

POLICY WATCH – October 2022

In This Issue

- NBLC Endorsements – Your Vote Matters!
- List of Horrors – Things to Keep You Awake at Night!
 - Democratic Recession
 - Economic Recession
 - Mass Killings
 - Climate Change
 - COVID is not Done with Us
 - War In Ukraine
- Sonoma County Regional Climate Protection Agency Survey
- Members in the News



October is the month that we relish all things spooky, scary and horror-filled. In keeping with that theme, in this issue we have a Witch's Brew of issues that are keeping us up at night – our List of Horrors. It is our want to try to be optimistic about the future which isn't achieved in this issue. But we promise our November newsletter will be filled with gratitude and thanks for all that's right in the world.

The biggest takeaway is that we have a very important election on November 8th, and it is important that you cast your ballot. Please remember that democracy is about protecting your rights but to do so, you need to take responsibility to make your voice heard through voting. Please see NBLC's endorsements of candidates and ballot measures below. Thank you for being a good citizen!

Best,

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

Cynthia

Your Vote, Your Voice:

One key way we preserve our democracy is by voting. Please do your part to protect our democracy by casting your ballot either by mail or at the polls on November 8th. Remember to mail your absentee ballot early as the mail delivery is slower than it used to be.

Here are NBLC's Endorsements:

Candidates

NBLC members have voted to endorse the following candidates because they are the best candidates in terms of balance, experience, and knowledge of the issues:

Novato- By District
Rachel Farac #3

Petaluma- By District
Karen Nau #3
Dylan Lloyd #1
David Adams #2
Kevin McDonnell -- Mayor

Rohnert Park- By District
Susan Hollingsworth Adams #5
Samantha Rodriguez #1

San Rafael – By District
Maribeth Bushey #3
Eli Hill #2

Santa Rosa- By District
Mark Stapp #2
Dianna MacDonald #3
Terry Sanders #4
Jeff Okrepkie #6

Napa County Supervisors:
Suzanne Truchard – Supervisor – District 1
Anne Cottrell – Supervisor – District 3

Ballot Measures:

SUPPORT: Proposition 1: Would make California’s existing rights to abortion part of the state’s constitution.

SUPPORT: Proposition 31: This referendum seeks to overturn legislation (SB 793, Hill) prohibiting the retail sale of certain flavored tobacco products and tobacco flavor enhancers.

List of Horrors – Things to Keep You Awake at Night!

Frightening Things that Won’t Go Away after Halloween

In homage to the Halloween vibe of frightening things, we are exploring a List of Horrors that unfortunately won’t end when Halloween is over. This list is long but not inclusive -- another sign of our challenging times. Let’s hope we can be brave and change the outcomes of the horrors before us.

Democratic Recession:

In [Five Strategies to Support U.S. Democracy \(Link\)](#), Rachel Kleinfeld writes “American democracy is at a dangerous inflection point. Every major international measure of democracy demonstrates serious U.S. decline. The Varieties of Democracy index charts growing autocratization since 2010; the Economist Intelligence Unit downgraded the United States to a ‘flawed democracy’ in 2017; Europe’s International

Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance now classifies the United States as a “backsliding democracy”; and Freedom House shows the United States on one of the fastest downward trajectories of any country, now ranking U.S. democratic quality alongside Romania and Croatia.”

“Many Americans view this moment with concern, but their worry is measured: America’s system is creaky, but the world’s oldest democracy has strong institutions and will pull through,” says Kleinfeld. “However, since the end of the Cold War, most democratic failure globally has been caused by elected governments using legal methods, such as gerrymandering and technical rule changes, to derail democracy. Their destructions of their own democracies have been supported by pluralities or majorities of their citizenries, whose polarization leads them to back policies that harm democracy to ensure their side prevails. America is on precisely this path.”

Kleinfeld says, “The age and consolidation of U.S. democracy provides resilience—but Americans should not expect too much from the country’s historical strength. Many of the laws that form institutional guardrails were written poorly in the aftermath of the Civil War, with loopholes that are easily challenged given a lack of precedent. Moreover, the country’s age means that much of what are presumed to be laws and institutions are, in fact, simply norms. These norms are eroding quickly.”

“Other organizations and philanthropists already understand the danger America is in,” says Kleinfeld. “They are pouring time and money into getting more people to vote, particularly minorities and swing voters, to win back democracy. These efforts are necessary—but not sufficient. America’s democratic decline has accelerated despite record numbers of people, minorities, and swing voters voting. And for those on both sides of the aisle for whom these voting measures are proxies for partisan preferences they believe will save U.S. democracy, democratic decline in many states has accelerated despite Democratic control of both chambers of Congress and the presidency at the national level. The community supporting U.S. democracy needs a better strategy.”

