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Where Have the California Building Industry Representatives Gone?

“Since 2010, energy codes updates have added \$30,000 to the cost of building a new home.”
- Dave Dmohowski, executive officer of the Homebuilders Association of Kern County, NBBJ, August 23, 2021

“Are you okay with that stove; it’s electric?”
- House Hunters International, S167, E11, aired Aug 5, 2021

Only a footnote at the end of an article was warranted, about appointed (not elected) energy regulators pushing for all-electric new homes, including, in the near-term, batteries? That’s all the space the building association garnered for its response to the costly 2022 building code?

Who is concerned for the homeowners and renters in California if state and local governments are not? Approving onerous building code (2019) after unaffordable building code (2022) is *not the way* to address housing affordability and, by extension, the growing homeless problem across the Golden State.

Where does the California Building Industry Association (CBIA) stand with respect to supporting its customer base, the homeowners, landlords, and building owners of California?

I believe Dave Dmohowski [1] of the CBIA is low in his \$30,000 added costs of building a new home, especially in light of the California Energy Commission’s (CEC’s) approval of the recommended 2022 Building Code. Has the CBIA looked at the future when extremists will push harder for the CEC to force upgrades of existing homes to address their “quixotic attempts to fine-tune the planet’s climate?” That’s a minimum \$116,000 upgrade for most homes [2] built prior to 2016.



It’s very expensive – thousands of dollars – to upgrade a home’s electric panel for 200-amp service, including a 40-amp breaker for a soon-to-be-required electric vehicle to plug in.

Photo courtesy R.K. Koslowsky.

I just hate to see that kind of writing on the wall. Even so, activists are livid that more extreme and costly all-electric measures weren't foisted onto homeowners. John Cox reports, "Despite pleas from environmental groups, they do not go as far as mandating that all new single-family homes go fully electric to the exclusion of natural gas-powered heating and cooking."

Who are these people and what motivates their fanaticism to eliminate cost-effective, superior-performing gas appliances?

Enjoy Natural Gas Appliances

Fortunately, except for some cities in California, most residents can still purchase and enjoy their gas cooktops or ranges, gas furnaces, gas dryers, and gas water heaters (tanked or tankless) [3] in their new homes.

Until the latest 2022 Building Code goes into effect on January 1, 2023, most homeowners can continue to enjoy their natural gas service, even beyond 2026. But environmental activists and extremists are not happy. They want natural gas to be banned now, everywhere, for everyone. "That had been a sticking point, with environmentalists saying more aggressive action is needed to phase out natural gas appliances," Cox wrote. Meanwhile, building industry groups are warning all-electric appliances "put too much strain on the power grid and are not yet widely available."

Efficiency is touted as the reason for "encouraging" all-electric construction [4] and in some towns, like Santa Rosa, "mandating" all-electric construction. However, as has been reported by numerous sources, efficiency does not mean better appliance performance nor less costly appliances. In fact the cost for all-electric new builds propels the cost of homes much higher and future housing retrofits will be astronomical, on the order of six figures to upgrade.

Roger Nelson, president of Midstate Construction, in Petaluma summed it up well, "The proposed solar and battery back-up creates an affordability gap." Actually, such bad public policy goes beyond creating such a gap. That gap already existed and was exacerbated with the 2019 Building Code and its reach codes. The affordability gap is significantly expanded with the proposed 2022 Building Code. Nelson confirms this fact: "New residential construction is already out of reach of many income levels." And now it will be pushed further out of reach.

Rather than shrinking homes, reducing lot sizes, packing multiple residences into a single-family lot, and generally wiping out the American dream of owning a home with a yard [5], maybe the CEC and its political overlords should gut much of these all-electric building codes that add significant costs to the state's housing stock. This simple step of less regulation would make housing affordable once again in California.

"To protect humanity some humans must be sacrificed. To ensure your future, some freedoms must be surrendered. We robots will ensure mankind's continued existence. You are so like children. We must save you from yourselves. Don't you understand?"

- V.I.K.I., I, Robot (2004)

“On September 9, 2021, many Cloverdalians experienced a 1 hr and 50 minute outage from 10 am to 11:50 am. PG&E offered no explanation for its equipment failure.”

– R.K. Koslowsky

[1] California energy regulators push for all electric new homes, batteries for buildings, John Cox, *Bakersfield Californian*, August 23, 2021.

[2] *Homeowners Will be Faced with a \$100,000 Upgrade Fee – Unless Your Home was Built After 2020, But Even Then . . .*, R.K. Koslowsky, Submitted September 28, 2020, AND *Appliance Savings Touted for “All-Electric Houses” Should Be Challenged*, R.K. Koslowsky, Submitted February 19, 2021.

[3] *Superiority of Natural Gas Appliances*, 19-page summary, R.K. Koslowsky, 2020.

[4] “[Homebuilders] will also be encouraged, but not required, to put in electric-powered heat pumps that the commission says warm rooms and water more efficiently than natural gas,” writes John Cox [1]. As I wrote in the appliance summary [3], “The warmth produced by gas-fueled furnaces feels hot and toasty compared to the warmth produced by a heat-pump. Generally, the air from a heat-pump isn’t as hot as that coming from a gas furnace. Although the home is warmed it “blows cooler,” something I’ve noticed with the heat coming from our ductless split system (electric heating) used in the lower level of our rebuilt home. I, like many others, don’t like that aspect of electric heating.”

[5] In their quest for living by regulatory fiat, California State Legislators are pushing more bills through the capitol. Legislators are on a quest to eliminate single-family homes and their associated zoning, even for cities looking to preserve single-family neighborhoods featuring good-sized yards and parks. Towns are being run roughshod over for their resistance to preserving their traditional neighborhoods. As the *North Bay Business Journal* wrote on August 27, 2021, “Spurred by an affordable housing shortage, spiking home prices and intractable homelessness, California lawmakers on Thursday, Aug. 26, 2021, advanced the second of two measures designed to cut through local zoning ordinances.” Their idea is to force single-family lots to be converted to duplexes or multiplexes, or compel them to add Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) or give up their garages to become granny suites. Other real estate near bus stops or trains stations must be converted to apartments or other forms of high-density housing. But SB 9 and SB 10 violate property rights. As HJTA wrote on September 4, 2021, “When someone ‘owns’ property, they possess a ‘bundle’ of ancillary rights. A bundle of rights is a term for the group of legal privileges that attaches to the owner upon purchase. The bundle includes the right of possession; the right of control; the right of exclusion; the right of enjoyment; and the right of disposition. Increases in density, when not consistent with existing law, general plans or zoning, can negatively affect most, if not all, the ancillary rights of property ownership.”