Do you want a pair of free Giants tickets?

There’s a pennant race going on – in case you didn’t know.

Lake Tahoe News has two tickets to give away to the Sept. 22 game at AT&T Park in San Francisco where the Giants will be hosting the Padres. Could this be the game where the Giants secure a playoff spot?

To win the tickets – post a comment as to why you should win them. It’s that easy.

This promotion is open to all members of *Lake Tahoe News* special NEWS Team. Just fill out a paid subscriber form to be part of the NEWS Team. You can email it to info@LakeTahoeNews.net.

Winners will be announced Tuesday.

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe

Piper and Ella are sweet girls about 8 years old who were abandoned outside when their owner moved. They were very matted and had to be clipped, but their multi-colored fur will grow back beautifully.



They would prefer to go home together.

Piper and Ella are spayed, microchipped, and vaccinated.

They are at the El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers, along with many other dogs and cats who are waiting for their new homes. Go online to see photos and description of all pets at the shelter.

Call (530) 573.7925 for directions, hours, and other information on adopting a pet.

For spay-neuter assistance for South Tahoe residents, go online.

– Karen Kuentz

Opinion: California's natural treasures are threatened

By Robert E. Doyle

Park agencies, park rangers and in particular the California state parks system always have enjoyed a high level of public trust and credibility. But the disclosure that state park managers hid funds from the taxpayers has damaged that trust and angered the public, especially park supporters.

Yes, hiding the funds was a breach of public trust, but the

revelation and the political fallout it caused have not changed the state parks' root problem – a decade of neglect. We must seize this moment as an opportunity to solicit new ideas and recommit ourselves to be wise stewards of our parklands. It is a time for tough choices.

Once the pride of California, the state parks have for more than a decade suffered deep cuts in funding for operations and maintenance while, at the same time, the public has approved bonds to add important lands to the park holdings. Since 1980, the state parks system has grown by more than 500,000 acres while the state's population has increased by more than 13.5 million. More than ever, the public seeks places of solace, beauty and recreation, and thus our parks are overflowing with visitors.

Yet state officials did not fund the parks to keep up with the increased use and added lands, or to maintain the aging infrastructure. In 1979, 91 percent of the parks' budget came from state taxes. Now it is 29 percent. While the conservation movement in California has been hugely successful, support for park maintenance and operations has taken a backseat. Many park facilities were built by the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s. They need to be maintained to retain the value of the original investment.

Even worse, for the first time in the state's history, 70 of the parks we Californians own were "proposed" to be closed, with devastating potential effects on local communities. The response from citizens, donors and nonprofit organizations has been remarkable – volunteers and private foundations worked near-miracles to try to keep any state park from closing.

Read the whole story

Robert E. Doyle is the general manager of the East Bay Regional Park District. The district has managed state parks in the East Bay for 40 years.

Sass: Better leadership, grow the economy, improve the built environment

Publisher's note: ***This is the second of five Q&A profiles of a South Lake Tahoe City Council candidate running in the Nov. 6 election.***

Name: Austin Sass

Age: 59

How long have you lived in South Lake Tahoe?: I moved to South Lake Tahoe in 1975. In 1983, I leased out my house and left town until 2002 when I returned to resume residency in the same house.



Austin Sass

Work/volunteer experience: Volunteer experience

• City of South Lake Tahoe Planning Commission

• Lake Tahoe Unified School District School Bond Oversight

Committee

• Geotourism Committee, Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce

• St. Theresa’s Food Pantry volunteer

• Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority Sales Committee

• Leadership Lake Tahoe graduate

• Little League coach, South Lake Tahoe.

Work experience

• November 2008-February 2011: Aramark Lake Tahoe, director of sales and marketing. Under license to the U.S. Forest Service, Aramark Lake Tahoe operates Zephyr Cove Resort, a full service destination resort featuring an historic lodge, cabins, restaurant, RV center, beach, marina, special events center and snowmobile operation. In addition, owns and operates Mississippi-style paddle-wheel boats conducting scenic cruises and charters on Lake Tahoe. As a member of the executive team, responsibilities included sales, marketing, promotions, public relations, reservations, ticket sales, scheduling, pricing, and special event/group services for all products. Oversight of staff of 15 and revenue budget in excess of $11 million.