Kleinfeld says, “As political scientist Lee Drutman has written, a nadir can also enable a change of direction. Today, Americans have a chance to not just piece together the cracked remnants of what was—but to create the next chapter of America. In fact, we not only can do better, but we must think bigger to galvanize the movement we need to succeed at our immediate challenges. We must act now, at scale, with strategy.”

“America has long-standing democratic challenges that built slowly over the last twenty-plus years. The country’s politics have fundamentally altered, and many Americans who came of age in previous decades are not aware of just how great the change has been,” says Kleinfeld. The terms ‘swing’ and ‘battleground’ states did not exist before the 1990s, because so many states were competitive. Now, just a handful are at play in presidential races, raising the stakes in those places while effectively disenfranchising many voters elsewhere whose contra-majority votes in safe constituencies are known not to matter well in advance.”

Adding to the dangers, Kleinfeld says, “This year’s redistricting further increased the number of so-called safe seats, which now compose about 90 percent of the House of Representatives. Such a large number of safe seats pushes candidates to cater to the views of extreme partisans rather than tacking to one side during primary elections and then back to the middle for their general elections. The procedural tool known as the filibuster (which requires sixty votes to override, allowing a minority of senators to stop legislation even if a majority support it) was altered in the 1970s in a way that made it easier to use. Yet it has only been routinely employed since 2010. It has made rule by the majority into rule by the

supermajority, creating gridlock, incentivizing further gerrymandering, and frustrating Americans who feel that even voting for a party that wins the majority does not advance their policy goals.”

Kleinfeld says, “These slow-growing phenomena opened the door to today’s acute problems. Antidemocratic politicians supported by safe seats and polarization have walked through and begun enacting an authoritarian playbook. This playbook has massively accelerated democratic disintegration over the last five years. Like the American author Ernest Hemingway’s famous quip about how one goes bankrupt, America has been losing its democracy at first gradually, and then suddenly.”

“The left has contributed its share to this slippage. In the strategies section, says Kleinfeld and she suggests “tactics to reverse the alienating politics of the left that are deepening polarization, static identities, and competitive victimhood and driving many Americans toward extremism. However, the rapid decline is asymmetric. It is primarily being driven by a very different Republican Party.”

Insightfully, Kleinfeld says, “That is because leaders of this new Republican faction are not only further right but are also far less committed to democratic institutions, practices, and norms. They are aware that in increasingly safe seats, their main threat is from a primary challenger. A base whose majority is White, evangelical, rural men, and which in 2016 gained a larger percentage of formerly swing voters who cared about identity issues but wanted more government economic redistribution, is more easily motivated by identity than by traditional conservative policy issues such as small government or low taxes. These politicians have also come of political age seeing that bipartisanship can enable hit ads that hurt their chances in primaries but that violence and voting manipulation will not be punished at the ballot box.”

“In America, many states have been flooded with laws to alter voting,” says Kleinfeld. The worst of these maneuvers have occurred in a dozen states that have passed laws transferring power to more partisan electoral bodies and/or criminalizing their election administrations. These antidemocratic legal moves cannot be overcome by turnout.”

And Kleinfeld warns, “Meanwhile, an obscure legal tactic could allow state legislatures to legally select their own slates of electors (whose votes are those that actually count to determine the winner of the presidency), regardless of the will of their voters. The ‘independent state legislature’ theory argues that the Constitution gives state legislatures alone the final determination of election procedures, superseding state constitutions, courts, governors, and even voters, whose votes for electors are only advisory. This once-fringe theory sounds far-fetched, but the Supreme Court has taken a case that will allow it to decide on the theory in June 2023, and four of the sitting Supreme Court justices have previously indicated their potential support in decisions from *Bush v. Gore* (2000) to spring 2022. While Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett has remained silent, the activism of this Supreme Court does not encourage confidence.”

Kleinfeld then speaks to “Personnel changes to ensure extreme partisans adjudicate election decisions. The key Republican in Wayne County, Michigan, who certified Detroit’s election and thus allowed the state’s votes to be counted, has since been replaced with a fierce election denier. Georgia’s Republican secretary of state, who refused to look for the 11,000 votes that Trump asked him to find, has faced death threats, harassment, and a Trump-supported primary challenger (though he ultimately kept his seat). A coordinated campaign with bureaucratic, electoral, and violent components is attempting to replace competent, long-standing election officials of both parties with partisan activists.”

And it gets more frightening. Kleinfeld says, “Threats of violence against election workers, once nearly nonexistent, are now frequent—the Department of Justice (DOJ) has tracked over a thousand threats

against election officials since the 2020 elections. In Colorado, threats are severe enough that some election officials are undertaking active shooter trainings and have been told to drive home following different daily routes to maintain their safety. A 2022 Brennan Center poll found that one in six election officials had experienced threats, and half had not reported them. About 50 percent had been threatened in person—not just online or on the phone. One in three knew at least one official who had already quit because of fear or threats.”

