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Newsom vs Republicans - State of the State

Gavin Newsom delivered the [2024 State of the State Address](#) on June 25 and sparked many controversies with it. This year, like never before, the Address took on surprisingly partisan rhetoric as Newsom went down a long list of Republican talking points, discrediting each in a span of a 28-minute video.

In order of appearance, Gavin Newsom addressed:

1. The Fascist Tendencies of the Republican Party
2. The Border Crisis
3. The Homelessness Crisis
4. The Economy
5. The Environment

1. The Fascist Tendencies of the Republican Party

In probably the most controversial topic of the Address, Gavin Newsom began his speech with a harkening to California's response to the rise of fascism in 1939. Implying the GOP as the latest iteration of these ideas, Newsom announced

"I write to you with a warning from the past. It was January 2, 1939, that anxious moment in history. The world was on edge as fascism spread its hate and destruction through Europe. On that day, Governor Culbert Olson delivered an inaugural address to raise the alarm with lawmakers and the people of this great state. He spoke of California's most determined task in the face of 'the destruction of democracy.'

...

This year, we face another extraordinary moment in history — for California, for the country, and for the world. We are presented with a choice between a society that embraces our values and a world darkened by division and discrimination."

Newsom is essentially comparing modern Republican policies to those of WWII fascists. Republicans have already responded to these assertions in massive pushback. Senator Kelly Seyarto responded in reference to the video of the Address:

"While this pre-recorded speech fulfills the governor's legal mandate, it does not in any real way fulfill his responsibility to Californians who deserve a safe, affordable and opportunity-filled future."

While never directly addressing Newsom's comparison to a fascist state, California Congressional Republicans continued to refute every point of the Address. Their slogan, "Fix California," highlights the mismanagement and failed promises of Newsom's California. A [video](#) published by the California Senate Republicans YouTube channel one day before the State of the State Address, specifically lists homelessness **(an important distinction to make is that Republicans try to fix the danger of homeless people while Democrats try to fix their suffering)**, "businesses... closing their doors, and crime contin[ing] to rise" as important issues on the Republican platform in California. They assert that Newsom has grossly mismanaged these crises.

Taking a step back, in this first part of the Address, it becomes clear that Gavin Newsom is attacking the growth of authoritarianism in the modern Republican Party while the Republicans are following the same guidebook established by the GOP: using the media to ignore important issues and inflate the importance of tangential ones.

The truth is that Newsom is far from the first to denounce Trump and his party's shift away from democratic values. These concerns, however, rarely make their way to Republican voters. Instead, right-leaning media asserts tangential issues, or sometimes flat lies, to gain the popular vote.

Take their claim on the increase in crime. This is simply not true. According to the [FBI 2024 quarterly crime report](#),

“Murder decreased by 26.4 percent, rape decreased by 25.7 percent, robbery decreased by 17.8 percent, and aggravated assault decreased by 12.5 percent. Reported property crime also decreased by 15.1 percent.”

Republicans and right-wing media, on the other hand, have continued pushing the narrative that Democrats are causing a skyrocketing violent crime rate. According to the FBI, this is a flat lie. Aside from factual inaccuracies, right-wing media rides on anger over tangential issues like LGBTQ+ rights and women’s reproductive rights to secure power even though Republicans have no reasonable response to the hardline statistics of Newsom’s talking points.

Fighting Civil Rights has nothing to do with the economy or law and order, which were historically the Republican platform, but right-wing media and the GOP enthusiastically fight in these culture wars as a distraction from the ground facts: crime is actually decreasing, the economy is at an all-time high, and the GOP is increasingly exploring fascist ideals.

2. The Border Crisis

Newsom quickly pivoted to his next point,

“When it comes to the southern border with Mexico, California has proven time and time again that it’s willing to tackle the hardest problems. But Republicans in Congress have chosen cynicism, partisan politics, and the dangerous path of chaos instead of doing their job.”

Taking another jab at Republicans in California and in the Senate, Newsom is reaffirming that his administration is adequately handling the border crisis. He highlights that Republicans have actually blocked many proposed actions on the border (such as Biden's [border security bill](#) earlier this year) and have repeatedly failed to fulfill their promises on the border even during Trump’s Presidency (no wall or long-lasting border reform was ever made).

Newsom reaffirmed his commitment to tightening control at the southern border and placed the fentanyl surge as a top priority for his candidacy. Referring to the border crossings in the south, Newsom claims

“The vast majority of fentanyl seized at the border comes through these points of entry. That’s why we have deployed the California National Guard – to stop the flow of this deadly drug into our state and the rest of the nation, allowing U.S. border agents to do their job to secure our borders. These operations have resulted in the seizure of more than 62,000 pounds of fentanyl in 2023,”

Needless to say, the influx of fentanyl is the largest drug crisis in the nation’s history. According to the [CDC](#), an estimated 74,702 Americans died due to fentanyl overdose in 2023. This is a horrific failure of our government to protect its people.