• October 2002-November 2008: Vail Resorts Inc., Heavenly Mountain Resort, director of resort sales. Owned by Vail Resorts, Heavenly Mountain Resort is world-class destination ski resort with the second largest skiable acres in the United States. In 2004, awarded special Chairman’s Award after being identified as one of Vail Resort’s finest examples of leaders. Reporting to the vice president of marketing, responsibilities included sales and services for the following channels of business: group, international, corporate, lodging, REI, online ticket sellers and wholesale. Directed central reservation department and coordinated all outbound season

pass renewal efforts. Oversight of staff of 20.

• July 2000-Feburary 2002, FurnitureFan Inc., Sudbury, Mass., senior vice president. FurnitureFan was a venture capital funded Internet startup company that provided online marketing services, and designed, built and hosted websites for furniture manufacturers and retailers. The organization had 26 employees with annual sales rate of $1 million.

• 1997-2000, Maptech, Greenland, N.H., vice president of sales and marketing. Maptech is a digital mapping and navigation software company providing software and data for a variety of recreational and professional uses. Distribution channels included retail, resellers, and online direct. Owned by Land's End, the company had 60 employees with sales over $12 million.

• 1992-1997, Spacelabs Medical, Redmond, Wash., general manager. Spacelabs Medical is a leading provider of diagnostic and critical care medical equipment. The division I headed up had over 300 employees and contributed to annual revenues of $270 million. I was a member of the executive team that developed, managed and was responsible for the budget.

• 1991-1992, Meredith Corporation, Custom Marketing Group, Los Angeles, senior sales and marketing manager.

• 1987-1991 Hearst Corporation, Popular Mechanics, Santa Monica, Western sales manager.

• 1984-1986 Yale University, Athletic Department, New Haven, Conn., manager of sales and marketing.

Why are you running for City Council?: I am running for City Council because I am passionate about South Lake Tahoe and rather than sit around for the next 10 years and complain about how our city has and is being run, I have decided to try and do something about it. And I believe I have the background to do it well.

Professionally, I have over 25 years working in and running large organizations. I understand how they function, how to create, manage and oversee budgets and create a sense of team and purpose.

I believe the city is a business. The City Council is the senior management team. The citizenry are the stockholders. If I were hiring for this senior management team, I would want the most qualified, energetic, and passionate individuals I could find.

Locally, I have over 15 years working in the tourism industry including lodging, ski resorts, attractions, events, weddings and gaming. I live the Tahoe lifestyle all-year round – be it skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, mountain biking, or golfing. I have put two children through our school system and have volunteered my time in everything from the Planning Commission to the Lake Tahoe School Bond Oversight Committee to the food pantry at St. Theresa Church to coaching Little League.

I have the character this city needs. I am honest. Plain and simple, I don't lie.

I own no businesses, I serve on no one's board, I have no local clients. There will be no cronyism.

I am energetic and passionate. I believe in transparency. We, the voters and citizens, have a right to know how our government operates when it's legally and ethically appropriate.

What is your vision for South Lake Tahoe, the South Shore and the entire Lake Tahoe Basin?: My vision for South Lake Tahoe, the South Shore and the entire Lake Tahoe Basin is at the highest level similar. I envision a community where we are using best management practices to protect and improve our environment; both natural and built. A community that has a diverse and healthy economy anchored by all types of tourism, recreation, entrepreneurship and high altitude scientific,

environmental and athletic research facilities. A community where we have a sense of pride in ourselves, where we live, and how we conduct ourselves both as professionals, public servants, volunteers and residents. A community that has environmental and business entities working together rather than fighting in the courts.

