

Opinion: LTN endorses June 5 ballot measures B and C

El Dorado County voters are being asked on June 5 to approve two measures that would help small businesses.

Measure C is a countywide measure that would alter El Dorado County's Charter that was approved in 1994. It would allow department heads to approve expenditures of \$10,000 or less. As it is now, anyone doing work for the county must have a formal contract no matter what is being done.



Measure B is just for South Lake Tahoe and would change the business license structure by lowering the annual tax for most businesses, while increasing the cap for a handful.

Lake Tahoe News is recommending a yes vote on both measures. They each need 50 percent plus one vote to pass.

Measure C would streamline business in El Dorado County. In turn, this means businesses – many of which are small – would be paid in a more timely fashion. It will also reduce county staff time and paperwork.

All of this makes for a more efficient, effective government operation.

It does not mean oversight has been eliminated. There are checks and balances in place to make sure money is not leaving county bank accounts for purposes other than what was intended. And there are protocols to ensure it was a necessary purchase or the work performed was required.

County Counsel Lou Green wrote the impartial analysis of

Measure C for voters. He says, "The purpose of the measure is to simplify the contracting process with service providers who do not traditionally use signed contracts in their business, and who frequently resist the county's request for a written contract. However, the proposed amendment does not allow for undocumented transactions."

A similar measure was on the ballot a few years ago that would have allowed expenses up to \$15,000 be approved without a contract. That failed 51 percent to 49 percent.

As a comparison, South Lake Tahoe's city manager is allowed to approve expenses up to \$6,000 without council approval and contracts up to \$30,000.

Besides *Lake Tahoe News*, other supporters of Measure C include Supervisor John Knight, Supervisor Ron Briggs, District Attorney Vern Pierson, Sheriff John D'Agostini, Auditor-Controller Joe Harn, and the El Dorado Hills Chamber of Commerce board of directors.

Measure B in a slightly different format was also before voters in recent years and barely failed.

What is different this time around is this will lock in rates for businesses whose gross sales do not increase. As it is today and was on the previous ballot measure that did not pass, the business license tax increased each year based on the consumer price index. The CPI component has been eliminated in Measure B.

Ninety-eight percent of South Lake Tahoe businesses would have a lower tax with the passage of Measure B.

While *Lake Tahoe News* supports Measure B, there are two flaws. One is the timing. The vote is June 5 and the new rate structure takes effect July 1 – when the annual license is paid to the city. This was poor planning on the city's part. The increase should have been delayed to 2013 to give

businesses the opportunity to work the new rates into their budget.

The other flaw is with not keeping the CPI part of the tax structure. Without having it in there, and assuming Measure B passes, one day the city will be collecting less money than it did in 2011.

Conflicting messages have come out of city hall as to whether Measure B is all about making things more equitable for businesses or if the intent is to bring in a couple hundred thousand dollars more a year.

Lake Tahoe News likes both reasons. We just don't understand why the CPI component was eliminated and strongly disagree with that decision. But we don't disagree enough to vote no.

Measure B is for businesses. Yes, the cap goes from about \$3,000 a year to \$20,000 – but that means those making more money are paying a fairer percentage of their gross income. The measure attempts to level the paying field, so to speak.

South Tahoe Chamber of Commerce has come out against Measure B. Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce is not taking a stance.

Lake Tahoe News says yes to B and C.

35% containment in Topaz Fire

as it moves toward Wellington

Updated May 24, 2012, 7:30pm:

The Topaz Ranch Estates Fire is burning west of Rickey Canyon in the Pinenut Mountain Range in Wellington..

The burn area is estimated to be approximately 7,500 acres, and the fire is estimated to be approximately 35 percent contained.

No additional structures have burned. The fire has had no active perimeter growth since 6pm.

Ground crews are holding the line in all divisions. The ground crews were supported by air in their efforts until approximately 2:30 pm, when prevailing winds became too strong for continued helicopter operations.

Updated May 24, 2012, 7:50am:

Firefighters working overnight on the Topaz blaze south of Gardnerville still have it 15 percent contained, however the total acreage burned has increased to 7,500.

Updated May 23, 2012, 9:25pm:

The Topaz Fire has grown to approximately 7,000 acres and is approximately 15 percent contained.

The fire continues to burn in the hills to the north and east of the Topaz Ranch Estates residential area.

No additional structures beyond the 19 that have burned are in immediate threat.

Air operations are suspended for the night, however ground crews will continue to work throughout the night expanding and improving ground fire breaks.

The number of responding fire personnel has increased to approximately 575.

Updated: May 23, 2012, 11:20am:

The Topaz Fire has grown to 6,600 acres, without additional loss of structures.

"The preliminary investigation indicates that the fire was caused by a private residential open burn which exceeded the regulatory limitations and permit requirements, including the ignition of materials not allowed under the regulations," according to the Douglas County Sheriff's Office.

The mutual investigation is continuing with the Nevada State Fire Marshall, Douglas County Sheriff's Office and Bureau of Land Management.

