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**POLICY WATCH – November 2020**

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Happy Thanksgiving! While this Thanksgiving is not going to be the big festive affair we love, we can still bring our loved ones close through other ways than in our arms. We must socially distance, but we also must stay connected in all the other possible ways. This issue discusses gratitude, “the moral memory of mankind,” and why gratitude is so important, especially when we feel that there is a shortage of things for which to give thanks. I hope it uplifts you to read how gratitude can be our path forward and our salvation as we struggle.

We also explore how we can heal our divisions after such a contentious election and with the multiple crises challenging us. Can we find a way to care more about each other? Can we afford not to?

And we at NBLC, thank you for being a part of our community. We are grateful for your interest in our work and efforts to improve the North Bay for all who live and work here. Thank you for the feedback on our newsletter and for staying engaged. We are better together!

Best,



Cynthia

**Gratitude: The Moral Memory of Mankind**

As we contemplate the coming holidays and the arrival of winter, we are hearing disturbing predictions that we are in for a very dark next few months. The virus is surging, and the rising cases and loss of life is almost beyond belief. We are being called upon to make sacrifices and show personal responsibility to protect ourselves and each other. Public health experts urge us to stay home, not hold our normal Thanksgiving dinners, and take the precautions of mask-wearing, socially distancing and hand washing. I read if you have a big gathering at Thanksgiving, expect to attend a small funeral at Christmas. That took my breath away.

So how do we get through this? How do we stay connected when physically apart? Where do we find hope that we will get through these dark times?

My “go to” is to focus on what and who I am grateful for. I will name a few things I am grateful for and I hope you start a list of your own. This pandemic has made me very grateful for our healthcare providers. The reports from these heroes of what they are experiencing on the frontlines of treating COVID patients is shocking and awe-inspiring. They are laying their lives on the line to protect us. We are in their debt more than we could ever pay. But the very least we can do is practice the safety precautions, so we don’t send them more patients to treat when they are exhausted and overwhelmed. Thank you to the healthcare providers!

My next thing I am thankful for is women. This pandemic and recession has hit women inordinately hard. More of them have lost their jobs than in any previous recession, and for those still working, many of them are essential workers who are working in precarious circumstances so we have the services, food, and other support we need. And many women are struggling with taking care of children because of the lack of childcare and helping with remote learning because schools are closed, while working at home to the point when they realize they can’t do it all and quit their jobs. And these women will potentially have this impact their earnings and career opportunities for the rest of their lives. Women have been the glue holding things together during this crisis at great cost to themselves. Thank you to the women!

And the third thing I am grateful for is having a purpose. Having a purpose is essential in keeping me motivated and resilient. By having a cause bigger than myself, being able to help others, and believing that the world can be a better place if I work to make it so, I am given the strength and resolve to keep going even when the outlook is bleak. The cliché that it is better to give than receive has been proven true throughout my life.

So as we think about why we are grateful, it is interesting to discover what gratitude is. And that is answered in What Is Gratitude? (Great Good Magazine, [Link](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/gratitude/definition)) which says, “Because gratitude encourages us not only to appreciate gifts but to repay them (or pay them forward), the sociologist Georg Simmel called it “’the moral memory of mankind.’ This is how gratitude may have evolved: by strengthening bonds between members of the same species who mutually helped each other out.”

The moral memory of mankind is a powerful statement. What moral memories are we passing on to each other and our children? This pandemic has taught us how much we need each other and how we hold in our power the ability to protect and value each other. I want my moral memory bank filled to the brim with the good memories of how I was part of a community that loved and cared for each other, whose social fabric was knit with the good works of those who supported their neighbors when in need.

Robert Emmons, “perhaps the world’s leading scientific expert on gratitude, argues that gratitude has two key components, which he describes in a Greater Good essay, Why Gratitude Is Good.”

“First,” he writes, “it’s an affirmation of goodness. We affirm that there are good things in the world, gifts and benefits we’ve received.” In the second part of gratitude, he explains, “we recognize that the sources of this goodness are outside of ourselves. … We acknowledge that other people—or even higher powers, if you’re of a spiritual mindset—gave us many gifts, big and small, to help us achieve the goodness in our lives.”