The California Senate Republicans' video addressed the fentanyl crisis by calling it a

“The governor said he was committed to fight against fentanyl, yet legislative Republicans had to fight tooth and nail to get even the most common sense bills considered in committee at a time when fentanyl is a leading cause of death in the United States. Our communities desperately need a more serious approach.”

On the California Senate floor, it becomes more obvious that both Democrats and Republicans are extremely concerned about the fentanyl crisis. According to a [summary of Senate bills](#) by AP, the biggest difference between the parties' approaches is that

“Some Democratic lawmakers support policies that focus on education, prevention and treatment, while Republicans and more moderate Democrats want more enforcement against fentanyl dealers.”

This is largely a philosophical difference in the overall very liberal state of California. It is becoming increasingly difficult to compare California Republicans to the national GOP, with California Republicans supporting fentanyl bills in their own way and federal Republicans, according to [White House records](#),

“The Republican Study Committee, which represents 100% of House Republican leadership and about 80% of their members, released a budget that would severely cut critical funding for states to respond to the overdose epidemic.”

The title of the report itself reads: “FACT SHEET: House Republicans Propose Severely Undermining Fight Against Opioid Crisis in Latest Extreme Budget Proposal.” Clearly, national and California Republicans have different goals for the state border.

Despite the fear of the southern border and the great risk it poses to the opioid crisis, Gavin Newsom maintains that his party is able to protect the border and welcome immigrants at the same time. He maintains that

“We are a success story exactly because of our universality and our extraordinary diversity, and because we practice pluralism.

...

When [Republicans] speak of immigrants poisoning American blood, and of mass deportations and detention camps, and of “vermin” who want to destroy America, this is the language of destruction — of 1939, when Governor Olson issued his warning.”

In summary, Newsom’s Address announces tighter control of the southern border while promising to never turn his back on legitimate immigrants.

3. The Homelessness Crisis

Newsom continues onto the homelessness crisis:

“When it comes to America’s homelessness problem, California’s detractors have similarly offered nothing but rhetoric, moaning and casting blame. No state has done as much as California in addressing the pernicious problem of homelessness that too many politicians have ignored for too long. Let me remind you that when I became Governor in 2019, there was no state homeless strategy...

Since then... California has provided shelter for more than 71,000 people.”

Republicans shoot back in their video:

“The real State of California is more than 180,000 homeless people. Capital Democrats have spent more than 22 billion on the problem in the last 6 years only for things to get worse.”

Republicans are essentially saying that the Democrats' attempt to fix homelessness has cost far too much money and been far too ineffective. This is a fair criticism. The [LA Times](#) corroborates the statistics,

“California has spent \$20 billion over the past five years dedicated to the state's homelessness crisis, including funneling money toward supporting shelters and subsidizing rent. Still, homelessness grew 6% in 2023 from the year prior, to more than 180,000 people, according to federal “point in time” data.”

Instead of Newsom's expensive strategy, Republicans declared:

“that is why legislative Republicans have called for an audit of the state's homeless spending and why we believe that we need accountable programs that compassionately clear encampments...”

This would at first seem like a great thing, and in theory, it is. Spending on homelessness programs needs to be more focused and effective to keep up with housing costs. However, Republicans have an unfortunate history of extreme cost-cutting when it comes to humanitarian welfare. They often follow dangerous precedents of frugality on these topics and any voter should be warned that a Republican audit is a promise of extreme cost-cutting (only in that subject).

Perhaps the more unfortunate history is the Republican outlook on homelessness. As previously mentioned, while Newsom's California has aimed to spend its money on elevating the lives of the homeless, the Republican's response video said

“...no one wants an encampment in their backyard. It's not safe for you, the community, or anyone on the street. I'm across the street from the state capital standing in front of one of the numerous law enforcement vehicles needed just to keep us safe.”

This quote exemplifies the whole Republican view of homelessness. Rather than appeal to the humanitarian crisis of the homeless people, they call on voters to do whatever possible to get homeless people out of their backyards. This is not a solution, nor is it compassionate as a human being to those down on their luck. This rhetoric signals a fundamental difference between the Democrat and Republican approach to homelessness.

Gavin Newsom's State of the State Address announced expanding welfare and housing services in response to the homelessness crisis; Republicans called for bringing spending under control.

