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Private Property Rights and Socialism Do Not Mix

An urgent message to the National Association of Realtors

By Tom DeWeese

The National Association of Realtors (NAR) is the main stream organization in which nearly every real estate agent in the nation belongs as a means to keep up with the latest ideas and trends in the property selling industry. NAR's members are the professionals that all of us look to for the best approach to buy and sell our homes. One of NAR's mottos is "protecting the American dream of home ownership". And they claim to protect property rights.

Would it then surprise you that NAR is a major promoter of a plan that actually results in the destruction of private property rights? NAR documents show the Association is working to advocate the policy of Smart Growth for local community development.

Urban planners promote Smart Growth policies because they adhere to the dogma that urban sprawl (development projects) are a danger to the environment, increasing pollution and housing costs, creating more driving time and shopping stress. In addition, say planners, such "urban sprawl" uses up more natural resources and reduces open space.

In response, Smart Growth advocates promote policies to encourage individuals to live in denser population communities that take up smaller tracts of land per housing unit. Such communities also advocate that residents rely more on walking, biking, or public transportation than on cars. Smart Growth plans call for mixing retail and other commercial facilities with residential units. The point is to eliminate the need to commute to jobs or shopping. All will be right there in one neighborhood. Most recently, Smart Growth policies are pushing to include mixed income housing to encourage diversity in every neighborhood.

To promote its Smart Growth the policy, NAR paints a delightful, positive picture of a Smart Growth future

in its documents: "Our members don't just sell homes, they sell neighborhoods." By promoting Smart Growth, NAR says it's working to "create a range of housing opportunities and choices." "Providing quality housing for people of all income levels is an integral component in any smart growth neighborhood. Housing diversity in terms of type and cost provides a healthy, diverse community. By using smart growth approaches to create a wider range of housing choices, municipalities can reduce the environmental costs of auto-dependent development, use their infrastructure resources more efficiently, ensure better balance of jobs, and housing, and generate a strong foundation of support for neighborhood transit, commercial centers and other services." So says NAR Smart Growth promotional materials.

Rail trails, walkable communities, complete streets, to help build "strong communities" are all part of the grand NAR vision for America's glorious future. It's the vision of utopia – a beautiful, well-controlled community of high rises where shopping and jobs are within biking or walking distance or a quick ride on a quaint trolley. Wind turbines turn lazily in the background to supply all energy needs. There are no dirty smokes stacks, no car, no parking problems, no grid lock, no sprawl. According to the vision, everyone is living in complete harmony.

Through surveys that have been created to deliver a pre-determined outcome, planners and NAR tell us that 84% of residents believe their communities are getting worse and so are "demanding" such planning be done to improve things. Under that excuse, NAR is just working hard "through the smart growth strategies to help create the neighborhoods consumers are demanding." And to make it all happen, they are passing out NAR Smart Growth Action Grants to realtor groups all over the nation.

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Where do such ideas originate and who is NAR working with to create such a policy? Well, to begin with, NAR is a member of the Smart Growth Network. It is joined by such organizations as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), National Resources Defense Council, American Farmland Trust, Rails to Trails Conservancy, and even the State of Maryland, among others. Now there's a crew from which any promoter of private property rights should run as fast as possible.

Just for the record, the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC), founded in 1970, was created by a grant from the Ford Foundation to be an environmental law firm. Their favorite tactic is to aggressively sue American industry and state governments to force compliance with radical environmental regulations, costing thousands of jobs and millions of dollars in lost revenues. The American Farmland Trust's method of "preserving" family farms is acquisition and control of development rights, essentially controlling the farms and how they operate. Rails to Trails Conservancy is infamous for taking property that was leased to now defunct rail roads and turning the right of ways into bike and hiking paths. The only problem is, those pathways are in many cases still owned by the property owners who leased them to the railroads. Basically the trails are pure theft from the property owners. Of course the State of Maryland has proven to be one of the worst oppressors of property rights in the nation as its Governor O'Mally has worked to lock away thousands of acres of land for "environmental protection." And the EPA -- well, it's the leader of the pack. Pretty strange bed fellows to NAR, which claims to be working for property owners.