Updated May 23, 2012, 10:30am:

The Topaz Fire south of Gardnerville is at 6,403 acres. It continues to burn in a northeast direction.

Evacuations are voluntary at this point. No roads are closed.

No injuries or deaths have been reported. However, 19 buildings, including two houses, have been lost.

There are still 120 residences and about 300 outbuildings that are threatened.

Full containment is expected by May 23. As of Wednesday morning the fire is 10 percent contained.

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Updated May 23, 2012, 8:05am:

Fire officials are reporting the Topaz Estates Fire being at

4,500 acres, with 10 percent containment.

No more structures burned overnight.

The fire is moving toward Smith Valley.

An air campaign will resume this morning in addition to the ongoing fight on the ground to control the blaze.

Updated May 22, 2012, 9:50pm:

It was originally believed seven house homes had been burned, however Douglas County sheriff's department just released revised numbers – two house and 17 outbuildings were destroyed.

The fire has grown to 4,400 acres.

It continues to move in a northeasterly direction, away from homes in the Topaz Ranch Estates residential area.

Fire crews are still working on containment.

Updated May 22, 2012, 8:50pm:

Fire crews are using bulldozers and hand crews to cut a fire break between the fire and the homes in the area along Sandstone Drive in the Topaz area of Douglas County.

U.S. Forest Service personnel and equipment from the Lake Tahoe Basin have been sent to the fire. Tahoe Douglas crews are also fighting the other.

Other Tahoe agencies are on alert in case more resources are needed.

The helicopter crews are obtaining water for their air drops from Topaz Lake, so boaters on the lake should stay out of the way.

Updated May 22, 2012, 8:15pm:

The Topaz Ranch Estates Fire has destroyed seven houses.

The 3,500 acre blaze south of Gardnerville is still raging out of control, but is not longer threatening homes, according to authorities.

Contact the American Red Cross at (775) 856.1000 for information about evacuations.

Updated May 22, 2012, 5:55pm:

According to the Sierra Front Interagency Dispatch Center, the Topaz Ranch Estates Fire has consumed 1,600 acres and is moving at a rapid pace to the northeast.

About 100 structures are threatened.

Evacuated residents can find shelter at the Topaz Ranch Estates Community Center (call 775.721.4697). Evacuated large animals can be taken to the Douglas County Fairgrounds in Gardnerville. Small pets to the animal shelter in Gardnerville.

A hiker who called 911 reporting that he was stranded by the fire has been evacuated by helicopter.

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Updated May 22, 2012, 4:20pm:

The wildland fire in Topaz Ranch Estates has grown to 400 acres, with four houses destroyed and zero containment.

"The initial investigation reveals the fire may have been caused by a controlled burn from the previous day. Although the fire was extinguished on previous day, it is believed to have rekindled," Douglas County sheriff's Sgt. Jim Halsey said in a statement.

The fire is being fought from the air with water drops by helicopter and by ground with five strike teams.

Douglas County sheriff's mounted posse is on scene for large animal evacuations.

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At least two structures have burned to the ground in a fast moving fire in Douglas County.

Residents in the Topaz Ranch Estates area being evacuated.

Jill Catlow with East Fork Fire in Minden told *Lake Tahoe News* more than 200 acres have burned as of 3pm, with two or three structures – maybe more having been lost.

She said the winds are high. This is the second consecutive day the region has been a red flag warning.

The May 22 fire started a little before 2pm. The cause as of now is not known.

Area fire agencies are on the scene, with additional resources coming in from Mono County. Ground and air crews are helping to douse the fast moving flames.

This area is about 20 miles south of Gardnerville. People are being evacuated to the community center at Carter.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Opinion: **Long-term**
consequences **change** **the**

discussion of youth football

By Phil Taylor, Sports Illustrated

I remember sitting at the dinner table with my family six years ago when my son Ben finally said the words I had been expecting, and dreading, for years. He had played basketball, baseball and soccer almost from the day he could walk, and my wife and I were beginning to think that at 14 and nearing the end of his freshman year of high school, he had decided those three sports were enough. But just when we dared hope that Ben would never force us to make the Big Decision, our luck ran out. "So," he said between forkfuls of spaghetti, "I want to play football."

Those were the words Ben used, but at the time they seemed to pass through some sort of internal parental translator. What I heard was, "I'd like to subject my brain to repeated trauma and expose my body to increased risk of broken bones, arthritis and paralysis."

My wife and I needed time to process Ben's declaration, which didn't surprise him. "I thought you would probably say no right off the bat, and then I'd have to give you all the reasons you should change your mind," my son, now a junior at Oregon, said last week when he granted his old man an exclusive interview. "I figured it was going to be more than one conversation."

