Letter: Sick people should not fear government

To the community,

When my friends and I wrote and passed The Compassionate Use Act, otherwise known as Proposition 215, we never, in our worst nightmares, could have imagined that 17 years after its historic passage, medical marijuana patients would still be living in fear.



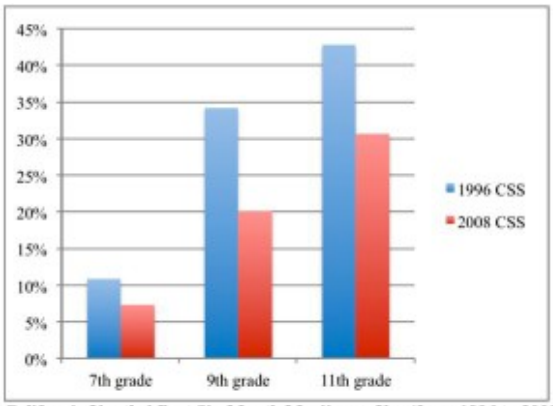
Steve Kubby

During all those years I've seen countless sick people arrested, humiliated, bankrupted, indicted, prosecuted like common criminals, and sent off to prison for decades at a time, all over a healing herb. I've also seen the exhausted faces of patients who must endure long rides, sometimes through dangerous blizzard conditions, because they have run out of the strain of cannabis that works best for them and are forced to travel to the Bay Area to get their preferred strain of medicine and the real relief it provides for them.

Right now, here is South Lake Tahoe, there are sick people who live in constant fear that the city will come in unannounced, turn off their power, fine them $1,000 per day and leave them to die. They live in terror of low flying aircraft, especially helicopters, convinced that they are about to be discovered and evicted. They avoid going out into public and hide in their homes and apartments instead. Yes, they are horribly

sick and living in fear each day.

You don’t ever see them, or hear from them, but I do. Some have obvious disabilities, others appear to be fine, but are in terrible pain and suffering. Most of all, however, they are in fear that enforcers from the city will find them, issue demands they can’t meet, shut off their power and destroy their lives.



California Youths' Past Six-Month Marijuana Use (from 1996 to 2008)

Source: *California Attorney General’s Office*

Regardless of how you or anyone else feels about marijuana, I think we can all agree that genuinely sick people do not deserve to live in daily fear of their city government.

Sadly, there are those who just don’t understand and choose to spread falsehoods instead. Don’t believe the nonsense about how our initiative “will result a pot store on every street corner.” It’s just phony propaganda by a small minority of opponents. Even the city attorney had to remove his comments about “Unlimited Dispensaries” and issue a new title and summary.

Only those who have been residents for over a year in South Lake Tahoe can qualify to operate a dispensary. And the City Council retains the right to ban signage or ban new dispensaries after six months. So don’t buy into the hype and

propaganda that people are making up about this compassionate attempt to provide safe access for patients who genuinely need this extraordinary medicine.

In order to protect dispensaries, we also created a clause about making it a crime to conspire with federal authorities to violate state medical marijuana laws. The city attorney balked at approving this clause, alleging that this is an illegal attempt to prohibit the police from enforcing marijuana laws, but we are firmly convinced that it is just the opposite and our initiative is intended to force police to uphold our state medical marijuana laws instead. We know that 99 percent of the federal raids on dispensaries begin with some local official or officer contacting the DEA and telling them that their local government or police have been unable to legally ban or evict certain dispensaries. So from our perspective, it is vital that we have a clause that upholds state medical marijuana laws, by making it a crime to conspire with federal agents intent upon violating state laws.

On Monday, I spoke with the city attorney about our objections to the title and summary he issued which included allegations such as “prohibits police from enforcing marijuana laws” and “allows for unlimited dispensaries.” After a frank exchange of views, the city attorney then issued a second title and summary Dec. 9 that removed these fraudulent claims about our initiative.

