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# Berkeley Public Policy Journal

Fall 2023

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# A Note from the Editors

At the time of this publication, we are witnessing a genocide in Palestine. The deafening silence of our political leaders haunts the halls of our institutions amidst the sounds of painful outcries in Gaza. We continue to organize, call, march, and shout the truth because our rage is simply righteous. Though darkness is overwhelming these days, the heavy feeling we carry in our hearts is our humanity. There is a Palestine that resides within all of us: free from the callousness of settler colonialism and unrestrained capitalism so that we may be in solidarity across borders. We unequivocally affirm the anti-colonial resistance—*our liberation is tied to one another*. Let this moment radicalize you; it is the only answer to the crushing of our souls.

The Goldman School of Public Policy (GSPP) is designed to equip its students with a toolbox to be public servants, policy leaders, and creative thinkers. Our curriculum teaches us a combination of theoretical frameworks and empirical analysis that inform the creation, implementation, and evaluation of policies—tools that have traditionally been wielded to commit injustices. If we are to create a better, more equitable future, it is our responsibility to be aware of that context. We must continue to hold ourselves accountable by using our positionality as public policy students to harness power. The place we speak from defines what we say.

With this context in mind, we thank everyone who contributed to the Fall 2023 edition of the Berkeley Public Policy Journal (BPPJ). All the authors, along with our wonderful team of editors, share a spirit of courage and empathy drawn from several inflection points

of our history. The journal begins with Master of Development Practice (MDP) student Katharine Eger's examination of the consequences of overturning Roe and its far-reaching impacts on access to reproductive health care in the United States. Second, Master of Public Policy (MPP) student Trishia Lim discusses the limitations of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) in protecting migrants in the face of the climate crisis. Next, MPP student Aditi Chugh raises questions about how the agricultural sector will evolve in the future by analyzing major sources of uncertainty. Then, Master of Public Affairs (MPA) student Karen Toro argues for ranked choice voting to improve Los Angeles elections and increase turnout. Finally, BPPJ editors interview Professor and former United States Labor Secretary Robert Reich about the dangers of political cynicism, the power of organizing, and his hopes for the future as he concludes his time teaching at UC Berkeley.

This publication is a culmination of a semester-long process of writing, editing, and thinking deeply about the role of public policy in our world. We are grateful to our editing team and the entire community that supports the work that we do. It is our pleasure to introduce this edition with the hopes of inspiring us to move beyond policies that are merely reactionary so we may all ride the tide that is turning.

— Trishia Lim, Zoe Klingmann, and  
Amrutha Ramaswamy

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*Professor at University of California,  
Berkeley and former  
United States Labor Secretary*



*Photo by: Saman Qadir, Independent Photojournalist*



# THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF OVERTURNING ROE V. WADE

— Katharine Eger

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*The Dobbs decision has already had far-reaching impacts on access to reproductive health care and abortion care in the United States. In this article, Katharine Eger (MDP '24) outlines the consequences of overturning Roe on the American economy and families.*

*Note: This is a fast-moving area of policy. This article was current as of summer 2023.*

The Supreme Court had a jam-packed summer. In a single session, they expanded gun rights, limited the EPA's reach, blurred the separation of church and state, and in “the Land of the Free,” five men and one woman voted to strip a woman of her choice to terminate a pregnancy in overturning *Roe v. Wade*. The effect was immediate. Within a month, 11 states either banned abortion completely or implemented a ban on abortion starting at six weeks of pregnancy.<sup>1</sup>

Central to the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* case is the assumption that a woman's access to abortion services is independent from her ability to meaningfully engage in the economy, something in clear opposition to the research. Notwithstanding the short-term costs for those seeking abortions—which range from travel to medical care to jail time (e.g., the Texas trigger law that results in a \$100,000 fine and/or life in prison)—a woman's inability to access all forms of reproductive healthcare directly impacts her financial prospects, as well as the future of local, state, and national economies.<sup>2</sup>

This article examines the fiscal ramifications of the *Dobbs* decision and highlights how the abortion debate is an economic one. It will first contextualize the repercussions that *Roe* had on women, the labor force, and the economy, then explore the economic consequences of the chipping away of *Roe* throughout the past few decades until today. This article will set aside the overwhelming implications of *Dobbs* on a woman's freedom in the U.S., and instead argue that there is an economic incentive for states to ensure access to safe and legal abortion care.

## ACCESS TO ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

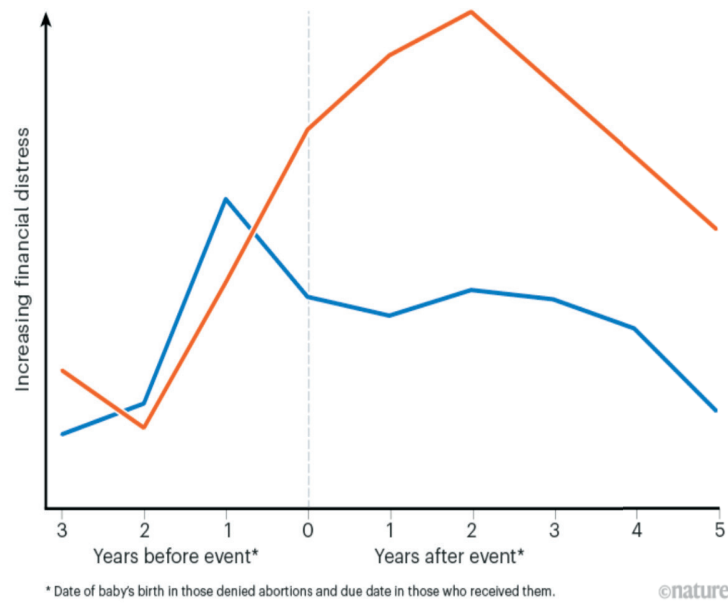
Researchers estimate that the nationwide legalization of abortion resulted in a five per-

centage point reduction in the aggregate birth rate in the U.S. between the 1970s and 2000.<sup>3</sup> During this time, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the number of women in the U.S. workforce with bachelor's degrees quadrupled, the women's labor force participation rate increased 30 percent, and the gender pay gap shrank by almost 40 percent.<sup>4</sup> In short, the *Roe* decision led to a major uptick in the labor force and had a positive ripple effect on the entire U.S. economy.<sup>5</sup>

Ample evidence suggests that access to safe and legal abortions, and the associated economic opportunities, has the strongest effect on Black women, who, prior to *Roe*, suffered most from unplanned pregnancies.<sup>6</sup> The probability that Black teenage girl would graduate high school and attend college increased by 23 and 25 percentage points, respectively, by simply having access to legal, safe abortion.<sup>7</sup> This educational opportunity led to greater overall investment in human capital and improved employment outcomes.<sup>8</sup> One study from the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) found that access to legal abortion services increased the probability of a Black woman working 40+ weeks per year by 6.9 percentage points (in comparison to 2 percentage points for white women).<sup>9,10</sup>

## ECONOMY-WIDE IMPACTS

Access to abortion care improves educational and professional outcomes, not only on the individual level but nationally. Economically empowered mothers create economically empowered families. Studies show that children born into families where the mother has reproductive autonomy are more likely to complete college, less likely to grow up in a single-parent household, and less likely to have incomes below the poverty line or be a welfare recipients at any stage of life.<sup>11</sup>



**Figure 1: Financial Insecurity.** Women who are denied an abortion are more likely to experience financial distress than those who were able to have an abortion close to the legal gestational age limit in their state.  
Source: Miller, S., Wherry, L.R. & Foster, D.G *The Economic Consequences of Being Denied an Abortion.* NBER Working Paper 26662 (2020).