But, there is more. Throughout the NAR literature on smart growth, it continually quotes the United Nation's World Commission on Environment and Development, better known as the Brundtland Commission. It was named after its chairman, Gro Harlem Brundtland, Vice President of the World Socialist party. The Commission's official report was called "Our Common Future." That report coined the term "Sustainable Development."

The Brundtland Commission was preceded by a series of UN conferences that

led to the findings and suggested policies for development of human society outlined in "Our Common Future." One such meeting, Habitat I, held in 1976 in Vancouver declared in its official report, "Land cannot be treated as an ordinary asset, controlled by individuals and subject to the pressures and inefficiencies of the market. Private land ownership is also a principle instrument of accumulation and concentration of wealth, therefore contributes to social injustice."

Wait a minute! Isn't that the very definition of sales of real estate? Aren't home buyers individuals seeking to earn wealth from the equity that will be gained by the purchase of the property? Isn't that the very pitch every single realtor in the nation uses to encourage us to buy a home? Why, then would NAR bother to hang around with, and promote policies created by such people?

Two major documents to come out of the UN after the Brundtland Commission, were Agenda 21 and the UN Biodiversity Assessment. That Assessment listed what was considered to be "not sustainable" in our brave new world that was being created for us. These include, "ski runs, grazing of livestock, plowing of soil, building of fences, industry, single family homes, paved and tarred roads, logging activities, dams and reservoirs, power line construction, and economic systems that fail to set proper value on the environment." They of course meant Capitalism. Again, how do Realtors justify promoting policies that oppose single family homes and a free market through which to sell them?

OK. So there is the background of such policy. A pretty unsavory bunch for Realtors who rely on the sale of private property to be associated. But what about the policies themselves? All of that wonderful utopia they have planned for us. It sounds wonderful. That can't be bad, can it?

The fact is, Smart Growth policies simply don't work. Irrefutable evidence now shows that urban planning actually creates the very problems smart growth is supposed to fix. The most notable result of implementation of smart growth policies is the destruction of American civil liberties and freedom of choice in our lives and the elimination of private property rights. In fact, in 2012, the American

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Planning Association actually did a study of smart growth policies and concluded that they don't work. But there is money in those policies – grant money. And so the drive for smart growth goes on, nearly unabated.

Across the nation the drum beat can be heard in nearly every community in the nation through vast new “visioning plans” of various names and titles – usually followed by the numbers 20/50. That's by design, because most are being implemented by the same planners nationwide, fueled by the same grant programs, and aided by the same NGO private groups.

Smart growth planners promote their schemes by insisting that Americans live the wrong way. And they use land use regulations to impose on others what they insist is the right way to live.

Listen to the sales pitch. In Omaha, Nebraska, the goal of its plan called Heartland 2050, according to its promoters, is to develop a strategic “vision” for the region's development over the next 30 years to assure “proper growth?”

This massive plan will lay the ground rules for transportation, housing, jobs, property/land use, education, and even health care.

What does all of that mean? It means they intend to put a line around the communities involved and declare little or no growth outside that line. That means the focus for future housing will be for high density neighborhoods living in high rise housing.

It means, the use of private cars will be discouraged in favor of public transportation. How is that done? Several ways. Higher taxes on cars and on gasoline – and there is now a plan inside the Obama Administration to tax the miles you drive.

Heartland 2050 includes the program called the “Complete Street.” That is an edict that cars must share the road with bicycles. It calls for “Traffic Calming,” which means large speed bumps placed in the center of residential streets that make it very unpleasant to drive over.

In San Francisco new residential apartment buildings have no parking lots. Again, that's part of the design to reduce the resident's ability to drive their cars and instead use bikes and public transportation, including

light rail trains, for trips around town.

So, how will all of these new planning schemes affect you? Are you going to be happy? Will life in your community improve?

Well, the best evidence to help predict the future is to look where all of this has already been tried. Portland, Oregon was announced as the poster child for Smart Growth policy. There it was fully implemented.

You can take an airplane over Portland and actually see the smart growth line around the city. On one side is vast, dense development. On the other side is nothing but open land.

Each of these plans focus on “density” of the population. What do you think will happen when you stop any kind of urban growth and instead demand that all development takes place in a certain contained area? Populations grow and so does the density of the population.

