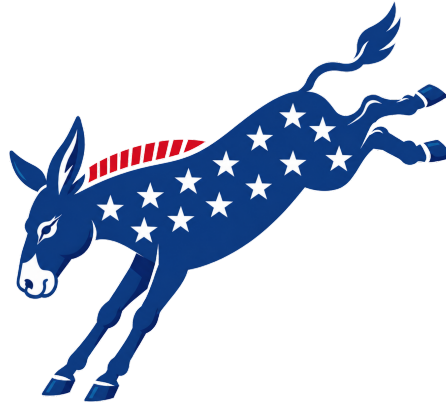




El Cerrito Democratic Club

★ Since 1952 ★

July 2026 Newsletter

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ECDC

PO Box 192

El Cerrito CA 94530

Newsletter Editor: Courtney Helion

1. El Cerrito Democratic Club General Information

Since 1952, the El Cerrito Democratic Club (ECDC)—one of the oldest Democratic clubs in the state—has provided a forum for area residents to discuss and take action on issues and campaigns of local, national, and international importance. Our General Membership Meetings are open to all and usually held on the fourth Tuesday of each month except October and December, when we typically have our annual dinner and holiday party.

Our monthly General Membership Meetings are generally in a hybrid format accessible both in person at Hana Gardens Senior Apartments (10860 San Pablo Avenue, next to El Cerrito City Hall) and remotely via Zoom.

For monthly meeting and calendar reminders, you are invited to download and import the following iCalendar (.ics) invites to your computer:

https://us02web.zoom.us/join/tZUpOCvqDkpEtH10GiVZ7NcegZqDI_tJeMI/ics?icsToken=98tyKuGpqjwjHdKXsxGCRpwcBo_CXe3wpnpej7d1zU_CChZpNS31M-V4I5ZWl8z6

For those of us who've been able to come to Hana Gardens, it's been wonderful to be in community and gather in person. Whether you join us in person or by Zoom, we encourage you to come a few minutes early to mix-and-mingle with fellow ECDC members.

The El Cerrito Democratic Club and its activities are supported by volunteers and the annual dues of members. Please see the "Membership Renewal Reminder and Instructions" section towards the end of this newsletter for directions on how to join the ECDC or renew your membership. El Cerrito Democratic Club executive board officer elections occur annually each January.

Special thanks to our 2025 volunteer officers:

El Cerrito Democratic Club Officers (2025)

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| ● President – Neil Tsutsui | ● VP Programs – Ruthie Abelson Olivas |
| ● Past President – Champagne Brown | ● VP Publications – Courtney Helion |
| ● Executive Vice President – William Ktsanes | ● VP Records – Leslie Reckler |
| ● VP Media – Madeline Kronenberg | ● VP Treasurer – Ed Crowley |
| ● VP Membership – Greg Lyman | |

The specific duties of officer positions are described in section "VII. Officers" of the Bylaws posted on the ECDC website at <https://ecdclub.org/club-documents/>.

If you're interested in participating more actively in the ECDC, please consider volunteering with the Club and/or joining the Executive Board.

Help is always greatly appreciated!

Courtney Helion, VP Publication

2. Call for Candidates: VP of Membership – ECDC

The El Cerrito Democratic Club is seeking volunteers to run for Vice President of Membership in our upcoming officer elections. This is a key leadership role for anyone who enjoys outreach, organization, and helping strengthen our local Democratic community.

The VP of Membership's responsibilities include:

- Managing and maintaining accurate membership lists
- Accessing online voter information to support club activities
- Leading membership development and recruitment efforts
- Facilitating affiliation with other Democratic organizations
- Assist with the annual re-chartering of ECDC

To support your success, you will receive hands-on training during your first three months in the role, ensuring you feel confident and prepared.

This position is a wonderful opportunity to help grow and energize the club, connect with fellow Democrats, and make a meaningful impact at the local level. No prior board experience is required....just a commitment to our shared values and a desire to get involved.

If you're interested or would like to learn more, please reach out to Immediate Past President Champagne Brown (cbrownecdc@gmail.com) to submit your nomination.

Your participation keeps our club strong and thriving!

3. Information and Zoom Link for the July 28th, El Cerrito Democratic Club General Membership Meeting

Our General Membership Meetings are generally held in a hybrid format, accessible both in person at Hana Gardens Senior Apartments (10860 San Pablo Avenue, next to El Cerrito City Hall) and via Zoom.

To join the monthly ECDC General Membership Meetings via Zoom, please use this link:
<http://tinyurl.com/ECDCMonthlyMembershipMeeting>

Zoom Meeting ID: 814 7976 2385; Zoom Passcode: c5fQKR

Dial In by Phone: +1 669 900 6833 or +1 408 638 0968;
Meeting ID: 814 7976 2385; Phone Passcode: 920761

Please note that the Passcode is different if you dial in by phone rather than join through Zoom.