What are the three best things about South Lake Tahoe?:

1) I love the fact that I can fill a glass of water from the tap and it is cold, fresh and clean and I can breathe air that is clean, crisp and invisible. I love the contrast between the bluest sky in the world, the green of our trees, the grey of our granite, the blue of our lake and the white snow on our mountains.

2) I love the fact that I can walk out my front door and be able to ski, hike and bike in a matter of minutes with friends who have the same outdoor mindset.

3) I love living in a small community and that we are connected in so many ways. That being a dad here meant that my children were involved in a community that cared about everything from athletic field maintenance, to helping nurture orphaned bear cubs and injured eagles, to building trails, to dog parades and mutt struts, to coastal cleanup, to helping each other in times such as the Angora Fire.

What three things would you like to change in South Lake Tahoe and how will you go about changing them?: 1. Leadership – I would like to see leadership from our City Council that would foster collaboration and partnerships as a way to get things done.

The city of South Lake Tahoe is part of the South Shore of Lake Tahoe. The futures of El Dorado County, Douglas County, and South Lake Tahoe are intertwined. One cannot succeed without mutual respect, planning and cooperation with each other. To do any less does not serve the best interests of our

citizens. Additionally, our experience has taught us that our future must include the consultation of all stakeholders including the environmental community, the business community, the public, governmental entities and the nonprofits.

I would like to see a South Shore Council be encouraged with leadership from the two counties and the city with the immediate goal of identifying issues, desirable outcomes and their prioritization. Next, include leadership from the environmental and business community and determine next steps to achieve these goals within the framework of the Regional Plan and the city's General Plan. By working together we can be more fiscally efficient, timely, and move forward in a positive manner.

2. Economic growth – We need a break from the current course that our city is taking. We need a fundamental change in how economic growth is achieved and how our city can support these endeavors. When I look at our City Council two of the most important things that are needed is strong business acumen and progressive versus regressive thinking.

I would like to frame the question of the future of South Lake Tahoe – where do we go from here and what can we do to make this a better place to live and work? I would like to see us support the Tahoe Prosperity Center, which includes local businesses, local government, environmental and recreational entities to attract investment and new businesses. Why not pursue a high altitude athletic research and training facility? Why not use some of the land near the airport or in the industrial area to attract high altitude research facilities? My hope would be that the Tahoe Prosperity Center could determine best strategies to do this.

Our economy is currently tourism and we need to improve the tourism experience to attract more people, events and to better serve our locals. Opportunities for improvement in this area are:

• Approving the Regional Plan update so we better deal with improving our environment

• Improving and enhancing recreational experiences through more and better facilities

• More events and promotion

• Connectivity in our walking and bike paths and public transportation.

3. Built environment – Anyone driving into town recognizes that our town looks tired and dated. The built environment does not match the beauty of our surroundings.

We have lodging properties that are being used as monthly and annual rentals. People are living in over 2,000 units that were designed for short-term overnight stays. Most of these units look run down, don't produce transit occupancy tax, do not have safe electrical wiring for the number of appliances being used inside of them and do not have adequate storage for trash containers and bicycles. We need to start enforcing our codes and clean them up. We need to replace these low income TAUs, with low-income housing available through grants and private investment.

We have a sign ordinance that was passed last year. It was written to improve the visual quality of Highway 50 and our main roadways. It's been changed three times. In my opinion, for the worse. Let's have the courage to stick to our convictions and not be taken off course to satisfy a select few.

Many of our shopping centers are half-full and dated. We need to develop a plan to consolidate and beautify them, create green space with the ones that retire and work to ensure the financial success of the redeveloped ones. Let's not forget that many tourism destinations consider shopping as recreation. This will improve our economy, environment and the

recreational experience.