In Portland, the planners kept upping the density requirements for housing. To increase urban densities, the planners turned dozens of neighborhoods of single-family homes into apartments and condos.

If you owned a vacant lot, you could not build a single-family house on it – you would have to build a row house or apartment. In some cases, the restrictions were so strict that if your house burned down, you could not rebuild a single family home on the property.

Eventually, Portland planners decided that row houses and low-rise apartments were not enough. They changed the rules to enforce the building of high rise apartment buildings. Pack and Stack, we call them.

Then they gave tax breaks, below-market land sales and other subsidies to developers who built the high rises. That meant that traditional neighborhoods were invaded by high rise developments.

The center of the plan was the light rail train system. The desirable homes (according to the planners) were those built along the rail line. This would assure rider ship, they claimed.

Whoops. Independent studies reveal that the people living in them don't ride public transit any more significantly than residents in single family neighborhoods.

In Atlanta, Georgia, the push was on to build a light rail transportation system. One resident studied the plan, took the official estimated construction cost and overlaid that with the number of predicted riders of the system and found that he could buy every single rider their own limo and even throw in a driver.

The result of Portland's grand plan is that increased density destroyed the entire livable atmosphere of the community. Congestion is worse, housing and consumer costs are higher, and urban services, including fire, police, and schools, have declined as the city took money from these programs to subsidize high-density developers.

The planners of Omaha's Heartland 2050 are excited that it is receiving grants for the federal department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD was one of the major participants in the UN Habitat Meetings and in the implementation of Agenda 21.

Moreover, just this year, Obama announced that through a HUD program, neighborhoods would now be tested for diversity and if there aren't enough minorities or low income residents living in them, they will force the input of more in such neighborhoods. What do you think the grants from HUD will require your local planners to do with that money?

Smart growth, sustainable development, Agenda 21 policies has been spread throughout the nation by the strings attached to HUD and EPA and other federal grants. It's the Kool-Aid that spreads the poison.

If all of the smart growth plans are fully implemented, as advocated by the APA and supported by NAR, density in American cities will be as much as three times higher than is currently in New York City.

People seek to escape cities because they are expensive, inefficient, crime ridden, drug infested, over taxed, over regulated, cesspools. Living space is cramped, over priced and undersized. Some studies have shown that people forced to live in such an atmosphere are less healthy and more dependent on government.

Why would an organization like the National Association of Realtors jump on the band wagon to support such an anti-people, anti private property policy? How can such a policy be defended by an organization that says it advocates private property ownership and healthy communities?

If one could install a video camera at the door of every new home built in a suburban neighborhood to record the moment a family walked into their newly purchased home, they would record happy faces. Here a family has the room to expand and grow, on their own terms. Here there is a safe place for their children to play. Isn't that the very image the nation's realtors promote?

Of course, smart growth urban planners would be quick to say such development encourages strip malls and costs communities more tax dollars. The fact is, those new commercial establishments not only provide goods and services for those new neighborhoods, they also provide jobs and generate tax revenues. That's how economies are built.

Smart Growth is pure socialism and it has never worked anywhere it has ever been tried. It destroys the economy. It devastates the poor. Building costs skyrocket. Housing shortages rise and freedom of choice falls. Government makes every decision for every life choice for every person. Is that really what America's realtors advocate?

NAR claims it speaks for all Realtors. If so, then it's past time for America's Realtors to stop turning a blind eye to the policies being promoted by their national association. Because, in time, as more smart growth policies are forced into place, there will be less and less private property for realtor's to sell.

Realtors - for your own survival- it's time to start working to restore the very policy that created American wealth- private property ownership. It's time to say no to the socialism of the National Association of Realtors. ●

Ethanol policy reform--the rare place where environmentalists and energy advocates agree

By
Marita Noon

We all expect to pay a price for missing deadlines-- fail to pay a parking ticket on time, and you may find a warrant out for your arrest. People have lost their jobs when they can't get the work done on schedule. Students, who turn in papers late, get lower grades-- maybe even fail the class.

