

Opinion: Calif. needs to import German transparency

By Joe Mathews

California could use a concert hall like Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie. The signature structure of 21st century Germany features performance space for the philharmonic, a dramatically curved escalator, and a dozen different public spaces for people to gather and enjoy city views.

But what California needs more than this stunning new piece of architecture is the scandal that built it. Originally planned in 2007 as a 186 million Euro project, with 77 million Euros from taxpayers, the Elbphilharmonie was so dogged by delays and overspending that its price tag approached 1 billion Euros, with taxpayers paying 789 million.



Joe Mathews

The good news: the resulting scandal produced one of the world's most advanced government transparency laws. And that law, unlike the hall itself, could be transported to California, where transparency laws typically produce frustration.

In our state, open records laws often require citizens to bear the burden and expense of requesting documents, fighting for access, and paying for copies. And open meetings laws restrict our government representatives – we dictate when they can meet

and talk to each other. These restrictions on citizens and their representatives often produce conflict between the two.

Hamburg's transparency law works differently because it empowers both citizens and government officials. The law sets a default of openness by requiring government officials to make their work – contracts, memos, deliberations – viewable on the internet, almost as soon as they produce it. Knowledge is thus open to all, inside and outside government.

I recently visited Hamburg as the guest of journalist Angelika Gardiner and farmer Manfred Brandt, who let me sleep in his barn. Twenty years ago, Gardiner, Brandt and other citizens began using direct democracy to bring transparency to Hamburg government. In 2011, spurred by the troubled Elbphilharmonie construction, citizens' groups organized a ballot initiative campaign to create an information register online where the government would publish its documents and where citizens could search them, anonymously and free of charge.

The initiative attracted support so quickly that the Hamburg parliament adopted their proposal before a public vote could be held. Today, Hamburg's online portal offers contracts, reports, plans, grant awards, proposed resolutions, spatial data, permits, even payments and benefits for senior officials.

The law guarantees "immediate" access, which usually means documents are published within a week of their creation. The transparency has not been total. Smaller contracts (those less than 100,000 Euros) are sometimes excluded, and an expansive exemption for personal privacy requires redaction of some information that might seem relevant for holding local officials accountable.

But an evaluation of the law, required after five years, just concluded that both law and portal are working as intended. Among the most intriguing findings: Hamburg's government

officials, who once worried about the logistics of transparency, are now some of its biggest fans, using it to monitor what other Hamburg departments are doing. In this way, the transparency law has been most effective as a force for efficiency within government, breaking down bureaucratic silos. The links hand now knows what the recht hand is doing.

That's the lesson of Hamburg: with people so consumed with their own work and lives, the best check on government abuses and corruption are city officials themselves.

On a visit to the Rathaus, I asked Andreas Dressel, who leads the governing Social Democrats in the Hamburg parliament, how the transparency law might be adapted for a California city.

"The best thing to do is to translate it into English – and put it right directly into your law," he said adding, "You need it not just in California, but for the entire United States."

Certainly, a law that makes disclosure an automatic online default should be more effective and produce less fighting than our current records and meetings laws, which create conflict between public demands for access and government desire for secrecy.

Such transparency would jumpstart the nascent open data movement, which has seen some California governments put up data sets so that tech-savvy citizens can help solve government problems. And it's not hard to see how Hamburg-style transparency might make government responses to crises faster and more effective.

In San Diego, officials in different city and county departments failed to communicate effectively for months earlier this year as a deadly hepatitis epidemic spread, according to the nonprofit Voice of San Diego. If officials could have seen their separate work and information online, it's quite possible that a fuller response – which included a

declaration of emergency – might have come earlier and saved lives. So far 17 people have died.

Of course, such transparency would be opposed by government contractors, public employee unions, and the local governments over which they exert too much control. But it is for situations like this that we have direct democracy in California. And in Hamburg.

Joe Mathews writes the Connecting California column for Zócalo Public Square.

Opinion: Don't trust government with new tax money

By Joel Fox

Reassurances to taxpayers about proper management of new revenue on the state and local level is too often ignored by politicians once the money is secured. Recent examples of attempts to spend money differently than promised are common—but it's an old story, as well.

