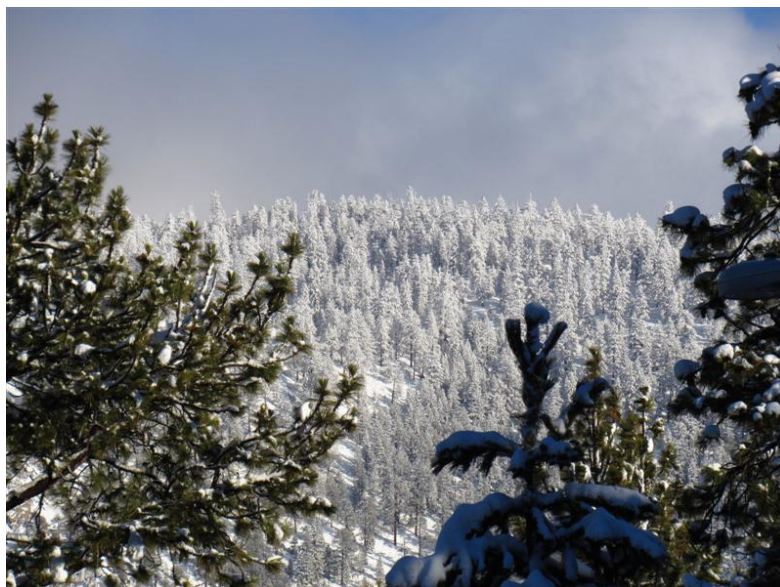


Power slowly coming on; ski traffic horrendous



The cold temps are keeping snow in the trees around Tahoe. Photo/Denise Haerr

Updated 9:30pm:

Although access to the power line that feeds the Floriston-Portola area presented a significant challenge, Liberty Utilities was able to restore power about 5:30pm Saturday.

Most of the Tahoma area has been restored, with the rest of the West Shore expected to be back online in 24 hours or so.

The Tahoe Pines and River Road regions continue to be a challenge and may require additional time.

The South Shore has approximately 20 customers still without power mostly in the Seminole Court and Celio Ranch areas. Crews continue to re-energize individual homes throughout the region.

—

Liberty Utilities crews continue to work on the South Shore where less than 50 customers are currently in the dark. It could be Monday though before power is restored.

The greater West Shore region is still expected to be back online in the next 24-48 hours. The Tahoe Pines and River Road regions are going to be out for several days.

Additional crews have been mobilized to work on restoration throughout all regions.

Two trees have gone through the line in the Russell Valley area between Truckee and Portola. Restorations is expected Sunday at about 5pm.

Crews are assessing Floriston and depending on damage it could be restored by Saturday evening.

Tahoe Donner PUD have reduced customers without power from 1,700 to just more than 100.

Patience is needed to get around the roads in Tahoe, especially near ski resorts. This is likely to be true all weekend.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Report slams hidden fees in travel industry

By Hugo Martin, Los Angeles Times

In the final report before the end of his term in office, President Obama's National Economic Council lashed out against "hidden fees" charged by airlines, hotels and other businesses.

The council, made up of various department and agency heads within Obama's administration, said fees that are not readily disclosed make it hard for consumers to pick the lowest price in airfares, hotel rates and other services.

"When pricing is unclear, it threatens the competitive process by which consumers make decisions," the report said.

Read the whole story

Caesars unit clears way to exit bankruptcy

By Tracy Rucinski, Reuters

Caesars Entertainment Corp's main operating unit has cleared the way for the casino operator to exit bankruptcy protection with an agreement that ends the last objection to its reorganization plan, lawyers told a U.S. judge on Friday.

The U.S. government's bankruptcy watchdog had objected to the reorganization of Caesars Entertainment Operating Co Inc, the subsidiary that filed an \$18 billion bankruptcy in 2015, because of legal protections for the non-bankrupt parent.

The objection by the U.S. Trustee was a cloud over next week's trial to approve the Caesars unit's plan to cut \$10 billion of debt and emerge from its two-year Chapter 11 bankruptcy.

Challenge to Prop. 66 by former EDC supervisor

By Kathryn Reed

Former El Dorado County Supervisor Ron Briggs wants the state Supreme Court to overturn Proposition 66, which voters narrowly approved in November.

“Prop. 66 is a sloppily written document, failing several constitutional tests,” Briggs told *Lake Tahoe News*. “... from firsthand experiences we know it takes approximately 17 years post penalty phase to work toward exoneration.”

The end goal for him is to have the court deem Proposition 66 unconstitutional.