Despite the clear association between a woman’s right to choose and economic prosperity—as emphasized by Treasury Secretary Yellen—Roe had been on the chopping block for decades.<sup>12</sup> The former President nominated the three anti-abortion judges that reshaped the Supreme Court during his term, but there was plenty being done before that on the state and local levels. Between 2011 and the recent Dobbs decision, states across the country passed over 400 abortion restrictions. These policies primarily circled around increasing parental involvement, establishing “waiting periods,” and banning state Medicaid funding for abortion. Limited funding had significant impacts: a Texas House Bill (HB2) caused over half of the state’s clinics to close between 2013 and 2014; Missouri had no clinics in the entire state by the time Dobbs was released.<sup>13</sup>

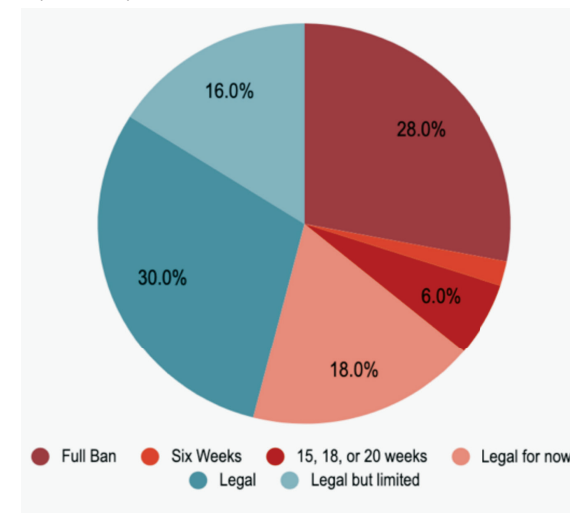
By 2019, states were more assertive with their legislation, ushering in an unprecedented wave of “early abortion bans” which forbid abortions after six weeks.<sup>14</sup> These state-level abortion restrictions were expensive. In Texas alone, abortion restrictions cost the state about \$14 billion per year; if Missouri were to lift their restrictions, it is estimated that their GDP would increase by 1.02 percent.<sup>15</sup> In total, these abortion restrictions cost state economies a combined \$105 billion per year but do not necessarily result in fewer procedures. One study in Missouri showed that while the absolute number of abortions provided in-state dropped between 2017 and 2020, the abortion rate for residents increased by 18 percent when considering out-of-state procedures.<sup>16</sup> Still, the overturning of Roe will make accessing abortion care across state lines more difficult, and the financial

consequences could be catastrophic.

Between the mounting costs of childcare and the “motherhood wage penalty,” it is no surprise that financial constraints is the most cited reason for seeking an abortion.<sup>17 18</sup> It seems obvious that denying a patient an abortion (typically a 20-something, single mother who lives below the poverty line) often results in sustained financial distress (Figure 1). One study found that six months after being denied an abortion, women were three times more likely to be unemployed and four times more likely to be below the poverty line than those who were able to access abortion services.<sup>19</sup> That means more families seeking welfare from the state and contributing less to the economy. In contrast, the IWPR calculated that if all state abortion restrictions were eliminated, an estimated 505,000 more women would enter the labor force, already-employed women would see an approximate \$102 billion increase in earnings, and the U.S. GDP would increase by nearly 0.5 percent.<sup>20</sup>

**LOOKING AHEAD**

We now live in a post-Roe America. Figure 2 illustrates the range of legal statuses of abortions across the country, from legal to banned. Note that in states with six- to twenty-week abortion bans, logistical hurdles ranging from forced waiting periods and defunded clinics can make access near impossible. Estimates calculate about 120,000 women who want an abortion this year will be unable to reach a provider.<sup>21</sup> These women will need to travel out of state, self-manage their abortion, or be forced to carry their pregnancy to term. We can expect to see an almost immediate decrease in female labor force participation and educational achievements, as well as a series of worse health outcomes and higher maternal mortality rates. Marginalized women will be less able to take advantage of economic opportunities and may fall further behind, exacerbating an already vicious cycle of inequality, the states employing restrictions will bear further costs, and the national economy will suffer.



**Figure 2: Legal Status of Abortion (as of September 2022)**  
Note: In some states, abortion remains “Legal for Now” as courts determine whether the existing or new ban can take effect. These states include total bans in Indiana, North Dakota, Michigan, and Wyoming; a six week ban in Iowa, Ohio, and South Carolina; a 20 week ban in Montana  
Source: Sanger-Katz, Margot, et al. “Tracking the States Where Abortion Is Now Banned.” The New York Times, The New York Times, 24 May 2022.  
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The Dobbs decision was not just a blow to equality and a woman’s bodily autonomy, but to the country’s economic well-being. As we head into a competitive election season, where abortion is on the ballot, it is imperative that pro-choice candidates highlight how restricting access to abortion is restricting the country, and its people, from reaching its full economic potential.

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# INCREASING PROTECTIONS FOR MIGRANTS DISPLACED FROM CENTRAL AMERICA

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Climate change will have a major impact in the Central American countries of El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala. Climate impacts such as extreme heat have already contributed to regional displacement. As food insecurity worsens and the land becomes uninhabitable, migration patterns will inevitably shift to the U.S. Scientists estimate that even if the U.S. takes actions to combat climate change, the increase in climate migrants from Central America is estimated to be 680,000 and will continue to rise to 1.5 million by 2050.<sup>1</sup>

The urgency of increasing protections for these climate migrants cannot be overemphasized, but the United States is currently unprepared. Our current immigration system, which is based on intensifying the border's security apparatus, is not only unequipped to manage climate-related migration, but it is an extremely volatile process. It is heavily reliant on issuing Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Central American migrants and offers little to no protection to these migrants. Further, a solution based on border militarization will trap large populations in inhabitable areas which may result in increased poverty, food insecurity, and human rights violations.<sup>2</sup> The United States should pass the American Dream and Promise Act of 2021 (H.R. 6) to create a pathway to lawful permanent residence (LPR) for current beneficiaries of Temporary Protected Status.