The Legislature passed the gas tax and vehicle license fee increase amid promises that the money would go to the much-needed repair of transportation infrastructure. Before the governor had a chance to sign the bill, Democratic politicians were proposing ways to spend the money that were far afield from the transportation goals such as repairing restrooms in state parks.

Part of the promises made on the use of the new gas tax money is that voters will have a chance to pass a constitutional

amendment in an election next year to assure that the money will be spent for transportation purposes. However, the new taxes will start coming in this year and many dollars will be spent before any guarantee is put in place. How much revenue will the constitutional guarantee protect and what might be spent of the new revenue before that guarantee is in place?

State Sen. Ted Gaines asked in a release: "Why would anyone believe that this new tax isn't a bait and switch sham where the funds won't be diverted to pay for pet projects like the High Speed Rail boondoggle?"

In Los Angeles, voters recently backed two measures to assist in helping the homeless. A city bond is dedicated to building housing for the homeless while a county tax will be used for services for the homeless.

But in both instances, voters were promised that current budgets for the homeless would not be shifted for other purposes to be replaced by the new revenues. Yet, as Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce President Gary Toeppen recently communicated to his membership, a shell game of moving dollars around may be in the works. As Toeppen wrote, "Voters were promised a "maintenance of effort" to effectively deploy new resources for new housing and new services. The Chamber is very concerned by initial signs that this commitment is not being met."

Toeppen points out the city budget currently under discussion shows a drop of funding for homeless services of over \$28 million, a reduction of about 43 percent of last year's homeless funding. Likewise, the draft budget for the County of Los Angeles indicates some new money would be used to backfill commitments to homeless services instead of expanding efforts on behalf of the homeless.

Yes, it's an old story. One I'm quite familiar with.

Twenty years ago, as head of the state's largest taxpayer's

association, I took the extraordinary step to support a Los Angeles Unified school bond on the condition that our organization had a seat on the newly organized Bond Oversight Committee to make sure the money was spent properly. No sooner had the bond passed, that the school district ignored the oversight committee and went its merry way in spending the bond money—that is until we sued and a superior court judge put a stop to the school district ignoring the oversight committee with an admonition that the committee was to fulfill it's oversight obligation, it was not there simply to count nails once they were pounded in.

A few years later the school district again attempted to ignore the oversight committee. This time, holding the seat once occupied by the taxpayer group, civil rights lawyer, Connie Rice, blasted the district for bait and switch practices (there's that phrase again) on the use of the money.

Will politicians and bureaucrats ever learn to live up to their promises or will taxpayers ever learn not to believe what they are told during campaigns for more money?

*Joel Fox is editor and co-publisher of **Fox and Hounds Daily**.*

Letter: Bread & Broth service dedicated to parents

To the community,

Bread & Broth's Monday meal on Oct. 9 was sponsored by Janet McDougall in memory of her parents, Mac and Jackie McDougall.

“Mac and Jackie were very hospitable and loved to feed people,” said McDougall. “They would love the Bread & Broth program for feeding people’s stomachs and souls.”

Although most people know that B&B provides nutritious dinners for the guests who come to St. Theresa Hall every Monday, the meals also are an important social outlet for those who attend the meals. The dinners bring people together and their casual exchanges over time develop into concern and support for each other and many friendships have evolved.

This social support and healthy food is made possible by the generosity of B&B’s Adopt A Day of Nourishment sponsors and volunteers who so willingly give of their time and energy to help and care for the disadvantaged in our community. At McDougall’s memorial AAD, her sponsor crew included her brother John McDougall and good friends Flori Curran, Kathy Maston and Donarae Reynolds. This group would certainly make Mac and Jackie proud because they were an outstanding crew who worked really hard and were so kind and warm to the guests.

According to McDougall, “B&B is an exceptional program and it’s a privilege to be a part of it.”

B&B is so fortunate to have sponsors who are as supportive as McDougall.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Opinion: Not sold on single-payer health care

By Joe Mathews

I'm so disappointed in myself.

I should be 100 percent supportive of establishing California's own single-payer health system, which means that one entity—the government—pays for everyone's healthcare. After all, the best Californians are for it.



Joe Mathews

California's next governor, Gavin Newsom, has made single-payer central to his campaign. America's next president, California U.S. Sen. Kamala Harris, is running on it.

So why do doubts keep springing to my diseased mind?