Kleinfeld continues, “Fears of criminal, legal, or violent repercussions are creating an exodus of mid-level professional staff—the level of resignations since 2020 is unprecedented. Stop the Steal activists—who wrongfully maintain that Trump won the 2020 U.S. presidential election—are being courted to replace them.”

And yes, it gets worse. Kleinfeld states, “In addition to taking over professional staffing, election deniers are running for the top elected positions that manage state voting procedures. In Colorado, an election denier in charge of Mesa County’s elections enabled voting machine passwords to be posted to public, online QAnon chat rooms. While she was indicted on ten counts by a Republican prosecutor, she is now running for secretary of state—a position that determines election rules. In fact, as of June 2022, two-thirds of those vying to be secretaries of state claimed that the 2020 election was fraudulent. More than one hundred election deniers have won their primary campaigns in 2022; nine states, including Michigan and Arizona, have election-denying candidates running for all major executive offices: governor, attorney general, and secretary of state.”

And giving the final blow to our election integrity, Kleinfeld says, “Finally, disinformation, misinformation, and malinformation on right-wing television and talk radio has succeeded in creating an alternate reality that facts cannot dislodge. This media echo chamber does not need to create a solid story that can be confirmed or denied. Instead, it is selling doubt. Voters who aren’t sure that a particular form of wrongdoing happened, but simply feel that something is not right, are actually harder to persuade with facts. Thus, while in October 2020 solid majorities of Republicans believed elections were fair, months of conspiracy theory coverage by mainstream-right outlets means that now, only 35 percent trust the election system and nearly three-fourths believe the current president occupies the White House illegally.”

And that distrust is growing. Kleinfeld says, “As policy agendas have become more extreme with less overlap over the last twenty years, partisans fear the other side so much that voters are willing to allow antidemocratic action by their side to keep the other out of power. By February 2021, 72 percent of each party was claiming the other was ‘a serious threat to the United States and its people.’ Scholars Milan Svoblik and Matthew Graham have found that 85 to 90 percent of U.S. citizens would vote for their party even if it engaged in undemocratic action, rather than cross party lines. Numbers are far worse in states where voters have actually had to make such choices. A recent Bright Line Watch survey found that 28 percent of Democrats and 39 percent of Republicans favored ‘doing everything possible to prevent the other party from governing effectively’—numbers that reduced only slightly when misbeliefs about the other party were corrected.”

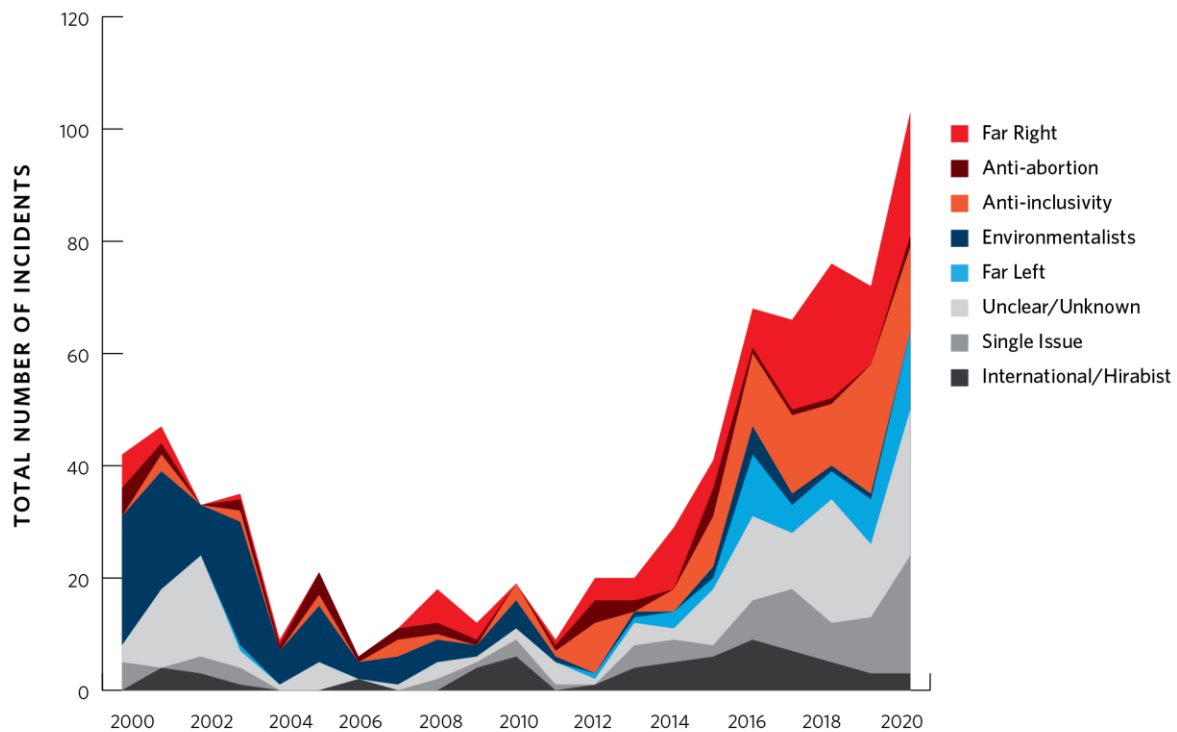
Kleinfeld says, “Looking at cases of severe polarization globally since 1950, researchers Jennifer McCoy, Murat Somer, and Benjamin Press found that no other established democracy has been this polarized for as long as the United States. In McCoy’s and Press’s words, ‘There are no peer analogues for the United States’ current political divisions—and the track record of all democracies does not provide much consolation.’ The lack of consolation is because among less-established democracies that faced pernicious

