



Managing in the “Age of Grievance”: Navigating the Evolving Role of City Managers

CalCities

City Managers Department Conference

Rancho Mirage February 5-7

Your Panelists



Anil Comelo

- City Manager of St. Helena, California
- CalICMA Board and Leads the Managers Support Initiative



Michael Kasperzak

- Former Mayor of Mountain View, California
- Past President of the League of California Cities



AJ Wilson

- ICMA Senior Advisor
- Former City Manager in Santa Ana and Pomona, California; Kansas City and St. Louis, Missouri

Survey Question 1

- Can we get a show of hands of City Managers in the Room have been a City Manager for less than 5 years? More than 5 years?



Survey Question 2

- How many are working in the first City they have served as a CM?
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Survey Question 3

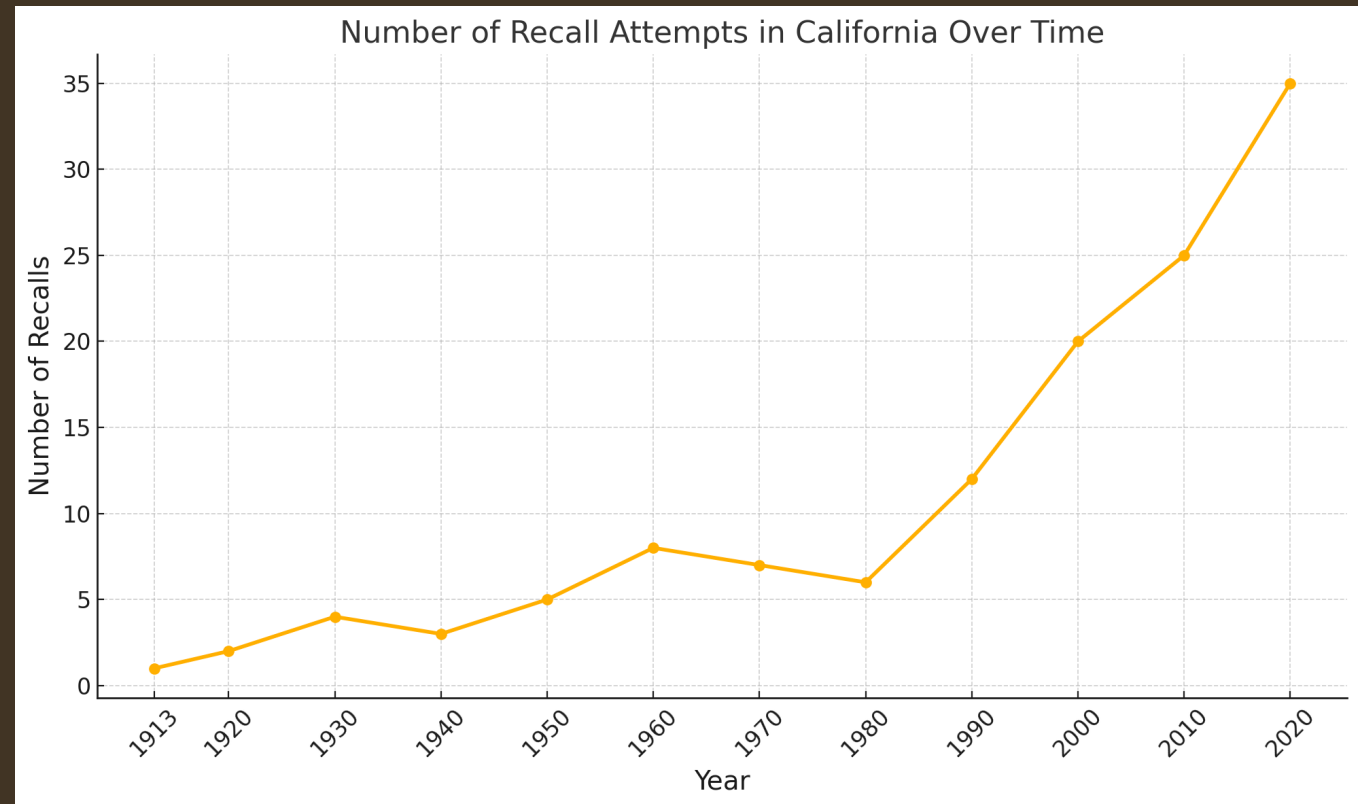
- And finally, how many came up through a CM Office like ACM or DCM?
 - Versus How many came up through departments like CDD, PW, etc.
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Metrics and Trends on Harassment from NLC

- 73% of Local Officials Report Experiencing Harassment, According to New National League of Cities Survey.
- Of those who experienced harassment, 89% experienced harassment on social media and 84% experienced harassment during public city meetings.
- Rise in polarization and grievance culture affecting governance.
- 23% of respondents report harassment of their family or loved ones.
- Almost 60% of respondents feel political harassment has gotten worse since they entered office.
- 60% of respondents say there is no plan in place to address political harassment though they believe one is needed.

