

POLICY WATCH – November 2023

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Happy Thanksgiving! North Bay Leadership Council gives thanks for a year without bad fires, the end of the drought, waning of the pandemic, resiliency of the economy, SMART ridership rebounding, homelessness reduced, new legislation passed to spur more housing construction and many more positive things to make it even better to live and work in the North Bay. We are also grateful to our members and our readers of this newsletter for their support and encouragement.

Check out the benefits of gratitude article to deepen why you should practice gratitude to improve your life. We also look at some new studies of how Californians are feeling about their state and their lives that show where some hurdles need to be overcome as we enter a big election year. And the article on the decline of local news is alarming when having access to facts is more important than ever.

Hope you have a wonderful time with your family and friends over the holidays!

Best,

Cynthia

Give Thanks! The Positive Benefits of Gratitude

There are many scientifically proven **benefits of gratitude** and how being grateful can have positive impacts on your life – from better physical and mental health, increased energy levels, and reduced stress to improved relationships with family, friends or coworkers and even financial success. [In Benefits of Gratitude: 31 Powerful Reasons to be More Grateful](#) by Gene P. ([Link](#)) the author provides good science and advice. We won't share all 31 reasons but here are a few to ponder:

1. Gratitude makes us happier.

It's a little known fact that happiness is one of the few things in life you can grow with the right attitude. One approach to **cultivating happiness** is keeping expressing your gratitude in everyday life by writing gratitude letters (that never need to be sent) to people you feel grateful for in your everyday life. Writing about people, experiences, or moments that evoke thankfulness helps to create an overall feeling of joy and contentment; and the **power of expressing gratitude** should not be underestimated! From

quick “*thank-you notes*” to special events showering loved ones with appreciation gifts or writing full on gratitude letters, taking the time to recognize how fortunate we are in life **can transform how we experience happiness** each day – it just takes a bit of conscious effort.

Daily gratitude does not take long. Creating a **daily gratitude habit** does not take a ton of time. Simply allocating 5 minutes a day can have a large impact. A **five-minute daily gratitude journal** can increase your long-term well-being by **more than 10 percent**. That's the same impact as doubling your income!

2. Gratitude makes people like us.

We've all heard it before: **attitude is everything**. While that phrase might be a bit of an optimistic outlook, research has found that this optimistic view is quite accurate. In two studies with 243 study participants, those who were 10% more grateful than average had 17.5% more social capital. So having an attitude of gratitude actually makes people like us more! Further studies have shown that expressing our gratitude not only provides us with better personal experiences, but also helps create social capital with those around us.

Being open and vocal about our appreciation stimulates **prosocial behavior** from those around us, further strengthening the bonds between individuals. So don't be afraid to **appreciate the small things** – in doing so, you may find yourself **improving your relationships** significantly!

3. Gratitude makes us healthier.

We all know that **physical health is important**, but what is equally relevant to our well-being are the feelings we cultivate within ourselves. Recognizing the **benefits of practicing gratitude** can do more than just lift our spirits – research shows it helps us reach physical health milestones too. Studies have revealed that regular displays of gratitude in our everyday life can **reduce levels of cortisol** released in the body, potentially **reducing blood pressure** and **relieving chronic physical pain**.

4. Gratitude improves career opportunity.

When it comes to the workplace, gratitude plays an important role – yet often, it gets neglected on a daily basis. From **improving career opportunity** to making you a more **effective manager** and improving your **decision-making capabilities**, we should be giving gratitude more attention. In difficult situations or even in everyday conversations with colleagues, taking a **moment to thank someone** can help us all to feel happier. And of course, various studies have found that **being grateful at work** helps us **find mentors** and leads us one step closer to achieving **our career goals**.

5. Gratitude strengthens our positive emotions.

Gratitude is like a good breakfast—it sets you up for the day. Feeling unappreciated and overwhelmed by **everyday difficulties** can get us down in the dumps, but good things are always around us if we take the time to look for them. Gratitude can help bring those **good things into focus** and boost our spirits! Regularly reflecting on everything from simple pleasures like sunny days or good conversations to life-altering moments of joy can help us **strengthen our positive emotions** and reduce our envy. Taking **gratitude breaks** throughout the day helps remind us of all the good that exists around us, even when it feels like there's not a lot of good news in the world.

How does expressing gratitude improve personality? Practicing gratitude has the power to **transform our personalities** in a variety of ways. Studies by counseling psychologists show that an attitude of gratitude benefits us on multiple levels – including our personality. **Expressing appreciation** for life's

blessings results in far more than just inner peace, as it benefits us in many facets of life. A little gratitude helps us develop an optimistic outlook, reduces materialism, and increases spirituality.