polarization, the majority experienced democratic degradation. Of the twenty-six countries that degraded, twenty-three descended fully into authoritarianism. Of the minority of cases that did not degrade, all but nine repolarized in ensuing years.”

“Globally, the world is in the sixteenth year of democratic recession,” says Kleinfeld. “Democracies have primarily been dying at the hands of their own voters, who appreciate democracy but fear the other party so much that they will allow antidemocratic action to keep their side in power. This is what is happening in America. Polarization is allowing authoritarianism to take hold with voter support.”

“In the face of ginned-up beliefs that their democracy is under threat and emboldened by the feeling that some police and politicians will excuse their actions, right-wing violence is skyrocketing,” as data that Kleinfeld expanded from the Global Terrorism Database show in the chart below.

FIGURE 1
Terrorist Attacks in the United States by Ideology, 2000–2020



SOURCE: Global Terrorism Database data set, coded by the author. See Box 1 for an overview of methods.

Kleinfeld says, “Apart from the vastly disproportionate number of incidents, there is another crucial difference between left- and right-wing violence from a democracy standpoint. On the left, those who justify violence identify least strongly with the Democratic Party—suggesting a disaffected fringe over whom the Democratic Party lacks control.”

“On the right, those who show the greatest support for violence also most strongly identify with the Republican Party,” says Kleinfeld. “That allows their violence to be used for political goals. Postelection

violence and intimidation on the right began to align with the political calendar in 2016 and 2018. By 2020, violence and armed demonstrations were highly connected to key dates of election procedures. Right-wing violence and intimidation, in other words, is targeted.”

Kleinfeld says, “A strategy to support democracy requires sticks as well as carrots. There are red lines that must be upheld for democracy to work. Those who lose elections have to accept defeat. Those who interfere in elections must be denounced and brought to account. Violence can have no place in democratic life. Corruption poisons trust—whether corrupt actions are technically legal or not. Politicians and wealthy elites cannot be above the laws that bind the rest of the people.”

Kleinfeld presents five strategies that she believes will save our democracy. To get more details on these strategies, click on the link at the beginning of the article. She says, “The five strategies aim at the roots of our acute problem: an alliance on the right between elites trying to consolidate power through antidemocratic means and an angry, illiberal social movement. This confluence means that democracy’s problems must be tackled from both political and societal angles. A solution must also address the long-term challenges of those on the left who have given up on democracy. Finally, it must counter forces on both the left and right contributing to the pernicious polarization that makes solving democratic challenges so intractable, offering instead a positive, attractive, comforting vision in which all parts of the nation can see themselves as potentially gaining through its mutual creation.”

“The visions Americans must build should not be about the abstraction of democracy itself—they should be about what Americans hope for from their daily life in America,” says Kleinfeld. “This future lived experience must be concrete and grounded. Perhaps deliberative democracy exercises could be used to discuss different parts of daily life, as well as major culture-war issues, to diffuse the latter with ideas that undermine hardened polarization with practical thinking while elevating shared desires for Americans’ lives in the future. How does the country achieve the American Dream of the future, together, rather than by looking back nostalgically at an America in which portions of the population were kept from competing or offering a vision that frightens the people who remain the majority of the voting public? Figuring that out is major work in and of itself.”

Kleinfeld stresses that “without a coordinated and inclusive prodemocracy movement, for instance, all of the efforts to strengthen accountability and reset norms on what behavior is legal and acceptable will be dismissed as partisan and most will fail or even enhance polarization.”