Of course, there are those who will assert that dispensaries will mean more weed ending up in the hands of kids. That is certainly the claim that the drug czar, Barry McCaffrey, made after the passage of Prop. 215. These are the haters and bigots who want us to believe that throwing kids caught with wee into a jail cell with sexual predators and hardened criminals is the answer to our drug problems.

Now, more than 17 years after the passage of California’s Prop. 215, a considerable body of data exists on teen use of

weed and the evidence is clear. No state with a medical marijuana law has experienced an overall increase in youth marijuana use since the law's enactment. All have reported overall decreases – in some cases exceeding 50 percent in specific age groups – strongly suggesting that the enactment of state medical marijuana laws does not increase teen marijuana use. See details here.

So don't pay attention to the vocal minority who oppose us and try to paint medical marijuana as some sort of fringe issue. The fact is that every national poll done, including by Fox News, shows 80 percent support for medical marijuana. Here in South Lake Tahoe, voters supported legalization in 2010 with a whopping 58 percent "yes" and a pathetic 42 percent "no".

The time has come to ignore those who tell you that South Lake Tahoe doesn't want medical marijuana in our community because this town clearly supports the medical use of cannabis and we have the polls to prove it.

Watch and you will see that those who oppose medical marijuana have no real arguments and must rely instead upon personal attacks against me instead.

With this in mind, my team and I will begin collecting signatures this week, in order to give voters a chance to stop the city from threatening sick people and protect them instead.

Steve Kubby, South Lake Tahoe

Squaw athlete captures his first downhill win

By USSA

COPPER MOUNTAIN, Colo. -– Jackie Wiles (Aurora, Ore.) and Bryce Bennett (Squaw Valley) claimed the U.S. Alpine Championships downhill titles during a chilly Tuesday at U.S. Ski Team Speed Center.

It was the second straight U.S. downhill gold for Wiles, who nearly scored Audi FIS Alpine World Cup points last weekend in both Lake Louise downhill races, the second and third World Cup starts of her young career.

Bennett also harnessed momentum from his first World Cup start – also in Lake Louise – to capture his first U.S. title with the men's downhill crown. consecutive U.S. Alpine Championships downhill title.

Katie Hartman (Breckenridge, Colo.) was second, followed by Katie Ryan (Aspen), who was also the top junior woman.

2013 men's downhill champion Jared Goldeberg (Holladay, Utah) took second in the men's race, followed by Artem Borodaykin of Russia, who was also the top junior.

S. Tahoe delays plastic bag

fine; Cole now mayor

By Kathryn Reed

On a 4-1 vote the South Lake Tahoe City Council decided to waive all fines associated with the plastic bag ban for the first 90 days.

The ban for grocery stores takes effect Jan. 15. Other retail outlets will be banned from using the single-use bags starting Oct. 15.

Councilman Tom Davis was the lone dissenter. He has been against this ordinance since the get-go.

Councilwoman JoAnn Conner pushed hard for the delay in implementing a fine so businesses can adapt to the change. She also initiated the reduction in the fine structure to have it start at $50 instead of $100 as City Attorney Tom Watson had proposed.

Warnings will be given to businesses until mid-April, after which financial penalties kick in. Those fines are per day that the retailer hands out plastic when they aren’t supposed to.

Mayor Hal Cole said he would like the money collected to be used for the program either in terms of education or being able to provide bags to nonprofits that use them. However, this was not incorporated into the resolution that was adopted Dec. 10.

The plan is for city staff to assess in the spring how the program is going and then convene a meeting with the rest of the businesses that must adhere to the plastic bag ban. It’s possible the grocery stores could offer advice. The council will then revisit the ban in the summer.

In other action:

• Cole was elected mayor for the next year by his peers on a 4-0 vote. He chose not to vote. Brooke Laine was elected mayor pro tem on a 4-1 vote. Conner's issue with Laine is that she had not been elected to the council, but was appointed.

• The 911 fee on phones is going up from $1.55 to $2.25 on Jan.1 and then to $2.65 on Jan. 1, 2015, on the 26,463 phones in the city. The city wants to have the system pay for itself and no longer subsidize it at $300,000 a year. Police Chief Brian Uhler said the gap is because of salary and benefit increases since 2009.