What would you do to balance the budget?: In 2008 the city used $1.8 million from its General Fund Operating Reserve to balance the budget, in 2009 it used $200,000, in 2010 it used $1.8 million, and in 2011 it used $1.3 million. In 2010, $500,000 was taken to the bottom line from an over accrual of the workers' comp fund and in 2011 another $800,000 was taken to the bottom line to make the budget balance better. It's obvious to me that the City Council, which approved these budgets, needs help forecasting revenues and managing expenses. We need experienced large-scale business acumen in the budget process from our city council.

I would immediately propose that we start looking at the budget differently. Department heads have to be held accountable to both their revenue and expense line items. As a city, we need to look at both of these on a month-over-month and year-over-year manner. The city manager, finance director and someone from the City Council needs to have all variances explained monthly and the budget readjusted on a monthly basis.

Our city manager, finance director and a councilperson need to be reviewing the lodging community's occupancy and revenue forecasts to better predict sales tax and TOT (transient occupancy tax) derived from tourists. They need to better understand property taxes as well.

Most important, we should be passing only balanced budgets. We can't keep spending money from our piggy bank; it's getting rather empty relative to 2007's high point.

On the revenue side, we need to improve our product. We need more tourism spend. More tourism dollars means more money for our safety and services, it means more job security for our public and private employees, it means better transportation options which in turn will attract further investment in our

community.

Finally, we need to really get a grip on vacation rental home TOT collections. I have heard everything from $50,000 to $500,000 as being the amount of money we are not collecting. Perhaps if the fines went from $250 to $2,500 people would take this seriously.

What would you like to see in a recreation master plan?: There is a lot of talk about attracting the sports business to this community. Our challenge with attracting significant tournaments/competitions and use of our city as a training center is the lack of contiguous fields, the lack of a complex and the lack of support facilities (bathrooms, locker rooms, bleachers, etc.) at our existing facilities. Further, a sports commission is needed; creating a revenue stream that helps support maintenance of the fields, bike paths, beaches and common areas.

Connectivity is a large part of a recreation master plan. If you live at the Y, how would you get to Van Sickle Park to hike and bike? Our bike and walking paths must be connected. We need lighted, safe parking near trailheads. Our transportation system should connect our parks, swimming pool, recreation center, tracks, fields, ice skating rink and beaches.

Promoting recreation was touted two years as a means to stimulate the local economy. Nothing has been done in that time. What will you do so that same sentence can't be said two years from now?: I think some progress was made recently with Lakeview Commons and Van Sickle Park. People are hiking closer in town. At the Commons there is plenty of kayaking and standup paddling thanks to the Proctor family and others.

More still needs to be done. First, I would want to create a sports and recreation commission to develop a plan that would drive revenues for the sole purpose of improving and

maintaining our recreational venues. Second, paint a better picture of our options even when they are not in the city. The Rim Trail and our hiking is under promoted, our mountain bike trails have limited accessibility and visibility. We need to work closer with TAMBA, the bike coalition, the LTVA, our fishing charter entrepreneurs, our watercraft rental companies, the USFS, the lodging community and others to make it perfectly clear that we are one of America's All Year Playgrounds.

We need to put our collective experience, market insight and combined expertise to better promote and market our products.

What types of recreation do you enjoy in Lake Tahoe?: I hike almost weekly from May through September with a group of friends. In the past year, I have hiked the entire Rim Trail, Mt. Whitney and every peak looking into the basin on South Shore.

I try to mountain bike twice a week in the spring, summer and fall. Most often on Power Line Trail and climbing Roundabout here in town.

I ski in the winter predominantly at Heavenly. Last year I got 66 days in and fully understand that if elected to City Council, that number will probably drop in half.

Additionally, I love to snowshoe on winter weekends with my wife and try to golf with friends once or twice a month in the summer.

How will South Lake Tahoe be different in four years after the end of your term?: Assuming we achieve the collaborative attitude amongst the council, we will have better leadership by all being part of a visionary and progressive team. We will have a better understanding of how and why things are voted on, the budget will be balanced, the town will look better, we will be working on rather than just dreaming of connectivity, our sports and recreation commission will be in place and

there will be a plan for the future.