The intent of the prosecutors who wrote Proposition 66 was for the state Supreme Court to rule on death penalty appeals within five years of sentencing. Today it usually takes 10 years or longer for that to occur.

Briggs said changing the “appeals process creates a system ripe for executing the wrong person. If the state is going to execute condemned persons, it must be perfect. Rushing anything is fraught with errors.”

Briggs filed the challenge with former Attorney General John Van de Kamp.

It was Briggs’ father, John Briggs, who as a state senator in 1978 sponsored the state’s current death penalty law.

In a July 2016 column in the *Sacramento Bee*, Ron Briggs wrote, "Though I was once California's biggest proponent of the death penalty, I now feel compelled to admit the policy is destructive to our great state. What we didn't know then is that the death penalty would become an industry that benefits only attorneys and criminals, and no one else. It's an extreme expense to taxpayers, does not make our communities safer and fails to deliver the justice it promised."

Briggs used a local case as an example of how the system is flawed. Joseph Nissensohn, 64, was sentenced to death June 5, 2014, for the murder of a South Lake Tahoe teenager and two others.

"That case cost El Dorado County \$3.1 million to send a (then) 62-year-old man to Death Row. The \$3.1 million came out of our General Fund that pays for libraries, roads, sheriff, mental health, senior services and on," Brigg said. "At the time in 2013 the \$3.1 million represented two-thirds of the county's total contingency. And for what purpose? The average appellate time is 24 years post penalty phase. Life without parole would have cost the county about \$750,000 and had the same effect in sending that monster away forever. Instead, he now has three appeals pending with two full-time attorneys along with a special care status instead of being in general population. This puts the victims' families in a legal hell as they are now subjected to living with Nissensohn, almost forever or until his death, whichever comes first."

In Briggs' challenge to Proposition 66 he contends the new law will be a greater financial burden to taxpayers.

Briggs told *LTN* that because the proposition keeps the appeals in the trial court it eliminates the appellate and Supreme Court from entering the appeals process. "This is in conflict with the Constitution that vests jurisdiction within all courts in any legal proceeding. This means if you or I are condemned, our appeals are kept with the trial court who, in a

Prop. 66 world, is charged in reviewing their own proceedings to discover any wrong steps. I do not know about you; I want a separate set of eyes reviewing, not the judge who made the decisions.”

Briggs and Van de Kamp also take issue with the proposition’s giving unqualified attorneys death penalty appeals cases.

When city retirement pays better than the job

By Jack Dolan, Los Angeles Times

James Mussenden doesn’t bring up his pension in casual conversation. No point getting his golf partners’ blood boiling.

The retired city manager of El Monte collects more than \$216,000 a year, plus cost-of-living increases and fully paid health insurance.

“It’s giving me an opportunity to do a number of things I didn’t get to do when I was younger, like travel to Europe, take some things off my bucket list,” Mussenden, 66, said recently. He even flew to Scotland to play the famed Old Course at St. Andrews, a mecca for golf enthusiasts.

Mussenden recognizes that few Americans have pensions anymore – least of all the El Monte taxpayers who are funding his retirement. So while he enjoys his monthly retirement check, he’s discreet about it.

“The guys I play golf with, they get very angry about my pension because they don’t have anything like it,” he said.

Actually, Mussenden has two pensions. He's part of a coterie of former El Monte civil servants who receive one taxpayer-funded pension through the California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS) – and a second through a “supplemental” plan approved by the city council in 2000.

The extra pensions, along with other sweeteners granted to El Monte employees over the years, have created one of the heaviest public pension burdens of any city in California, a *Los Angeles Times* investigation found.

Read the whole story

Placer makes it easier to open shelters

A change to change Placer County's zoning ordinance will allow more flexibility for temporary, emergency homeless shelter stays.

The change was approved by a 4-1 vote by the Board of Supervisors on Jan. 10, with Supervisor Jim Holmes dissenting.

Supervisors want to move the current temporary shelter at the Placer County Government Center campus to a more suitable location as soon as possible.

Now shelters will be allowed in industrial, industrial park and heavy commercial areas. Shelters were already allowed in several types of commercial and multi-family residential areas. The change also adds new development standards for shelters, as well as concrete plans for neighborhood relations and security.

The goal is to have shelters as close as possible to social services, job service programs and grocery stores or close to transportation between the facility and services.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

West Shore power outage continues; roads icy



Power lines are drooping on Taylor Street in South Lake Tahoe on Jan. 13 and at many locations in the basin.
Photo/Susan Wood

Update 9:35pm:

Liberty Utilities restoration efforts continue throughout North and South shores.

Teams went into River Road by helicopter on Friday to assess the plan for getting crews in safely. A helicopter is coming in from Southern California early afternoon Saturday and will drop crews and equipment into the region to begin restoration that is expected to take several days. Snowcats and snowmobiles will be used to get crews and equipment into Tahoe Pines on Saturday.

Tahoe City PUD is open until 5pm daily for residents to provide a warming center where residents can recharge phones, use WiFi, and warm up. They are not able to accept dogs. They can be contacted at 530.583.3705. The address 221 Fairway Drive, Tahoe City.

More than 2,000 homes on the West Shore were checked by a team of approximately 30 deputies, firefighters, paramedics and trained volunteers from various agencies. The goal was to assess the welfare of those who have been without power and may have potential challenges with access to services.

There were more than 50 reports of assistance, which included assessing infrastructure damage and downed power lines, personal property damage, and assisting citizens with egress.



Clouds still linger Jan. 13 after a week of storms in Tahoe. Photo/Denise Haerr

Update 4:20pm:

Due to ongoing power outages and damage caused by extreme winter conditions on the West Shore, a coordinated safety assessment operation is taking place.

Placer County Office of Emergency Services, Placer County Sheriff's Office, North Tahoe Fire Protection District, Meeks Bay Fire Protection District, Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue, and NTFPD Community Emergency Response Team are working together.

Deputies, firefighters, paramedics and trained volunteers will be going door-to-door between Timberland and Tahoma to assess the health and welfare of residents in neighborhoods, especially elderly, mobility impaired and other at risk populations. They will also be assessing damage in the area.

Much of the area – 4,000 customers – has been without power since Jan. 8. The area has received 12 feet of snow.

Officials are asking friends and family to call 530.584.2301 if they have not heard from those known to be living in or visiting the affected area.

A warming center is open at the Tahoe City Public Utility District (221 Fairway Drive) for those residents who are unable to shelter in place. Transport will be available for those who need assistance accessing the shelter. An overnight shelter was operated at this location last night. Continued operation of the shelter for this evening is still being assessed.

With the use of helicopters, Liberty Utilities will attempt to make repairs to remote areas over the next several days as weather allows, but some customers in the River Road and Tahoe Pines areas should prepare for multiple day outages.

Liberty intends to try to reach people by phone in those areas to inform them of the progress.

Trees and branches are bound to continue to fall on wires and snap poles, causing problems for Liberty and NV Energy customers.

South Lake Tahoe customers may experience sporadic, short-term outages as crews re-energize lines. There are 200 customers on the South Shore without power. It should be restored by Sunday morning at the latest.

Homewood, Tahoma and Crystal Bay have mailbox service only, but there are no postal retail offerings until power is restored. Customers with home mail delivery are encouraged to clear mailboxes as soon as practical.

With a variety of winter weather conditions occurring across Nevada and Eastern California, the Humboldt-Toiyabe National

Forest is reminding visitors to be extra careful while recreating this winter.

Tips:

- Be aware of existing and impending weather conditions and check with the National Weather Service frequently for updates.
- Leave detailed trip plans with a person you trust.
- Do not rely on iPhones or map apps.

Caltrans crews have been focusing efforts Friday in South Lake Tahoe to get two lanes of traffic going in each direction.

Several accidents have been reported on area roads. Black ice has been a problem, along with snow and sand or other de-icing substances.

Highway 50 on the South Shore in Nevada was closed for several hours Friday while multiple wrecks were cleared.

A single vehicle rolled over on Highway 267 at 5:38am Jan. 13. The male driver in his early 20s sustained minor injuries.

Douglas County road staff have reached the maximum driving hours allowed per federal law. They are unable to return to regular duty until Jan. 17 at 7 am. If an emergency arises, staff may be called in after 5am on Sunday.

The storms brought 29 billion gallons of water to Lake Tahoe.



Ice is on roofs and the roads in Tahoe. Photo/Susan Wood

By Lake Tahoe News

Residents in the Tahoe Pines area on the West Shore (Barker Pass Road to Cherry Street) could be without power for several more days.

That area has heavy damage, with multiple poles down that requires helicopter repair. That work should start today. Liberty Utilities has restored power from Tahoe City South to Sugar Pine Road and Highway 89.

South Shore crews are deployed and working on six primary wires. Power should be back on by this afternoon.

South Lake Tahoe's City Council at the regular Jan. 17 meeting is expected to declare a state of emergency in regards to the storms that just rolled through.

The action would allow the city to seek funding from the state and federal governments to help pay for the costs associated

with dealing with the deluge of rain and snow.