4. The Economy

Newsom spent a significant portion of the Address on the differences between California and a Republican economy. First, he asserted that Republicans are telling flat lies about taxes in California:

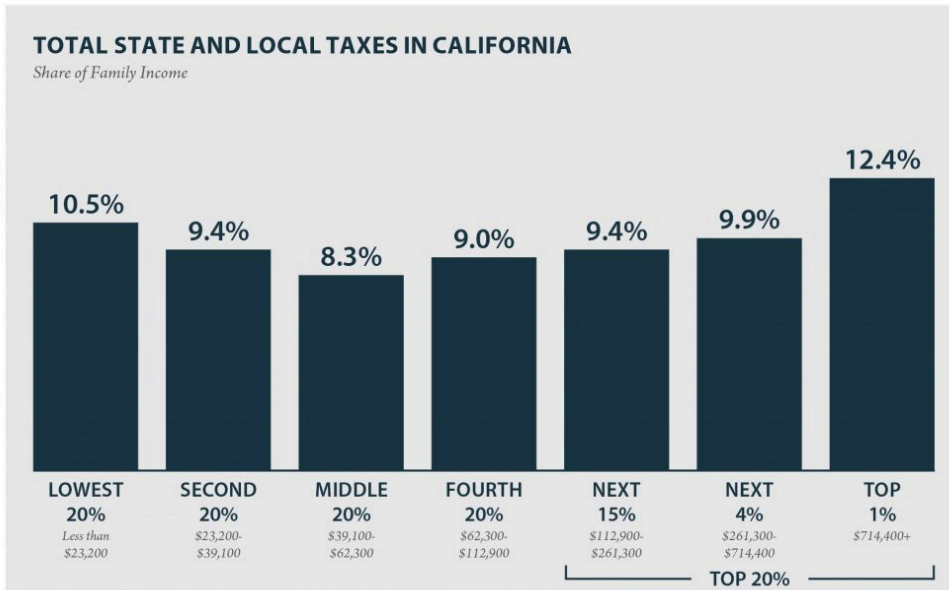
“Catering to big business and the rich is also why red states tax their lowest earners far more than California does. They punish you when you’re struggling, but give you a free pass when you’re wealthy. Here’s the truth Republicans never tell you: California is not a high-tax state.”

This is compared to the Republican claim from their video:

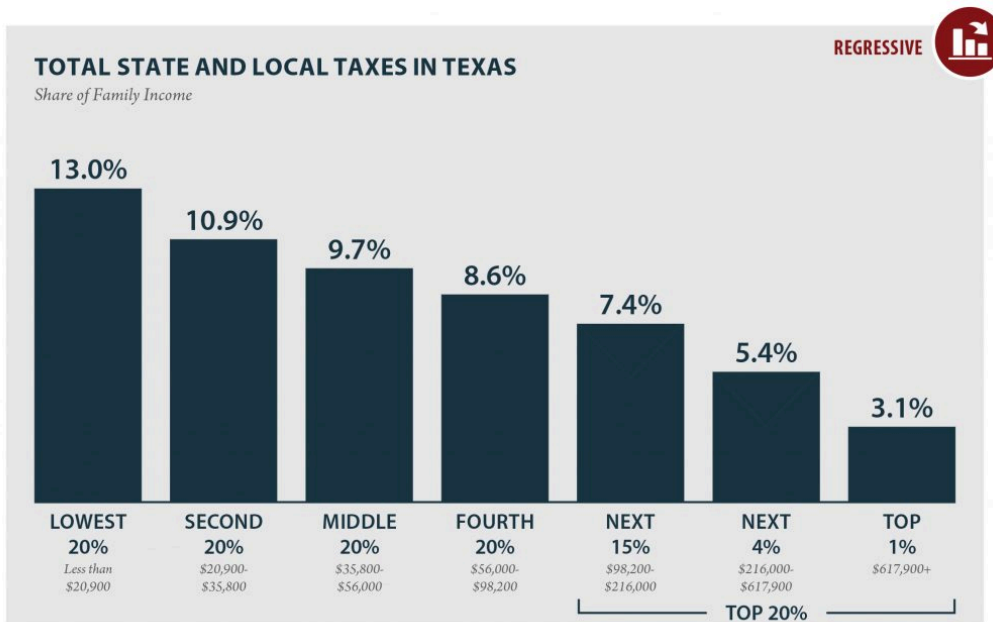
“...between soaring taxes and rampant crime we've lost hundreds of thousands of small businesses in recent years. And while California has one of the highest tax burdens of any state, what do we get in return? A record high homeless population, crumbling infrastructure, and projects like the high-speed rail that receive billions of your taxpayer dollars with little or no results...”

There is so much factually wrong with the Republican response that it is hard to know where to begin. Here’s what they actually got right: taxes in every state have increased, infrastructure needs to be revitalized, and homelessness is still a crisis. Every other point is either fabricated or an extension of the truth.