Being on the council requires working with four others. Give readers an example of how you work well others in difficult situations with differing opinions: Being part of a large corporation requires effective negotiating within your own organization both with people you work with, work for, and oversee.

An example of this is with the launch of a new product. I was general manager at a company in Seattle. We had an idea for a new product. Sales wanted it to look sleek and new, manufacturing wanted to use current assembly line processes, engineering wanted to integrate new and expensive technology, service wanted diagnostic capability via the web, retailers wanted a smaller footprint and my CEO wanted to make 24 percent annually.

Everyone had their own priorities. As the head of the division I needed to understand everyone's concerns. I needed to make everyone a hero. I needed everyone to compromise to achieve the greater goal. Everyone could not get everything they wanted but with patience, good listening skills and passion for the end product, I was able to achieve positive results. In the end, the concept of team and working for the greater good sealed the deal. Sometimes it's about leaving your ego at the front door, working with integrity and in an ethical manner, and just doing what's best for your company. In our case, the city of South Lake Tahoe.

What are your opinions about the following issues and/or entities?

• **Loop road** – If someone came to you and said they wanted to buy your house or business and had no money or financing prospects, how much time would you spend with them? For most of us, the answer would be none. That's how I currently think about the loop road. There is no money and there are no

funding sources to build now. We can all dream, but it’s time to focus on what’s real.

There is no doubt that the TTD (Tahoe Transportation District) threw a bomb into our community without thinking about how people’s emotions would flare up and how they would answer everyone’s questions. Plain and simple, they messed up. On the other hand, there are a small number of people in our community who are politicizing the issue for their own political and future financial gain. They are just as much at fault in polarizing our community as the TTD was. We also need to remember that this project has been part of the plans in our community for many years and the city knew it was in the works.

I am open to any ideas that would revitalize any part of the South Shore. I hope investment comes soon because that should improve the economy, the environment, and our transportation, which is key to achieving connectivity.

• **Hole at Stateline** – I think the city needs to do whatever it can to get the project back on track. After all, it was the City Council’s fault that they issued a project permit without a performance guarantee and then issued a building permit without mandating that the parcels be consolidated. We need to get something done to start our recovery.

Currently, Owens Financial is floating an idea to develop retail on the Highway 50 part of the failed convention center. The idea is that they would consolidate some of the parcels and develop the front part. I’m unsure of how much parking there would be, what happens to the concrete on the rest of the project area, etc. We’ll have to see what their plans are and if they can get this done before the TRPA permit expires.

If this plan is unacceptable to the city or does not go through, I would suggest we bring in a mediator so that the owners of the parcels can make some progress in how to best

develop or sell it.

• **Tahoe Valley Plan** – I reviewed this in a Planning Commission public forum meeting and I like it. We need to ensure that marketing expertise is brought to bear so that the retail component succeeds when we find the private investment to start the revitalization of the Y.

• **Giving money to any chamber or tourism bureau** – To my knowledge, neither the chamber nor the LTVA is asking for money at this writing. The TID supports the marketing of the destination. The LTVA receives very good support from the city's law enforcement and event planning personnel. In turn, the LTVA still has a City Council seat on the board so that the city can continue to be informed and contribute to the discussion on how they market.

Rather than fund the LTVA and if the budget allows, the city might consider setting up a fund to underwrite arts, culture and events. Local organizations could request grants with the purpose of improving the tourism experience and supporting our local's talents.

• **Benefits, including pensions, for city staff** – The current path is unsustainable. I like what the governor of California proposed as a start. Increasing retirement ages of new employees, capping the payout upon retirement, and require workers to contribute more to their retirement and health care.