As we **focus on the good and joyous moments** from our past, we become less self-centered and better equipped to view the world around us from others' perspectives; prosocial behavior is known to increase connectedness between people. Not only does gratitude **reduce feelings of emotional distress** such as depression and anxiety, but psychologists also remark that it can lead to increased self-esteem, social engagement, and better overall well-being. While all of these benefits of gratitude are impressive enough on their own, when taken together they form one amazing tool for developing a personality that radiates positivity!

6. Gratitude makes us more optimistic.

It's no surprise that **gratitude and optimism** go hand-in-hand, especially with the evidence suggesting that increasing our level of gratitude leads directly to a boost in our optimism. For people suffering from loneliness, disappointment or negative emotions, developing a **practice of gratitude** can lead to swapping out these feelings for positive ones. This can help us look on life with an optimistic outlook rather than one filled with despair.

The science behind gratitude and optimism:

- In one study of keeping a weekly gratitude journal, participants showed a 5% increase in optimism.
- In another study, keeping a daily gratitude journal resulted in a 15% increase in optimism.
- Optimism is correlated with gratitude. The above studies show that it isn't just correlation – increasing one's level of gratitude increases one's level of optimism.

With even just **writing down one thing** we're thankful for each day, we can significantly **increase our happiness** and improve our health – not to mention increase lifespan!

7. Gratitude reduces materialism.

The important role of **gratitude in reducing materialism** cannot be overstated. Several studies have found that gratitude reduces short term gratification and reinforces the pursuit of **more meaningful goals in life**. Little gratitude, on the other hand, can cause people to become obsessed with accumulating material possessions – often masking underlying feelings of unhappiness. Thus, people should strive to recognize the importance of expressing gratitude and take moments out of their day to **appreciate all that they have achieved**. Doing so will not only help them live a more satisfying life but also reduce their materialistic needs in the long run.

How EXACTLY does gratitude reduce materialism? Materialism flows from two sources: role models and insecurity.

1. Americans are constantly bombarded the materialistic ideal that **money brings success**. This notion is perpetuated by advertisements, celebrity culture, and business standards for **achieving our dreams**. Gratitude can be a powerful tool to help diminish **feelings of comparison** or envy towards these materialist “role models”.
2. Those with unmet psychological needs, such as **lack of confidence** or having had **difficult upbringings**, can be more likely to become materialistic. Fortunately for them – and everyone else too! – cultivating gratitude is a great way to break the cycle: perceiving benevolence triggers an emotional response that fosters feelings of security rather than insecurity and consumerism. Being grateful gives us a sense of being enveloped in

kindness from our environment which diminishes any underlying fear we may experience otherwise.

9. Gratitude makes us less self-centered.

Studies have shown that cultivating an **attitude of gratitude** can make us **less self-centered** and more open to others, and my own experience certainly supports this. When we focus on the benefits of gratitude – for example Robert Emmons' '**Three Good Things**' exercise – we direct our attention away from ourselves and towards others, as well as the realization that we aren't the only ones who deserve recognition. Gratitude practice can be far more beneficial than **self-esteem therapy**; while self-esteem therapy may give us a confidence boost in the short term, in the long term it can actually make us **more narcissistic** or damage our **self-esteem**. But with gratitude practice, there are no such risks – the effects are always positive.

10. Gratitude increases self-esteem.

When it comes to **matters of self-esteem**, **daily mantras** just don't always cut it! Nothing works better than knowing that your peers are not only interested in helping you out, but also doing so out of genuine goodness and care for your well-being. Gratitude is the emotion that encompasses this feeling, and when developed daily can lead to a positive outlook on life. As a result, countless **acts of kindness** are done daily that helps bridge divides between people and increase everyone's self-esteem.

Gratitude creates a more supportive social dynamic in three ways:

1. **Expressing gratitude** is a powerful tool that can open up **unexpected opportunities**. Research has proven it not only strengthens relationships and helps spread good vibes, but also increases one's social capital – making them **more likely to be helped by others** simply because they're liked and appreciated.
2. **Gratitude increases your recognition of benevolence**. For example, a person with low self-esteem may view an **act of kindness** with a skeptical eye, thinking that the benefactor is trying to get something from them. A grateful person would take the kindness at face value, believing themselves to be a person worthy of receiving no-strings-attached kindness.
3. **Practicing gratitude makes you feel better about yourself**. Chances are good that you do not do good things simply because it makes you feel good about yourself. But it is a nice side effect. Coupling gratitude with things like positive mantras will help to increase your confidence even more.

