

POLICY WATCH – May 2023

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This issue looks at some victories and losses. NBLC is pleased that the funding to making improvements on the critical Hwy. 37 corridor have a better chance of beginning with the passage of the ability to make that highway a toll road, reflective of it becoming a bridge when ultimately completed. We are also encouraged that the improvements will include bus transit service, a carpool lane and a means-based toll to make the tolling more equitable.

We are watching the state budget and the current winners and losers. With the deficit now at \$31.5 billion and potentially much higher, we know that there is a need to curtail spending. But some of the suggested cuts are counterproductive. It will be interesting to see how the Legislature tweaks the budget and NBLC will stay involved in that process.

In the meantime, heed the advice of Bill Gates and scientists and take some time to slack off and play. Make sure you take that summer vacation this year!

Don’t miss the Marin Housing Summit on May 31st. With the state streamlining housing approvals and increasing housing quotas we have a glimmer of hope for ending the housing crisis.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cynthia Murray". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cynthia

NBLC Helped Get Highway 37 Tolling Approved Which Will Fund Improvements

North Bay Leadership Council helped lead the way to raise funding to improve Highway 37, a key commuter route for employees working in Marin and Sonoma Counties coming from the East Bay. The project is being led by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission to reduce traffic by widening and elevating the roadway in stages, as well as providing environmental improvements to the wetlands along the highway. Cynthia Murray, CEO, NBLC, testified at a hearing on tolling, that “We feel that as it becomes a bridge it should be treated like other bridges and we really want to make sure that we have a functioning highway

before it goes under water, and these improvements are critical in making sure that the road can be raised and widened to meet the needs of the North Bay,” she told the commission.

The California Transportation Commission approved the Bay Area Infrastructure Financing Authority’s request to apply a toll on State Route 37. Part of their approval was because of the support by NBLC. According to Susan Wood, North Bay Business Journal, ([Link](#)), “The unanimous vote, made during Wednesday’s meeting, does not specify the toll amount. The approval came with two amendments: that the Transportation Commission is required to consider toll discounts based on regional, rather than federal income levels. The second amendment requires the commission to update its guidelines for toll hearings.”

Wood said, “Prone to heavy traffic congestion and flooding, Highway 37 is scheduled to receive short- and long-term improvements whose costs will be passed along to motorists. The tolls are seen as a matching incentive to attract state and federal funds.”

“Overall, the project would be a benefit for those working or living in Marin and Sonoma. Two lanes in each direction rather than the single lane section would reduce travel time and allow transit options from Solano County to Marin,” Transportation Authority of Marin Executive Director Anne Richman has said.

“State and regional transportation officials are proposing the toll to help offset a \$430 million price tag on the road widening of the road that overall runs 21 miles between Marin and Solano counties from U.S. Highway 101 to Interstate 80,” said Wood. “The road widening is expected to start in 2025 and finish two years later. The project to raise Highway 37 because of flooding caused by torrential rains and tidal surges will cost approximately \$6 billion and take 10 to 20 years to complete, according to transportation officials. The highway was originally designed as a toll road when it was built nearly 100 years ago.”

Winners and losers in Newsom’s California budget deficit plan

CalMatters ([Link](#)) offers their analysis of the winners and losers in the May Revise of the State Budget. Gov. Newsom has predicted a rising state deficit of \$31.5 billion which is a big swing from the substantial surplus we had just a year ago. The Legislative Analyst’s Office disagrees with the Governor’s assessment and predicts that the deficit will be much larger. They say that the situation is “muddy” due to the extension of residents to not pay their state taxes until October due to the storm damage throughout the state and the uncertain economic future given that many predict a recession by fall.

Here are the winners and losers in the Governor’s May Revise. Please note that much of this could change as the legislature negotiates the budget with the Governor which must be passed by June 15th. NBLC is pleased with the winners but hopes something more can be done around the failure to fund much of the climate change proposals, childcare providers, transit systems and struggling hospitals.