• **Tahoe Regional Planning Agency** – Like everyone else I would not give the TRPA passing grades for their performance over the past 25 years. However, I've seen some real change at TRPA over the last five years and I believe the agency is headed in the right direction. Like many long-time locals, I care about Lake Tahoe and want to protect it so that the next generation can enjoy it. But we also have a community that lives here and Tahoe isn't a national park. That means we need a reasonable

balance between environmental regulations and the needs of our economy and private property uses. I support the kind of reforms TRPA is putting out there – moving more permitting to local governments such as the city, focusing on bike trails and transportation, and being aggressive on invasive species so we don't ruin the lake altogether. Lake Tahoe is our bread and butter as far as the economy is concerned, so from a business perspective, we have to take care of it. I'm completely in favor of fixing what in years past was a broken permitting system. As a councilman for the city of South Lake Tahoe I would continue pushing for reasonable reforms and a productive working relationship between the city and TRPA.

• **Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board** – I am not a big fan of Lahontan. Perhaps they are well intentioned, but certainly they are naïve in thinking we can fulfill their demands. From what I have seen, they write a rule and then tell the rest of us to go figure it out. They seem little concerned about how we get it done or pay for it. They act as if they have met their obligation and then tell us good luck working it out.

On the upside, they have a new leader and I am hopeful that she will revisit the TMDLs and forest fuels reduction issues and bring in a new era of cooperation as well as helping us find funding and to navigate the halls of Sacramento.

• **South Shore Vision Plan** – I support the intent of the vision plan. We need more connectivity; we need to bring the bed base closer to the recreational opportunities. Most importantly, we need a plan to bring us forward and improve our economy.

All that being said, we need funding and we need capital investment by the major stakeholders in the Stateline area, which will not happen without a plan for the South Shore. Edgewood, which is proposing a new lodge, making their beach accessible to the public while improving the quality of water running into the lake, is a good example of a company looking

forward. While they have boldly taken a financial risk to plan for the future other individuals and companies that are looking to invest here need predictability.

• **Lake Tahoe Airport** – The city has the opportunity to envision a new future for the airport. What's needed is a comprehensive, transparent community process to come up with a master plan for the airport. We must all decide what we want to do going forward. With the expiration of the legal settlement agreement this year, the city should have made this a higher priority. Councilman [Tom] Davis and the city manager recently met with the TRPA and I would like to help jumpstart the master planning process since the airport is one of the largest assets we have as a community. I've spoken to TRPA about the airport and they've said they're ready to work with the city on a solution but the city must also engage formally with the League to Save Tahoe and the California Attorney General's Office who sued over the airport.

Why should voters vote for you over someone else?: When I look at the current City Council the one thing that is missing is business acumen. We need an experienced business leader. A business leader who has helped run companies with revenues and expenses that range from hundreds of millions of dollars to companies as small as several hundred thousands of dollars.

The second thing missing is someone who is experienced in and understands all of the most important components of our economy, tourism.

Third, since we are moving from being gaming centric to recreation centric, wouldn't it be nice to have someone who actually recreated on a regular basis. If you are going to vote to fund it, it helps to understand and experience it.

Four years ago you said you wanted to improve the visual look of the area. The council that was elected has not done much to make that happen. If you are elected, what will you propose to

do to make it a reality?: As discussed earlier I would support code enforcement, work to consolidate shopping centers, support the Tahoe Valley Plan, go back to the initial intent of the sign ordinance and use best efforts to resolve the failed construction site known as “the hole”. Most important, and in the near term, develop a plan to drive tourism revenues so all of our retailers can afford to start reinvesting back into their businesses.

Is there a person or business you would not take a campaign contribution from?: I would take legally obtained funding up to $1 million with the understanding that I would donate 100 percent of the amount above $5,000 to local youth, arts and sports organizations. I would never take funding from any company or individual who put a stipulation on the donation and as such, am open to being widely supported.

Tell readers something about yourself that they may not already know: The most important person in my life is my wife, Bev, who I cannot imagine living without and without whose support, I would never dream of running for City Council.

Opinion: WHS Boosters thankful for donation

To the community,

On behalf of Whittell High School Boosters Club, we wanted to thank the Tahoe Douglas Fire District for their generous

donation to the school of $1,700.