How does gratitude affect health?

Research shows that cultivating gratitude can have many **amazing health benefits**; not only can you expect to be feeling more relaxed and calmer, but you might also find yourself **living a healthier life**. For starters, grateful people tend to get **better quality of sleep**, which is incredibly important for health maintenance. On top of that, gratitude has been associated with overall increased health and vitality. Studies suggest that people who experience and express gratitude may even **live longer lives!**

Below is the full list of benefits. To read more about the ones not covered here, go to the link at the beginning of this article. And as we face the stresses and concerns of our world – locally, nationally and globally – let's give thanks for what is right and good to find balance and gain the benefits of giving gratitude.

BENEFITS OF GRATITUDE

1. Gratitude makes us happier.
2. Gratitude makes people like us.
3. Gratitude makes us healthier.
4. Gratitude improves career opportunity.
5. Gratitude strengthens our positive emotions.
6. Gratitude makes us more optimistic.
7. Gratitude reduces materialism.
8. Gratitude increases spiritualism.
9. Gratitude makes us less self-centered.
10. Gratitude increases self-esteem.
11. Gratitude improves your sleep.
12. Gratitude keeps you away from the doctor.
13. Gratitude lets you live longer.
14. Gratitude increases your energy levels.
15. Gratitude makes you more likely to exercise.
16. Gratitude strengthens your immune system
17. Gratitude helps us bounce back.
18. Gratitude makes us feel good.
19. Gratitude give us happier memories.
20. Gratitude reduces feelings of envy.
21. Gratitude helps us relax.
22. Gratitude makes you friendlier.
23. Gratitude helps your marriage.
24. Gratitude makes you look good.
25. Gratitude helps you make friends.
26. Gratitude deepens existing friendships.
27. Gratitude makes you a more effective manager.
28. Gratitude helps you network.
29. Gratitude increases your goal achievement.
30. Gratitude improves your decision making.
31. Gratitude increases your productivity.

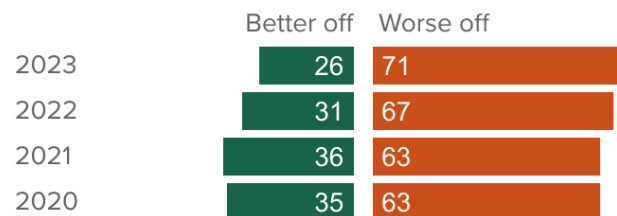
Why Voters Don't Feel Good about the Economy

NBLC is seeking to understand the disconnect in people's perception that the economy is not healthy juxtaposed to the fact that the economy is doing well in terms of job generation, productivity, increased wages, reduced inflation and other factors. We found this Public Policy Institute of California Statewide Survey on *Californians and their Economic Well-Being* survey ([Link](#)) that was conducted in October illuminating. Here are some of the key findings of this survey:

"Jobs, the economy, and inflation have been the most important issue for Californians throughout this year—even amid job creation, relatively low unemployment rates, and a slowing pace of inflation. Clearly, concerns about higher interest rates and consumer prices are still having an impact. Lower-income Californians continue to grapple with high housing costs, while upper-income Californians are experiencing more turbulence in the financial markets. A divided Congress and declining state revenues are creating new uncertainties about programs and services that aim to expand economic opportunity in California."

- **Majorities of Californians think the state is headed in the wrong direction and predict bad economic times for the state economy in the next 12 months.** About half or fewer approve of the governor and the state legislature on their handling of jobs and the economy. Roughly one in four say the availability of well-paying jobs is a big problem in their region, including three in ten lower-income Californians. About one in four lower-income residents say that the lack of well-paying jobs in their region is making them seriously consider moving out of the state.

Most Californians think children today will be worse off financially than their parents

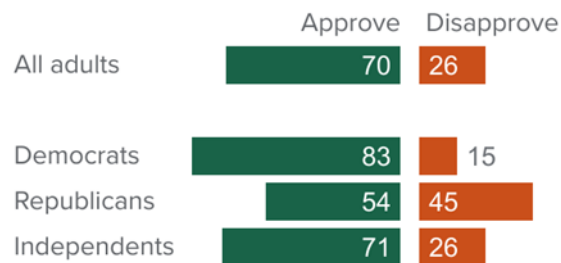


- **Most Californians are satisfied with their household's financial situation, but half of lower-income residents are not satisfied.** Majorities across income groups say that their personal finances today are about the same as they were a year ago. One in three residents think the "American Dream"—if you work hard, you will get ahead—still holds true. Seven in ten agree that when children in California today grow up, they will be worse off than their parents.
- **Three in ten Californians—including a majority of lower-income residents—report reducing meals or cutting back on food to save money.** Nearly one in five say that they have had difficulties paying their rent or mortgage, including four in ten lower-income residents. The majority have an unfavorable opinion of artificial intelligence (AI). Three in ten say they worry about their job being eliminated by AI, including more than four in ten lower-income residents.
- **Three in ten residents worry every day or almost every day about housing costs and retirement savings.** About one in four worry this often about paying bills and debts. Higher shares of lower-income residents worry this often about housing costs, retirement savings, bills, and debts. One

in three parents worry every day or almost every day about saving for their child’s college education.