## LIMITATIONS OF TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS

The Temporary Protected Status (TPS) program provides critical immigration relief for over 500,000 individuals vulnerable to deportation proceedings.<sup>3</sup> Intended to protect migrants who are unable to return to their home countries due to political violence or environmental disasters, Temporary Protected Status has been in statute since 1990.<sup>4</sup> Once a country receives a TPS designation, eligible nationals of that country who are physically in the United States can apply for the status if they meet requirements set by

the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).<sup>5</sup> When the country's designation expires, recipients return to the immigration status they previously held—undocumented in majority of the cases. In 2022, 84 percent of the 345,625 TPS recipients the Northern Triangle of Central America, the countries of Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and El Salvador, were at risk of being undocumented before the Biden administration extended TPS designation to two months before its expiration.<sup>6</sup> Migrants can pursue other avenues of documentation, but applications take up to four and a half years to process as the USCIS needs to tackle about 400,000 backlogged affirmative asylum cases to get back on track.<sup>7</sup>

Central Americans make up the majority of TPS recipients and approximately 17 percent of the 11 million undocumented immigrants in the United States.<sup>8</sup> In its present form, TPS offers temporary protections from deportation and work authorization to migrants coming from designated countries deemed as unsafe to live. Federal immigration officials can grant this status for up to 18 months should the outlined conditions persist.<sup>9</sup> Though the countries of El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Honduras have been historically designated for TPS, beneficiaries can easily lose this protection should the U.S. choose to not reinstate it in 2024. At the time of writing, Guatemala is awaiting TPS designation, leaving 662,500 Guatemalans without legal protections at all.

The United States is expected to receive the largest population of climate migrants from Central America by 2050, regardless of any action taken to reduce global emissions.<sup>10</sup> Along with decades of U.S. strategic military involvement that have contributed to instability in the region, mass movement across international borders has been increasingly attributed to the

existential threat from recurring droughts and food insecurity. While TPS offers relief to current beneficiaries, it fails to provide a permanent solution to the climate migrants seeking refuge in the United States. The White House Climate Migration Report points out that “TPS is not to provide a permanent solution for individuals unable to return home because of the long-term impacts of climate change.”<sup>11</sup>

TPS provisions are also under the purview of political entities, making the policy more volatile over time. We are increasingly seeing targeted efforts to terminate the program, with former President Trump at the forefront of fueling anti-immigration and xenophobic rhetoric through court cases such as *Ramos v. Nielsen*. Above all, the ability to dissolve the program without granting a permanent path to residency to its recipients beforehand risks resulting in an massive increase in of undocumented migrants. Without an immigration system capable of managing this level of migration, the United States will be unprepared for a future where climate change drives where people live.

### HUMAN RIGHTS AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Migrants have been historically pigeonholed for problems related to the economy and their contributions to the U.S. workforce have been ignored. Irrespective of their contribution to the economy, we must disentangle this notion of tying one's right to a safe home to their economic productivity. That said, U.S. policymakers should be aware that migration policy can have a major impact on local economies. Should the United States choose to reinstate their TPS designation, an estimate of over 1.5 million people from Central America will be eligible: “523,000 from El Salvador, 409,400 from Honduras, 35,500 from Nicaragua, and 662,500 from Guatemala.”<sup>12</sup>

This is vital to many states' economies. The largest portion of TPS recipients are in California (18%), Florida (14%), Texas (13%), New York (12%).<sup>13</sup>

The vast majority of TPS recipients are employed. FWD.us, a bipartisan political organization working to reform the nation's immigration and criminal justice system, has calculated that TPS holders, along with those who are eligible for the program, contribute \$22 billion in wages to the economy each year and work in more than 600,000 jobs, “filling important gaps in an economy plagued by persistent labor shortages.”<sup>14</sup> As shown in Figure 1, FWD.us' most recent analysis of government data highlights the significance of TPS designation to the US workforce and economy.

TPS holders also fill in gaps in sectors where labor participation rates have considerably decreased over time. Of the roughly 1.2 million TPS workers across the country, “280,000 [are] working in professional and business services, 250,000 in accommodations and food services, 200,000 in manufacturing, 190,000 in retail trade, 150,000 in transportation, warehousing and utilities, and 110,000 in healthcare and social assistance.” Terminating the TPS program poses a significant threat to many local economies in U.S. cities, such as Los Angeles, where 34,000 TPS holders currently reside.<sup>15</sup>

### POLICY RECOMMENDATION

The U.S. immigration system is not prepared to deal with the rise of migrants arriving at the border, and the situation will worsen if the President decides to remove one of the few legal protections for TPS recipients who have resided here for years. As the global climate warms and agriculture-dependent families move to the global north, the U.S.

must build an infrastructure that will not risk their lives. The United States should continue guaranteeing TPS for countries of El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Honduras, grant Guatemala TPS status, and pass the American Dream and Promise Act of 2021 (H.R. 6) to create a pathway to lawful permanent residence (LPR) for current beneficiaries of TPS. A permanent path to citizenship is not only a solution that streamlines our infrastructure, but it is especially one that honors human dignity.

Previous legislation that specifically aimed to protect TPS migrants includes the Act to Sustain the Protection of Immigrant Residents Earned through TPS (ASPIRE TPS) (H.R. 4384); Continue American Safety Act (CASA) (H.R. 6326); and TPS Extension Act of 2018 (H.R. 6696). These bills only extend the duration of the program. The American Dream and Promise Act of 2021 (H.R. 6) creates a pathway to permanent residence by setting a precedent and framework that can handle the surge of migration in the coming years. H.R. 6 outlines the following protections for TPS and Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) holders<sup>16</sup>:

- “Cancel deportation proceedings for TPS holders if they are eligible for LPR status under the bill's protections;
- Clarify that under current law, an individual with TPS is considered inspected and admitted into the U.S. It would permit future TPS recipients to adjust to LPR status under certain circumstances, including when they marry a U.S. citizen.
- TPS holders and TPS-eligible individuals who were deported or who voluntarily departed the U.S. on or after September 17, 2017 are able to apply for LPR status if they meet certain requirements, including having lived in the U.S. continuously for at least three years and having been deported solely because they were present in



- the U.S. after the expiration of their TPS status or, in the case of a voluntary departure, departed because of the DHS Secretary's decision to end TPS designation for their country.

Barriers in adopting this solution point to the congressional gridlock of the current political climate. H.R. 6 faces highly partisan objections to immigration reform, even in a Democratic controlled Senate and the White House—the budget reconciliation process is its best bet. However, such procedural hurdles should not deter the United States from standing behind this legislation.