Winners

Dyslexia screening backers: As someone who struggles with dyslexia himself, Newsom added \$1 million for teacher training and a requirement for dyslexia screening.

Foster youth advocates: Newsom restored \$20 million to the Court Appointed Special Advocates program for 2023-24, which advocates for foster youth and supports about 16% of California’s foster population. An additional \$20 million in funding is planned for 2024-25 as well.

Flood protection supporters: An additional \$290 million to the flood control budget brings the total that Newsom proposes to invest in flood protection to \$492 million.

Public health agencies: Newsom restored \$50 million for public health workforce training programs that were cut in his January proposal.

Losers

Climate programs: In January, Newsom slashed \$6 billion from the \$54 billion five-year climate package. His May proposal put another \$1.1 billion for climate resilience programs in jeopardy if a “climate bond” isn’t approved.

Childcare providers: On top of delaying funds for 20,000 of next year’s new childcare slots, which Newsom proposed in January, his May revise provides only an 8% cost-of-living raise, compared to providers’ requests for a 25% increase in reimbursement rates.

Public transit systems: Despite pleas from local agencies, Newsom unveiled no aid as they face a dire “fiscal cliff.”

School arts programs: Newsom slashed proposed grants for arts, music and instructional materials from \$2.3 billion in his January proposal to \$1.8 billion.

Prison towns residents: Newsom cut the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation budget by more than \$100 million and he’s moving forward with closing correctional facilities in Blythe and California City by 2025.

Struggling hospitals: Hospitals did not get the \$1.5 billion in immediate relief they had been seeking. But Newsom did allocate \$150 million to establish a loan program for distressed hospitals, and on Monday signed the necessary legislation.

Bill Gates’ 2023 Commencement Speech

Bill Gates gave the 2023 commencement speech to Northern Arizona University’s College of Engineering, Informatics, and Applied Sciences and the College of the Environment, Forestry, and Natural Sciences ([Link](#))

“Some of you might know that I never made it to my own graduation. I left after three semesters to start Microsoft. So, what does a college dropout know about graduation? Not much personally, to be honest.

As I prepared for today, I thought about how you, as new graduates, can have the biggest impact on the world with the education you received here. That led me to thinking about the graduation I never had, the commencement speech I never heard, and the advice I wasn’t given on a day just like this one.

That is what I want to share with you this afternoon: The five things I wish I was told at the graduation I never attended.

The first thing is, **your life isn’t a one-act play.**

You probably feel a lot of pressure right now to make the right decisions about your career. It might feel like those decisions are permanent. They're not. What you do tomorrow—or for the next ten years—does not have to be what you do forever.

When I left school, I thought I would work at Microsoft for the rest of my life.

Today, I still love my work on software, but philanthropy is my full-time job. I spend my days working to create innovations that fight climate change and reduce inequalities around the world—including in health and education.

I feel lucky that our foundation gets to support amazing institutions like NAU—even if it's not what I imagined I'd be doing when I was 22. Not only is it okay to change your mind or have a second career... it can be a very good thing.

The second piece of advice I wish I heard at my graduation is that **you are never too smart to be confused.**

I thought I knew everything I needed to know when I left college. But the first step to learning something new is embracing what you don't know, instead of focusing on what you do know.

At some point in your career, you will find yourself facing a problem you cannot solve on your own. When that happens, don't panic. Take a breath. Force yourself to think things through. And then find smart people to learn from.

It could be a colleague with more experience. It could be one of your fellow graduates, who has a good perspective and will push you to think differently. It could be an expert in the field who is willing to reply to your questions over DM.

Just about everything I have accomplished came because I sought out others who knew more. People want to help you. The key is to not be afraid to ask.

You may be done with school. But you can—and should—see the rest of your life as an education.