- **One in three employed residents are very satisfied—and half are somewhat satisfied—with their jobs.** Eight in ten say their jobs offer at least a fair amount of security, and majorities say that their jobs offer opportunities for growth and advancement. Lower-income employed residents report lower job satisfaction, less job security, and fewer opportunities for growth and advancement.
- **Seven in ten Californians approve of labor unions and one in three want them to have more influence.** Overwhelming majorities sympathize with film and television actors in their labor dispute with studios, including majorities of voters across partisan groups.

Most Californians approve of labor unions



- **Overwhelming majorities favor increased government funding for child care programs and expansion of the earned income tax credit.** Majorities also favor government policies to reduce higher education costs, including making tuition free at two-year and four-year colleges and eliminating college debt. Nearly eight in ten are in favor of the government offering a public health care option, with partisans divided. Similarly overwhelming majorities—including strong majorities across political parties—support increased government funding for job training programs.

These responses show that economic progress has not reached people evenly and that many are still experiencing adverse economic impacts. Notably, those with low incomes have the greatest hardship and smallest degree of benefit from the booming economy.

A poll by the New California Coalition the New California Coalition, a nonpartisan civic movement that advocates for common-sense solutions to the state’s most pressing livability challenges echoes what PPIC discovered. The survey of 1,084 likely California voters portends what promises to be a volatile election season marked by change-hungry voters:

- 80% cite addressing the rising cost of food, gas and other essential goods as “extremely” or “very” important, second only to maintaining a safe and reliable supply of water, which was accordingly cited by 81% of respondents.
- 67% of respondents support preventing fentanyl and opioid addiction by increasing anti-drug trafficking operations and enforcing drug laws.
- 71% of voters think artificial intelligence is having a significant impact on the world, but a plurality — 45% — believe that AI’s impact will be mostly negative for people like themselves.

- 68% of respondents support workers striking for better wages and benefits, with support particularly high — 77% — among Latino voters.
- A solid majority — 59% — backs the \$4.6 billion bond that will appear on the March ballot to fund behavioral health housing.
- 69% of respondents think Prop 47 has negatively impacted public safety, with more than half saying the law has had a “very negative” effect on the state. An astonishing 83% of voters embrace an initiative to amend Prop 47.

The poll results underscore voters’ desire for a productive government/business relationship, highlighted by the six in ten voters who say that collaboration between state officials and the business sector is not only possible but crucial. This alliance is seen as a potential solution to counteract the escalating cost of living and housing in the state, which is causing a troubling exodus of companies, jobs, and residents, another key concern identified by the survey.

“Anyone who has been paying attention in recent years knows that Californians are clamoring for transformative solutions to our biggest problems. Affordability — specifically housing — spiraling crime, the scourge of fentanyl and the homelessness crisis on our streets are issues that demand immediate and forceful action,” said New California Coalition CEO Tracy Hernandez.

“We no longer have the luxury of nibbling around the edges of these problems.” “The results of this poll should be a major wakeup call to public officials at every level of California government,” added Jim Wunderman, New California Coalition Chairman. “Particularly with respect to ballot initiatives regarding crime and homelessness, it appears that the electorate is prepared to make some big changes.”

No News is Bad News

The New California Coalition also shared a new report on the state of newspapers in the U.S. They said, “A shocking new report from Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University offers a troubling assessment of the local news landscape. California currently has four counties without a news source, and 11 counties with only one. Across the state, outlets are dropping like flies.

By next year, we'll have one-third fewer newspapers than in 2005. And the new kids on the block – digital and ethnic news – are struggling to fill those gaping holes. The real kicker? Communities waving goodbye to their local news tend to be on the poorer side, often disconnected from the faster lanes of the information superhighway. This isn't just bad news for them; it's a crisis for democracy.