Whittell Boosters

Publisher's note: *This article explains how the fire district had the money to donate.*

Las Vegas mayor wants Nevada to have toll roads

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Sun

Las Vegas Mayor Carolyn Goodman says she's ready to get behind a lobbying effort for legislation that would enable the state to collect tolls on Nevada highways.

At Tuesday's Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority meeting, Goodman said she would press the issue if it means Nevada could develop critical highway projects faster.

Nevada is the only state among seven in the West that don't have tolling authority.

Goodman's declaration came in the wake of a pair of reports to the authority board about projects needed to improve transportation to and from the city. The LVCVA's contracted transportation lobbyist, Tom Skancke, told the board that a lack of funding is the biggest barrier for completing a list of projects that would improve the flow of tourists to Southern Nevada.

"The Highway Trust Fund is broke and broken," Skancke told

board members.

He said lawmakers have been reluctant to raise fuel taxes to pay for highway infrastructure and that an alternative to raising taxes would be to charge tolls on highways or for the use of special traffic lanes.

Read the whole story

Not all business leaders behind Brown's tax initiative

By David Siders, Sacramento Bee

In January, Gov. Jerry Brown traveled to Irvine to meet with members of the Orange County Business Council, highlighting what he expected to be widespread business support for his November ballot measure to raise taxes.

Kaiser Permanente and Occidental Petroleum Corp. had already committed money to the campaign.

"Business is not only supporting it," Brown said, "but they're putting their money where their mouth is."

Eight months later, the Democratic governor has raised nearly $15 million, about half of which is from business interests, including California's heavily regulated oil and health care industries.

Yet many chambers of commerce and other business groups remain on the sidelines, saying higher taxes may damage the economy.

The California Chamber of Commerce is neutral on Proposition

30, which would raise the state sales tax and income taxes on California's highest earners.

Even the relatively liberal Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, Silicon Valley Leadership Group and Bay Area Council have yet to take a position. All three endorsed Brown's budget proposal last year, when the governor was seeking tax extensions to go with billions of dollars in spending cuts.

"It's a very challenging issue for us," said Jim Wunderman, president of the Bay Area Council. "Last year we were talking about extensions of existing taxes. Now you're talking about newer ideas … The business community at the company level is mixed on this issue."

Before a bill-signing event at a Bay Area Council meeting in Redwood City this week, Brown met privately with Wunderman, who said Brown brought up the initiative.

Publicly, Brown exhibits little concern. He said it is "amazing" that the state chamber is neutral, a stance that "is basically clearing the way for us."

Brown has enjoyed a relatively favorable relationship with business groups since taking office. The state chamber commended Brown a year ago when he vetoed four of five bills identified by the chamber as "job killers."

The legislation Brown signed in Redwood City also was encouraging to business groups, consolidating authority for the state's international trade and investment program within the governor's Office of Business and Economic Development.

"Thirty-seven years ago, my first act as governor was to abolish the Department of Commerce," said Brown, governor before from 1975 to 1983. "I sent someone over there to find out what the hell they were doing, and they had a bunch of pamphlets on the floor. I said, hell, let the Chamber of Commerce do that stuff.

“But over the last several decades I’ve really come to understand that a partnership with government and business can make a hell of a lot of difference.”

Brown has collected major donations this year from labor unions, Indian tribes and a variety of business interests, including oil companies, the American Beverage Association and Blue Shield of California. A political arm of the California Hospital Association contributed $2 million — more from that one source than the campaign opposing Proposition 30 has raised altogether.

“We believe that the state has to have a balance of new revenues and appropriate budget cuts,” said Jan Emerson-Shea, a spokeswoman for the hospital association. “And we’ve been on the cuts side for the last few years, and so we feel that this new revenue that will be raised through Prop. 30 is a necessary step to try to bring the state back into some fiscal health.”

