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## Is Blue State California's Agenda America's Future?

BY KERRY JACKSON

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An article that posits California as the model for the country's future recently picked up some traffic, thanks to an affirming tweet from Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey, who called it a "great read." We'd say it's more of a "must read," because it shows the rest of the country what policies it needs to reject to avoid falling into the California trap.

There are two overarching messages from "The Great Lesson of California in America's New Civil War." The first is its advocacy of California's failing Blue State policies and the "great lesson" they provide for an America that needs to be pulled "out of the political mess we're in." Second, it supports a one-party state, because "at this juncture in our history, there's no way that a bipartisan path provides the way forward."

In other words, ideas that aren't considered "progressive" are not welcome, and it follows that neither are those who hold them. Dissenters in one-party states are marginalized at best, and persecuted in the most extreme cases. This is not the way forward but a return to a primitive form of government.

The article is the fourth in a "California Is The Future" series published by Medium, a social journalism website. It outlines "an in-depth look at how the blue state today is inventing the political future that will come to all America in the next 15 years." According to authors Peter Leyden, a tech media CEO, and Ruy Teixeira, from the left-wing Center for American Progress, "the 21st-century hit California first, and the innovative state adapted early and has pioneered a promising new way forward."

A couple of reactions materialize quickly. One, the authors live in a platinum bubble protected from the hardships that Blue State poli-

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cies produce. Two, this article, buoyed by Dorsey's tweet, needs a thorough Fisking.

Let's start with the claim that "California Democrats actually cared about average citizens, embraced the inevitable diversity of 21st-century society, weren't afraid of real innovation, and were ready to start solving the many challenges of our time, including climate change."

In truth, California's many challenges have been made worse by Sacramento's Blue State agenda. A solvable housing crisis created by shortsighted public policy continues to plague the state's 99 percent. Diversity isn't extended to thought, speech, nor politics in a state that's so thoroughly dominated by one way of thinking. Meanwhile, the business climate is so toxic that companies are fleeing at alarming rates, and the efforts to harness climate change, an existential threat in the minds of true believers, will make lives harder for most in the state while achieving little if anything at all.

Let's move on the assertion that Republican ideas must be snuffed out because "since 1980, their policies have engorged the rich while flatlining the incomes of the majority of Americans." The only "evidence" they offer to support this claim is "last December's tax overhaul, which ultimately bestows 83 percent of the benefits over time to the top 1 percent." But tax cuts are not benefits. They are an expression of increased liberty, and have not caused the "flatlining" of any incomes -- how could they?

The cuts appear skewed toward the rich only because it is the rich who are sending nearly all the income tax payments to Washington. Under the Trump cuts, the top 20 percent will pay 87 percent of all federal income taxes, up three percentage points from the previous year, while the top 1 percent have been paying about 40 percent. Meanwhile, the bottom 40 percent "collectively" pay zero income tax, according to Brian Reidl of the Manhattan Institute.

While ignoring California's own tax burden, among the most oppressive, and most broken, in the country, the authors fail to mention that the top 0.1 percent, the richest of the rich, will see their average tax bill grow by \$387,610 under the Trump tax cuts. This figure comes not from a conservative group, but from the Tax Policy Center, which is closer to the left than the middle.

Later, Leyden and Teixeira write, "California was a model of governmental dysfunction in the 1990–2005 period, with Democrats and Republicans at each other's throats and little being accomplished." But it's those checks and balances that keep one party from executing the tyranny of the majority, and they are clearly inconvenient to those who wish to consolidate political power. In one-party systems, the majority doesn't govern, it rules.

Leyden and Teixeira look fondly at the 1930s, when "the Democratic Party won and dominated American politics for" about 50 years. This overlooks the reality that the welfare state took root in this period. The result has been restrained economic prosperity, generational dependence on government and poverty made worse. They ignore the fact that California, with its generous anti-poverty programs, has the highest poverty rate in the country.

Leyden and Teixeira also celebrate California's climbing minimum wage, which will put people out of work; the budget-busting, behind-schedule, and wholly unjustified high-speed rail; and the job-killing Global Warming Solutions Act, that won't make a bit of difference in the world's temperature.

They further claim that "California is thriving right now, the economy is booming," and "state government budgets are setting aside surpluses." We admit some are thriving, but many aren't. The state makes up about 12 percent of the population, yet it is home to one in three welfare recipients. The economy is booming for a few while public policies continue to increase the cost of living, keep the poor mired in their poverty, and squeeze the middle class. The surpluses, which lawmakers will find a way to spend, are further confirmation that residents are overtaxed.

Yes, life in the Golden State is beautiful for a few. But it can be a nightmare for the majority that doesn't live in the coastal bubble. If California "provides a playbook for America's new way forward," this country is in deep trouble. Forward is not the way it will be moving.

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