July Meeting Agenda

- 6:20 pm – Assemble and Mingle, Zoom Logins
- 6:30 pm – Call to Order
- 6:31 pm – Review and Approve the July 2026 Meeting Agenda **(Action Item)**
- 6:32 pm – Review and Approve the June 2026 Meeting minutes **(Action Item)**
- 6:35 pm – Officer reports
 - President (Neil Tsutsui)
 - Executive VP (William Ktsanes)
 - Membership (Greg Lyman/William Ktsanes)
 - Media (Madeline Kronenberg)
 - Publications (Courtney Helion)
 - Treasurer (Ed Crowley)
 - Records (Leslie Reckler)
 - Programs (Ruthie Abelson Olivas)
- 6:45 pm – Contra Costa Dems (Champagne Brown)
- 6:50 pm – Program
 - “Winning Back the House & Senate in the Midterms”*, Neil Tsutsui
- 7:45 pm – Announcements (2 minutes each)
- 7:55 pm – Good of the Order
- 8:00 pm – Adjourn

Next Membership Meeting: August 25, 2026

4. July Meeting Minutes

Call to Order

President Tsutsui called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

Review and Approve the June 2026 Meeting Agenda

On the motion of Crowley and the second of Ktsanes, the agenda was approved as presented unanimously.

Review and Approve the May 2026 Meeting minutes

On the motion of Tsutsui and the second of Rebecca Benassini the minutes were approved as presented unanimously.

Officer reports

- President (Neil Tsutsui) Sign up for the ECDC table at the July 4th festival. [Sign up on the list posted in this link in the Google Drive.](#)

- Executive VP (William Ktsanes) Next meeting council will vote on maps. They are down to two versions. C3 and A2 are the final maps.
- Membership (Greg Lyman) No Report
- Media (Madeline Kronenberg) No Report
- Publications (Courtney Helion) No Report
- Treasurer (Ed Crowley) Cash balance \$2466.41. Nine renewals = 16 members, since the last meeting, a generous donation from Al Miller, and no expenses.
- Records (Leslie Reckler) No Report
- Programs (Ruthie Abelson Olivas) July program Neil Tsutsui “State of House and Senate Races” Looking for a speaker for the annual dinner in October. Send recommendations to Neil. Dates in October are flexible.
- Contra Costa Dems (Champagne Brown)
 - Special guest speaker Congressman Josh Harder attended the meeting. Following redistricting, his district now includes a larger portion of Contra Costa County. He thanked the club for its support and discussed his work in Washington, D.C.
 - The Central Committee approved proclamations recognizing Juneteenth and Pride Month.
 - Several bylaw amendments were discussed. None directly affect local clubs at this time. One proposal grants voting rights to associate members serving as committee chairs on both the Central Committee and Executive Board. Another proposal would expand the discounted youth membership rate to individuals up to age 30, providing a 50% membership discount.
 - Members were encouraged to save the date for the DPCCC Solidarity Gala on Sunday, September 27, from 4:00–7:00 p.m. The speaker is still to be determined. Tickets are currently \$175 and will increase to \$200. This is the DPCCC's primary annual fundraiser, with proceeds supporting Democratic candidates and ballot measure campaigns.

Endorsements in selected races for the November 3, 2026 election.

The slate was approved with one abstention.

California Governor

Xavier Becerra (vs Republican Steven Hilton)

House of Representatives, District 8

John Garamendi (vs Republican Rudy Recile)

Lieutenant Governor

Fiona Ma (vs Republican Gloria Romero)

Attorney General

Rob Bonta (vs Republican Michael Gates)

Secretary of State

Shirley Weber (vs Republican Donald Wagner)

Controller

Malia Cohen (vs Republican Herm Morgan)

Treasurer

Eleni Kounalakis (vs Republican Jennifer Hawks)

Program – Healthcare For All! Single Payer Medicare for All Stephen Adair Vernon MA, MFT

Obtaining mental health care coverage is challenging. Insurance reimbursement rates are often substantially below private-pay rates.

Medicare vs. Medicare Advantages

Traditional Medicare provides greater patient control, fewer authorization requirements, and broader provider access. He noted that Medicare expenditures have increased approximately 21% over time, compared to more than 50% increases in private insurance costs.

Discussion included concerns regarding Medicare Advantage plans, including prior authorization requirements, network restrictions, and coding practices that may increase reimbursement rates.

