

## 2026 won't be about left versus right. It will be about builders versus blockers

The political center, we're told, is a mushy midpoint for the indecisive and uninspired. In California, however, it's the launchpad of a political rebellion.

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The political center, we're told, is boring, a mushy midpoint for the indecisive and uninspired. It's a good place to take a political nap.

In California, however, it's the launchpad of a political rebellion.

Centrist voters are the most coveted members of our democracy. They hold the keys to the castle in an era of razor-thin margins and cavernous ideological divisions. The trick is to get them energized.

Many political professionals will say you can't get moderates fired up because, well, they're moderate. But maybe they just haven't found anything in our politics that ignites them?

Here's the truth: Moderates aren't lukewarm on issues because they don't care; they're frustrated because they've learned the hard lesson of modern politics — caring intensely is not the same thing as getting results.

This is where the pundit concepts of "centrist" and "moderate" mislead. The center is not an ideology. It's not the halfway point between political extremes. It's a constellation of overlapping interests — renters and homeowners, workers and employers, urban and rural residents — who share one blunt demand: make life work.

Build housing without endless litigation. Get people living on the streets out of sidewalk tents and into treatment. Create more middle-income jobs and rebuild the middle class. Protect neighborhoods without pretending that consequences are cruelty. Make sure the power turns on, we can afford to charge or fuel our vehicles, and our kids can drink the water. Deliver results that make a meaningful difference in people's lives.

Here in California, that demand is no longer theoretical. It has a voting bloc.

Proposition 36, restoring accountability after years of "crime without consequences," passed with 70% across all 58 counties last year. More telling: Proposition 1, which funded infrastructure to move people from street crisis into treatment and housing,

passed narrowly — but it passed.

A decade ago, such measures would have failed badly. Voters' tentative approval signals mounting frustration with the status quo.

Add the appetite for building. This year's legislative session produced the most significant California Environmental Quality Act reforms in a generation, streamlining housing approvals and creating new pathways for manufacturing and infill development.

The implicit admission: Process is not a substitute for progress.

None of this happened because ideology won. It happened because functionality found a constituency, one larger than the interest groups that dominate social media. When it comes to building, these interest groups dominate more than just social media.

Wealthy NIMBYs blocking housing in the name of "community character." Ideological purists treating compromise as betrayal. Unions that gladly sacrifice the best interests of all workers for the best interests of their members. Companies willing to stall progress for the sake of predictability.

These factions don't represent a majority. They represent a hardened, narrow view.

There is a different way to organize the mechanisms of state power — and it starts with reorienting political culture away from ideology and regulatory capture and toward solutions.

That doesn't mean splitting differences. It means building a governing majority around what works.

This coalition has real tensions. Homeowners and renters want different things. Workers and employers see labor policy differently. But here's what matters: They all want predictable systems that function.

A homeowner in Fresno and a renter in Oakland may disagree on rent control, but both need housing production that doesn't take a decade. A San Diego service worker and a Red Bluff rancher might not see eye-to-eye on cultural issues, but neither wants to see soaring energy bills.

Common ground doesn't mean everyone agrees on everything. It's that everyone is exhausted by a system that can't deliver on anything.

Here's why this qualifies as rebellion: For a generation, our politics has rewarded those who can stop things — kill projects, block reforms, tie up opponents in procedure. Activists who can mobilize a dozen people to a planning meeting wield more power than a thousand families who need housing but lack the time to testify.

This isn't democracy failing; it's a political structure working as designed — for those who benefit from stasis.

Demanding that the system actually build, actually deliver, and actually solve problems at scale is an attack on that structure. It threatens comfortable arrangements and forces questions about who benefits from dysfunction.

In that context, competence isn't compromise. It's a challenge to the incentives that make governing hard and obstruction easy.

The opening for 2026 is real, but it's not just about finding the right candidates. It's whether this coalition can convert popular impatience into durable political power — a new majority in work boots eager to show up and hold leaders accountable.

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Forget left versus right and ideological purity tests. 2026 is about builders versus blockers.

It's time to radicalize the center.

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