

HEALTH POLITICS U.S. WIRE

Californians literally swimming in fecal matter thanks in part to left's homelessness crisis



By C. Douglas Golden, The Western Journal

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If you're in California, your waterways are literally teeming with human waste. You could be swimming in it, in fact. And the homelessness crisis is to blame.

Yes, even though California bristled at the fact that President Donald Trump called out the state -- specifically San Francisco -- for "hazardous waste and homeless sites" that create "bad and dangerous conditions, also severely impacting the Pacific Ocean and water supply," it turns out that's not wholly inaccurate.



Donald J. Trump

@realDonaldTrump

Replying to @realDonaldTrump

....We should all work together to clean up these hazardous waste and homeless sites before the whole city rots away. Very bad and dangerous conditions, also severely impacting the Pacific Ocean and water supply. Pelosi must work on this mess and turn her District around!

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According to a Jan. 7 report from Kaiser Health News, "some of California's most prized rivers, beaches and streams are indeed contaminated with levels of fecal bacteria that exceed state limits, threatening kayakers, swimmers — and the state's reputation as a bastion of environmental protection."

David Gibson, executive officer of the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board, talked about what it was like cleaning up some of the homeless encampments there.

“I’ve carried 5-gallon buckets that were unambiguously being used as toilets,” Gibson said. “They were taking it to the San Diego River, dumping it there, and rinsing it out there.”

Things in California are bad enough that the White House is preparing a plan to tackle homelessness in the state and even liberal legislators are looking at -- *gasp!* -- solutions to the problem.

“The crisis is so bad people’s minds are really opening up and the policies are shifting,” Democratic state Sen. Scott Wiener of San Francisco said, according to Politico.

“Legislation that would have had no chance five or 10 years ago can pass.”

It's interesting that "minds are really opening up" among liberals about conservatism. Far out. If only it didn't take rampant homelessness for that shift to happen.

California has the nation's largest homeless population at 151,000 individuals, and 72 percent of those sleep outside or in cars. That's a major issue for the state's waterways.

"In San Diego, the state’s second-most populous county, dozens of homeless encampments line the 52-mile-long San Diego River, which flows into the Pacific Ocean," Kaiser Health News reported.

"Officials have for decades recorded high levels of fecal bacteria in the river that exceed state standards, Gibson said.

"Last year, the regional water board ordered San Diego County, several cities and municipal agencies to determine the source of the contamination. In

addition to investigating the condition of leaky sewage infrastructure, which fails when it rains, the order requires municipalities to evaluate how homeless people living on riverbanks, in parking lots, trailers and RVs may be contributing to the problem, Gibson said."

It's not just in San Diego, either.

In Sacramento, for instance, fecal bacteria levels in the American River have been high for over three years. As Kaiser notes, it's a spot many locals use for water sports despite the fact that it's close to homeless encampments.

At Tiscornia Beach, at the confluence of the American and Sacramento Rivers, E. coli levels from fecal matter are so elevated they've hit the upper limit of what the water board's laboratories can even measure. That's a popular family recreation area, one where waders and BBQers are frequent sights. This was 700 percent more than the state's standard.

This shouldn't be the case for a number of reasons. For one, Thomas Mumley, executive officer of the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board, says monitoring doesn't even require testing equipment.

All you have to do is look at what surrounds a homeless encampment, in fact. If there aren't any bathrooms, "we can assume there's a discharge of waste" into the water, Mumley said. There's also the observation and sometimes the mere smell of effluence that can tell an investigator there's a problem.

He said that fines could eventually be doled out to municipalities that don't adopt solutions like ones being tested in pilot programs like dump stations for RVs and providing sanitation services to the homeless camps.

"We're cautious about using that authority," Mumley said. "We want public dollars going toward solutions, not just paying penalties."

Mumley should become somewhat more open-minded, at least in the same way that state Sen. Wiener is -- open-minded to conservative solutions, which is part of the problem with RV dump stations and better facilities for homeless camps.

Mind you, there isn't mutual exclusivity between those solutions and more sweeping measures to try to address the causes of homelessness, like an economy that drives jobs away or overregulation that makes affordable housing nigh impossible to come by in the state's largest urban areas. However, what usually happens is that the state's politicians come up with neat solutions that fit neatly within the algorithm of liberal compassion and call it a day.

Nothing gets solved. Nothing is done to actually alleviate homelessness. And yet, that's what everyone keeps saying needs to be done.

The Kaiser Health News piece even ends with a quote that says roughly the same thing.

“The long-term solution is really to address the societal issue of homelessness,” Renee Purdy, executive officer of the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board, said. Water quality control boards can't do that, though, and one wonders whether Democratic politicians will actually be willing to step up to solve the problem.

One reason they may is pressure from voters. In 1999, one percent of voters thought that homelessness was the state's most pressing problem. Now, it's one in four. That's enough to goad any politician -- no matter how liberal they are -- into concrete steps to end the state's homelessness problem.

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