And she gives warning that “The pernicious effects of U.S. democratic decline will not be confined to America’s borders. As autocratic coordination increases, stumbles within U.S. democracy gravely harm democracy abroad. Given the strong correlations between democracy and economic growth through improved human capital, peace, and even life expectancy, a major setback to U.S. democracy would have tremendous consequences on global poverty and well-being.”

Kleinfeld concludes, “The stakes are massive, and each moment deepens the polarization that is making these problems less amenable to change. As Americans, we must start now, at scale, strategically, with a broad, cross-party coalition to save our democracy.” We, the people, must save ourselves.

[Economic Recession:](#)

In NBLC State of the North Bay conference, we heard from the top analysts at the Bay Area Council Economic Institute that we are going into a recession. There was disagreement on how bad and for how long, but the telltale signs are there that a recession is happening.

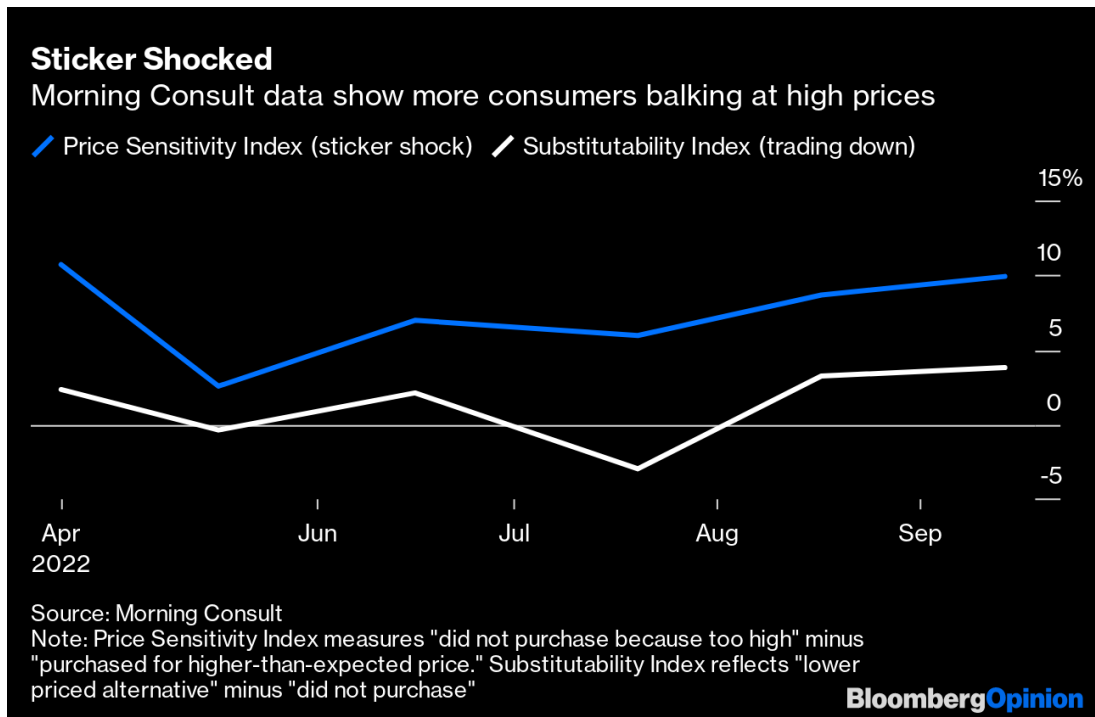
And in this spooky season, who better to turn to than Dr. Doom, top economist Nouriel Roubini, for his prediction as reported in 'Dr. Doom' Nouriel Roubini says a debt crisis is already here and a hard landing before year end is now the baseline scenario by Jennifer Sor ([Link](#)). "There are signs that a debt crisis has already started taking shape, and a hard landing of the economy before the end of the year is now the baseline scenario, according to top economist Nouriel Roubini. Roubini, who has earned the nickname 'Dr. Doom' for his pessimistic views on markets and the economy, has warned of a looming debt and inflationary crisis for about a year. Previously, he predicted it would lead to a Frankenstein-style recession by the end of 2022, mixing the worst aspects of 1970s stagflation and the 2008 financial crisis."

And the signs of that financial meltdown are finally emerging, Roubini said, who referred to a hard landing as the baseline scenario in an op-ed for Project Syndicate. Those warnings have largely stemmed from built-up supply shocks and inflationary pressures over the past several years, such as ultra-loose monetary policy of the pandemic, China's lockdown restrictions, and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which has cause energy prices to go haywire.

The Federal Reserve's Jerome Powell has grown bearish, switching to talk of a "softish landing" with "some pain." And the US has never achieved a soft landing with over 5% inflation and sub-5% unemployment since World War II, Roubini pointed, calling the hopes for a mild recession "delusional."