## CONCLUSION

The Temporary Protected Status program provides significant relief for migrants who are unable to return home safely due to increasing environmental disasters that are not temporary. The program's longevity and effectiveness so far speaks to how deeply embedded TPS holders are in our communities—they are our teachers, farmers, and neighbors. Though the program remains extendable, over 400,000 known beneficiaries live in status limbo until H.R.6 is signed. Extending the pathway to citizenship to those under Temporary Protected Status will provide protections and better prepare the U.S. for our climate future.

can-immigrants-united-states

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# THE FUTURE OF AGRICULTURE IN CALIFORNIA: A FORESIGHT ANALYSIS

## CASE STUDY

— *Aditi Chugh*

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*Agriculture is crucial to California's economy, but the threat of climate change and the rapid advance of new technology raise questions about how the agricultural sector will evolve in the future. In this article, Aditi Chugh (MPP '24) builds on the work of the California 100 Project to analyze major sources of uncertainty in the agriculture sector and explores three possible future scenarios.*

Agriculture is a crucial sector in California's economy, providing jobs and contributing to the state's food security. However, the future of agriculture in California faces several challenges, including water scarcity, climate change, and shrinking labor supply. On the other hand, California also stands at the forefront of emerging technologies in the agriculture and food sector.

Foresight analysis can help us anticipate and prepare for the future of agriculture in California and ensure that it continues to be a vital contributor to the state's economy and food security. Foresight analysis is a structured and systematic way of using ideas about the future to anticipate and better prepare for change.<sup>1</sup> It involves exploring alternative futures, assessing the likelihood of different outcomes, and identifying actions that can be taken to achieve desired goals. One of the tools in the foresight analysis toolkit is scenario building. In the context of public policy, scenario planning helps policy-makers make better sense of changes in their external environment, spot early warning signals, and refine their policies accordingly.<sup>2</sup>

This article builds on work of the California 100 initiative. Their report, *The Future of Agriculture and Food Systems in California* focused on two key uncertainties: water insufficiency and adaptation to climate change. This article will further explore the future of the sector, with a focus on emerging technologies and policy responses to supply-side challenges.

### PRESENT STATUS OF AGRICULTURE AND EMERGING TRENDS

California is one of the most important agricultural players in the U.S., both for domestic production and exports. This

dominance is partially due to the state's large landmass, around 24,000,000 acres of which is agricultural land.<sup>3</sup> However, in recent years, California farmlands have seen a reduction in terms of arable land. While this trend can partially be attributed to decreasing water availability there is also a socio-technical component due to unsustainable practices such as planting water-intensive vineyards.<sup>4</sup>

#### *Water*

Water is a major determinant of agricultural production. As acreage has moved from lower-revenue crops like alfalfa and corn silage to higher-revenue crops like fruits and nuts, farmers have become increasingly dependent on irrigation. The proportion of California's irrigated land dedicated to these higher-value cash crops rose from 16 percent in 1980 to 33 percent in 2015.<sup>5</sup> This higher dependency on irrigation is also partially due to impacts of changing climate like lower annual rainfall and change in temperature range. Farms now depend on a combination of surface and groundwater. But some, particularly in the Central Valley regions, have overdrafted groundwater basins by taking more water than is being returned into the basin from precipitation, runoff, or intentional recharge efforts.<sup>6</sup>

#### *Labor*

Virtually every farm in California relies on farm laborers to some extent. While many hired farmworkers are foreign-born, fewer immigrants are entering this workforce in recent years.<sup>7</sup> Several socio-economic and political factors have contributed to this demographic trend. These factors include very low wages, demanding work conditions, undocumented status, and health threats from pesticides.

According to the National Agricultural Workers survey, just 31 percent of the workers interviewed reported having health insurance coverage for injuries and illnesses unrelated to their work.<sup>8</sup> Major events like the COVID-19 pandemic may have also changed the nature of the farm workforce as the lower-income farmers were disproportionately impacted.<sup>9</sup> This has led to both a decrease in the availability of farmworkers and an increase in the cost of hiring labor.

### *Climate Change*

Climate change adds another layer of complexity in predicting the future. California is experiencing more warm days than previous years, a higher number of heat waves, and climate change-induced droughts.<sup>10</sup> Combined with the increasing shift towards higher value cropping patterns like vineyards, this temperature increase can have a significant impact on both the quantity of agricultural output in California and farmers' income. For instance, heatwaves decrease the size of fruit at harvest and a loss of winter chill may eliminate the production of some fruits and nuts like almonds, peaches and pistachios.<sup>11</sup> Farming communities in California are already shrinking and the fields are left unplanted due to drought and lack of water.

### *Consumer Demand*

There has been a recent shift due to changing consumer preferences towards organic produce and rising imports mainly of fresh market vegetables. There has also been a slight fall in demand for animal-based proteins.<sup>12</sup> Plant-based proteins, microorganism-based fermentation, cell-cultured lab-grown meat, and protein-rich microalgae (seaweed) have all seen greater investment and wider acceptance in recent years.<sup>13</sup> This movement has a potential impact on sustainability of the

agriculture sector where it promises to reduce inputs like water and energy on the one hand and greenhouse gas emissions on the other.

### *Rise in Imports*

With improvements in road, containerized shipping, new varieties of foods developed for growth in warmer climates, and better storage technology, more than half of the fresh fruits and almost a third of fresh vegetables in the U.S. in 2018 were imported from other countries.<sup>14</sup> This trend is driven by the increasing competitiveness of imports, but also by the challenges faced by the agriculture sector in California.

## **UNCERTAINTY FROM PRODUCTION SIDE CHALLENGES**

Before discussing the possible scenarios for the future of California agriculture, it is essential to discuss the underlying trends and uncertainties that lead to these possibilities.

### *Production-side Challenges*

The first important uncertainty is whether California will be able to effectively meet its production side challenges like meeting water shortage and challenges arising from changing climate.

Several steps have been taken by governments at all levels and farmers to mitigate these challenges. Approaches such as groundwater recharge are gaining renewed attention throughout the state. In addition, water trading and markets are becoming more prevalent and there has been more investment in alternatives to existing surface water systems such as desalination.<sup>15</sup> There are also emergency technologies to make up for the shortage of farmworkers. Startups such as Agrobot are emerging in the area of agriculture robots and drones.<sup>16</sup>

Many steps have also been taken to reduce agriculture emissions. The dairy sector has set a goal of reducing methane emissions by 40 percent to make advances on climate mitigation. To reduce its carbon footprint, farm operators have been installing “dairy digesters” that capture methane from dairy manure lagoons and convert it to biogas.<sup>17</sup> Farmers are also adopting practices like using shade-netting, new drought and salt-resistant rootstocks, and more attention to the row orientation and cover-cropping to avoid too much direct sun exposure and build resilience against extreme temperature.<sup>18</sup> Measures that are taken to achieve “sufficient water” are usually accompanied by measures to combat climate change like switching to more resilient crops and changing production methods.

