counts this year more than ever!

## **Maybe Despair Porn and Miserabilism are Justified**

In these days of the pandemic, economic uncertainty, fires, and other challenges, there is a call to not wallow in despair porn or miserabilism. While having optimism is a good trait, sometimes it is important not to dismiss how bad things really are. A tendency to paint a rosy picture and think that better days are coming is not always the best strategy to confront the realities of the situation and devise solutions to achieve the improvements needed to get to stronger communities and thriving economies. Let's hope understanding how bad things are, can be a catalyst to taking action to fix what's wrong.

There have been some new studies that reveal what is happening below the veneer that the stock market is doing well and some businesses aren't feeling the financial distress that many others are from the pandemic shutdown. The first is a [survey](#) released on September 23rd from NPR, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Harvard University's T.H. Chan School of Public Health that found 46% of households in the U.S. reported serious financial problems because of the pandemic in the survey, 31% have used up all their savings and 21% are having trouble paying debt. Emily Peck writes in [Getting COVID-19 Is Putting Americans On The Brink Of Economic Crisis](#) ([Link](#)) that "researchers asked if Americans had 'serious' financial issues as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. Typically in the event of a hurricane or flood, government aid is there to provide a cushion for those in distress, which limits the number of people who report 'serious' issues. Robert J. Blendon, an emeritus professor of health policy and policy analysis at Harvard, and his fellow researchers assumed that the stimulus checks and expanded aid provided in the economic stimulus package, called the CARES Act, would cushion the blow of the pandemic. They expected to find what they normally see after a disaster: a small subset of people for whom that cushion wasn't enough."

**Figure 1. Serious Financial Problems among U.S. Households During the Coronavirus Outbreak (in Percent)**



NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, *The Impact of Coronavirus on Households Across America*, 7/1/20 – 8/3/20. N=3,454 U.S. adults ages 18+. Race/ethnicity categorized as non-Hispanic white, non-Hispanic Black, and Latino. Income defined as reported 2019 household income. *Net Q4-5. At any point since the start of the coronavirus outbreak, has anyone living in your household... had a) serious problems paying mortgage/rent, b) serious problems paying utilities, c) serious problems making car payments, d) serious problems affording medical care, e) serious problems paying credit cards/loans/other debt, f) serious problems affording food, g) other serious financial problems? ...used up all or most of their savings?*

“Instead they found widespread, serious financial distress — particularly among Americans earning less than \$100,000 a year, people of color, those with disabilities and those who’ve contracted the coronavirus. The numbers are jaw-dropping for nonwhite Americans: 72% of Latino households reported serious financial problems; so did 60% of Black households and slightly more than half of Native Americans. The Harvard survey, for all the distress it shows, could even be painting a fairly rosy picture, as it was conducted in July and August just as the financial benefits of the [CARES Act expired](#).”

“Blendon said it was clear that whatever aid the CARES Act provided, it was inadequate. He was incredulous that the benefits had expired and that there was no more aid coming.” In particular, those stricken with COVID-19 are hard hit. “Of the Americans who’ve contracted COVID-19, 63% are facing serious financial problems. Nearly 2 in 3 households where an adult has been sick with the coronavirus has experienced job loss, furloughs or a reduction in hours, according to the survey. About half of the coronavirus-affected households have used up their savings and are facing serious problems paying credit cards or other debt. And about 1 in 5 of these households are having problems affording medical care.”

Looking more broadly, Nicholas Kristoff writing in ‘[We’re No. 28! And Dropping!](#)’ ([Link](#)) about “the newest [Social Progress Index](#) finds that out of 163 countries assessed worldwide, the United States, Brazil and Hungary are the only ones in which people are worse off than when the index began in 2011. And the declines in Brazil and Hungary were smaller than America’s.”

“The data paint an alarming picture of the state of our nation, and we hope it will be a call to action,” Michael Porter, a Harvard Business School professor and the chair of the advisory panel for the Social Progress Index, told Kristoff. “It’s like we’re a developing country.”

Kristoff says “The index, inspired by research of Nobel-winning economists, collects 50 metrics of well-being — nutrition, safety, freedom, the environment, health, education and more — to measure quality of life. The United States, despite its immense wealth, military power and cultural influence, ranks 28th — having slipped from 19th in 2011. The index now puts the United States behind significantly poorer countries, including Estonia, Czech Republic, Cyprus and Greece. ‘We are no longer the country we like to think we are,’ said Porter.”

