

## Candidate calls for Cultivation Amnesty

**Cannabis is a big part of life here for better or worse.**

It has been an economic engine for the region for the past thirty years, at least.

It is no secret that Humboldt County has dropped the economic football by fumbling cannabis permitting. We have lost at least \$120 million dollars off of our budget as of the start of this year. That's an over 20 percent drop. It has surely gotten worse.

Humboldt County is not the only county to have fumbled the cannabis football.

Mendocino just voted to research and enact a Cannabis Cultivation Amnesty Transition Pathway for local growers who have not yet entered into the county cultivation program. The Board of Supervisors unanimously approved the research into a cannabis transition pathway program.

**The goal of the cultivation amnesty program is to transition all commercial cannabis cultivation from the black market to the legal market, with help from the state if necessary. In other words, the transition programs goal is to bring the businesses back and stop the rabid abatement of the local economy.**

The plan would give more years for legacy growers to transition into county compliance. The Mendocino cannabis program has had trouble with implementation, applications still being proposed, confusing ordinances, more financial losses than revenue, county staff departures, and the transition of running the cannabis program from the Mendocino County Department of Agriculture to Planning and Building Services.

The cannabis program has also had numerous complaints from the public, and the county estimates that more than 90 percent of cultivators in Mendocino County might be outside the permitting framework with no ability to re-enter the program after it closes. **Just like here in Humboldt County.**

**Sean DeVries, Candidate for Supervisor in Humboldt Counties 2<sup>nd</sup> District**

## Help for Low-Income Residents to Weather PG&E Blackout?

**The state had a program & \$72 million - but hardly anyone applied.**

When PG&E shut off power in early October, 2.1 million people lost electricity. Amid the darkness and confusion of the next two days, residents caught a glimpse of what researchers call "the climate gap." Those with solar panels, and more importantly, solar battery storage, fared pretty well during the outages. Tesla electric-car owners, some of whom had home solar systems, boasted about making pizzas in the midst of the blackout, while others watched movies in their parked cars. Meanwhile, those with limited means ended up buying expensive and polluting gas-powered generators at prices ranging from a couple hundred to a few thousand dollars. Many people, including some who rely on food stamps, were forced to throw out spoiled food. Those with medical disabilities worried about how long the outage would last and how much it would cost to keep a generator running.

The state already has a plan in place to help remedy this disparity. In 2017, California designated funding to help disadvantaged residents and community organizations access new technology like solar batteries, through its Self Generation Incentive Program's Equity Budget. It sounds like the perfect solution, one that by 2019, had accrued \$72 million. The problem is, for residents, not one installation has taken place.

FOR YEARS, SO-CALLED "EARLY ADOPTERS" — people who buy things like electric vehicles, or install solar panels on their roofs — have been rewarded with rebates. But people who cannot afford the upfront costs miss out on the savings and new technology. As a result, by the end of 2017, solar panels were three times as likely to be found outside of disadvantaged communities, per capita, than in them, according to "Distributed Solar and Environmental Justice," a research study conducted by Physicians, Scientists and Engineers for Healthy Energy (PSE). Meanwhile, low-income residents pay significantly more for electricity than early adopters do. That's partly because a larger portion of their paychecks goes to energy costs, says Boris Lukanov, a senior scientist with PSE and lead author of the study — about 7.2% of a low-income family's paycheck, compared to the average of 3.5% of their more fortunate neighbors pay. But it's also because in places like California, where solar adoption is high, the cost of moving electricity around the grid falls on those who use more power. That includes disadvantaged residents, whose housing infrastructure might not be the most energy-efficient, and whose access to solar installations is limited, due to the high cost. Working-class communities often have the most to gain from sustainable energy, and not just for financial reasons: Low-income and communities of color are disproportionately impacted by high gas emissions.

THIS PAST SEPTEMBER, the California Public Utilities Commission announced sweeping changes to the budget in hopes that more people will be encouraged to apply. The solution, it turns out, is more nuanced than simply having to pay for the upfront cost of solar batteries. Starting in 2020, the program will aim to cover nearly all of the costs for a battery installation for residents who live in a disadvantaged or low-income community.

**Jessica Kutz**  
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## BOLIVIAN COUP

**Continued From Front Page**

Morales won the October election by more than 10 points, beating his right-wing challenger, former President **Carlos Mesa**, 47% to 36%. A third party candidate took the remaining votes. Mesa was president from 2003-05, having previously served as vice president in the administration of President **Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada**. The latter was brought down by mass popular protest against his plans to sell off Bolivia's extensive natural gas reserves to foreign companies. The deals he proposed would have left little in profit for the Bolivian people and were condemned by social activists and indigenous groups as a continuation of the country's long exploitation by imperial powers—helped along by local economic elites.

Among those leading the protests during the "gas wars" had been Morales, who was elected Bolivia's first indigenous president at the head of the **Movement Toward Socialism (MAS)** party in 2005. One of his first acts upon coming to office was the complete nationalization of the country's hydrocarbon resources. It was a crime against capitalism which many mining and resource companies never forgave.

Utilizing the money generated from the now publicly-owned natural resource industries, the Morales government embarked on a massive—and successful—poverty elimination program. According to data collected by the Center for Economic and Policy Research, economic growth in Bolivia has been twice that of the Latin American and Caribbean region during the years of the Morales government.

Before the MAS came to power, Bolivia's government was collecting a paltry \$731 million in annual revenue from hydrocarbons. Following nationalization, that number soared more than seven times to reach \$4.95 billion. With account surpluses most years and increased trade with other left-leaning governments in the region, Bolivia was able to

achieve a measure of economic independence it had never before enjoyed.

The percent of the population living in poverty plummeted from a boggling 60% to 35% by 2018, with those in extreme poverty declining from nearly 38% to 15% in the same period. This was achieved by not only resource nationalization, but through a combination of redistributive wage and public investment policies and an abandonment of the extortionist demands of the International Monetary Fund.

The reforms of the Morales years extended well beyond the economy. Indigenous peoples in Bolivia gained new recognition and respect and their languages finally entered the public school curriculum. The disastrous "war on drugs" that had devastated vast stretches of the countryside and ruined the lives of peasant farmers was ended. The cultivation of coca—which has medicinal and other uses far beyond the production of cocaine—was legalized, and drug enforcement operations re-focused on trafficking. Constitutional reform in 2009 made Bolivia's status as a **plurinational**, secular state of many peoples and nationalities official, making a huge step forward in ending European-descended elite dominance of public life.

Despite the impressive gains in raising living standards and incomes for the mass of the Bolivian working class, and its indigenous peoples in particular, Bolivia remained a poor country, though—something the Morales government was still working to overcome. Efforts to diversify the country's economy away from over-reliance on gas were underway, including increasing agricultural output to achieve food sovereignty and seeking to become a leader in the international lithium battery market.

It was this kind of program that Morales and the **MAS** campaigned on in the Oct. 2019 election. But even before the first vote was counted, the U.S. and right-wing governments in Colombia and Brazil were already saying they wouldn't recognize the results of an election that didn't reflect "the will of the Bolivian people." The approach of the international

## TERRA-GEN IS BAT-SHIT CRAZY

In a word it's a boondoggle. Spelled **Terra-Gen Wind Power Project!** A corporate con to pick up the last fat dollars before the sands run out on us. The Hearing provided to catch our flak with was packed. 300 or so people overflowed the Supervisors chambers into the corridors and rooms beyond. A busy cop worked like Security at a Taylor Swift concert, directing traffic in and out of the standing-room-only crowd in the Chamber itself where endless queues waited patiently to testify. My estimate is that opponents led supporters probably 4-1. The applause was sometimes tumultuous, but never for supporters of the project. The event started at 4 and concluded at 9:30, and til the very end the Chamber remained filled. Another hearing had to be scheduled to pick up the final 34 speakers.

The levels of eloquent concern were outstanding. That the Wiyots were expected to once more make the sacrifice on their sacred land was an outrage to many. Give them Woodley Island but take back the Bear River and Monument Ridges. Supporters of the project were willing and ready to make any sacrifice (by the Wiyots) to maintain the cozy lives our industrial civilization has bestowed upon us.