Maybe I resent beautiful, camera-ready people like Newsom and Harris. But good if homelier progressives—in unions, nonprofits, and the Democratic Party — also have made single-payer their No. 1 political litmus test. Any officeholder who doesn't support it faces recall and Twitter bullying.

I confess that, in dark moments, I wonder whether single-payer is just a weapon for some political interests to use against their opponents. But how can I think such a thing when President-in-Waiting Harris recently assured us—as she co-sponsored legislation that protects you from health insurance by making it illegal for your employer to provide it—that single payer is “a nonpartisan issue”?

Upon hearing that, I asked myself: Haven't Americans been fighting in partisan ways over healthcare for 100 years? But no, Harris is right: a century is a blip in the vastness of

space-time.

Now, I admit that I can get crazy and wonder how practical single-payer is, and whether it might be wiser to build on the existing system. I also think about the one-third of all Californians, and half of children, on Medi-Cal, California's version of Medicaid, which means the government pays for their care. Many of the people in this smaller version of single-payer struggle to get care because there aren't enough doctors and institutions that will serve them.

Then I start thinking about money—money! I'm so ashamed! — and ask: Why doesn't the single-payer legislation in California and in Congress explain how you pay for single-payer? Then I read these estimates that suggest that a single-payer healthcare system in California alone would cost \$400 billion, which is two-and-a-half times the size of the state General Fund.

And that gives me an anxiety attack, since raising taxes requires a two-thirds vote of the Legislature, which can be hard to get. And then I worry—I'm not proud of this—about my kids' schools. The two big pieces of the state budget are education and health care, so when you see a big run-up in spending on health, the schools get hit, and teachers get laid off and instruction time gets cut.

But then I get a hold of myself, and listen to Bernie Sanders (who like all Vermonters knows California deeply), and I stop worrying.

Because California's schools already do remarkably well with some of the lowest state funding levels in the country. So why would it matter if they're cut further? Since everyone will be so much healthier under single-payer, the teachers will be able to teach more kids in less time, and the children will learn faster!

And, after listening to single-payer advocates, I'm sure that

this single-payer healthcare will pay for itself; in fact, it will save money, because all the money we spend on insurance and pharmaceuticals will just be replaced by new taxes, and the resulting efficiencies will create some savings. (Don't sweat the details). And while there may be startup costs, this is California, with an economy the size of France's. We've got plenty of money. If the taxes don't come through at first, we'll have a Kickstarter campaign. Or crowdsource it. Or make Mexico pay for it.

Since having those realizations, I've been totally behind single-payer—with the exception of one bad bender of doubts. My trigger for that episode was the housing crisis.

I was reading a UCLA report about how far behind we are in meeting Californians' needs for housing they can afford. And then I saw the news that, spurred by rising homelessness, Los Angeles and San Diego counties now have Hepatitis outbreaks that constitute public emergencies.

So I couldn't stop my mind from thinking: How can these fancy people running our state be talking about some pie-in-the-sky single-payer when they're failing to provide Californians with the most basic piece of the healthy life—shelter?

But then I realized I was stuck in the past. Just because our systems for education and housing haven't produced enough of either doesn't mean that single-payer healthcare won't produce enough healthcare.

Then it hit me: All my doubts about single-payer are a form of illness, and that illness is itself the best possible argument for single-payer.

Because, clearly, I'm sick in the head. And if there were a cure, I couldn't afford it.

So bring on single-payer. It will fix me, and good.

Joe Mathews writes the Connecting California column for Zócalo Public Square.

Opinion: Trump is bad for skiing

By Marc Peruzzi, Outside

This is not the beginning of a partisan smear campaign like the seminal “CHENEY SKIS IN JEANS” bumper stickers popular in Jackson Hole in the early aughts. Once upon a time, years before President Trump subscribed to the human-body-as-depletable-battery school of exercise avoidance, he was a skier. His children fondly remember racing dear old dad to the bottom.* Years later, they told an interviewer that Father Trump would shove them over if they attempted to pass.

No, what follows are just the facts: Trump is a clear and present danger to skiing as an industry. His bombastic speeches and immigration policies are worse than January rain when it comes to the dollars and cents and powder days that support the sport.

