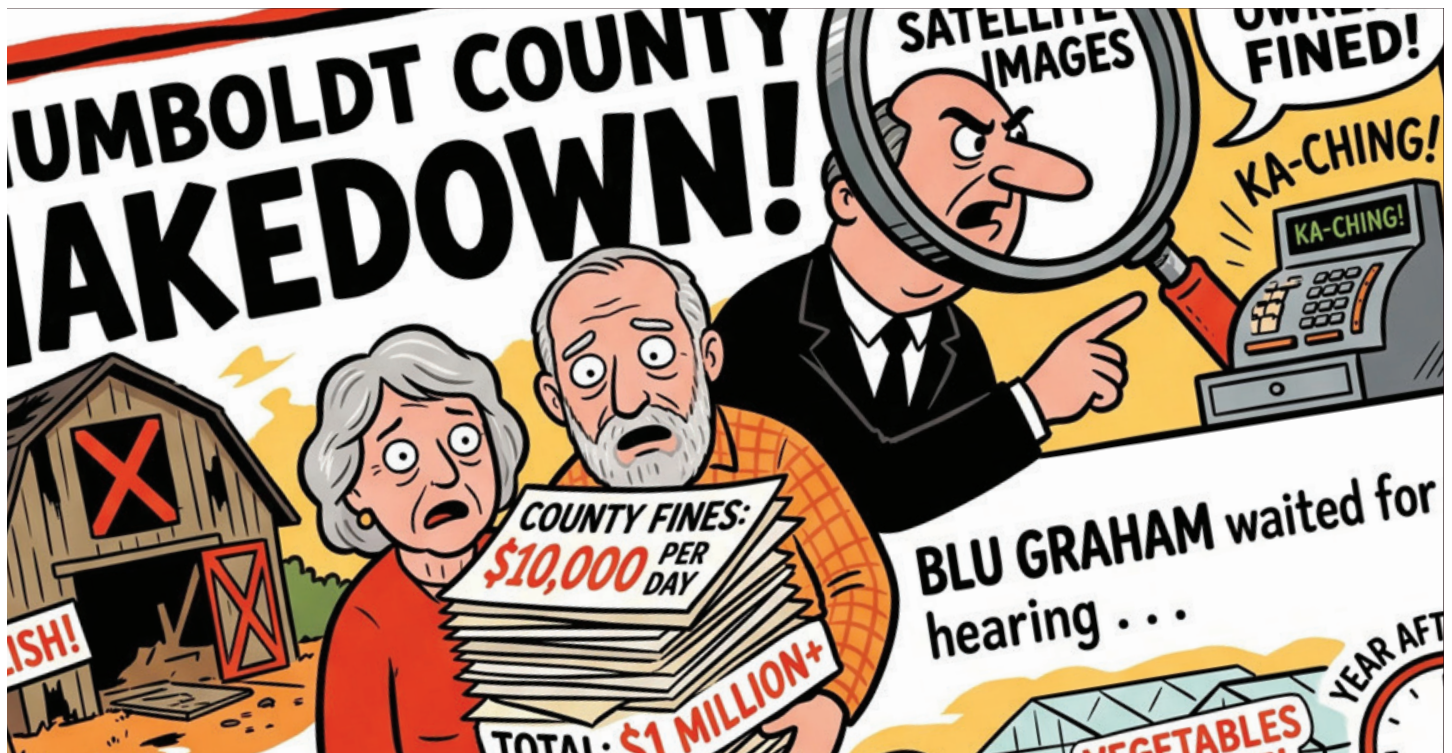




Humbled in Humboldt County

September 3, 2026

For years, the county clobbered property owners with fines of “\$10,000 or more per day for offenses they did not commit,” [reports](#) the Institute for Justice, which has represented several of the harassed residents.

More than 1,200 property owners in Humboldt County, California, were hit with such fines for growing pot despite only one form of evidence: old satellite images of their property. Followed by, often, no further investigation.

Among the victims: Corrine and Doug Thomas,

whom the county charged more than a million dollars. They were also supposed to pay \$200,000 to demolish a barn near their home because a *prior* owner had grown marijuana there. Another owner, Blu Graham, tried in 2018 to get a hearing to show that his greenhouses contained vegetables, not marijuana. As he waited year after year, the fines piled up.

Finally, in 2022, these and others targeted by the county sued in federal court with IJ’s help.

After some ups and downs, a court of appeals affirmed the plausibility of the plaintiffs’ claims, and the prospect of a trial motivated county officials to settle.

The county has withdrawn the fines, retracted the arbitrary allegations, and agreed to give owners 30 days warning in which to counter an accusation before the county acts further. No fines are to be levied until a case is decided. New owners cannot be punished for what previous owners did. Etc.

And the county must pay the plaintiffs’ litigation costs.

This is Common Sense. Let’s hope it sticks.

I’m Paul Jacob.