Brown’s tax campaign considers business group endorsements significant enough to have promoted in July one from the Valley Industry & Commerce Association, a San Fernando Valley group. But the lack of broader support from chambers may be less significant to Brown than it would have been a year ago, when he relied on them in his unsuccessful effort to persuade Republican lawmakers to negotiate a tax deal.

Nor is the support of chambers likely as important to Brown this year as it was to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger’s failed campaign in 2009 for Proposition 1A, which would have extended certain tax increases. The state chamber’s support for Proposition 1A, which voters rejected, was considered crucial during the campaign in part because the initiative was decided in a special election, where voter turnout tends to be more conservative than in November.

Schwarzenegger adviser Adam Mendelsohn said, “Getting business

support was definitely more critical in our campaign," but he added, "just trying to get as much support as possible is important, because tax increases are, you know, by their definition not easy to get passed."

Public support for Brown's tax measure remains above 50 percent, according to polls. But tax increases are difficult to pass in California, and Brown's measure does not include the kind of state spending restriction that made Schwarzenegger's measure more palatable to business.

"Our message has tried to be very clear," said Rob Lapsley, president of the California Business Roundtable, which will consider Proposition 30 on Sept. 24. "If there's going to be revenues, there need to be comprehensive reforms that go with it."

He credited Brown for his proposals to reduce pension costs and to limit the reach of the California Environmental Quality Act.

"Obviously people want to create a positive working relationship with the governor for a variety of key issues facing the business community," Lapsley said. "Nobody likes taxes, but the business community tries to look at the big picture. They recognize that the governor is trying to stabilize California."

However, he said, "they also recognize that (Brown) doesn't have the votes in the Legislature, with the Democrats, to get any of his real reforms passed."

The Orange County Business Council, where Brown visited in January, met Thursday to consider his initiative. The group has yet to announce a position, but it appears to have reservations.

Lucy Dunn, the council's president, wrote a blog post in June critical of the initiative and other calls for increased

funding.

“Millions, billions, gazillions,” she titled her post. “But where are the reforms and innovations?”

TRPA accepting Best in Basin nominations

The nomination period is open for the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency’s 2012 Best in the Basin awards program.

The program recognizes environmentally compatible projects in the Lake Tahoe Basin that stand out as the best designed, planned and implemented.

The nomination period ends Oct. 12. The categories are:

· new residential

· residential modification

· rebuild projects

· new commercial

· commercial modification

· commercial rebuild

· shorezone

· green building

· public service

· erosion control

· restoration

· BMP retrofit

· defensible space

· forest fuel reduction

· mixed-use project

· green remodel.

To qualify, projects must have been complete or near completion in the 2012 calendar year and before the close of the nomination period.

Here is an entry form.

Winners will be selected by a panel of area professionals in the fields of architecture, landscaping, planning, engineering, and resource management.

Winners will be honored by the TRPA Governing Board in January.

KGID board to vote on water meters

Kingsbury General Improvement District customers could start paying for water based on consumption instead of the current flat rate.

There will be a public hearing on Oct. 16 at 6pm to discuss

the proposal. If the board agrees that night to switch to meters, the change would be effective Nov. 1.

The change would affect all customers – residential, commercial, recreational, industrial, high density, restaurant, and office-retail.

The meeting is at the KGID office, 160 Pine Ridge Drive, Stateline.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• The Lake Tahoe Friday Evening Farmers Market at Kahle Community Park will continue through Oct. 26 from 4-7pm. Corley Ranch will provide local, fresh-cut Douglas County pumpkins in the basin's only pumpkin patch later this month.

• Lake Tahoe Coin Jewelry in South Lake Tahoe has the petition for redetermination forms for anyone who wants to fight the fire fee.

• The El Dorado County Fairgrounds changed its name to The El Dorado Event Center.

• Lake Tahoe Restaurant Week is Oct. 7-14.

• Here is the Caltrans roadwork schedules for El Dorado-Tahoe and Sierra.

• Oh, to be a Tahoe dog: