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gotten any less so on Newsom's watch. Since his inauguration, the number of Californians estimated to be living in shelters or on the street has increased by 25 percent.

• **Ease zoning laws:** Since Newsom took office, some of the most ferocious legislative battles have been over bills that would relax local zoning rules across California, opening up neighborhoods to more duplexes and apartment buildings. To the dismay of "Yes In My Backyard" activists, none of those proposals have earned the full-throated endorsement of Newsom and—perhaps partially as a result—all have failed so far.

Pandemic

What he's done:

• **Ramp up vaccinations:** California may have gotten off to a rough start, but we've since turned a corner maintaining an inoculation rate higher than all but 12 states. Newsom has helped with the pro-vaccine campaign—funding door-to-door vaccination campaigns, partnering with churches and other trusted community groups and, of course, emceeding those cheesy vaccine lottery drawings.

• **Set the record for executive orders:** While the pandemic slowed the other branches of government to a crawl, the governor's office went into lawmaking overdrive. In 2020, Newsom issued more executive orders than any governor in a single year in modern history. Of the 58 that were COVID-related, some called for lockdowns or implemented color-coded tiers, while others lifted and relaxed them; some redirected billions of dollars while others loosened restrictions on aid; and many reshaped other areas of the law in response to the public health threat, suspending evictions, extending tax filing deadlines and ensuring that every voter would receive a ballot in the mail, to name a few.

• **Led in acquiring personal protective equipment:** In the early months of the pandemic, everyone—hospitals, households, national governments—was scrambling to get masks, face shields and ventilators. With the federal government taking a laissez-faire approach to PPE, the governor coordinated purchases with neighboring states, massaged the Trump administration for more gear and deployed a torrent of contracts to private vendors. While some of those last-minute contracts collapsed or went to eminently unqualified vendors, other no-bid deals benefited Newsom's biggest campaign benefactors.

What he hasn't:

• **Solve the unemployment catastrophe:** Since the beginning of the pandemic, California's Employment Development Department has struggled to keep up with the historic surge in unemployment claims. Hundreds of thousands have spent weeks or longer waiting for desperately needed assistance while the department and its contractors fight against fraud. Newsom has deployed a "strike team" to streamline the process and the state has spent hundreds of millions on consultants. But the governor has also conceded that the current system was "not designed for the challenge."

• **Shutter churches to prevent COVID:** The earliest pockets of pushback against Newsom's handling of the pandemic came from houses of worship. As early as Easter 2020—less than a month after the first public health orders—churches represented by conservative legal action groups began suing the state over the right of congregations to pray, chant and sing in-person and indoors. Initially, the churches lost, but as their challenges landed at the nation's highest court with its newest member, Justice Amy Coney Barrett, California restrictions began to fall—a loss for Newsom and a sea change in constitutional law. □

"Masks required" sign at Bootleg clothing boutique in downtown Chico. (Poster by John Reed)

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