The stagflationary-debt crisis Roubini predicts could lead stocks to plunge 40%. "[The] most forward-looking indicators of economic activity in advanced economies point to a sharp slowdown that will grow even worse with monetary-policy tightening. A hard landing by year's end should be regarded as the baseline scenario," he warned.

Consumers are starting to rebel against inflation by either not buying or buying a lower cost substitute – check out this chart:



From Bloomberg Opinion Today, October 18, 2022

The good news is that “Thanks to its large budget surplus, California is very well prepared to get through a moderate recession without having to raise taxes or slash spending, according to a [new study](#) by Moody’s Analytics. In fact, California ranks fourth out of 50 states when it comes to recession readiness. That’s up from 15th place in 2019, the last time Moody’s did the same type of “stress test” on the states,” as reported by Kathleen Pender in [How will California weather a recession compared to other states? See ‘stress test’ rankings \(Link\)](#).

Pinder says, “Jerry Nickelsburg, director of the UCLA Anderson Forecast, said the state has been ‘stockpiling’ reserves since the last recession. As a result, state-government deficits will not exacerbate a recession, should one occur, like they have in the past. Although the stock market has taken a beating, ‘venture capital investment is still heavily in California, by a significant margin, as is foreign direct investment.’ And increased defense spending will boost demand for sophisticated weaponry coming from California. ‘Where there is potential weakness’ is in residential construction, which will be hurt by higher interest rates, and in transportation and warehousing, Nickelsburg said.”

And despite this reassurance, state personal income tax receipts are way below expectations and there has been a decline in sales tax, too. Dr. Doom is cackling!

Mass Shootings:

There virtually hasn’t been a single week in 2022 without a mass shooting. The Gun Violence Archive, a nonprofit research group that tracks gun violence using police reports, news coverage and other public sources, defines a mass shooting as one in which at least four people were killed or injured. The Gun Violence Archive has counted at least 531 mass shootings so far this year, through mid-October. Of those shootings, 16 involved five or more fatalities.

No wonder anxiety is off the charts in the U.S., especially among children. This is a continuous horror movie.

Climate Change:

We have received one scary report after another on the growing crisis in climate change. In [United in Science: We are Heading in the Wrong Direction, \(Link\)](#), the press release says, “Climate science is clear: we are heading in the wrong direction, according to a new multi-agency report coordinated by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), which highlights the huge gap between aspirations and reality. Without much more ambitious action, the physical and socioeconomic impacts of climate change will be increasingly devastating, it warns.”

The report, United in Science, shows that “greenhouse gas concentrations continue to rise to record highs. Fossil fuel emission rates are now above pre-pandemic levels after a temporary drop due to lockdowns. The ambition of emissions reduction pledges for 2030 needs to be seven times higher to be in line with the 1.5 °C goal of the Paris Agreement.”

“The past seven years were the warmest on record. There is a 48% chance that, during at least one year in the next 5 years, the annual mean temperature will temporarily be 1.5°C higher than 1850-1900 average. As global warming increases, “tipping points” in the climate system can not be ruled out.”

“Cities that host billions of people and are responsible for up to 70% of human-caused emissions will face increasing socio-economic impacts. The most vulnerable populations will suffer most, says the report which gives examples of extreme weather in different parts of the world this year.”

“Floods, droughts, heatwaves, extreme storms and wildfires are going from bad to worse, breaking records with alarming frequency. Heatwaves in Europe. Colossal floods in Pakistan. Prolonged and severe droughts in China, the Horn of Africa and the United States. There is nothing natural about the new scale of these disasters. They are the price of humanity’s fossil fuel addiction,” said UN Secretary-General António Guterres.

“This year’s United in Science report shows climate impacts heading into uncharted territory of destruction. Yet each year we double-down on this fossil fuel addiction, even as the symptoms get rapidly worse,” Mr. Guterres said.

A press release [Governor Newsom Signs Sweeping Climate Measures, Ushering in New Era of World-Leading Climate Action, \(Link\)](#), said, “California enacted some of the nation’s most aggressive climate measures in history as Governor Gavin Newsom signed a sweeping package of legislation to cut pollution, protect Californians from big polluters, and accelerate the state’s transition to clean energy. The Governor partnered with legislative leaders [this session](#) to advance groundbreaking measures to achieve carbon neutrality no later than 2045 and 90% clean energy by 2035, establish new setback measures protecting communities from oil drilling, capture carbon pollution from the air, advance nature-based solutions, and more.”

“This is an essential piece of the [California Climate Commitment](#), a record \$54 billion investment in climate action that exceeds what most countries are spending and advances economic opportunity and environmental justice in communities across the state.”