• The council, with a good portion of the fire department staff in attendance, approved the purchase of a new engine. The city does not have a backup engine, so it uses a brush truck, a state vehicle or borrows one from another agency when an engine is sidelined. The engines are 11-, 14-, and 22-years-old. To date combined they have been out of service for 107 days this year. The cost of the new engine is $529,746.60. It will be financed and paid back via Proposition 172 funds.

Tech giants want government to back off

By Edward Wyatt and Claire Cain Miller, New York Times

Eight prominent technology companies, bruised by revelations of government spying on their customers' data and scrambling to repair the damage to their reputations, are mounting a public campaign to urge President Obama and Congress to set new limits on government surveillance.

On Monday the companies, led by Google and Microsoft,

presented a plan to regulate online spying and urged the United States to lead a worldwide effort to restrict it. They accompanied it with an open letter, in the form of full-page ads in national newspapers and a website detailing their concerns.

It is the broadest and strongest effort by the companies, often archrivals, to speak with one voice to pressure the government. The tech industry, whose billionaire founders and executives are highly sought as political donors, forms a powerful interest group that is increasingly flexing its muscle in Washington.

Read the whole story

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2 men to serve time, pay fine for bear poaching

Two Northern California men will spend time in jail and pay fines for poaching bears in El Dorado County.

Peter George Vitali, 56, of Pioneer and Arthur Martin Blake, 59, of River Pines, pleaded no contest to misdemeanor charges of illegally taking wildlife for profit. Vitali was fined $12,500 and Blake $5,000. Both must serve 30 days in jail, followed by 36 months on probation.

Vitali and Blake were arrested by California Department of Fish and Wildlife officers in April 2013 after they were found to be in possession of 20 large bear claws and three bear gall bladders in the Eldorado National Forest.

“This case is an example of the challenges our officers face,”

CDFW Lt. Stacey LaFave said in a statement. “Heavy fines and jail time send a strong message to poachers who unlawfully take and profit from California’s natural resources.”

Officials said the two men killed three bears, likely a sow and two cubs. The claws, liver and gall bladder had been removed from the sow and only the liver and gall bladder were removed from the younger two bears. The bile contained inside bear gall bladders is believed by some to have medicinal properties and is sold on the black market.

California laws forbid the sale, purchase or possession for sale of any bear part.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Here are this week’s roadwork schedules from Caltrans for El Dorado-Tahoe and Sierra.

• The South Lake Tahoe Recreation Facilities Joint Powers Authority is seeking applicants to the Bicycle Trail and Fields advisory committees. The application deadline is 5pm Jan. 17. Pick up applications from the South Lake Tahoe City Clerk, 1901 Airport Road, or call (530) 542.6004 or (530) 542.6003 or email eapalazzo@cityofslt.us.

• South Tahoe Refuse will be picking up Christmas trees after Dec. 25. Trees must be no taller than 6 feet and all

decoration removed.

• SnowGlobe, the three-day music fest in South Lake Tahoe, returns Dec. 29-31. The city's complaint line is (530) 542.7429.

Nissensohn sentenced to death for 3 killings

By Kathryn Reed

Joseph Michael Nissensohn will never have the opportunity to hurt another woman. On Tuesday, a jury of 12 in South Lake Tahoe said he should die for his crimes.

In October, the 62-year-old was found guilty of three counts of first-degree murder.

The remains of Kathy Graves, 15, of South Lake were found near the Mount Tallac trailhead in 1990, about one year after she was last seen alive. Nissensohn also killed Monterey County teenagers Tanya Jones and Tammy Lynn Jarschke in 1981.



Joseph Michael Nissensohn

He has already been in prison 15 years for the second-degree murder of a woman in Tillicum, Wash. When he was supposed to get out in 2008 El Dorado and Monterey county prosecutors agreed to wrap their cases into one and filed charges before Nissensohn was freed.

It took jurors only 90 minutes to complete this phase of the more than six-month trial.