Newsom was actually right when he said “Here’s the truth Republicans never tell you: California is not a high-tax state.” According to a report from the [Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy](#), California’s taxation distribution organized by income level looks like this:



The top 1% is actually taxed at a higher rate than the bottom 20% and taxation rates are relatively evenly distributed across the spectrum. Newsom claimed “red states tax their lowest earners far more than California does,” and sure enough, according to [ITEP](#),



Texas has an extremely regressive taxation curve. Unlike California, Texas, and other red states tax their top 1% at less than a quarter of what the lowest 20% has to pay. So, to reiterate, Republican claims about taxation are nonsense when accounting for who has to pay those taxes.

Crime is not abnormally rampant. As explained in part 1 of this article, according to the [FBI](#), crime is steeply on the fall. California and the USA are significantly safer than they were last year.

Republicans express concerns over the closure of small businesses, which have increased over the years. This increase, however, is rarely because of Democrat policies, and rather due to the massive damage sustained over the coronavirus pandemic between 2019-2022. Most closures have long been coming and began during this period. Republicans' only response on how to stop them has been tax cuts, which, historically, have rarely worked out ([Fact Sheet: Tax Cuts Don't Boost Small Business Employment](#) and [Small Businesses Lose in Trump Plan](#) are excellent resources to learn more).

California Republicans have spent much time hammering away at the state's high-speed rail plan. Currently, California is constructing the first internationally competitive high-speed rail line in the nation's history, upgrading lines between the state's major cities and even running a line from Los Angeles to Los Vegas. This could be the beginning of a rail revolution in California, so it's unsurprising that conservatives are worried.

The automotive industry has worked to lobby municipal and federal governments to stop investment in any kind of public transportation. In every major city, the subway lines are dying. Across the nation, public transportation is hard to find and harder to use.

Unfortunately, sole reliance on cars is not an option for a sustainable future. With the prevalence of electric cars with heavy batteries (increasing the total weight by up to 50%), the road infrastructure can not keep up. Asphalt crumbles because of the weight of cars, and the heavier cars need more road repairs. The cost of repairing and maintaining car infrastructure is exorbitant, not to mention the environmental impact!

Europe has already figured this out. For decades now, European nations have been heavily investing in rail infrastructure and reaping the benefits. In 2023 alone, the EU declared a new €6.2 billion [infrastructure bill](#) to expand their rail network. According to [Statista](#), China invested ¥710.9 billion (\$97.9 billion) and similar amounts each year before. Despite unfulfilled promises from every

president in the past 20 years, the US is lagging far behind the rest of the world in rail and infrastructure.

Finally, someone took action. Plans for investment in rail infrastructure in California were made in 2015 and President Biden signed a new Infrastructure Bill in 2024. If US infrastructure is not urgently rebuilt, something Republicans have repeatedly refused to do, the nation will come to a grinding halt.

Newsom ended this topic by summarizing his outlook on the California economy,

“Here is a simple question for Republicans: If California is a failed state, why are four of the seven most valuable companies in the world based here? Why does the Bay Area remain the top-ranked region for venture capital?”

Fact: California’s economy is at its strongest point in history ([California Remains the World’s 5th Largest Economy](#)).

5. The Environment

Newsom ended his address with commentary on the environment.

“We’re in the middle of the largest dam removal project in U.S. history – restoring 400 miles of historic river... We’re moving forward with the largest climate resilience project in the nation, the Delta conveyance, protecting our water supplies while building resilience for the state’s most important ecosystem.

...

We know that protecting the environment improves our economy. Look no further for proof of California’s economic dominance than the revolution happening right now with clean cars. We are home to 60 zero-emission vehicle companies. The global EV market would not exist without California’s leadership.

...

We’re moving forward in the face of oil-funded politicians all around us who are lying to us. They’re trying to say a clean economy is a bad economy. But we’re not asserting, we’re proving. We have six times more clean energy jobs than fossil fuel jobs in California. We’re holding Big Oil accountable for their lies and for their price gouging. We’re suing them for defiling our planet...”

While none of these efforts were commented on by the California Republicans, sadly, they are not bipartisan. Regardless, these efforts and accomplishments in restoring the natural environment must be applauded in today's political climate.

Summary

In summary, Gavin Newsom delivered a State of the State address sparking controversy in its partisanship. He went through California's key concerns and promoted progressive policies at each turn.

1. Republicans are veering dangerously close to fascist ideologies
2. Democrats are working to secure the border while still allowing legitimate immigrants through
3. Homelessness is still a massive priority for California
4. The economy has never been better
5. California has made genuinely impressive progress in environmental protection

California Republicans responded with a pre-recorded video shedding their views, including many inaccuracies, on progressive policy in California.