“Over the next two decades, the California Climate Commitment will:”

- Create 4 million new jobs
- Cut air pollution by 60%
- Reduce state oil consumption by 91%
- Save California \$23 billion by avoiding the damages of pollution
- Reduce fossil fuel use in buildings and transportation by 92%
- Cut refinery pollution by 94%

“Taken together, these measures represent the most significant action on the climate crisis in California’s history and raises the bar for governments around the world.”

“This month has been a wake-up call for all of us that later is too late to act on climate change. California isn’t waiting any more,” said Governor Newsom. “Together with the Legislature, California is taking the most aggressive action on climate our nation has ever seen. We’re cleaning the air we breathe, holding the big polluters accountable, and ushering in a new era for clean energy. That’s climate action done the California Way – and we’re not only doubling down, we’re just getting started.”

COVID is not Done with Us:

In Covid will be a leading cause of death in the U.S. indefinitely, whether or not the pandemic is 'over' Disease experts predict that Covid will remain among the top 10 causes of death in the U.S. for the foreseeable future, by Aria Bendix and Shannon Pettypiece ([Link](#)) we learn, “Since April, Covid deaths have stayed relatively flat, at a weekly average of around 300 to 500 per day. If the trend continues, the U.S. could expect 113,000 to 188,000 deaths a year from Covid, putting it on par with Alzheimer’s, chronic lower respiratory diseases and stroke. Experts said Covid is likely to remain among the U.S.’s 10 leading causes of death for the foreseeable future, regardless of new vaccines, boosters or treatments that might become available.”

“If we were to see the number of deaths from Covid down to what we see on an annual basis for flu — somewhere in the 20,000-a-year range — we’ll then say that the pandemic is clearly over,” said Dr. Eric Toner, a senior scholar at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security at the Bloomberg School of Public Health.”

And in Long Covid Disables Millions Worldwide, Even as Rates Ease, Study Shows, by Jason Gale, ([Link](#)) the devastating impacts of long COVID are detailed. Gale reports, “Long Covid’s effects are, on average, similar to what occurs after a moderate-to-severe traumatic brain injury or complete deafness, said [Theo Vos](#), a professor of health metrics sciences at the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington, who led the study.

“The study, published in the journal JAMA, helps explain why as many as 4 million Americans have dropped out of the workforce in the wake of the pandemic and why long Covid may cost \$3.7 trillion in the US alone. More than 94 million cases and 1 million Covid deaths have been reported in the US, where the coronavirus infected almost 42,000 people a day on average in September.”

Gale says, “The latest analysis accounts for Covid cases through the end of 2021, before omicron variants fueled an unprecedented surge in infections. UK data suggest the hyper-infectious omicron clan of strains is much less likely to cause long Covid than the delta variant that preceded it.”

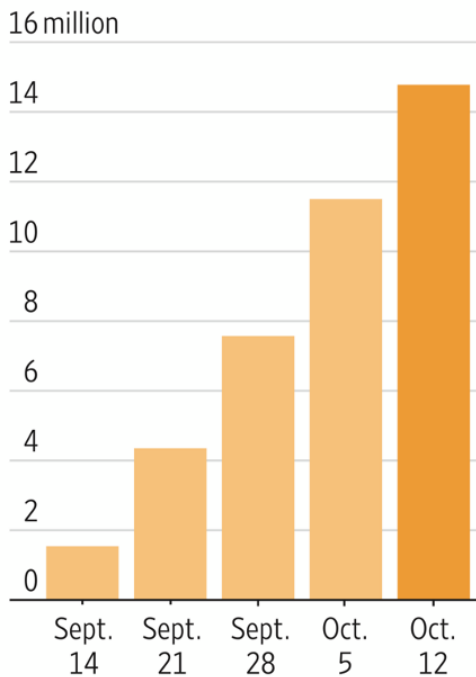
And sticking to the theme of “Be afraid,” David Axe reports in [The Nightmare COVID Variant That Beats Our Immunity Is Finally Here \(Link\)](#), “A new subvariant of the novel-coronavirus called XBB dramatically announced itself earlier this week, in Singapore. New COVID-19 cases more than doubled in a day, from 4,700 on Monday to 11,700 on Tuesday—and XBB is almost certainly why. The same subvariant just appeared in Hong Kong, too.”

“A highly mutated descendant of the Omicron variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that drove a record wave of infections starting around a year ago, XBB is in many ways the worst form of the virus so far. It’s more contagious than any previous variant or subvariant. It also evades the antibodies from monoclonal therapies, potentially rendering a whole category of drugs ineffective as COVID treatments.”

“That’s the bad news,” Axe says. “The good news is that the new ‘bivalent’ vaccine boosters from Pfizer and Moderna seem to work just fine against XBB, even though the original vaccines are less effective against XBB. As the novel-coronavirus evolves to become more contagious and more resistant to certain types of drugs, keeping current on your boosters is ‘the most impactful thing you can do in preparation for what might come,’ says Peter Hotez, an expert in vaccine development at Baylor College.”