As soon as the clerk in the El Dorado County Superior Court read the verdict Nissensohn was handcuffed. The entire time he sat staring straight ahead in the direction of Judge Suzanne Kingsbury.

“I wouldn’t say it was disturbing, but you definitely feel a lot of responsibility is on your shoulders,” Bob Grant, one of the jurors, told *Lake Tahoe News* after the Dec. 10 sentencing verdict. “You are very careful to pay attention in court to make sure you get the right verdict.”

El Dorado County sheriff’s Lt. Pete Van Arnum was in the courtroom. Afterward he called Nissensohn a dangerous man. Van Arnum was with a different department when Grave’s skull was found near Fallen Leaf Lake.

He said it’s good Nissensohn was sentenced to death; pausing to wonder if these are the only crimes the criminal committed.

Nissensohn is scheduled to be formally sentenced March 18.

Since El Dorado County District Attorney Vern Pierson was elected in 2007 his office has pursued the death penalty three times and has won them each time. Prior to today, David Zanon was the last person sent to Death Row from El Dorado County. This was three years ago for the murder of California Highway Patrol Officer Scott Russell.

California has more than 700 inmates on Death Row. Clarence Ray Allen on Jan. 17, 2007, was the last person executed. The

controversy of using lethal injection is creating the logjam.

Nevadans may be asked to vote on 2% business tax

By Andrew Doughman, Las Vegas Sun

Here’s one for the holiday shoppers in Nevada whisking in and out of retail stores.

No state business tax means you should be getting better prices here than in other states, right?

After all, if businesses pay fewer taxes in Nevada than in other states, the savings ought to trickle down to Nevada consumers. It’s simple logic: Hey, the state’s giving you a break, so how about cutting us a break?

But just the opposite is happening, says Guy Hobbs, founder of Hobbs, Ong & Associates, Inc., a Las Vegas-based financial advisory firm. Nevadans are effectively subsidizing other states’ consumers because people living in high-tax states are paying about the same price as people do in Nevada when they shop at national retailers, Hobbs said.

And the complaint doesn’t stop there. Nevadans also are paying with a diminished quality of life that is rubbed in our noses with every new ranking that compares Nevada dismally with the other states.

Some political activists say it’s time for large companies to pay more to do business in Nevada and are advocating a tax

measure to wring money out of companies for Nevada's education system.

That effort comes in the form of a proposed 2 percent business margins tax, which teachers and others want voters to approve in the Nov. 4 election.

Read the whole story

Popcorn – a good and bad snack choice

By Sally Tamarkin, Huffington Post

Popcorn might be the world's most versatile snack. It can be dressed up with cheese, caramel, butter, salt or more exotic flavors. It can be sweet, savory or both, and it's easy to grab by the handful for quick transport to the mouth.

But popcorn is the Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde of snacks – one minute it's the healthiest choice around (Low in calories! Whole grains!), the next it's getting banned for containing trans fats. What the heck is going on?

Here's the deal: Kernels that are simply air-popped (in a brown paper bag in the microwave, for instance) contain no saturated fat and barely any sodium.

But the pre-packaged microwave, store-bought, and movie theater varieties are often heavily processed and packed with additives and lots of salt. Plus, because of the way these varieties are packaged, it's easy to polish off several servings of the stuff in one sitting. (For example, a typical bag of microwave popcorn is 10 cups, and a small movie theater

popcorn is about 11 cups.)

Read the whole story

Letter: Live Violence Free grateful for Rotary

To the community,

Tahoe-Douglas Rotary’s 2013 Children’s Holiday Party was a complete success thanks to the generous support of all club members, Sealed with a Kiss, and Forever Dance.

Live Violence Free would like to give them a big thank you from the bottom of our hearts for all of the work and support that the Rotarians give to our agency year after year. Your party gives our clients and their children a space where they can focus on enjoying themselves for an evening. It allows them to not have to worry about the hardships they’ve had to encounter in the past.

Thank you,

Diana Cabrera, Live Violence Free