Here's the lowdown: over half of U.S. counties are news-starved. We've lost nearly 2,900 newspapers since 2005, and with them, a staggering 43,000 journalists. Alternative local news operations are hanging in there, but they're facing an uphill battle, with many struggling to keep the lights on. And local NPR stations? They're trying to make a dollar out of fifteen cents. There's a silver lining, though. Some news outlets, especially in wealthier areas, are finding their groove with innovative business models. It's proof that with the right mix of grit and community support, local news can still thrive.”

“The bottom line? If we want to save local news, it's going to take a village: policymakers, philanthropists, industry execs, and regular Joes and Janes. Because a world without local news is like a day without sunshine – bleak.” If we want to keep our local news sources, we must invest in them. Subscribe to your local paper today!

READ THE REPORT

CALIFORNIA NEWS, MAPPED

Career Readiness: Is Four Year College the Best Way to Prepare?

In [Is Gen Z opting out of four-year college?](#) by Karen D'Souza ([Link](#)) we learn of a big change in how young people are preparing for careers. D'Souza says, "Undergraduate enrollment may finally be making a comeback post-pandemic, but one new report shows a steep drop in traditional freshmen, The 74 reported. College enrollment rose by 2.1% this fall compared to last year's drop of roughly 1%, according to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, but freshman enrollment fell by 3.6% among 18- to 20-year-olds at four-year institutions. Instead, community colleges saw an enrollment uptick, particularly among first-year students over the age of 21 pursuing health care and construction jobs that require only short-term vocational training programs, the report found."

D'Souza says, "Doug Shapiro, executive director of the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, said in a statement the freshman decline may be a 'troubling sign' for higher education. 'This disparity in age aligns with the disparity in the kind of schools and the types of programs students are now choosing,' said Shapiro. 'If you're less confident the job you get, even after earning a degree, is going to pay you significantly more than what you could make right now, it makes sense why young students would focus on short-term programs that have more direct connections to the workforce.'"

FREE WEBINAR: How to Make Your Company Culture Shine

The banner features a blue background with white and yellow text. At the top left, it says "The Business Edge BRIEFING SERIES". To the right are logos for "DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY of CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE FOR LEADERSHIP STUDIES" and "NORTH BAY LEADERSHIP COUNCIL". The main title "How to Make Your Company Culture Shine" is in large yellow font. Below it, the date and time "Wed. Nov. 29th, 2023 | 9:00 am - 10:00 am PT | Online via Zoom" are listed. A circular portrait of Candra Canning is on the left, and her name and title "Candra Canning, Founder, Live Bright Now, LLC" are on the right. At the bottom right, it lists "Executive Education Instructor, Dominican University of California".

The Business Edge
BRIEFING SERIES

DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY
of CALIFORNIA
INSTITUTE FOR
LEADERSHIP STUDIES

NORTH BAY
LEADERSHIP
COUNCIL

How to Make Your Company Culture Shine

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Candra Canning
Founder
Live Bright Now, LLC

Executive Education Instructor
Dominican University of California

Members in the News

Cornerstone Properties, Catholic Charities of Santa Rosa, and Burbank Housing Are Creating New Housing Key to New Life Downtown

There's an anecdote developers like to share about Santa Rosa: More housing in downtown Santa Rosa will bring more people to downtown Santa Rosa.

Bank of America Community Partner Luncheon highlighting the Bank of America Study of Philanthropy

Bank of America's commitment to our community is really making a difference in so many people's lives!

GMH Builders Recognized by North Bay Business Journal With An Excellence in Construction Award

Congratulations to GMH for their outstanding efforts in the North Bay!

BPM Announces Six New Partner Promotions

BPM LLP, one of the top 35 largest public accounting and advisory firms in the country, is pleased to announce the elevation of six new Partners – Alan Alvarez, Sachi Danish, Elizabeth Dodson, Stacy Litteral, Josh Schmidt and John Weems.

NBLC Advocates for the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge Third Lane

Transportation planners are supporting a suite of projects to help ease gridlock over the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge, but to the dismay of discontented drivers, that won't, for now, involve opening a third westbound commute lane.

North Bay Children's Center's Susan Gilmore Celebrates 37 Years at the Helm

Congratulations Susan! The North Bay is a better place because you have served it and it's children' so dutifully. Thank you for all of your time, attention, and support!

Pacific Gas and Electric Company's First 100% Renewable Remote Grid

A partnership with the Pepperwood Foundation, Sonoma Clean Power, working with BoxPower and Franklin Energy.

Keysight Technologies Seeks to Buy Remainder of French Virtual-Prototyping Company

Keysight Technologies Inc. is looking to complete the second half of its planned billion-dollar acquisition of a Paris-based company that helps manufacturers predict how their products will work in the real world.



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

www.northbayleadership.org