He was right. For some parents, the question of whether to allow their sons to play football is an easy yes, for others it's a don't-even-think-about-it no. I know one dad who ripped up his son's football parental consent forms the first time the boy brought them home, then put a second set in the shredder when his son tried again a week later. But most of us lie between the extremes; we need to wrestle with the issue for a while before deciding. The potential downside of saying

yes grew even darker with the news last week that All-Pro linebacker Junior Seau, 43, had committed suicide, an act that may well have been related to the constant cranial pounding of his 20-year NFL career.

Seau's death, coming on the heels of similar suicides by ex-NFL safeties Dave Duerson 15 months ago and Ray Easterling last month, put a famous face on the issue of football's long-term toll. The more we learn about the delayed brain damage that the sport's controlled violence can cause, the harder it is for a growing number of parents to feel comfortable allowing their kids to play. According to the most recent figures available from the National Sporting Goods Association, participation in youth football declined from 10.1 million in 2006 to 8.9 million in 2009. Even ex-NFL quarterback Kurt Warner acknowledged last week that he would prefer his sons, one of whom is 13 and has already suffered a concussion, not follow in his footsteps. "You understand the size [of the players], the speed, the violence of the game, and then you couple that with situations like Junior Seau," he said on Dan Patrick's radio show. "It scares me as a dad."

Read the whole story

Venus Transit viewing

Space Science for Schools in collaboration with Sand Harbor Nevada State Park are sponsoring a free public astronomical viewing of the last Venus Transit of the solar disc this century.

The event in the past was used to establish the size of the Solar System and measurements of the size of the Sun and Venus.

Specially equipped telescopes for solar viewing will be provided by Space Science for Schools to follow this epic event.

The event is June 5 from 5-7pm at Sand Harbor.

For more information, click on the flyer.

Chain controls possible on mountain passes

Caltrans is advising motorists that winter weather with the potential for snow is projected starting May 25.



Caltrans urges motorists traveling over the Interstate 80 and Highway 50 this weekend that chain controls may be in effect due to ice and snow at the summits. Motorists should plan ahead for adverse driving conditions by packing provisions, ensuring the vehicle is in good working order with proper tire tread and to carry chains.

Most traffic interfering work will be suspended for the holiday weekend. However, motorists can expect all lanes on I-80 from Highway 20 to Cisco Grove to be narrowed to 11-feet. There are no scheduled lane restrictions on Highway 50.

LTUSD warning businesses about scam

A company called "School District Publishing" from Riesel, Texas, has been soliciting advertising from businesses claiming they are representing Lake Tahoe Unified School District.

LTUSD officials are warning that this company does not have the authority or the permission of the Lake Tahoe Unified School District to solicit donations, or to sell or market products in the name of or on behalf of the district.

Opinion: Pelosi's definition of middle class uses funny math

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from May 23, 2012, Washington Post.*

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi has an interesting definition of what constitutes the middle class. She believes it includes people earning anything less than \$1 million a year – at least when it comes to tax cuts.

The California Democrat sent a letter Wednesday to House Speaker John A. Boehner, R-Ohio, calling on him to schedule an immediate vote to make permanent the Bush tax cuts for income below \$1 million annually. President Obama's position has been that the tax cuts should be extended, but only on income of

\$250,000 or less. Republicans, of course, insist on maintaining the upper-income tax cuts in their entirety, a move that would cost an estimated \$850 billion over the next decade – \$1 trillion, including the cost of paying additional interest on the debt, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

How much federal revenue would be lost by moving the cutoff point to \$1 million? Citizens for Tax Justice estimates it at about 43 percent in 2013, and there is no reason to think that the loss would be any smaller in future years. If anything, as the economy improves and incomes rise, the loss could be larger. And among the biggest beneficiaries of Ms. Pelosi's "middle class" largess would be those earning more than \$1 million a year, because they would enjoy the benefit of paying lower marginal rates on the first \$1 million of income. Indeed, an estimated half of the benefit of the lower rates would flow to, yes, millionaires.

Read the whole story

Lake Tahoe Lifestyle Festival

Bijou Bash has been renamed Lake Tahoe Lifestyle Festival.

The annual South Lake Tahoe event is now a city and Barton Health event.

The Lake Tahoe Lifestyle Festival mission is to promote a healthy lifestyle and environment for residents and visitors to South Lake Tahoe. Participants can look forward to interactive booths and an overall experience highlighting the outdoors in a fun and festive atmosphere.

Guided hikes, mountain bike skills clinics and fun runs will be some of the activities offered.

The festival will be Sept. 8 from 10am–4pm.

Spring concert at STMS

Lake Tahoe Unified School District's elementary and middle school spring concerts are May 23.

The free musical events will be in the multipurpose room of South Tahoe Middle School.

Grades 4-6 start at 6pm, and grades 6-8 are at 7:30pm.

Memorial Day ceremonies

There are two places in El Dorado County to recognize those who died in battle fighting for the United States.

One Memorial Day event is at Happy Homestead Cemetery on May 28 at 11am. The other is at the El Dorado County Veterans

Monument in Placerville on May 28 at 11am.