In a *Wall Street Journal* essay last month, Aspen Ski Co. President and CEO Mike Kaplan blamed the “xenophobia radiating from the Oval Office” for the dip in Mexican tourism the resort saw last year. Visits by this demographic—a core market for all the major Colorado ski resorts—fell by 30 percent. Think about it: If Mexico’s president called you a rapist and a drug dealer and said he was going to build a wall and make you pay for it, would you book a trip to Cancun?

In response to that tourism falloff and the Trump-propagated

national intolerance, Aspen—which has hosted Gay Ski Week and the National Brotherhood of Skiers for years—has launched an ad campaign for the resort built around the slogan, “Love, Respect, Unity, and Commit.” The idea came from an earlier essay Kaplan penned for the *Aspen Daily Times* titled “We’re Still Here,” where he spoke for the reasonable folks in the ski town who care about things like, you know, the international community and the environment.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Stop playing the national anthem at games

By Chris Murray, Reno Gazette-Journal

I have a solution for the national anthem debate that has gripped the sports world – and to some degree the entire country – over the last year: stop playing “The Star-Spangled Banner” before sports events.

There was a time when the anthem wasn’t played prior to games. It was actually rare prior to World War II.

During the Vietnam War, all teams started playing it before games and the tradition that stuck. But why? At its soul, the anthem is a war song. The teams on the field aren’t going to war. They’re playing a game, one U.S. city against another.

There aren’t any “bombs bursting in air” or “rockets red glare” on the diamond, hardwood or gridiron. There’s no reason for the anthem to be played beforehand.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Free tuition in Calif. worth celebrating

By Jeff DeFranco

I have some exciting news to share. Gov. Jerry Brown signed Assembly Bill 19 into law Friday afternoon, enabling California community colleges to provide a year of free tuition for the 2018-19 academic year. I have been pleased to personally lend my name and support to the Rise California campaign. I'm thrilled to see this new program as a result of their efforts. Free community college could be a game changer for our students and our state.



Jeff DeFranco

This bill waives the cost of first-year fees for any first-time student who enrolls full-time at any one of the 114 California community colleges. As you know, cost is a genuine barrier to many otherwise college-bound students. The effect of this bill for California is enormous, with the potential to have a significant impact on our citizens' ability to earn good livelihoods, experience real upward mobility, contribute to their communities and local workforces, and to bring in hundreds of thousands of new students into our system.

To be eligible for the California College Promise, students

must be California residents enrolled full-time in a community college and complete a free application for Federal Financial Aid (FAFSA) or a California Dream Act application. Income will not be a factor in whether they receive a waiver under this program. The California College Promise is estimated to cost an additional \$33 million beyond the funds already accessed by students through the BOG Fee Waiver.

The next task for Brown and the state Department of Finance is to locate the funding to cover this cost in next year's state budget to fully roll out the promise of a free first year of college. This will take place in the 2018-19 budget process starting with the governor's budget proposal which is typically rolled out in January. It is also important to note that this is a pilot program for the 2018-19 academic year and it will be essential to demonstrate the benefits of this program if it is to be renewed for future years.

We'll have much more about the California College Promise in the days and weeks to come. It will be important for us to be ready to serve these students who are coming to LTCC for the first time. For now, join me in celebrating this milestone of access for all Californians.

Jeff DeFranco is president of Lake Tahoe Community College.

Letter: If not now, then when for Tahoe's roads?

To the community,

All of us living in this tourist town understand a simple truth: our infrastructure is burdened with more than it can

handle. Specifically, our roads. Each year, millions of visitors drive to Tahoe to enjoy the natural beauty of our home, but the damage this causes to our roadways is a serious problem. We need help making our community safer for driving, walking, and biking.

I'm voting yes on Measure C because we have waited too long to address our community's critical infrastructure needs. While I agree with recent editorials that the city should invest in road safety, our city's budget simply does not have sufficient funding to cover the many services we provide for year-round residents and tourists – emergency services, fire protection and response, law enforcement, and road maintenance. We need a separate source of funds to ensure our roads get the long-term attention they deserve.

Enter Measure C, a new way to shift the financial burden of roadway repairs off our residents onto the many tourists visiting and shopping in town each year. This smart measure will fix potholes, repave crumbling roads, and ensure that our entire city has safe routes for drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists. Measure C is the only way for voters to ensure our roads are repaired with revenue that legally cannot be diverted by the City Council for other projects.