### *Emerging Technologies*

The other major uncertainty stems from the kind of technologies that will dominate the sector. Historically, technologies like cold chain, high yielding seed varieties and greenhouses have had significant impact on agriculture and many regions leveraged these technologies to become agricultural leaders. It is expected that the nature of technologies and their pace of adoption will play an important role in any of the potential scenarios. To understand the difference in outcomes, emerging technologies in the field of agriculture can be broadly divided into two categories: organic and indoor farming technologies and factory farming technologies.

Organic and indoor farming technologies are aimed at optimizing farm inputs like water and labor and make production more efficient. They include hydroponics, aeroponics, creating optimal growing conditions using grow-towers, and more. This

category also includes technologies like robotics and drones for planting systems, spraying pesticides, and crop monitoring to help reduce labor demand in the sector.

Factory farming technologies seek to explore entirely new food sources and production methods. They include plant-based proteins as an alternative to resource-intensive conventional meat industry, microorganism-based fermentation, cell-cultured meat using bioreactors, edible insects and protein-rich microalgae and seaweed and 3D printed food. All these technologies need significant innovation and acceptance by consumers but have the potential to overcome the input side constraints due to a much lower water and land requirement.

Which of these technologies will be adopted on a wide scale is highly dependent on the overall ecosystem, consumption patterns and the pace of innovation in these technologies. Mainstreaming most of the organic and indoor farming technologies will be slow because they involve improving efficiency of existing farming technologies and require large scale adoption by the current or new generation of farmers.

This slower adoption rate may make it more likely that investors either shift to other sectors or to other food production technologies like those in the “factory farming” category. The latter will still allow for the possibility for California to remain a leader in food production and will create a whole new set of opportunities for the agriculture sector like supplying raw material for these factory farms.

Either way, California will have to address its production challenges (water, labor and climate change) through technological innovation and quick adaptation if it wants to remain a leader in food production.

### FUTURE SCENARIOS FOR AGRICULTURE IN CALIFORNIA

Based on the above discussion, we can construct a few scenarios that may emerge in the medium to long term. The branch diagram below (Figure 1) gives the three different scenarios: Organic and indoor farming revolution, Factory farming leader, and California no longer a major player in agriculture.

The key idea behind this approach is that the production side challenges like water scarcity and climate induced-challenges are closely interrelated. There cannot be any serious water conservation efforts without resorting to sustainable agriculture practices that are less resource-intensive and have a lower carbon footprint.

This explains why there is only one branch that stems from this node, as the technologies that will help mitigate these challenges will help California maintain its importance in the food production system.

The alternative scenario is when California fails to respond to these challenges. This failure could either be due to inefficient and half-hearted measures taken by the state, or if the pace and severity of climate change and its impact on agriculture is higher than anticipated, leading the conventional agriculture sector to crumble. This leads to two possible outcomes—California becomes import-dependent for food or tries a complete shift to new production methods and sources backed by the tech industry.

#### Scenario 1: Organic and Indoor Farming Revolution

In this scenario, the state manages to solve its production side challenges by investing in sustainable and innovative farming practices. A positive transition is seen from resource

intensive agriculture to small scale farms that are mostly organic along with a strong indoor and community farming movement. The larger farms (like those in the Central Valley region) have transitioned to less water- and resource-intensive crops and genetic varieties too and California is not exporting water.<sup>19</sup> Backed by water conservation practices like groundwater recharge, water recycling, and new growing media like hydroponics and aeroponics, this scenario will see food sufficiency in agriculture with a much lower pressure on inputs like land and water. Large scale adoption of agriculture robots and drones will reduce the labor demand. The sector under this scenario is also more resilient to climate change and extreme events.

#### Scenario 2: Factory Farming Leader

As the state continues to struggle with input constraints like water and labor and fails to adapt to climate induced stressors, California will see a large-scale exit by farmers from the conventional industries. Other states and countries will face similar production issues, and there will be worldwide movement towards other sources of food and newer ways of production. Technologies such as plant-based meat, cell-cultured food, 3D printed food and exploring alternate food sources like insects and seaweed will become more common. This scenario will see not only a shift in supply but also a parallel shift in demand and consumption of unconventional food.

#### Scenario 3: California No Longer Remains A Major Player in Agriculture

In this scenario, California fails to meet the production challenges and those induced by changing climate. The sector sees many farmers selling their farmlands. There is low interest in farming as an occupation and a drying up of private and public sector investment. As a result, California transitions from a food surplus nation to a net importer. Most

of these imports come from nearby countries like Canada (where food production increases due to warming) and Mexico.

### COMBINING FORESIGHT ANALYSIS AND POLICY-MAKING

It is evident from the discussion above that Scenarios 1 and 2 are more desirable than Scenario 3. But how does all this scenario discussion translate into better policy making? Understanding the future scenarios is important to identify the key enablers and policy interventions that will help achieve the desirable outcomes. This discussion is also essential to be prepared and improve resilience to deal with the undesirable scenario outcome.

To convert Scenario 1 into a reality, there needs to be an increase in the investment in water conservation, including the large-scale adoption of indoor farming technologies and agriculture robots. Some specific policy measures to achieve these goals could include repairing infrastructure leaks across the entire water system and increasing regional infrastructure for tertiary treatment of recycled water. The state government could also direct funds to repurpose light industrial sites into advanced greenhouses sites for horizontal farming. To improve the efficiency of existing farming methods, California should also scale up its incentives for precision farming.

The key enablers for Scenario 2—i.e., for California to be a leader in factory farming—are a regulatory environment that promotes new ventures in alternative food sources. California Department of Public Health could partner with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in its efforts to ensure that “new foods” from California, such as cell-cultured protein, meet the