My third piece of advice is to **gravitate toward work that solves an important problem.**

The good news is, you are graduating at a time when there are many important problems to solve. New industries and companies are emerging every day that will allow you to make a living and make a difference, and advances in science and technology have made it easier than ever to make a big impact.

For example, many of you are becoming foresters. Your professors taught you about cutting-edge tools, like drones that use LIDAR to produce accurate maps of the forest floor. You could find new ways to use that technology to help fight climate change.

Some of you are heading off to start careers as programmers. You could use your talents to make sure all people can benefit from artificial intelligence—or to help eliminate biases in AI.

When you spend your days doing something that solves a big problem, it energizes you to do your best work. It forces you to be more creative, and it gives your life a strong sense of purpose.

My fourth piece of advice is simple: **Don't underestimate the power of friendship.**

When I was in school, I became friends with another student who shared a lot of my interests, like science fiction novels and computer magazines.

Little did I know how important that friendship would be. My friend's name was Paul Allen—and we started Microsoft together.

Remember that people you've sat next to in lectures, skied Snowbowl with, and competed against on Wingo night are not just your classmates. They are your network. Your future co-founders and colleagues. A great future source of support, information, and advice.

The only thing more valuable than what you walk offstage with today is who you walk onstage with.

My last piece of advice is the one I could have used the most. It took me a long time to learn. And it is this: **You are not a slacker if you cut yourself some slack.**

When I was your age, I didn't believe in vacations. I didn't believe in weekends. I pushed everyone around me to work very long hours. In the early days of Microsoft, my office overlooked the parking lot—and I would keep track of who was leaving early and staying late.

But as I got older—and especially once I became a father—I realized there is more to life than work.

Don't wait as long as I did to learn this lesson. Take time to nurture your relationships, to celebrate your successes, and to recover from your losses.

Take a break when you need to. Take it easy on the people around you when they need it, too.

And before you begin the next stage of your lives, take a moment and have some fun. Tonight, this weekend, this summer, whenever. You deserve it.

Class of 2023, the future belongs to you. I believe you will be the ones to solve the climate crisis and reduce the gap between the rich and poor.

You have already made history by attending college during some truly unprecedented times. I have no doubt that you will continue to make history throughout the rest of your lives. I cannot wait to see how you will drive progress around the world."

The Science of Play -- Take that Summer Vacation!

If you heed Bill Gates' advice to not be afraid of slacking off and having some fun, you will also be following what scientists have discovered about the benefits of play. In **[Bill Gates Just Advised Young People to Have More Fun. Science Agrees Play Helps You Be Successful](#)**, ([Link](#)) Jessica Stillman says, "Play is an antidote to burnout and a balm to creativity. Physicist Richard Feynman claimed goofing off not only saved him from one of the lowest points in his career, but also led directly to the work that earned him a Nobel prize. Albert Einstein apparently used long stints lounging on his sailboat to think through his ideas. Research suggests these geniuses are not alone in seeing a link between creative energy and 'slacking off.'"

"Research has found evidence that play at work is linked with less fatigue, boredom, stress, and burnout in individual workers. Play is also positively associated with job satisfaction, a sense of competence, and creativity. Studies show that when a participant receives a task that is presented playfully, they are more involved and spend more time on the task," reports the American Psychological Science blog.

Stillman says, "A variety of time management and innovation experts have argued for leaving time to, essentially, goof off in your schedule if your end goal is to maximize your productivity and impact. This time for play helps us break out of our usual thought patterns and allows for half-baked ideas to percolate in the brain."

So take that summer vacation and give yourself more time to play!

Marin Housing Summit – Support More Housing in Marin on May 31st

Hey Housing Advocate,

Are you passionate about shaping a brighter future for Marin, with housing opportunities for all residents? 🏠 Interested in exploring how we can turn the potential of new housing into a reality that benefits everyone?