But this issue goes beyond City Council. It is up to us as a community to decide that we are fed up with our roads being in constant disrepair. Instead of continuing to ignore our city's most visible problem, I am voting yes on Measure C to solve it.

Katie Riley, South Lake Tahoe

Opinion: Nev. pension system paid \$71K to PR firm

By Victor Joecks, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Nevada's Public Employees Retirement System has just spent your money to make sure you have a better opinion of the ... Public Employees Retirement System.

Last November, the PERS board hired an out-of-state PR firm to review its communications efforts. One of the goals was to "develop compelling messages to proactively tell the PERS story and get ahead of opponents and the media." That'd be like using the company credit card to come up with a plan to undermine the owner of your company. As much as the state's pension system wants to pretend otherwise, government ultimately works for you, the taxpayer.

Taxpayers have poured billions and billions of dollars into PERS to support generous benefits that aren't available to private-sector workers. And taxpayers are on the hook for billions of dollars worth of promised benefits that PERS won't be able to pay.

Read the whole story

Opinion: California's on a tax binge

By Dan Walters, CalMatters

California has been on a tax binge in recent months, enhancing

its status—for better or worse—as one of the nation’s highest-taxing states.

Last year, California voters approved a big boost in cigarette taxes, from 87 cents a pack to \$2.87, and extended for 12 additional years the nation’s highest income-tax rates on the highest-income residents.



Dan Walters

This year, the Legislature and Gov. Jerry Brown enacted a more than \$5-billion-a-year increase in gas taxes and other vehicular levies to finance transportation improvements and imposed a new tax on real estate transactions to finance affordable housing.

Those increases, plus a slew of new local government levies and hikes in personal income and taxable retail sales, will raise total tax collections to just under \$300 billion a year, or \$50 billion more than they were just two years ago. The breakdown: Nearly \$200 billion will go to the state and more than \$100 billion to schools and local governments.

You won’t find those numbers in any central data repository. Rather, they are calculated from dozens of different sources, ranging from the state budget to tax authorities and reports from agencies that are empowered to impose specialized levies, such as payroll taxes on employers for unemployment insurance, taxes on workers for disability insurance or utility taxes to support the Public Utilities Commission.

It should also be noted that these are compulsory taxes, not

fees. California's state and local governments collect many more billions in fees tied to specific services, such as college tuition, hunting and fishing licenses, local utility services and admissions to state and local parks. Nor does it include such things as premiums for workers' compensation insurance or earthquake insurance.

Those are important distinctions because taxpayers and even politicians often get taxes and fees mixed up. What's called the "vehicle license fee," for instance, is actually a property tax based on the value of a vehicle. And numerous political battles have been fought on the distinction because new state taxes require approval by two-thirds of the Legislature, while fees can be levied by simple majority votes or by agencies without any votes.

A 2010 ballot measure draws a sharp legal line between taxes and fees that became a major factor in this year's struggle over reauthorization of California's cap-and-trade system of regulating carbon emissions after the current program ends in 2020.

The battle over whether the state's current sales of emission allowances, about \$2.5 billion a year, are taxes or fees has rattled around the courts. To avoid any legal cloud due to that 2010 ballot measure, the post-2020 reauthorization was approved by two-thirds votes in both legislative houses. For purposes of this column, they are being counted as taxes.

So how does that \$300 billion annual tax bill shape up in relative terms? While there are several ways to measure tax burden, the most equitable is total state and local taxes as a percentage of personal income, thus accounting for wide economic variances among the states and differing methods of allocating taxing authority between state and local governments.

California's \$300 billion is 12.7 percent of the current

estimate of Californians' personal income, \$2.3 trillion. That could be the nation's highest relative burden, but up-to-date comparative data are impossible to find.

The Washington-based Tax Foundation periodically calculates relative taxation but its latest report uses 2012 data and doesn't include all of the minor taxes that this writer has charted. That report shows California's burden at 11 percent of personal income and sixth highest in the nation, with New York No. 1 at 12.7 percent, exactly California's current load.

Suffice to say that California's is at least one of the highest, right up there with New York, Connecticut, New Jersey, Wisconsin and Illinois, and markedly higher than those of other Western states. Alaskans, according to the Tax Foundation, have the lowest in 2012 terms, just 6.5 percent of their personal income, thanks to the state's oodles of royalties on oil extraction.