The details of this project are depressing. 17 miles of roads, poisoned aquifers, blades that can't be recycled, 60 towers sitting on ten foot thick concrete pads, hundreds of acres plowed under, the decimation of wildlife, including birds, birds, birds. Wind generation is fashionable with a certain kind of environmentalist who will always buy the next technical fad. Mega wind power projects are this year's favorite fix - soon to go the way that Dams went, such as the Klamath Dam, mentioned by more than a few.

What struck me was the cost to Hoary Bats, little winged mice named after their grey-white coloring. Who knew Humboldt was a home to these fellows in great numbers? These are bats that do not live in caves. The hoary bat will hang out in the leaves of trees and use their furry tail membrane to wrap themselves up like their own little personal sleeping bag. They typically hang from one foot and look like a dry leaf in a tree.

The hoary bat is a migratory bat species, which means instead of spending winter months hibernating in large colonies, this solitary bat migrates to warm winter habitats. Summers are spent concealed in the foliage of mature deciduous and coniferous trees, typically near the edge of a clearing. Hoary bats may fly as fast as 13 miles per hour and as high as 8,000 feet during their long-distance migrations in the autumn and spring, stopping at night to hunt for moths, mosquitoes and occasionally other bats.

Since they prefer open, wide hunting grounds and rely on poor senses while flying, they are easily obstructed when there are artificial objects in formerly open areas (such as large wind turbines in high meadows). Sadly, hoary bats are the species most frequently killed by wind turbines in North America, and make up 38 percent of bat fatalities at wind energy facilities in North America.

Among the worst case scenarios: the project would have the potential to create a "population sink" for the western North American population of hoary bats. An estimated 76,000 to 152,000 are killed every year by wind turbines. According to one recent study, impacts from wind energy projects are so great that the hoary bat population is expected to dip 90 percent in just 50 years.

My image of these immense, out of scale wind towers is that of Easter Island: great monuments to a civilization outliving its civilization. Terra-Gen will be among the curiosities like the freeways when Martian anthropologists pay a visit to the planet, wondering how an extinct species managed to create such environmental marvels **after** they vanished.

**11/21/19: An initial vote on a motion to accept the project stalled with a 3-3 vote, which prompted commission Chair Robert Morris to ask Terra-Gen's representative if he would be OK delaying the vote a couple of weeks until after the Thanksgiving holiday when the full commission would be available. The representative — Terra-Gen Senior Director for Wind Development Nathan Vajdos — replied that he wanted a clear answer then and there, prompting the vote on whether to deny the project. (Bongio, who had voted for the motion to accept the project was the swing vote in denying it, but offered no explanation for the change.) After hearing more than five hours of public comment spread over three meetings,**

**the planning commission voted the project down**

**- denying a conditional use permit application that would have paved the way for Terra-Gen to begin the process of securing the dozens of other permits needed to begin construction.**

**NOT DEAD YET:**

**The commission's decision is appealable to the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors.**

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financial institutions has similarly been set in stone for years already.

The **International Monetary Fund** consistently sided with Mesa when he was president 16 years ago, granting loans premised on his pledge to never threaten a public takeover of resources. The U.S. government has likewise never wavered in its backing for the comprador clique represented by Mesa and threatened to cut off financial aid for Bolivia as far back as 2002 during an earlier Morales run for the presidency.

Mesa had been a reliable administrator on behalf of the mining multinationals and the enforcers of neoliberal orthodoxy at the **IMF** and in Washington. Morales was the exact opposite, saying in 2006:

**"The worst enemy of humanity is U.S. capitalism. That is what provokes uprisings like our own, a rebellion against a system, against a neoliberal model, which is the representation of a savage capitalism. If the entire world doesn't acknowledge this reality, that nation-states are not providing even minimally for health, education, and nourishment, then each day the most fundamental human rights are being violated."**

the coup has, for now, killed off hopes for that publicly-owned lithium industry that would have carried Bolivia into the 21st century and generated even more funds for creating jobs and alleviating poverty. If the Teslas and iPhones of the world are to be powered by Bolivian lithium, there likely won't be much benefit for the people of that country. The mining companies must be rejoicing.

**President Evo Morales has arrived in Mexico after accepting an offer of political asylum from the government of President Andrés Manuel López**

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