Join us for #AffordableHousingMonth in May at "**Seizing the Housing Moment: Empowering our Community through Collaborative Implementation of the Housing Elements**," where we'll explore these questions and more. Register for our Zoom event on **Wednesday, May 31, from 5:00-6:00 PM** Pacific Time, and get ready to make a difference!

Join us for our convening of the Marin Housing Summit for a dynamic and engaging panel event designed to bring together housing advocates with experts from legal, finance, housing development, and government sectors. This event is your opportunity to be part of the movement to leverage the potential of the housing elements to shape a thriving, inclusive Marin for all.

Hear from an insightful panel who will share their experiences, challenges, and innovative solutions for implementing housing units approved under the housing elements. Gain practical strategies for approval, financing, and construction, and be inspired by the power and importance of collaboration across sectors to achieve our housing goals.

By fostering a dialogue between key stakeholders, "Seizing the Housing Moment" aspires to empower our community to capitalize on the potential of the housing elements, promoting a shared vision of accessible and inclusive housing that drives meaningful change across Marin. Sign up now, and let's build a brighter housing future together!

Register at tinyurl.com/housingmoment23

Make your voice heard! Complete the State Digital Equity Survey

The internet is critical to everyday life. Yet 1 out of 5 Californians do not have access to affordable, reliable broadband internet, devices, or the skills to use them. Due to this gap, referred to as the digital divide,

many are unable to obtain jobs, advance in their careers, participate in online education, or access healthcare and essential government services.

The California Department of Technology (CDT) has developed one of the most accessible and innovative digital equity surveys in the nation to help achieve Broadband for All Californians. The survey will help identify digital equity barriers and needs of Californians living in unserved and underserved communities to help inform the State's Digital Equity Plan, which once submitted and approved by the NTIA, will qualify California for additional funds to ensure that all Californians have access to affordable and reliable broadband internet service, devices, and skills training.

The survey is mobile friendly, available in English and 13 other languages, and has an audio option to hear spoken, recorded questions to collect a wide variety of input, including responses from Californians with vision or reading impairments. The survey also includes an interactive speed test, enabling users to measure their internet speed in real time and report it in their survey response.

[Take the Survey](#) for your household now. Hurry, the deadline for collecting feedback is June 30, 2023.

Members in the News

Midstate Construction Completes Mirasol Village Blocks B&E (formerly Twin Rivers)

General contractor Midstate Construction Corporation, and developer McCormack Baron Salazar in coordination with Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency recently completed Mirasol Village Blocks B & E (formerly Twin Rivers), a new 123 unit mixed-income residential complex in Sacramento, CA.

Northern California Public Media Nominated for an Emmy Award

Congratulations to the NorCal – Public Media TV production team on being nominated for an Emmy Award in the category of Public Affairs – “From Homeless to Housed-Labath Landing.”

Sonoma Raceway Offers \$25 College Race Ticket Announced for Toyota/Save Mart 350

It's graduation season, and in celebration of grads and NASCAR's stop at the famed West Coast road course, Sonoma Raceway is extending an exclusive opportunity to all college students with a valid .edu email address.

SRJC Breaks Ground on Construction Training Center

Santa Rosa Junior College on Wednesday officially began building its long-planned 10,000-square-foot construction training center at its 40-acre Petaluma campus.

Burbank Housing Gets \$14 million for 1st-Time Homebuyer Loans

Burbank Housing has received \$14.72 million for homebuyers that can be used on homes anywhere in Sonoma County, provided the buyers are lower income (or moderate-income disaster victims) first-time homebuyers.

Buck Institute for Research on Aging Launches the First-Ever Online Course on the Biology of Aging!

Education has always been part of the Buck's mission; the public has always been included in the Institute's community seminars and tours.

North Bay Leadership Council Supports Connolly Taking Strong Steps to Address Concerns of Richmond Bridge Commuters

It's good to see that Assemblyman Damon Connolly hasn't given up trying to get traffic moving for those relying on the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge.



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

www.northbayleadership.org