The US purchased 171 million bivalent BA.5 booster shots; less than 10% have been given. There's a new wave on the way, fueled by BQ.1.1. A booster is your best shot to add protection vs severe Covid.

Cumulative bivalent vaccines administered in the U.S.



Note: Data are released weekly by the CDC.
Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

War in Ukraine:

Continuing to be scary, we look at the war in Ukraine. In [Russia's annexation puts world 'two or three steps away' from nuclear war](#), by Liz Sly, ([Link](#)). Sly says, "President Vladimir Putin's declaration of the annexation of four regions in eastern and southern Ukraine signals the onset of a new and highly dangerous phase in the seven-month war, one that Western officials and analysts fear could escalate to the use of nuclear weapons for the first time in 77 years. Now that the areas being fought over are regarded by Moscow as Russian, it is possible to chart a course of events toward the first use of a nuclear weapon since the 1945 atomic bombing of Japan."

"It's a low probability event, but it is the most serious case of nuclear brinkmanship since the 1980s" when the Cold War ended, said Franz-Stefan Gady, a senior fellow with the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London. "It is a very dangerous situation and it needs to be taken seriously by Western policymakers."

Sly says, "The West had been hoping that Ukrainian successes would force Putin to back down, but instead he is doubling down. 'Time and again we are seeing that Vladimir Putin sees this as a big existential war and he's ready to up the stakes if he is losing on the battlefield,' said Alexander Gabuev, a senior fellow with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace who was based in Moscow until earlier this year."

"U.S. and European officials say they are taking the threats seriously," says Sly." White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said on Sunday that there would be 'catastrophic consequences' if Russia resorts to the use of nuclear weapons. He refused to specify what those would be but said the precise consequences had been spelled out privately to Russian officials at very high levels."

Nuclear war has to be one of the scariest nightmares we can imagine. Let's hope it can be removed from the List of Horrors.

And while this List of Horrors is finished, we realize that the true list is much longer. This list is a good sampling of what we are facing so we will not go further. And next month we will dedicate our newsletter to what's good in the world and our gratitude for what has improved and that gives us hope.

Sonoma County Regional Climate Protection Agency Survey

The Sonoma County Regional Climate Protection Agency (RCPA) is seeking public input on its **RCPA Sonoma Climate Mobilization: A Call to Action**. RCPA is working to build community and funding support to help implement their Climate Mobilization Strategy. They want to design a climate expenditure plan that aligns with voter interests and supports the community's vision for a carbon neutral future. The recently passed SB 852 designates RCPA as an existing Climate Resilience District – making them the first in the State. Now they want to put their strategy into action! Please complete the survey:

RCPA Climate Survey: <https://scta-rcpa.typeform.com/SCMCalltoAction>

Members in the News

SOMO Village Opens 24,000sf Coworking Center

One of the North Bay's largest mixed-use developments now is opening a sizable coworking center as part of a rollout of live-work services ahead of construction of hundreds of homes at the project.

Santa Rosa Junior College President Frank Chong to Retire After 11 years

Santa Rosa Junior College President Frank Chong has announced plans to retire next summer after 11 years as head of the two-year institution, saying, at 65, he's eager to fill his days with golf, travel and other personal pursuits.

Sonoma Raceway's Jill Gregory Honored as One of San Francisco Business Times Influential Women of 2022

These honorees have reached the highest level of the typically male-dominated Bay Area sports arena.

Redwood Credit Union Plans to Hire Hundreds in Napa County in Wine Country Push

The credit union is seeking to fill positions in Napa, where it expects to eventually add 600 employees.

Sonoma Media Investments Names Eric Johnston New CEO

Eric Johnston, a veteran media executive who started in the news industry when he was in high school in Lodi, has been hired as the new chief executive officer of Sonoma Media Investments, replacing the retiring Steve Falk.

Dominican University Awarded \$3 Million Grant to Support Hispanic Students

Dominican University of California has been awarded a five-year \$3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education to improve educational outcomes for Hispanic students.

Sonoma Valley Hospital CEO Works to Make a Difference

Though he's held six positions at community hospitals in his career, one thing that is different for the 51-bed Sonoma Valley Hospital CEO John Hennelly this time around is he's not actually employed by the hospital.

Sonoma Raceway's Ferrari Challenge Event Proceeds Donated to Speedway Children's Charities Sonoma Chapter

Spectators at the Ferrari Challenge event at Sonoma Raceway earlier this month not only got to experience the thrill of Ferrari race cars battling for a championship win, but also helped generate funds for Speedway Children's Charities Sonoma to the tune of \$35,000.



Who We Are

Over thirty 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

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