Kristoff lists the sad truth of the U.S. in comparison with the rest of the world:

- The United States ranks No. 1 in the world in quality of universities, but No. 91 in access to quality basic education. The U.S. leads the world in medical technology, yet we are No. 97 in access to quality health care.
- Americans have health statistics similar to those of people in Chile, Jordan and Albania, while kids in the United States get an education roughly on par with what children get in Uzbekistan and Mongolia.
- A majority of countries have lower homicide rates, and most other advanced countries have lower traffic fatality rates and better sanitation and internet access.
- The United States has high levels of early marriage — most states still allow child marriage in some circumstances — and lags in sharing political power equally among all citizens.
- America ranks a shameful No. 100 in discrimination against minorities.

Kristoff warns, “The data for the latest index predates Covid-19, which has had a disproportionate impact on the United States and seems likely to exacerbate the slide in America’s standing. One new study suggests that in the United States, symptoms of depression have risen threefold since the pandemic began — and poor mental health is associated with other risk factors for well-being.”

“David G. Blanchflower, a Dartmouth economist, has new research showing that the share of Americans reporting in effect that every day is a bad mental health day has doubled over 25 years. “Rising distress and despair are largely American phenomenon not observed in other advanced countries.”

Kristoff says, “That’s why this is an election like that of 1932. That was the year American voters decisively rejected Herbert Hoover’s passivity and gave Franklin Roosevelt an electoral mandate — including a flipped Senate — that laid the groundwork for the New Deal and the modern middle class. But first we need to acknowledge the reality that we are on the wrong track. We Americans like to say ‘We’re No. 1.’ But the new data suggest that we should be chanting, ‘We’re No. 28! And dropping!’”

Kristoff urges, “Let’s wake up, for we are no longer the country we think we are.” Will we wake up? Is this the country we want to be?

And heeding Kristoff’s warning, we need to vote like our lives depend on it in this election. Because they do.

## Solastalgia

What do call a longing for the days before the environment took a turn for the worse? There’s a word for it: Solastalgia. And it is fitting descriptor for how we are feeling in the North Bay, longing for the old days where fall didn’t fill us with dread of being in fire season. Julia Wick writes in Column: There’s actually a word for the climate change-induced despair you’ve been feeling ([Link](#)) that a philosopher coined the

term to address the distress of residents of an Australian city under siege from open-pit coal mining and other heavy industry. Wick says, “Sitting at the dinner table with his wife, the philosopher struggled to characterize the specific nature of their pain — a pain “experienced when there is recognition that the place where one resides and that one loves is under immediate assault.”

Wick says, “Glenn Albrecht, the philosopher in question, and his wife, Jill, first thought of the concept of nostalgia — because, as Albrecht writes, the term was once linked to ‘a diagnosable illness associated with the melancholia of homesickness for people who were distant from their home. But the distressed residents of Australia’s Hunter Valley weren’t émigrés in exile longing for home. Quite the contrary, they had remained in place, even as the landscape that had once brought them solace became unrecognizable.”

“Albrecht coined the term “solastalgia” — a neologism that combines the words nostalgia, solace and desolation — to describe their profound sense of loss and isolation, and the overwhelming feelings of powerlessness that came with it,” says Wick. “Solastalgia, as Albrecht defined it in a 2004 essay, is ‘manifest in an attack on one’s sense of place, in the erosion of the sense of belonging (identity) to a particular place and a feeling of distress (psychological desolation) about its transformation.’ In short, it is ‘a form of homesickness one gets when one is still at home.’”

Wick says, “It’s a word that has started to be used more frequently in recent years, particularly in the context of climate change. Perhaps it describes some of the destabilizing sorrow you’ve experienced as the ash rains down and fire burns in every direction. We Californians have long defined ourselves against an unforgiving landscape of grand beauty and destruction. But it’s never been quite like this before (with so many fires burning). It’s difficult not to wonder what our state will look like when and if the flames subside. Or if we will ever feel fully safe here again.”

Dr. Susan Clayton, is a professor of psychology and environmental studies at the College of Wooster in Ohio where she studies the psychological effects of climate change. Wick says, “According to a 2017 American Psychological Assn. report Clayton coauthored, the acute impacts will probably include more trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder in the wake of climate change-induced extreme weather and other major destabilizing events. Chronic impacts could manifest as a heightened sense of helplessness, hopelessness or fatalism as people reckon with profound changes to their environment or what they see as their lack of control over what’s happening.”

Wick says “Clayton says some of the more incremental impacts of climate change could damage our psychological well-being. ‘There is very good evidence that, for example, hot weather actually is bad for our mental health. You see increases in suicide rates, increases in aggression and increases in psychiatric hospitalization.’”