Mr. Vernon argued that a single-payer health care system could:

- Provide universal health coverage regardless of employment, income, or health status.
- Reduce administrative costs through consolidation of insurance systems.
- Improve continuity of care and reduce concerns about provider networks and insurance changes.
- Increase bargaining power to lower prescription drug and medical service costs.
- Improve equity by providing the same basic coverage to all residents.

He said that studies have shown adequately funded health care systems can improve health outcomes while controlling overall costs.

Political Discussion

Governor Gavin Newsom and Xavier Becerra have both said they are for single-payer health care in the past, though they have been lukewarm about pushing it forward.

Assemblymember Buffy Wicks has also said she supports single-payer health care. Mr. Vernon was uncertain of State Senator Jesse Arreguin's current position.

The discussion emphasized the importance of legislative committee action in advancing health care legislation.

(C. Brown) Implementation of a statewide single-payer system requires federal waivers. Some unions do not like single payer as they have concerns about jobs. (Vernon response) Some proposals say they will raise salaries by eliminating bureaucracy and overhead. Also, all bills brought forward have included multi-year retraining programs to support workforce transitions.

The presentation concluded with a discussion about rebuilding public confidence in government institutions and public programs.

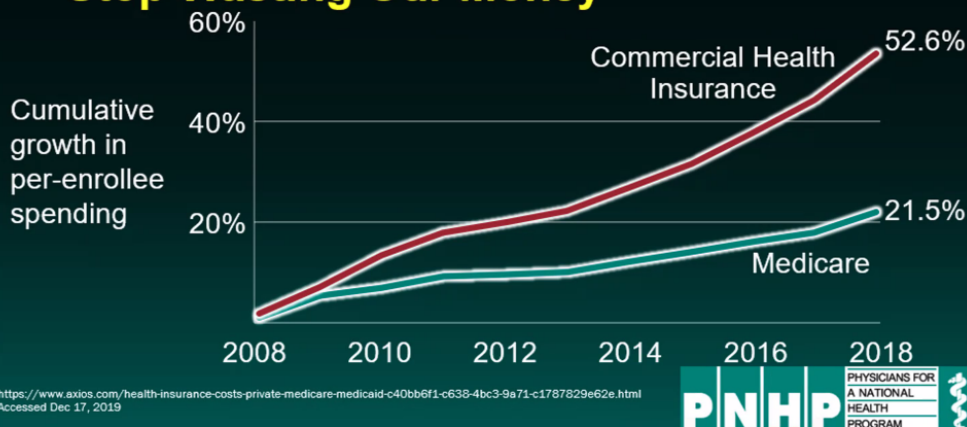
Calculate how much guaranteed healthcare could save you. [Click on this link.](#)

What's So Great About Medicare?

1. It's yours – you're in control
2. It doesn't waste your money
3. You live longer and healthier

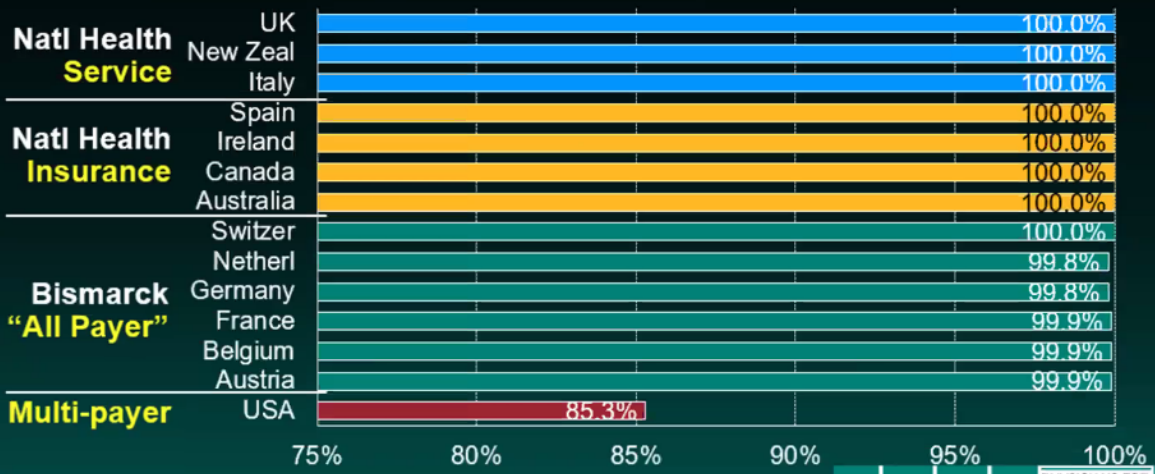


Medicare Means Stop Wasting Our Money



Medicare costs have risen about 21%. Commercial insurance has gone up 50%.