California's income and sales tax rates are at or near the top, as well. Of major tax sources, only its property taxes are relatively moderate, thanks to Proposition 13, the iconic tax-limitation measure adopted by voters in 1978.

However, those property taxes are not as low as Proposition 13's critics would have us believe, because California's property values are among the nation's highest. Property values and the resulting tax collections have climbed sharply in recent years, thanks to a red-hot housing market and new construction.

Even with Proposition 13's limit—1 percent of value plus the cost of local bond service—schools and local governments are receiving \$64 billion a year in property taxes, more than 12 times as much as they were getting in 1978 after the measure passed. On a per capita basis, California property taxes are somewhere in the middle range of the states.

So: Are Californians' taxes too high, or still not high

enough?

California launched a so-called tax revolt with Proposition 13 in 1978, but the state's politics have veered sharply to the left in recent years. Its voters have been inclined to approve new state and local taxes when given the opportunity—particularly levies that they don't pay themselves, such as cigarette taxes (only 11 percent of adult Californians smoke) or income taxes on the one-percenters at the top of the income ladder.

The new political atmosphere emboldens some political factions, such as public employee unions, to propose other new taxes. At least a dozen tax hikes were introduced in this year's legislative session, not counting numerous measures authorizing local government agencies to ask their voters for sales tax overrides.

Six of those passed. Assuming Brown signs them, they will continue the flurry of local tax measures that have been placed on ballots in recent years, many of them purporting to pay for enhanced police and fire protection but in reality needed to cover burgeoning pension costs for public-safety employees.

Income taxes are 70 percent of California's general-fund revenue. Image via Flickr

California may be maxed out on income taxes. They now account for 70 percent of the state's general fund revenue, and half of them are paid by those one-percenters, which may encourage at least some change residences to low- or no-income-tax states such as neighboring Nevada. The combined federal-state marginal income tax rate—that paid on the highest increment of income—is now more than 50 percent for the highest-income Californians.

Brian Sabeen, executive vice president of the San Francisco Giants, told the San Francisco Chronicle recently that such

taxation makes recruiting highly paid players especially difficult, along with AT&T Park's reputation for unfriendliness to hitters.

"Let's face it," Sabeian said, "How many free agents are going to come here? They're not. For two reasons: the ballpark and the California taxes. That's just a fact."

Moreover, the state's ever-increasing reliance on income taxes has made its revenue stream much more volatile, subject to sharp decreases during even mild economic recessions because the incomes of the wealthy are very sensitive to swings in equities and other capital markets.

There have been periodic efforts to reform the tax system to make it less volatile. But that would involve shifting some tax burden from the rich to middle-class taxpayers, which would be politically incendiary. Brown and other politicians acknowledge the need for tax reform but have shied away from the heavy political lifting it would require.

Sales-tax rates continue to climb, thanks to those local override measures, largely in quarter-cent increments. They're near or above 10 percent in many locales. But actual sales-tax revenue continues to flatten because of consumers' changing habits—buying more untaxed services rather than taxable goods and increasing internet purchases that are often untaxed.

Taxable retail sales equaled 60 percent of Californians' personal incomes during Brown's first governorship four decades ago; today they are well under 30 percent and still falling. Sales taxes were the state's largest revenue source during Brown 1.0; today, at just 20 percent of general-fund revenue, they are a very distant second to income taxes.

A fight may be coming over whether to tax commercial and residential properties differently.

As pro-tax groups and their political allies seek more revenue, the big battle looming on the horizon is likely to be

over Proposition 13. Unions and other liberal groups have yearned for decades to repeal, or at least modify, the property-tax limit, and legislation to do that has been introduced from time to time.

A fight is most likely to involve a “split roll” that would keep Proposition 13’s benefits for homes but allow taxable values and taxes to increase for commercial property. Pro-tax groups believe that blue-state voters could be persuaded to take that route, but the groups haven’t been willing, yet, to test the theory with a ballot measure.

Business organizations would throw big money against a split-roll measure, if it surfaced. One of the key points would be whether rental homes and apartments would be considered residential, and retain Proposition 13’s protections, or commercial, and lose them.

A successful split roll drive would generate billions of new dollars each year—how many is impossible to say because of the unresolved rental-property factor—and would probably make California No. 1 in tax burden, if it’s not already there.