Recall Elections UP! Candidates dropping out Mid or after their First-Term!

- Ballotpedia's 2023 Recall Analysis highlights that city council officials were the most targeted, accounting for 42.2% of recall effort.
- A study by the Bipartisan Policy Center, in collaboration with researchers from UCLA, examined data from 2000 to 2024 and found significant turnover rates among local chief election officials across various jurisdictions.
- Research by the Brennan Center highlights that threats, harassment, and political pressure have contributed to this exodus, with many officials reporting increased stress and safety concerns.





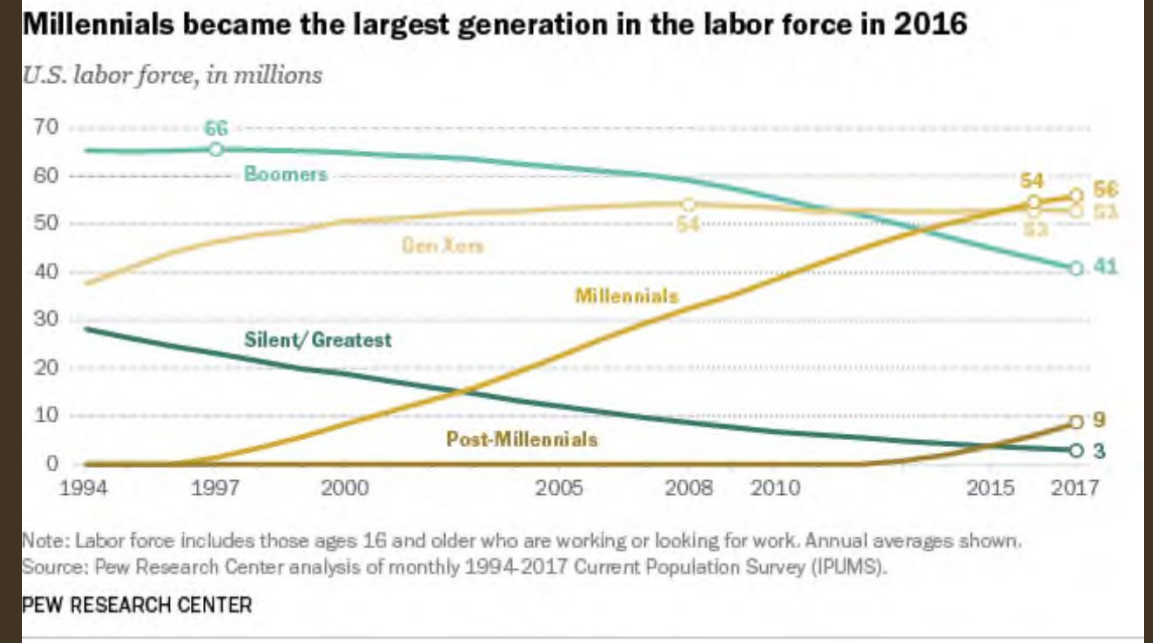
Brief overview of Frank Bruni's "Managing in the Age of Grievance."

- **Grievance Culture's Roots**
 - **Social Media Amplification**
 - **Institutional and Psychological Impacts**
 - **Proposed Solutions**
 - **Call to Action**
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City Manager Turnover: Challenges and Contributing Factors

- ICMA reported that over 38 million workers left their jobs in 2020, with the trend continuing into 2021
- A study analyzing city manager turnover found that out of 133 managers surveyed, 33 were no longer in office within a two-year period, indicating a turnover rate of about 25%.

- Council-Manager Conflicts
- Political Transitions (i.e. New Councilmembers)
- Increase Workload
- Skills Gaps



Resources for those looking for help

- **International City/County Management Association (ICMA):**
- **Professional Support Networks:** ICMA emphasizes the importance of building and maintaining personal and professional support networks to combat burnout.
- **Mental Health Initiatives:** In partnership with the American Psychological Association, ICMA launched the "Mental Health in the Workplace" initiative to support local government employees.
- **California City Management Foundation (CCMF):**
- **Mental Health Services:** CCMF provides free mental health services to its members, including city managers, assistants, and deputies.
- **Resource Library:** CCMF maintains a collection of articles, legislative updates, and other materials designed to assist city managers in navigating their roles effectively.