Population Coverage



http://www.aafp.org/content/dam/AAFP/documents/about_us/congress/restricted/2017/BoardReportF-SinglePayerHealthCareSystem.pdf Accessed Aug. 30 2017

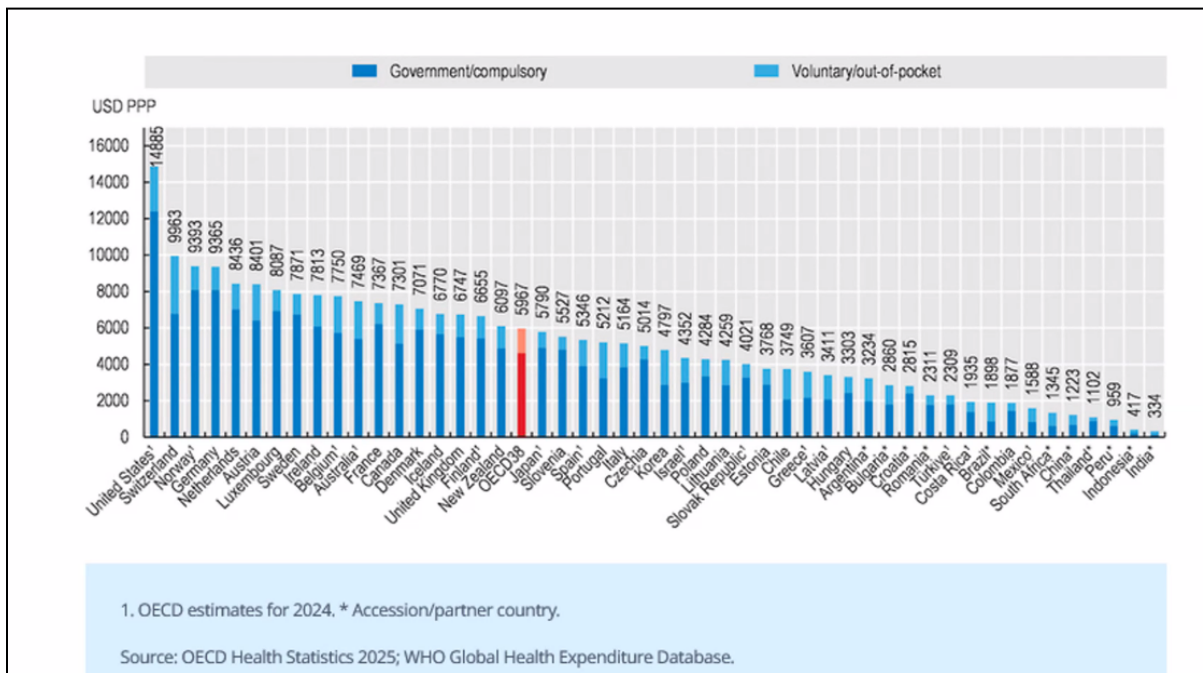


Common Finance Models

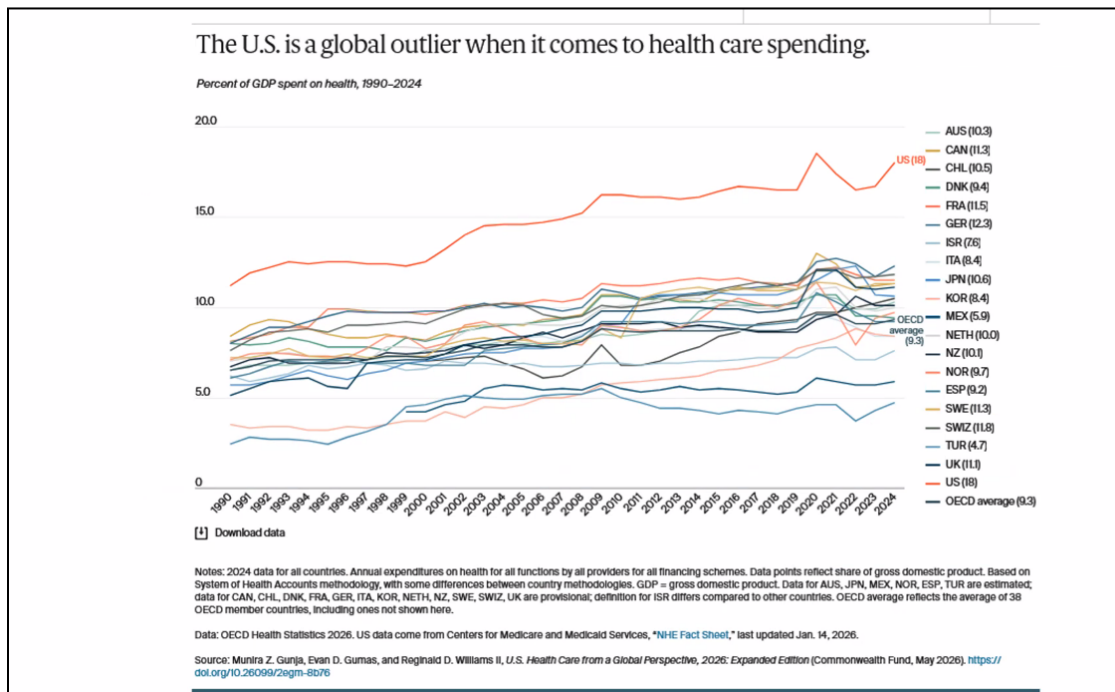
Natl Health Service	Public funding, public delivery. "Socialized Medicine"
Natl Health Insurance	Public funding, private delivery. "Medicare for All"
Bismarck "All Payer"	Mixed funding, private delivery. Highly regulated non-profit insurers Expand on ACA's regulatory pathway?
Multi-payer	Mixed funding, mixed delivery.