And this will resonant for us in the North Bay. Wick says, “The overhanging existential threat of climate change can also create a background level of worry, often referred to as ‘eco-anxiety’ or ‘climate anxiety.’ As Clayton explains, some level of anxiety can be a motivating force, spurring action and change — but too much can be debilitating, paralyzing us.”

“For all of us, we need to find this way of thinking — *There is something I can do*,” Clayton said. Maybe you can’t save the world, but you can exert some small sense of control over your corner of it, even with something as simple as readying your own evacuation plans. She also mentioned pressing local officials on certain issues or voting to address the matter at hand.”

Wick finds comforting words from Sammy Roth, an energy reporter at The Times, in his writing [about reckoning with his own climate despair](#), where he quotes a line from the rabbinic teachings of Pirkei Avot: 'It is not your responsibility to finish the work of perfecting the world, but you are not free to desist from it either.'" May we work together to fight climate change and end our eco-anxiety.

## **Members in the News**

### **College of Marin Recognized with Dr. John W. Rice Diversity & Equity Award**

The award was established in 2001 to honor community college staff members, districts, colleges, or programs that have made the greatest contribution towards faculty, staff, and student diversity and equity.

### **Star Staffing Presents – HR Summit: Building a Great Company Culture**

In this half-day virtual conference, we will discuss how to create a culture that inspires innovation, high-performance, and values in an era of fierce competition, remote working, and constant exposure to challenges and injustices.

### **College of Marin Offers Short-Term Career Training Academies**

Online courses and programs leading to employment and higher wages.

### **Star Staffing is an Eight Time Best Places to Work Award Winner, Poised to Host HR Summit Focused on Company Culture**

Star Staffing, a Forbes Ranked Best Temporary Staffing Firm, is the only staffing agency to make the North Bay Business Journal's Best Places to Work list this year.

### **Kaiser Permanente Creates the First Carbon-Neutral Health System in the U.S.**

Kaiser Permanente, the nation's largest integrated, nonprofit health system, has become the first health care system in the United States to achieve carbon-neutral status.

### **Bank of America's Community Impact Update**

Bank of America is committed to the North Bay and this region, and we will continue to work with our clients, our non-profit partners, and local leaders to help create the conditions for fair and equal access to economic opportunity.

### **Kaiser Permanente – Together We Can Fight the Spread of COVID-19**

Around the world and across the nation our communities are still facing an unprecedented public health crisis.

### **CannaCraft's Care By Design Hemp to Participate in Industry Leading Study on CBD Safety**

Care By Design Hemp, a wholly-owned CannaCraft brand, announced today that it joined several industry leaders in an IRB-approved study to provide real world evidence of safety in cannabinoid product use which commenced this month.

### **North Bay Children's Center and Other Marin Child Care Facilities Receive Marin Community Foundation's Donation of \$1M**

The Marin Community Foundation has given the Marin Child Care Council a \$1 million grant to bolster the county's network of child care providers during the coronavirus pandemic.



### **Redwood Credit Union Opens 2020 Fire Relief Fund**

The Redwood Credit Union Community Fund (RCUCF) has opened a 2020 Fire Relief Fund to assist those who lost homes due to the recent fires, and to prepare to help its communities should more fires happen this year.

### **Nelson Honored by San Francisco Business Times**

For the third-consecutive year, Nelson has been recognized on the San Francisco Business Times list for the Largest Bay Area Family-Owned Businesses. Ranked by 2019 companywide revenue, Nelson lands at No. 22 out of 98 companies featured on the list.

### **Dominican University's President Mary Marcy Steps Down**

After leading Dominican University of California through nearly a decade of transformation and success, President Mary B. Marcy has announced her decision to step down at the conclusion of the 2020-2021 fiscal year.

### **Becoming Independent Makes the 2020 Best Places to Work List 11 Years in a Row!**

Congratulations to Becoming Independent for making the North Bay Business Journal's Best Places to work list 11 years in a row!

### **Becoming Independent Receives National Recognition**

The NADSP, on behalf of our partner organizations, the Research and Training Center on Community Living at the University of Minnesota and the American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR), is pleased to announce the 2020 Moving Mountains Award for best practices in workforce development.

### **Sonoma Raceway President Steve Page Ends His Tenure**

After nearly three decades at the helm of Northern California's premier motorsports facility, Sonoma Raceway President and General Manager Steve Page announced today that he will retire at the end of 2020.

### **Redwood Credit Union Hosts Free Webinar with Finance Expert Jean Chatzky**

Redwood Credit Union (RCU) will host a free 60-minute webinar with personal finance expert Jean Chatzky titled "Finding Financial Resilience in Uncertain Times."



**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)