That acknowledging other people points to the social dimension as being especially important to gratitude. “I see it as a relationship-strengthening emotion,“ writes Emmons, “because it requires us to see how we’ve been supported and affirmed by other people.”

And research has shown the benefits of being grateful including boosting physical and mental health, increasing happiness, and fostering forgiveness. And after the bruising year we have had, being able to forgive and heal our differences will be a tremendous way to begin to look forward to a better tomorrow.

So this year, show your gratitude by following the advice of the health experts, stay home with your immediate family and socially connect with those you love in other ways so you will be grateful to still have those loved ones in your life after the holidays.

**Three Good Things**

Greater Good’s Christine Carter asks her daughters about [three good things](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/raising_happiness/post/Foundation_Happiness) that happen to them each day—a way to help them appreciate the gifts big and small that come their way. A good practice and one sure to help you find more things to brighten up your day. Here are three good things that give me hope and joy now:

* The Legislative Analyst’s report that the state budget is currently projected to have a $26 billion surplus, with the potential to grow as large as $40 billion by the end of the fiscal year.
* Two COVID-19 vaccines are nearing approval in record time and with promise of great efficacy
* 2020 is almost over – I can’t wait to be done with this year!

What are three good things in your life today? If you can’t think of three, try doing something nice for someone else so you can finish the list!

**How to Heal Our Divisions**

The election is over, but we remain a nation divided. President-Elect Biden has made clear that he has a goal to help heal our country. How do we help achieve that goal? Some insight is found in After A Bitter Election, Can Americans Find A Way To Heal Their Divides? By Christianna Silva ([Link](https://www.npr.org/2020/11/01/929856421/after-a-bitter-election-can-americans-find-a-way-to-heal-their-divides)). Silva interviewed Rich Harwood, president and founder of the Harwood Institute for Public Innovation, a nonprofit dedicated to building community and effecting positive change who was hired to help heal the community after the Sandy Hook shooting. Harwood sees the divisiveness in the U.S. today and says those tensions exist because people aren't feeling understood.

Harwood says, "We need to understand the human dimensions of this. Why do divides exist? I think they exist because people feel aggrieved, because they haven't felt seen and heard, because they feel as though their dignity has been stripped from them, that they feel trapped. And when people feel these things, they hunker down and protect themselves, build walls and form smaller and smaller groups that they belong to where they want to fight it out with other groups."

Harwood says it's crucial to "not simply sit in that pain and sorrow," but to start envisioning a different path and how to get there. According to Silva, “He calls 2020 a uniquely challenging moment, in that the nation is facing four crises simultaneously: a pandemic, economic upheaval, systemic racism and social injustice and a political crisis.”

"There's no magic wand that we can wave and correct all of the challenges that we face today," he says. "It's going to take us taking small steps forward, rebuilding our trust, restoring our belief in ourselves and one another and knowing that we can get things done together."

Tyree Head, a violence interrupter at the Institute for Nonviolence Chicago, says "hurt people, hurt people." Head is a graduate of the Metropolitan Peace Academy. Troy Harden, professor of sociology and the director of the Race and Ethnic Studies Institute at Texas A&M University, helped to develop the curriculum for the Metropolitan Peace Academy.

Harden believes the way to break the cycle of mistrust and mutual animosity is by “acknowledging the harm that's happened and really being able to see that there are different interests that people might have, but they're also mutual interests that people have. I would argue that we're at a turning point in our society where we can begin to recognize the harm that's been created historically and really begin the process of healing that through realizing that every human being not only has a right to exist but has certain rights on this earth."

Spencer Traylor, co-founder of Next STEP, an alternative high school program, says “there is a pervasive idea in society that if you open up conflict, it's going to disrupt a community and cause divisions, so it's best to keep quiet. Seeds of Peace takes a different approach, encouraging participants to have uncomfortable conversations in order to quell divisions.”

"You have to talk about divisions," Traylor says. "You have to talk about conflict in order to have a functional community. And you have to create methods and give tools and resources for young people and adults to be able to have those conversations in ways that are productive and constructive and in ways that people can start to see and understand each other rather than try to hide their feelings and thoughts away from each other."