http://www.aafp.org/content/dam/AAFP/documents/about_us/congress/restricted/2017/BoardReportF-SinglePayerHealthCareSystem.pdf Accessed Aug. 30 2017





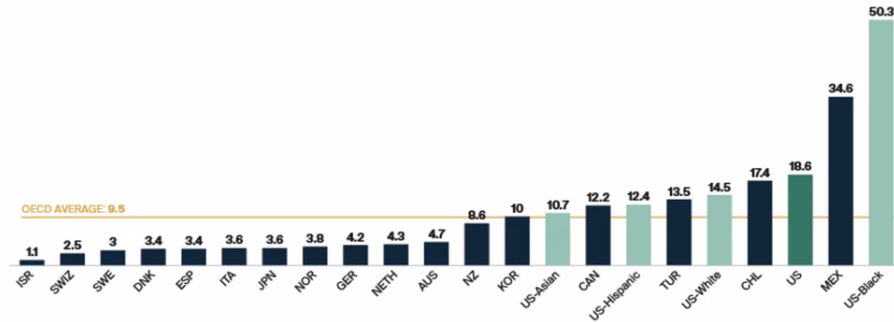
The blue line is what the government already pays.



17-18% of GDP. Projected to rise to 20% of GDP.

Black women in the U.S. have the highest maternal death rate in the OECD.

Maternal mortality, deaths per 100,000 live births



[1] Download data

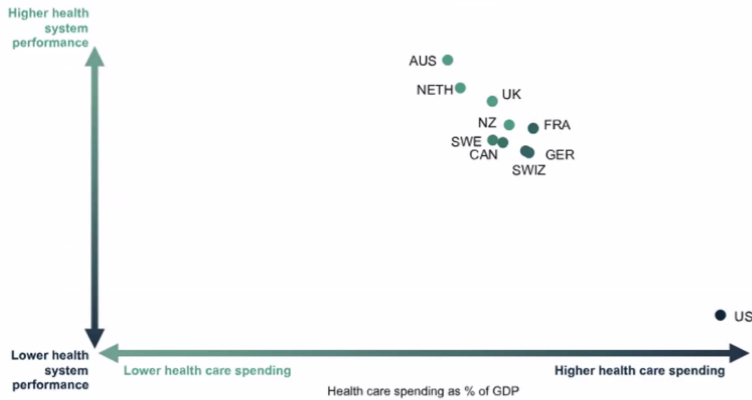
Notes: 2024 data: CHL; 2023 data: CAN, GER, JPN, KOR, MEX, NETH, NOR, ESP, SWE, SWZ, TUR, US; 2022 data: AUS, DNK, ISR, ITA; 2020 data: NZ. Data for CHL are provisional; definitions for AUS and DNK differ from other countries; data for NETH and NZ are estimated. OECD average reflects the average of the most recent data available within the past six years of 36 OECD member countries, including ones not shown here.

Data: OECD Health Statistics 2026. US race and ethnicity data come from: Donna L. Hoyert, "Health E-Stat 100: Maternal Mortality Rates in the United States, 2023," National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Feb. 2025.