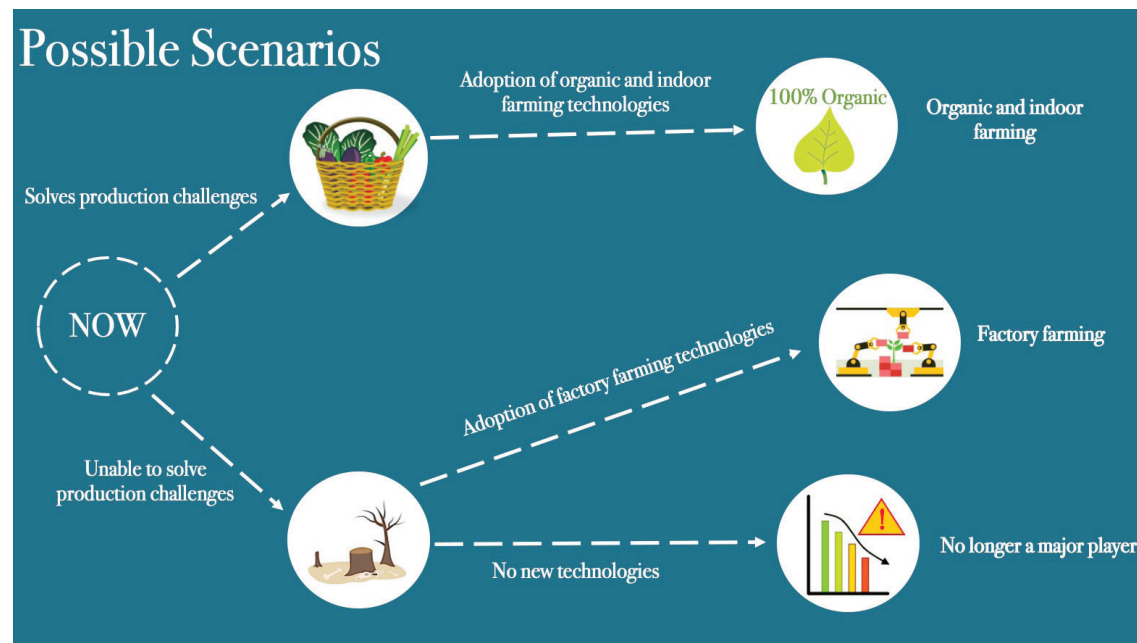


Figure 1. Possible Scenarios for Agriculture in California

standards of “generally recognized as safe.” The state must also provide regulatory oversight of synthetic biology research, design, and commercial operations to protect against uncontrolled releases into the environment. There could also be public investment in sustainable sources of energy as cellular-meat and seafood companies need to find energy sources for production. California also needs to provide economic incentives to companies to encourage scaling up of these technologies as many of these companies may not be economically sustainable in the beginning.

To be better prepared for the undesirable future of Scenario 3, the state needs both preventive measures to avoid this situation and coping mechanisms to deal with the outcomes. California’s foreign missions will need to change objectives in relation to California’s supply chain. The state will also need to develop larger emergency food stocks and create additional employment opportunities in other sectors and provide reskilling for farmworkers. In preparation for numerous farmers and farm workers facing unemployment or inability to maintain a profitable farm, the State of California must also plan to invest in mental health resources and basic benefits for rural farming-dependent communities.

The primary purpose behind forecasting the future for a sector is not to accurately predict what is going to happen but to have effective policies and measures in place that can lead to preferable future scenarios and build resilience against the undesirable outcomes. From this case study it is clear that if California wants to maintain its leadership and self-sufficiency in food production it must strive to help the sector adapt and prepare for.

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# WHY THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES NEEDS RANKED-CHOICE VOTING REFORM NOW

— Karen Toro

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*Los Angeles is one of the largest and most diverse cities in the country, but—as Karen Toro (MPA '23 argues In this article—continues to rely on an electoral process that excludes voters and wastes public resources. Toro argues that Ranked Choice Voting could improve Los Angeles elections, increase turnout, and lead to more positive campaigning.*

In June 2022, a crowded field of 12 candidates were on the ballot to become Los Angeles' next mayor. When the votes were counted, Karen Bass received 43% of the vote and Rick Caruso received 36%.<sup>1</sup> But the majority of eligible voters simply didn't turn out—less than a third of those registered cast a ballot in the mayoral primary that year.<sup>2</sup> And because neither Bass nor Caruso achieved the majority required to win, the race moved on to a costly run-off in November.

These expensive and unrepresentative elections cannot be the best that our democracy has to offer. There is a straightforward and effective solution that could create more positive campaigns and lead to less polarization, increase voter turnout, and cost taxpayers less money: Ranked Choice Voting.

## WHAT IS RANKED CHOICE VOTING?

Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) is an electoral method that allows voters to rank candidates in the order of their preference. Voters rank candidates by first choice, second choice, third, and so on. If a candidate receives more

than half of the “first choice” votes in a race where there can only be one winner, that candidate wins. But if no one has received a majority of the vote after first choice votes are counted, the count then goes to an “instant run-off.” The candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated, and voters who chose that candidate will have their vote count towards their next choice. This process continues until a single candidate gets over 50% of the votes—eliminating the need for an additional run-off election. Figure 1 demonstrates how RCV votes are counted.

RCV is gaining traction across the US. In the state of Maine, RCV is used for all primary elections at the state level, and for general elections of federal offices<sup>3</sup>, while Alaskans began using RCV in general elections for the first time in 2022.<sup>4</sup> New York City uses RCV, as do several California cities, including Berkeley and Oakland. San Francisco adopted RCV in 2002 and has used it in municipal elections, including elections for members of the Board of Supervisors, the Mayor, and other city-wide offices.<sup>5</sup>

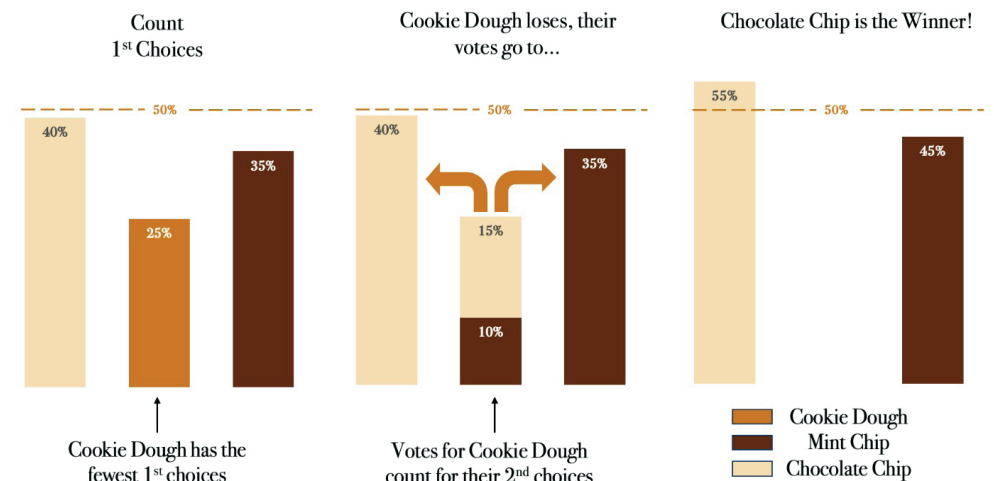


Figure 1. Source: FairVote.org

## WHY RCV IN LOS ANGELES?

Despite its large population and its sweeping diversity, the city of Los Angeles does not currently use RCV. The city currently uses a non-partisan, top-two primary system for its municipal elections. All candidates from all political parties appear on a single primary ballot. The top two, regardless of party affiliation, advance to the general election. If a candidate gets more than 50% of the vote, then the election is settled during the primary and there is no general election race in the fall. If no candidate receives more than 50% of the vote, then the top two vote getters advance to the fall for a run-off election.

California has been at the forefront of voting reform and public participation. Implementing RCV in a city like Los Angeles—with a large and ethnically diverse population—has the potential to increase turnout, create more civil campaigns, and lower costs.