Eliza O'Neil, one of the directors of Seeds of Peace, says that it's powerful for people to see that you can have a disagreement and still keep a relationship intact, and that the knowledge that this is possible brings "a sense of openness and willingness to engage and courage in future conversations with those who disagree with them."

While some liken our divisions to the Civil War. Noted Harvard political scientist, Richard Putnam, sees a different era. In How we heal after a contentious election by Jennifer Graham, ([Link](https://www.deseret.com/indepth/2020/11/4/21546229/how-we-heal-after-a-contentious-election)) she says, “Putnam says the circumstances sowing division in America today — to include rising inequality, sweeping technological change, moral decay and cultural narcissism — were also present in large measure at the end of the 19th century.”

“Looking back to a time Mark Twain disparagingly called the Gilded Age turns out to feel eerily like looking in a mirror,” Putnam writes in his new book, “The Upswing,” co-written with Utahn Shaylyn Romney Garrett.

When looking at where America was 125 years ago in four areas — economics, politics, society and culture — Putnam found startling resemblance. “Inequality, political polarization, social dislocation and cultural narcissism prevailed — all accompanied, as they are now, by unprecedented technological advances, prosperity, and material well-being,” he wrote.

Graham says, “But instead of staying mired in the muck, America clawed its way out, by becoming less of an “I” society and one more focused on “we,” Putnam and Garrett say. It didn’t happen after one election, but history shows a steady ascent that occurred over decades. Perhaps most significantly, it didn’t happen through the work of a single, charismatic leader, but collectively, through a society determined to change. In fact, when and how we heal is up to all of us, analysts say.”

The results of this election has made clear that the 2016 election wasn’t an anomaly. “A lot of Americans are more concerned about me than about we,” U.S. Sen.-elect John Hickenlooper, D- Colorado. And getting from “I” to “We” will take work. And why is it important to heal? John Sarrouf, director of Essential Partners, warns what can happen if we don’t try to repair our rift.

“If we’ve divided ourselves in half, which statistically we sort of have, and tomorrow we stay in these camps, as a country, we’re only half of ourselves, and we are missing the richness of each other, of our regional diversity, our religious diversity, our ethnic diversity. We’ve lopped off half of who we are from each other,” Sarrouf said.

Also, he said, “I would say we have to invite one another back into our lives. People unfriended people in the heat of the election season, stopped inviting people over for meals. I think inviting one another back into each other’s lives is an enormous and important first step.”

Sarrouf adds “that there will be no solution to common problems if we remain in our divided state.

If you care deeply about the causes that you advocate for and the beliefs that you hold, and you want to do something about them, you have to include everyone in these conversations because we are so divided that we will not get anywhere by ourselves. Anything that gets done in one election cycle will get undone in the next,” he said.

The solution is in each of our hands on how we move forward as a people, a community and as a nation. Let’s hope we find the way back to caring about the “We” that our moral compasses, democracy and society are based on.

**The Cure of Troy**

“Human beings suffer,
They torture one another,
They get hurt and get hard.
No poem or play or song
Can fully right a wrong
Inflicted and endured.

The innocent in gaols
Beat on their bars together.
A hunger-striker's father
Stands in the graveyard dumb.
The police widow in veils
Faints at the funeral home.

History says, don't hope
On this side of the grave.
But then, once in a lifetime
The longed-for tidal wave
Of justice can rise up,
And hope and history rhyme.
So hope for a great sea-change
On the far side of revenge.
Believe that further shore
Is reachable from here.
Believe in miracle
And cures and healing wells.

Call miracle self-healing:
The utter, self-revealing
Double-take of feeling.
If there's fire on the mountain
Or lightning and storm
And a god speaks from the sky

That means someone is hearing
The outcry and the birth-cry
Of new life at its term.”
― **Seamus Heaney**

**NBLC Member Anniversaries**

**Thank you to the for being NBLC members all these years!**

***BioMarin Pharmaceutical ~ 14 year anniversary***

***Interwest Insurance Services ~ 1 year anniversary***

***Recology Sonoma Marin ~ 1 year anniversary***

***Santa Rosa Junior College ~ 14 year anniversary***

***St. Joseph Health System ~ 19 year anniversary***

**Members in the News**

**Kaiser Permanente Donates $18 Million in Grants Help Residents Recover After Fires**

Kaiser Permanente recently awarded the organization $500,000 for the next 2 years, and that is on top of a $90,000 grant in 2019.

**California Press Foundation Names Press Democrat Publisher Steve Falk Top Newspaper Executive**

Steve Falk, publisher of The Press Democrat and CEO of Sonoma Media Investments, was named newspaper executive of the year Friday by the California Press Foundation.

**Kaiser Permanente Donates $1 Million to Revive Santa Rosa Junior College Housing Complex**

A $1 million grant from a prominent Northern California health care company has revived an ambitious student housing project at Santa Rosa Junior College that was in danger of being scaled back after construction costs soared over budget.

**Catholic Charities Santa Rosa Caritas Village Update**

Have you been downtown lately? If not, you’re missing something big! The entire site for Caritas Center is nearly prepped for construction.

**Redwood Credit Union Recognized for Outstanding Performance in Investment Services**

Six wealth management advisors at Redwood Credit Union (RCU) received Pacesetter awards, and RCU’s investment marketing efforts were also recognized at the CUSO Financial Services (CFS) 2020 Annual Conference.

**Sonoma State’s DREAM Center Receives Multiple Recognitions for its Service to Undocumented Students**

Sonoma State University’s DREAM Center, which aims to provide a safe space for undocumented students to receive academic, personal, and professional guidance, has been recognized with an esteemed award for its development of a program for undocumented students interested in immigration-related issues.

**Sonoma Raceway Takes Virtual Food Drive into High Gear**

Sonoma Raceway has kicked off its season of giving with the 20th annual Thanksgiving Food Drive, but for the first time ever, the food drive will take place virtually.

**CannaCraft’s CEO Jim Hourigan Spotlight**

Get to know CannaCraft’s CEO Jim Hourigan.

**Redwood Credit Union’s International Credit Union Day Celebration Raises More than $36,000 for Local Food Banks**

Redwood Credit Union (RCU) joined credit unions around the world to celebrate International Credit Union (ICU) Day, a time to pay tribute to the credit union difference and the important role credit unions play in their communities.

**The Buck Institute for Research on Aging Finds A Metabolite Produced by the Body Increases Lifespan and Dramatically Compresses Late-Life Morbidity in Mice**

Middle-aged mice that had the naturally-occurring metabolite alpha-ketaglutarate (AKG) added to their chow had a better “old age.”

**The Buck Institute’s Global Consortium for Reproductive Longevity & Equality Announces First Grant Recipients**

The Global Consortium for Reproductive Longevity and Equality (GCRLE) at the Buck Institute for Research on Aging, made possible by the Bia-Echo Foundation, announces its inaugural recipients of its GCRLE Scholar Awards.

**Buck Institute’s Postdoc Nathan Basisty Wins a Prestigious Career-Boosting Award From the NIH**

With both of his Buck mentors describing him as an “exceptional scientist” and a “generous and valuable collaborator,” postdoc Nate Basisty is poised to take a huge leap in his career, thanks to a prestigious and highly competitive Pathway to Independence Award from the National Institutes of Health.

**The Buck Institute Mourns the Passing of Paul F. Glenn**

Paul F. Glenn, a successful commodity trader whose philanthropy helped fuel many careers and subsequent discoveries in research on aging, died on September 29th, 2020, at the age of 89.

**Buck Institute for Research on Aging Finds Bodybuilding Supplement Promotes Healthy Aging and Extends Life Span, at Least in Mice**

A dietary supplement bodybuilders use to bulk up may have a more sweeping health benefit: Staving off the ravages of old age. Mice given the substance—alpha-ketoglutarate (AKG)—were healthier as they aged, and females lived longer than mice not on the supplement.

**The Buck Institute for Research on Aging Highlighted in Making Up for Lost Time: Biomedical Research and Female Subjects**

After the end of the Second World War, thalidomide was introduced in Europe as a safe and effective new sedative, an alternative to the highly addictive barbiturates that had been rising in use since the tail end of conflict.

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**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

**www.northbayleadership.org**