But the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) can apparently miss deadlines (many) with impunity. For the past two years, the EPA has failed to meet the statutory deadline under the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS), requiring the agency to tell refiners how much ethanol to blend into the nation's motor fuels.

In November 2013, the EPA did make an attempt to announce the proposed 2014 blend levels--which by then were already months past the legally mandated deadline. The EPA surprised and pleased the RFS opponents when it utilized its authority to adjust the mandate and took market conditions into consideration. The EPA set the proposed 2014 standard to a level lower than 2013's, even though the law requires increasing amounts. Ethanol producers, who were expecting the usual uptick, loudly opposed the reduction. They made so much noise, the EPA agreed to reconsider. To date, the 2014 standards have not yet been announced.

Then, on November 21, 2014, the EPA announced it would make a decision next year (2015) on how much ethanol refiners had to add to gasoline this year (2014)--yet, if refiners don't meet the unknown requirement, they get fined. That's akin to handing out the class syllabus after the students have failed the final exam.

With the goal of a reduction in foreign oil imports, Congress enacted the RFS in 2005 and revised it in 2007--which also provided incentives to America's fledgling ethanol industry. At the time, gasoline demand was rising to an all-time high and oil imports comprised more than 58 percent of U.S. oil consumption. No doubt Congress believed it was

saving American consumers from their addiction to oil.

Then the world changed. The U.S. economy plunged into its worst recession ever, unemployment soared, and gasoline demand fell sharply. Meanwhile, advanced drilling technologies, including the long-used hydraulic fracturing and newer horizontal drilling, began producing oil and natural gas from U.S. shale formations--which were previously uneconomic to develop--leading to America's 21st Century energy boom.

Today the U.S. is the world's largest natural-gas producer and is projected to pass Saudi Arabia as the number one oil producer. With crude oil supplies flooding the market, prices have been cut in half. Although fears over foreign-oil dependence have abated, the U.S. remains stuck with an ethanol mandate that is outdated, unworkable, and even harmful to vehicles, engines, and the environment.

Consider just some of the RFS's flaws.

The law requires refiners to cap their blending of corn ethanol and use more cellulosic biofuels. Never mind that very little cellulosic biofuel has ever been produced--even according to EPA's own data. But that fact hasn't prevented the EPA from levying millions of dollars in fines against refiners for failing to use the phantom fuel, without any assurance that enough cellulosic biofuel will ever be available. It's kind of like receiving a bill for something you cannot buy because it doesn't exist, but you're being charged anyway.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office reports cellulosic biofuels are: "complex, capital-intensive, and costly." Given the difficulty of producing them, capacity will "fall far short of what would be necessary to achieve the very rapid growth in the use of cellulosic biofuels required" under the RFS.

Then there is the "blend wall" problem. With less gasoline being sold than Congress anticipated,

refiners cannot add ever-rising amounts of ethanol to gasoline without exceeding E10--the fuel consisting of 10 percent ethanol and 90 percent gasoline sold virtually everywhere in the country today. To get around the blend wall issue, the EPA granted a "partial waiver" allowing the sale of E15, a fuel blend containing up to 15 percent ethanol for model-year 2001 and newer vehicles.

The EPA's quick fix made a bad situation much worse, and all at the taxpayers' and consumers' expense. Ethanol levels higher than 10 percent can damage or destroy vehicle engines, according to a study conducted by the well-respected Coordinating Research Council. Automakers are voiding warranties and refusing to be held responsible for mechanical problems caused by fuels containing more than 10 percent ethanol. And the marine industry warns of potential engine failures on various types of watercraft powered by the industry's most common engines.

The Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI) is so concerned about safety hazards that it has launched a campaign telling consumers to "Look Before You Pump." OPEI says equipment ranging from lawn mowers to "jaws of life" devices could be damaged by ethanol's corrosive properties if used in concentrations above 10 percent. Do you want your expensive new lawn mower to quit the third time you use it? You certainly want life-saving devices to work on demand.