“Ranked Choice Voting allows the candidate most widely accepted by a constituency to win an election which helps reduce polarization, extremism, and negative campaigning. RCV has been proven to work in elections across the country ranging from New York City to Alaska so I’d like to see Los Angeles be next to adopt it.” - Kevin O’Brien, Residential Director, LA Neighborhood Council (Westchester/Playa) and GSPP MPA ‘23

## RCV INCREASES VOTER TURNOUT

An analysis of 100 years of LA city election data by the Los Angeles Times shows that the percentage of registered voters who participated in mayoral elections in LA reached its highest point in the late 1960’s

and has since decreased to record lows.<sup>6</sup> In LA County, which includes the city of Los Angeles, more than half of registered voters did not participate in the 2022 general election.<sup>7</sup>

RCV eliminates the need for primaries and run-off elections, which increase the burden on voters and can decrease turnout.<sup>8</sup> Cities that adopt RCV experience a 10% boost in voter turnout and are more likely to have candidates who are broadly acceptable to most voters.<sup>9</sup> One study of voting patterns in US cities found that youth voter turnout was higher in cities that use RCV: the probability of voting among youth was higher in RCV cities by nine percentage points.<sup>10</sup>

## RCV REDUCES ELECTION COSTS

RCV saves costs by eliminating the need for run-off elections. Researchers at New America found that between 1993 and 2005, Los Angeles used \$17.6 million to conduct runoff elections. In 2005 alone, the city spent \$4.7 million.<sup>11</sup> RCV could eliminate these costs.

Critics argue that changing an election system will require significant financial resources and investment. In a city like LA with such a large population, new voting machines would be required and would cause a financial burden on the City. However, the savings of RCV are likely to offset these costs in the longer term. According to an analysis by the Fiscal Policy Institute in 2018, the savings that would result from implementing RCV in the future would be worth the short-term costs of updating the voting equipment, despite being expensive in the short-term.<sup>12</sup> In 2019, the NY Independent Budget Office estimated that the implementation of RCV would

require an initial cost of between \$100,000 to \$500,000, but would ultimately save the city up to \$20 million per election cycle.<sup>13</sup>

## RCV MAY ENCOURAGE MORE POSITIVE CAMPAIGNS

As polarization increasingly dominates American politics, negative campaigns have become the norm. LA’s 2022 mayoral race was no exception, with attack ads about the Church of Scientology and abortion rights on the airwaves.<sup>14</sup> While there isn’t enough research to conclusively show that RCV reduces polarization, there is promising evidence that RCV elections may lead to positive effects on campaigns and voter perceptions.

A study published in *Electoral Studies Journal* compared three cities using RCV to seven cities using plurality voting systems. The research found that voters in cities with RCV were nearly twice as likely to say local campaigns were “a lot less negative” than other elections that had occurred recently. In comparison, cities using plurality voting experienced more negativity: people were twice as likely to confirm that the candidates involved were critical of each other “some or most of the time.” The respondents in the survey who lived in RCV cities were significantly more likely to be “very satisfied” with how local campaigns were being run.

In a complementary study, researchers examined campaign messaging in cities that use RCV against plurality cities, finding that newspaper articles about mayoral and city council elections in RCV cities used significantly more positive words and fewer negative words than cities with plurality voting methods.<sup>15</sup>

## COULD RCV CONFUSE VOTERS?

Despite the potential upsides, there are several common criticisms of implementing a new voting system such as RCV. Critics of RCV argue that a new voting system will actually decrease representation by confusing voters with its complexity. In particular, implementing a new voting system might be difficult for those who are less politically engaged, and will require new education efforts and outreach.

However, it is not clear that this concern is backed up in the research. A 2016 study to compare the participation of cities that use RCV with those that use plurality found that the use of RCV did not have a significant impact on voter turnout during general elections. Rather, the number of contests on the ballot (turnout increases when there are three or more), timing (even-numbered years), and the presence of a competitive mayoral race have a greater influence on general election turnout.<sup>16</sup>

## CASE STUDY: NEW YORK CITY AND RCV EXIT POLLS

New York City voters decided to implement RCV through a ballot measure in 2019, which received 74% approval.<sup>17</sup> As of 2021, NYC has implemented RCV in primary and special elections for local offices. An exit poll conducted in partnership with advocacy group Rank the Vote NYC after the 2021 election highlights the promise of RCV.<sup>18</sup> The poll involved 1,662 participants, both in-person and via phone, across a diverse range of age groups, races and educational backgrounds that accurately represent NYC’s demographics. According to the poll, voters appreciated the advantages of

ranked choice voting, found it easy to comprehend, and expressed a desire to use it in future elections. In addition, nearly eight in ten of voters supported using RCV for future local elections.<sup>19</sup> 95% of voters found their ballot simple to complete and 83% of voters ranked at least two candidates on their ballots in the mayoral primary.

## LOS ANGELES AS THE NEXT STEP FOR REFORM

American democracy faces challenges such as low voter turnout, high costs, and increasing polarization. These challenges are exacerbated by a plurality voting system that widens divisions among voters and does not offer them real choices. RCV could be one solution to these issues. There is evidence that it could lead to more positive campaigns, higher voter turnout, and lower election costs. The city of Los Angeles can be at the forefront of changes that are needed across the country.

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# AN INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT REICH

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Berkeley and former  
United States Labor Secretary*

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*When we arrived for our interview with Professor Robert Reich, he led us into an office that felt more like a museum. The walls were filled with photos of illustrious figures, magazine covers, newspaper articles, art, letters, and other accolades. He asked us to call him Bob and offered us seats, one of which turned out to be his official United States Secretary of Labor chair “I don’t know what I’m going to do with this thing when I move out of my office”).*

*It was Bob’s final semester teaching at UC Berkeley, but he’s not a fan of the word “retirement.” He won’t use that term because “the majority of people in our society reach retirement with a huge sigh of relief and I’m just the opposite.” And indeed, we couldn’t help but notice that he taught another class the fall semester following our interview.*

*Here are excerpts from our conversation.*

## ON TEACHING

Berkeley Public Policy Journal (BPPJ): You've had a lot of different roles throughout your career: Labor Secretary, lawyer, politician, teacher, commentator, TikTok influencer. *What has been your favorite role?*

Robert Reich (RR): Teacher. I love students. I love teaching. That's what I'll miss the most. My favorite thing is those moments when I can see in students' eyes and body language that they are excited and they figured something out.

BPPJ: *Do you remember the first moment that happened?*

RR: I do. I was teaching at Harvard at the Kennedy School. It was 1981. Reagan was beginning his supply-side nonsense. And I said something about there being no evidence that tax cuts on the rich would stimulate more investment or more jobs. I made the argument as best I could, and then I made the argument on the other side. And I remember that a number of students sat up straight in their chairs. It may seem, in retrospect, kind of obvious, now that we've experienced 40 years of this supply-side nonsense. But at the time, I was saying something that students had not thought about.