Source: Munira Z. Gunja, Evan D. Gumas, and Reginald D. Williams II, *U.S. Health Care from a Global Perspective, 2026: Expanded Edition* (Commonwealth Fund, May 2026). <https://doi.org/10.26099/2e0m-8b76>

EXHIBIT 4 – Performance vs. Spending

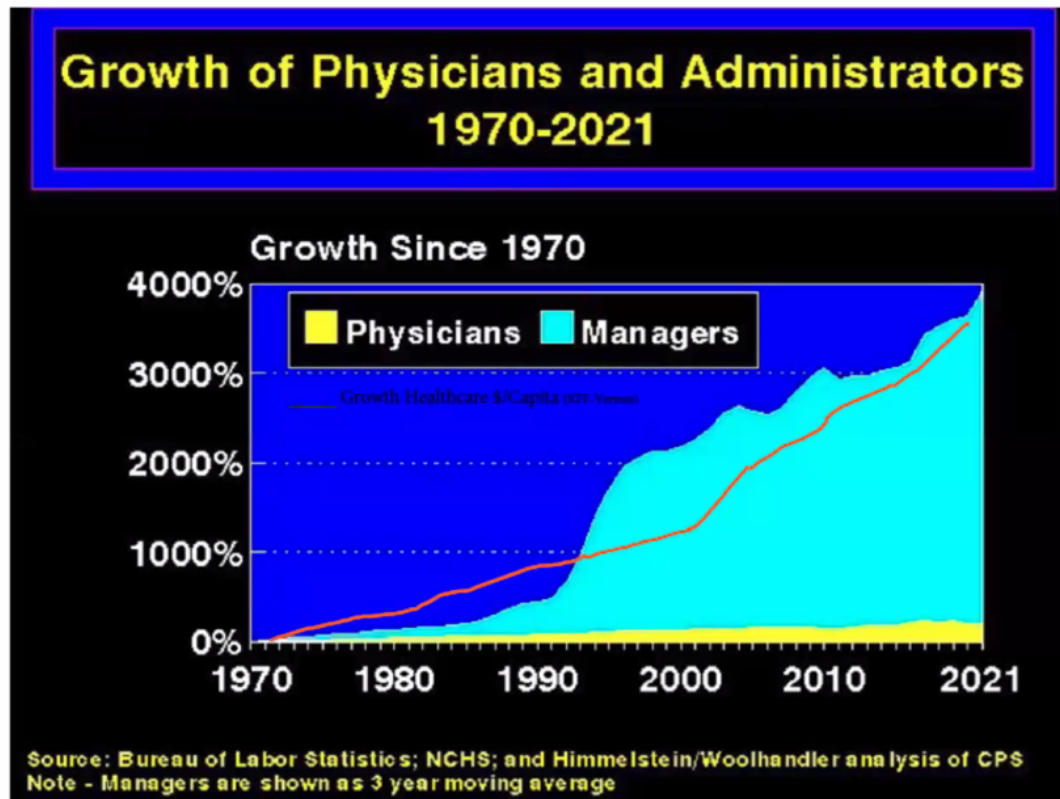
Health Care System Performance Compared to Spending



Notes: GDP = gross domestic product. Health care spending as a percentage of GDP. Performance scores are based on standard deviation calculated from the nine-country average that excludes the US. See "How We Conducted This Study" for more detail.

Data: Spending data are from OECD for the year 2022 and 2023 (updated in July 2024).

Source: David Blumenthal et al., *Mirror, Mirror 2024: A Portrait of the Falling U.S. Health System – Comparing Performance in 10 Nations* (Commonwealth Fund, Sept. 2024). <https://doi.org/10.26099/ta0g-2p06>



Announcements

EDCD table at July 4th World One festival. [Sign up to help out at the table.](#)

Adjourn: 7:44 p.m.

Next Membership Meeting: July 28, 2026

5. ECDC Connects with El Cerritans at the July 4 WorldOne Festival

As usual, the El Cerrito Democratic Club set-up a nice table for El Cerrito's biggest annual event, the July 4th WorldOne Festival. We were snugly placed on Pomona Avenue, between the League of Women Voters and 350 Bay Area booths. Lots of folks stopped by, maybe lured in by our "*Resist Fascism*" and patriotic star stickers. A frequent comment we heard from people was frustration with the leadership of the Democratic Party, especially in failing to effectively resist the actions of Trump and his MAGA followers.

We were able to sign up some new members and add over a dozen other names to our email list. THANK YOU! ...to those who joined, renewed, and signed up for more information!

Also, big thanks to the ECDC members who took a shift at the booth, including Ed Crowley, Joanna Pace, Bob and Ruby MacDonald, Lorraine Schnurr, Walter Schweikert, Mordecai Stayton, and Neil Tsutsui!

- Neil Tsutsui



6. Coming Soon: ECDC Endorsements in Local, Regional, and State Races

The filing period has opened for local races and the slate of state-wide propositions has been established (14 this year!). As usual, we will work through this together and provide useful information to our members by holding a candidate forum and discussing issues at our Membership Meeting. The current plan is to once again join forces with the DPCCC and the West Contra Costa Democratic Club in hosting a candidate forum for local races, including El Cerrito City Council and WCCUSD Area 5 Trustee. We are currently working with the DPCCC to determine the date, but we are trying to schedule it before our August 25 Membership Meeting. Then, at the August 25 meeting, we will discuss the Propositions, with an argument made for both Pro and Con on each. Since there are 14 of these measures, I think we will try and triage them a bit by moving quickly through ones that seem non-controversial and spend more time on the more difficult ones. We will also consider endorsement of the WCCUSD Parcel Tax renewal.