And that's not all. Ethanol contains less energy than gasoline, forcing motorists to fill up more often, thereby causing more consumer expenditures. Ethanol production has driven up food prices here and abroad. Additionally, some studies indicate ethanol usage increases greenhouse gas emissions. Politico reports: "Some green groups have vocally abandoned their support for corn ethanol, blaming the crop for polluting water supplies, wiping out conservation land and even increasing carbon emissions." According to Craig Cox, director of the Ames, Iowa, office of the Environmental Working Group, an environmental group that opposes the mandate as it is now structured: "Corn ethanol's brand has been seriously dented in the last 18 months. ...it certainly doesn't occupy the same pedestal that it occupied two years ago."

But then, despite the fact that the EPA says

decisions are made on merits, politics entered the scene. Rumors flew that the announcement of the 2014 blend levels was delayed to help Rep. Bruce Braley (IA-D) in his Senate bid. Braley was pushing for an increase in the proposed levels and was hoping that he would be able to influence the White House to raise the targets. Additionally, a Republican-controlled Senate would be more likely to pass legislation to reform or repeal the RFS. Braley was quoted in Politico saying: "Voters in Iowa look at where I stand on this issue and where my opponent stands, who's supporting me in this campaign and who's supporting [Ernst]." The Politico story states: "Iowans say wavering on corn ethanol once would have been certain political suicide in a state where 90 percent of the land is farm acreage. So Braley sought to capitalize on Ernst's expressed qualms about big government, portraying her as someone Iowans can't trust to fight for them." Yet, Ernst, a Republican, won the Senate seat formerly held by Democrat Tom Harkin by 8.5 percentage points.

The EPA's unwillingness to do its job by setting ethanol volumes--along with ethanol's loss of "political heft"-- should provide the impetus for ending the complex and wasteful RFS program. Ethanol is a rare topic where environmentalists and energy advocates agree. Now is the time to get our elected officials all on board. As soon as the new Congress convenes in January, it should give the RFS an "F" and reform, revise, or even repeal it.

(A version of this content was originally published on Breitbart.com)

The author of Energy Freedom, Marita Noon serves as the executive director for Energy Makes America Great Inc. and the companion educational organization, the Citizens' Alliance for Responsible Energy (CARE). Together they work to educate the public and influence policy makers regarding energy, its role in freedom, and the American way of life. Combining energy, news, politics, and, the environment through public events, speaking engagements, and media, the organizations' combined efforts serve as America's voice for energy. ●

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The collusion is like something out of a bad spy movie. For example, Vitter's oversight team uncovered a June 2009 deal in which the Rockefeller Family Fund offered then-EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson money to pay for a plant inside the President's Council on Environmental Quality, to "stake the EPA's claim there," and then slip the shill into a pre-arranged EPA job, giving the agency a White House insider on staff –while not coincidentally tightening the Rockefeller Fund's power grip over the EPA.

Jackson wrote to her chief of staff Diane Thompson, "I think it's a fine idea and can only help EPA in the long run." Jackson then used her fake Richard Windsor email account to send the note, in an attempt to prevent exposure of her unethical shenanigans. Thompson replied, "My thoughts exactly. The more inside connections, the better."

The Rockefeller shill was Shalini Vajjhala, who agreed to leave her minor position at the Washington think tank Resources for the Future for a two-month stint at the CEQ, holding the pretentious title of "deputy associate director for energy and climate." The EPA then slipped her in as deputy assistant administrator of its Office of International & Tribal Affairs. Vajjhala remained there until her 2011 appointment as EPA's special representative leading a presidential US-Brazil initiative.

After Vajjhala cycled through the White House and EPA, she got her personal reward in 2012: approval to found and manage a new investment portfolio supported by the Rockefeller Foundation. (This is the original 1913 John D. Rockefeller philanthropy, not the fourth generation's Family Fund. There are many Rockefeller tentacles, which makes all of this even more confusing.) Vajjhala now contributes to the Huffington Post, funded in part by the wealthy Park Foundation.

EGA foundations are metastasizing into hundreds of far-left funds. The report drills into one of them, the Sea Change Foundation, "a private California foundation, which relies on funding from undisclosed donors and funnels tens of millions of dollars to other

foundations and prominent environmental activists who strive to control both policy and politics."

