



# Speak Out Now

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## Elections 2024: Either Way the Rich Will Win

We're now just a week away from the presidential election. While it is not clear which candidate will win, it's already decided who the real winners will be: the tiny class of the super rich and the corporations they own.

This election has already been the most expensive election in history, with an estimated \$16 billion dollars spent on presidential and congressional candidates. The top 50 wealthy donors alone have already poured \$2.1 billion into election campaigns, way above any previous election. These are billionaires tied to many of the biggest corporations in the U.S., ranging from banking to energy to shipping to tech. And millions more dollars have come from so-called "dark money," which are groups that do not have to disclose where their donations come from.

Both presidential campaigns have been spending so much money that they have turned to aggressively targeting their supporters with high donation requests that automatically renew every month or week, with people having to read the fine print in order to opt-out. The Harris and Trump campaigns have gone after elderly supporters, many with dementia, with requests for recurring high-dollar donations that can total six figures. Many elderly supporters have had their entire retirement accounts completely emptied, some with amounts as high as \$400,000. Clearly these campaigns don't care about the livelihoods of their less wealthy supporters.

Other billionaires in the U.S. have not publicly endorsed either candidate, knowing their interests will be protected either way. For example, *The Washington Post* has refused to endorse a candidate for the first time since 1988 — a decision made by the newspaper's billionaire owner, Amazon founder Jeff Bezos. And, the billionaire owner of the *Los Angeles Times* also prevented his paper from making an endorsement this year.

For corporations and wealthy elites, they know they will be covered with either election outcome. Wall Street firms, military contractors, and other corporate leaders know their profits will remain secure regardless of who wins. Their confidence is based on just how well their system works in their favor, regardless of which party is

in power. In 2024, corporate profits broke an all-time U.S. record, totaling \$3.14 trillion dollars in the months of April, May and June. And median CEO pay has skyrocketed, reaching \$16.3 million, which is about 200 times more than the wages of an average worker. For example, the three richest billionaires in the U.S. have seen their wealth soar since 2016, with Elon Musk's wealth going from \$12 billion to \$277 billion, Jeff Bezos' from \$45 billion to \$211 billion, and Mark Zuckerberg's from \$44 billion to \$203 billion. For the class of the super rich, this system is working just fine, regardless of who's in the White House.

While the rich get richer under both Democrats and Republicans, it's a totally different story for workers. Rising inflation, stagnant wages, and soaring living costs continue to cripple working class families. Healthcare costs continue to skyrocket, and quality health care remains out of reach for many working class families and the poor. Our schools, infrastructure, and public services continue to deteriorate, while the military budget increases every year, regardless of which administration is in office, funneling billions of dollars to support brutal regimes like Israel and its genocide of Palestinians.

These aren't mistakes by those in power — this is their system working by design, a political system that prioritizes the wealthy over the majority of us. Our current political system is designed to maintain the status quo and expand the overall wealth and power of the U.S. ruling class. Democrats and Republicans may have differences in approach to achieve this goal, but both parties ultimately serve the interests of the rich. For the super rich, the elections are rigged for their class to win every time, regardless of which candidate gets elected.

The ruling class wants us to believe that our only power lies in the ballot box, but history shows us otherwise. The power to change this society lies with us, the majority who do the work to keep this system running every day. There is no need to line up behind the promises or threats of any politician. Regardless of who wins in November, we can organize ourselves to defend our interests and demand the changes we need.

# Speak Out Now at BART (October 28, 2024)

## Breaks Are NOT Optional

BART like many other companies has decided that, when schedules need to be met, workers' breaks are not included in the scheduling. At AC Transit, when there are traffic delays, drivers are expected to maintain the schedule and do a quick turnaround at the end of the line. At BART it can be the same. And in hospitals, nurses and other staff can work 10 and 12-hour schedules without real breaks!

Some pay workers for missed break time. But is that little bit of change really worth it? It may add up over time, but what does missing lunches or the time to just have a moment to rest and reset add up to?

It is a loss, not measurable in dollars and cents. It takes its toll on our lives. That is why paid breaks are in union contracts. It is necessary to maintain our health. And no dollar amount can be placed on that.

## BART in Crisis

Week after week it's the same story. BART cannot exist with the current ridership. Most public transit systems, like other public services are always under stress. California's economy isn't soaring like it was a decade ago. There are 63 billionaires and 629 worth over \$100 million in the Bay Area. The money is here.

But who is going to push for it? BART Management? Their posters on the trains saying how essential BART is to the environment and the Bay Area are read by people who already know about BART. There needs to be a much stronger voice.

The workers who make BART run and the riders who rely on BART should be the voice of BART, not those who are putting their CVs up on LinkedIn as the BART latest doom and gloom story hits the media.

## Trains vs Land in a Field of Dreams?

It's been said that BART is a land company that happens to run some trains. With every passing day that seems to be more accurate.

Last Thursday, BART representatives, and Berkeley and State officials, were all smiles as they gathered at the North Berkeley BART station to announce that the State had given BART \$25 million to continue ignoring the system and build a massive housing project at the North Berkeley Station.

This project promises to all but close the station. What will access to the station be like during years of construction? When it is completed there will only be 200 parking spots remaining, out of an original 700. Around 110 of them are blocks away from the station. Not very safe or convenient for those parking late at night or early in the morning, especially on rainy days. The same is proposed for the development at the Ashby station, 85 parking spots will remain of the current 535. And most are not close to the station.

Are these people watching reruns of "Field of Dreams" and taking that seriously? We do need to be less reliant on cars. First we need reliable public transit and apparently that's not as profitable as building these new housing projects.

What's really driving this development craze? It's certainly not a concern for people who are unhoused that they try to "sweep away" or for other people who need affordable housing. Apparently there's money for development, even if some of these buildings are not filled. That money comes easier than demanding secure funding for BART and refusing to continue to go along with this failed fare-based funding model.

**Save the Date - A Post Election Discussion**

**Their Elections Are Over**

**Our Future is Up to Us**

**Sunday, November 17, 4pm**

Henry Ramsey Jr. Center,  
2939 Ellis Street, Berkeley

**We do the work to make society run.**

**We need to organize!**

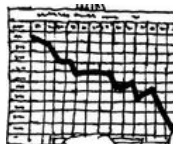
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*Somewhere at BART HQ*



Yes ridership is down. But let's look at the next chart, showing our TOD projects! First let's watch a clip from our favorite movie.