My style of teaching is never to just simply present my views, it is to get people to think harder about something. I tell my undergraduates, and I tell my graduate students, that *the best way of learning, besides going out and doing, is to find somebody who disagrees with you. And not persuading, but finding out why they disagree with you.*

*And using that disagreement to re-examine your own assumptions.*

## ON THE ROLE OF ECONOMICS

BPPJ: Many of us go to policy school because we see how our economy is only serving a small part of our population, so we tend to struggle with the way that traditional economic theory doesn't match real-world experiences. *How do you think that economics can be used in academic institutions to create more value, rather than how we extract more from our current economy?*

RR: I urge people to take economics, but also to see the context. I don't teach economics per se, I teach political economy, which is an older tradition. In the 19th century, there were no economists. In fact, in the 18th century, Adam Smith didn't call himself an economist, he called himself a moral philosopher, because the question at that time was: what is a good society? I urge people to understand that the rules of the game are determined politically. There is nothing about a Pareto improvement that is necessarily more just. And fundamentally, what we're talking about here is power.

But the history of the last forty years shows a pattern. And that is that wealth has moved to the top of our system here in the United States. To a dramatic extent, in a short amount of time, we are replicating the Gilded Age of the late 18th century, in all its craziness and with its abuses of power. And the question we all ought to be asking is, how do these vicious cycles end?



## ON WEALTH, POVERTY, AND ACTIVISM

BPPJ: *What are your thoughts about how to address the wealth and income gap in the US, and what are some barriers to implementing solutions?*

RR: One idea that I think needs to be more broadly understood is that while inequality of income and wealth is not a zero-sum game—it is possible to have vast wealth at the top and still have a lot of upward mobility elsewhere in the system—power is a zero-sum game. You can't have a great deal of power accumulating in one place without it being lost somewhere else. And wealth and power are inseparable.

I could spend the next hour going through public policy solutions and just scratch the surface. What's hard is getting the political

will—mobilizing and energizing enough people to make any of these solutions real. So, while I'm a true believer in public policy, and I have spent years in three wonderful public policy schools, I think that the issue of political feasibility is too easily avoided by saying well, "The Overton window is just this big and no bigger." What is feasible at any given time depends on the strength of organization and advocacy. To be a change agent is to widen that Overton window dramatically. So, we must never believe that we are constrained by what is currently possible. And yet at the same time, to merely talk about public policy without talking about political power is an exercise in futility.

BPPJ: We often don't see the curriculum in public policy schools and educational institutions training us to be advocates.

So, in thinking about transformative policies like abolition—*what do you think is the role of academic institutions in this work?*

RR: Well, I think there are two parts of public policy that are critically important and often not addressed in public policy schools: one is the role of the media, how issues are framed, and how choices are presented to the public. The second is the ability to organize and advocate.

I don't know of any school that does a particularly good job of the latter. Partly because it's terribly difficult to teach. There's no substitute for learning it on the job, actually doing it.

It can seem very daunting. We're now facing everything from climate change to systemic racism, to inequality, to threats to democracy. It is sadly easy for young people to say, I can't possibly address something as large, and I think that's where we fail. The combination of having student debt and at the same time, seeing how large and seemingly intractable these issues are can be very discouraging. And that can rob somebody of the energy and motivation, and optimism they need to become an advocate.

## ON THE PRESENT AND FUTURE OF U.S. POLITICS

RR: Ultimately, nothing will change unless there's a shift in power. And the paradigm won't change unless the public broadly comes to see that the current allocation of power—whether it is between owners and workers, or between finance and non-finance, or however you want to slice it—is not sustainable.

In 2016, the two most popular candidates to emerge were, neither of them were politicians, in the traditional sense, Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump.

And I think we'll see a similar anti-establishment politics in the future, which could veer into some dangerous areas, or could be very reformist. But that's where we're heading. The Republican Party is in a death spiral right now. It is moving away from democracy, small d, at an accelerating pace. It's very dangerous for this country to have only one party capable of government, which is what we have now. The Democratic Party, though, has been abandoning the working class for forty years. So there's a huge void, politically speaking, and that void will be filled somehow.

I do feel, especially after the 2016 election, a lot of Democrats and a lot of progressive liberal organizers were caught with the cynicism bug.

BPPJ: *Do you have any takes on how to address that cynicism?*

RR: Well, I'm very optimistic about the future, mainly because of young people. The demographics don't lie. Young people today are more diverse. I mean, who will the leaders of this country be? Twenty years from now, this will be a different country. And a country that I for one would be, if I lasted that long, much happier to be a member of.

## ADVICE FOR POLICY STUDENTS

BPPJ: You mentioned tackling apathy, feeling like some of these problems are just bigger than what we can handle.

*What advice would you give for policy students who are encouraging others to vote or be more active?*

RR: Well, first of all, I didn't use the word apathy. I used the word cynicism. There's a difference. I don't think students are apathetic at all. I've taught for more than 40 years. That's two generations, possibly two and a half generations. This current generation of students is more committed, more concerned, and more dedicated to positive social change than any generation I've had the privilege of teaching before.

If I were graduating with a Master's in Public Policy today, there are reasons that I would be feeling daunted and discouraged. But on the other hand, can you imagine a better time in the history of this country to begin facing challenges? Huge challenges.

What I was referring to with "cynicism" was a sense of being overwhelmed. That's fear. And the sense that maybe nothing will change, or there's nothing I can do and possibly make a difference. There is a danger in cynicism—there is importance in skepticism, but deep danger in cynicism about the system. That's a self-fulfilling prophecy of doom. I think that any of us who had a position of authority, to whom students look as models, it's our responsibility to tackle that cynicism head on.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

BPPJ: *Can you tell us about some of the most rewarding moments of your time here at Berkeley?*

RR: I remember during the Occupy movement, being at Sproul Hall, and I was giving the Mario Savio Lecture. I've been

asked weeks before, but it so happened that on this particular day, the police and students had clashed here. The tensions were high on campus, and the Occupy Movement had captured the imaginations of a lot of people. And so I gave a talk on the steps and there were thousands of students. It was very much from the heart and very extemporaneous. It was one of those moments where I felt that I was saying something that was meaningful to young people at the time they needed to hear it.

BPPJ: *Is there anything that we did not cover in this that you'd like to say to the Goldman community in this interview?*

RR: Just this: of all the jobs I've had, my years here at the Goldman School have been the most fun, the most satisfying. It's been by far, the best community I've ever had.

## BOB'S BOOK RECS

- *Justice is Fairness* by John Rawls
- *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* by Albert Hirschman
- *The Affluent Society and the New Industrial State* by John Kenneth Galbraith

# NOTES

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