There is an incredible seedbed of Sea Change front groups. Bill Gates' foundation gave Sea Change Capital Partners \$2.5 million. eBay's Omidyar Network Fund gave the same partners \$2 million. David Rockefeller's personal foundation gave loads of cash to the Center for Sea Change. Wal-Mart's foundation gave \$500,000 to Strategies for the Global Foundation Sea Change, an international tentacle into the White House.

But it's not just the environment. The Crime Prevention Research Center, a nonprofit that tracks gun control activists, reported: "On January 8, 2013, the Obama Administration met with 23 large foundations to organize a push for national gun control. They included such organizations as the Open Society Institute, the McCormick Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation" and the MacArthur Foundation.

Foundations appear to be colluding with almost every Executive Branch department in the Obama administration. And it's not just the Big Green donors. It's all kinds of left-wing activists and bureaucrats who want to control our lives, liberties and living standards – with no accountability for mistakes they make, intentional harm and emotional distress they intentionally inflict, or damage they cause to millions of American businesses, families and communities.

It's time for Congress to hear testimony from some of the manipulative foundation program directors and investment managers, as they try to explain their actions to those whose lives they have wrecked and destroyed.

Ron Arnold, a Washington Examiner columnist, is executive vice president of the Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise. A version of this article originally appeared in the Examiner. More of his articles can be found at <http://WashingtonExaminer.com/author/Ron-Arnold> ●

The hidden “persuaders” of the environmentalist elite

These left-wing billionaires direct and control the environmentalist movement – and your lives

By

Ron Arnold,

Washington Examiner columnist

America’s Big Green environmental agenda is set by elite foundations that decide which activists get the money. They form “affinity groups” to collude with President Obama’s bureaucracy, which funnels tax dollars to Democratic advocates to enforce that agenda.

And they don’t just attempt to develop public policy and persuade Americans to adopt them. They find numerous ways to impose those policies on us – without our advice or consent, and despite the harm they inflict on our economy, national security, jobs, living standards or well-being.

Meet the conservation cash cartel of the uber-rich: the Environmental Grantmakers Association, a veteran organization (founded in 1985) of more than 200 ultra-wealthy foundations now caught in the spotlight of a new 92-page US Senate report exposing Big Green wealth eating away America’s industrial strength.

This is the same EGA that emerged as an issue during Senate confirmation hearings for Rhea Sun Suh, the Interior Department’s new head of national parks and the Fish and Wildlife Service – and a veteran EGA member who invited colleagues to come visit her at Interior any time.

Suh once worked for the Packard Foundation on programs to block oil and gas production in the western United States. Ironically, Packard’s investment portfolio – the profits from which the foundation pays its anti-oil and gas grants – holds more than \$350,000 in ExxonMobil shares, and millions in dozens of other lesser-known fossil fuel securities.

Most of the EGA’s foundation members have similar million-dollar dirty little secrets. But of course their tax-exempt activist recipients are not morally conflicted by taking fossil fuel cash and keeping it a secret – as long as the loot furthers their corrosive

goals of reducing America’s hydrocarbon use and economic power, and regardless of the impacts their policies inflict on the jobs, living standards, health and welfare of poor, elderly, blue-collar and minority families.

The classic unintentional self-parody displayed by Greenpeace, for example, is fascinating to watch, as it concocts convoluted “ethical” explanations for why its oil-soaked funding is purified by the “lofty” save-the-planet intent of its donors, whenever the funding is exposed.

The new report is titled “The Chain of Environmental Command: How a Club of Billionaires and Their Foundations Control the Environmental Movement and Obama’s EPA.” It was produced by the Republican staff of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, under the direction of Senator David Vitter of Louisiana, the committee’s ranking minority member.

Its executive summary states, “an elite group of left-wing millionaires and billionaires, which this report refers to as the ‘Billionaire’s Club,’ directs and controls the far-left environmental movement, which in turn controls major policy decisions and lobbies on behalf of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.”

Having researched over \$80 billion in green grants during the past few decades, I was impressed by the scope and detail of the oversight team’s work, and asked Vitter how he felt about it.

“This report really gets to the core of tracking the money and exposing the collusion,” Vitter told me. “The complicated, layered system is intended to create a lack of transparency. There is an unbelievable amount of money behind the environmental movement, and far too much collusion between far-left environmental groups and the Obama EPA.”

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