Endorsement voting will occur after these two events, with ballots distributed via email on either the evening of Aug 25 or the morning of Aug 26. If you are a new member with a “two and one address” membership, please make sure you have provided the email address of your second member to our VP for Membership at membership.ecdc@gmail.com. Thank you to everyone who has already done this! Members in good standing 45 days before the opening of the election are eligible to vote.

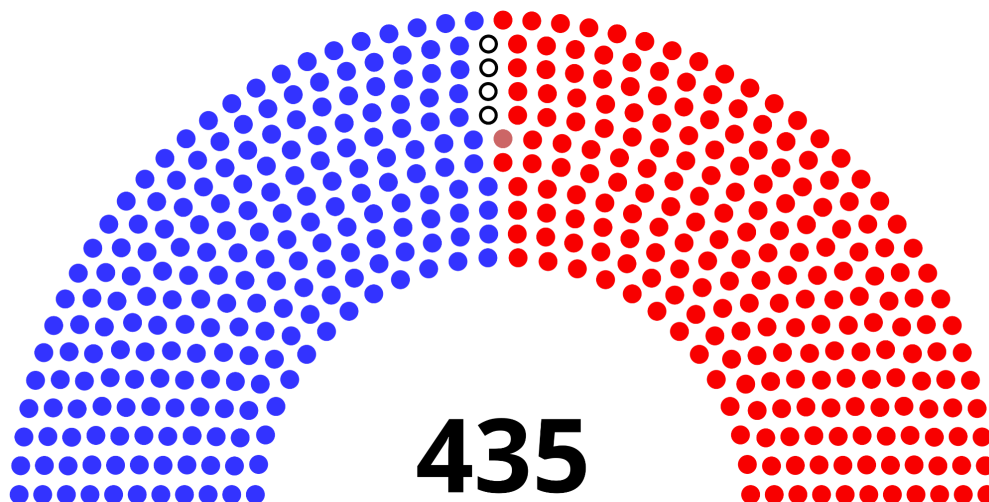
- Neil Tsutsui

7. July Program: Winning Back the House & Senate in the Midterms!

The actions of Republicans, and the President in particular, continue to disgust and appall us. The trampling of fundamental Constitutional rights, the overt racism and sexism, the use of violence both here and abroad, the brazen corruption... the litany of horrors seems endless. Our best hope to establish some resistance is flipping the House of Representatives and/or the Senate to Democratic control in November. Republicans currently hold majorities by slim margins, which gives us a good chance. But the playing field has been chaotic and unpredictable as several states have undergone redistricting, unexpected deaths, health scares, and scandals have upended several races, and the popularity of all branches of government and political parties slides downward.

For our July program, Neil Tsutsui will give an overview of where we stand now and what our prospects look like for taking back the House and Senate in the midterm elections.

- Neil Tsutsui



8. Future Events - *Mark Your Calendar!*

El Cerrito Democratic Club General Membership Meetings and Events

ECDC July Membership Meeting – 6:30 pm, Tuesday, July 25, 2026;

(4th Tuesday of the month); hybrid format, in-person at Hana Gardens Senior Apartments (10860 San Pablo Avenue, next to El Cerrito City Hall) and remote via Zoom link <http://tinyurl.com/ECDCMonthlyMembershipMeeting>

Preliminary Monthly Program: “Winning Back the House & Senate in the Midterms”

ECDC Executive Board Calendar – The El Cerrito Democratic Club’s Executive Board (E-Board) meets monthly via Zoom for about an hour to handle routine club business, plan programs for the monthly General Membership Meetings and discuss newsletter content. As with the General Membership Meetings, the E-Board meetings are open to the public. The Zoom Link is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89264608412?pwd=c2sySEl5ZEplL1lHVUM5bERCZGpEQOT09>.

Below is the ECDC E-Board Calendar going into 2026:

2026 El Cerrito Democratic Club Executive-Board Calendar (E-Board)				
Monthly ECDC Executive Board Meeting (E-Board)	Deadline for Submitting the General Membership Meeting Agenda and Articles for the ECDC Newsletter	Monthly Newsletter Completed	Monthly ECDC Newsletter Emailed (by 6:00 pm)	General Membership Meeting Date
Thursday 7/2/2026	Wednesday 7/15/2026	Tuesday 7/21/2026	Saturday 7/25/2026	Tuesday 7/28/2026
Thursday 8/6/2026	Saturday 8/15/2026	Tuesday 8/18/2026	Saturday 8/22/2026	Tuesday 8/25/2026
Thursday 9/3/2026	Sunday 9/15/2026	Tuesday 9/22/2026	Saturday 9/26/2026	Tuesday 9/29/2026

Other Community Events

El Cerrito City Council Meetings – 6:00-9:00 pm, first and third Tuesdays of most months; hybrid format; in the City Council Chambers at City Hall (10890 San Pablo Avenue) and via Zoom; meeting materials and recordings available at <https://www.el-cerrito.org/113/City-Council>

Tentative Upcoming El Cerrito City Council Agenda Items: (select highlights)

- Tuesday, August 4th – No city council meeting (summer schedule)

- Tuesday, August 18th – 4th quarter General Fund budget updated; fiscal year ending 6/30; “Alternative Service Plan” presentation from BART
- Tuesday, September 1st - No city council meeting (summer schedule)
- Tuesday, September 15th – 4th Quarter General Fund Budget Update (quarter ending 6/30); Local Road Safety Plan Adoption

Full agendas are available at <https://www.elcerrito.gov/482/Council-Meeting-Videos-Materials>.

Instructions for submitting comments to the City Council are here:

<https://elcerrito.gov/DocumentCenter/View/13983/Instructions-for-Public-Comments>

“Coffeetime” Discussions with El Cerrito City Councilmember William Ktsanes –

by appointment; 9:30 am-12:00 pm first and third Saturday mornings of most months at El Cerrito Natural Foods Annex, 10387 San Pablo Avenue; other days, times and locations available upon request; click here to schedule an in-person meeting:

[Meet with William / https://tinyurl.com/Meet-William](https://tinyurl.com/Meet-William)



El Cerrito Farmers Market – 9:00 am-1:00 pm, every Tuesday and Saturday;

El Cerrito Plaza, 9000 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito, CA 94530;

southwest corner parking lot between Trader Joe's and Wells Fargo Bank;

www.contracosta.ca.gov/7549/Contra-Costa-Certified-Farmers-Markets



DPCCC and West County Dem Events

<https://contracostadems.com/events/>

West County Dems Monthly meeting - 6:00 - 7:30 pm, second Tuesday of the month; This is a local Democratic club chartered by DPCCC. Meetings are via Zoom.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83146226722?pwd=cHRneSsxYkVnWWdTcTNQRnBBTmhhdz09>

For more info, contact the club. <https://www.westcountydemocraticclub.com>

DPCCC General Membership Meeting - 7:00 - 10:00 pm, If you are not a DPCCC member and wish to attend, please RSVP to the DPCCC Secretary at secretary@contracostadems.com.

If you are a DPCCC member, you should have received an email with details for the meeting about seven days in advance. If you did not, please email the DPCCC Secretary at secretary@contracostadems.com.

If you know of other community events that may be of interest to our members, please submit them to Courtney Helion at ecdc.pubs@gmail.com for publication in future newsletters!

- Courtney Helion, VP Publications

9. Membership Renewal Reminder and Instructions

REMINDER! – ECDC annual memberships expire annually on **September 30th**. If you have not yet done so, please renew for 2026. **Now is the time!**

You can do so online at: <https://ecdclub.org/join/>

Or by mailing a check to: ECDC Membership
PO Box 192
El Cerrito, CA 94530

Dues are \$5 for students, \$20 for individual members, and \$30 for two adults at the same address. The newsletter comes with membership and is delivered electronically by email. The added cost for a printed, hard-copy, postal mailed newsletter is \$18 (in addition to dues). Please make checks payable to “El Cerrito Democratic Club” and provide an email address for all individual members.

There have been some issues with double paying on Paypal. **Don't pay us twice!**
Wait a day or more if you suspect your payment hasn't gone through!

If you have membership questions, please email Greg Lyman at membership.ecdc@gmail.com.

Thank you!

- Greg Lyman, VP Membership

10. Call for Newsletter Submissions

The El Cerrito Democratic Club Newsletter is published eleven months a year (each month with the exception of a combined December-January issue) in advance of the General Membership meetings. ECDC members, friends and supporters are invited to submit articles and announcements regarding local issues and events of interest. Submissions should be emailed to ecdc.pubs@gmail.com for review and editing.

- Courtney Helion, VP Publications

11. Link to the ECDC Website and Bylaws

Periodically the Club updates our Bylaws. The bylaws were changed in October 2018 to meet DPCCC requirements; revisions were proposed and adopted during the January 2021, August 2022 and March 2023 ECDC meetings. The ECDC Bylaws are posted on the ECDC website at <https://ecdclub.org/club-documents/>.