Truckee, Douglas County and El Dorado County officials have all made the same declaration.

Incline Village schools are still closed, as is Tahoe Truckee Unified and Lake Tahoe Unified.

Traffic should be picking up as visitors come to the area for the long weekend. Crews will continue to clear snow as fast as they can. Highways could be closed at any time because wrecks, avalanche control or some other reason. Click on the state icons on the home page of *Lake Tahoe News* for current road conditions.

Waste Management garbage customers in Incline Village who did not receive service Thursday will have trash picked up Saturday.

Squaw Valley's record snowfall for January came during the 1981-82 season with 175 inches. In the first 12 days of January 2017, the resort has received 101 percent of that accumulation.

This week's canceled Lake Tahoe Community College board of trustees meeting is rescheduled for Jan. 17 at 6:30pm.

DCSD won't pay for KMS environmental documents

While Douglas County School District trustees and administration are eager to sell Kingsbury Middle School, officials don't want to make further financial commitments to make that happen.

At this week's board meeting the electeds voted not to allocate any money for environmental documents related to the site. The board's belief is that the environmental impact statement for the Stateline parcel is the buyer's responsibility.

"We are eager to sell it, but if different zoning were to change the value of the property, we cannot support paying for the work only to have the buyer reap the benefit," Superintendent Teri White told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Patrick Taylor in July entered into an agreement with the district to purchase the 22-plus acre sitewith 36,000-square-feet of space for \$3.25 million, which included paying half the utilities – \$25,000 – for a year.

He has been given extensions on the due diligence deadline by the district because of issues related to zoning per Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. The current deadline is in April.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Accidents, bad road conditions in Douglas County



Multiple vehicles crashed Jan. 13 on slick roads on Highway 50. Photo/LTN

Highway 50 is closed between Round Hill and Glenbrook because of three accidents.

Two of them are property damage, the third involves an injury that is not life threatening.

“Because of the temperatures it’s freezing all of the water over to ice,” Nevada Highway Patrol Trooper Dan Gordon told *Lake Tahoe News*.

He did not have an estimate of when the road would be open. The accident occurred about 9:30am Jan. 13.

With two months of extreme freeze-thaw cycles with above average moisture in Douglas County, many of the roads such as Jacks Valley and Waterloo Lane have experienced an increase in potholes. The recent flooding has caused shoulder erosion on areas of Genoa Lane, Mottsville Lane, and Centerville Lane.

Flood cleanup and repair, and snow removal have been the main focus for our road crews this week. Pothole repair will start as soon as possible on all county roads depending on several factors including severity, weather and work load priority.

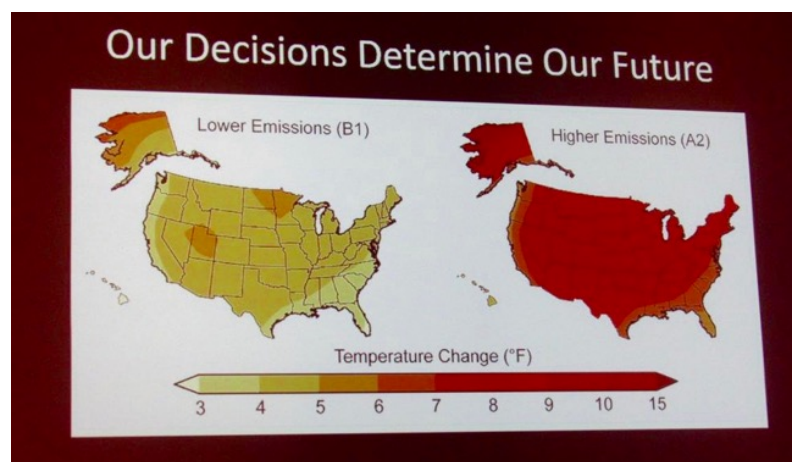
– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Calif. leads charge to combat climate change

By Susan Wood

STATELINE – Everybody talks about the weather. And few can accurately analyze it – especially when we speak of the climate, which is technically the statistics of weather.

But that's just what many tried to do Thursday morning at Harveys as Operation Sierra Storm wrapped up amid an unprecedented series of storms that knocked out power, closed roads and buried residents with water and snow.



Making the case for the reality of climate change. Photo/Denise Haerr

The annual climate conference brought out more than 30 stakeholders and weather enthusiasts to hear preeminent climate expert Richard Somerville of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography and California state Senate President Pro-tem Kevin de Leon.

For the first time, the Weather Channel sent three crews to

cover the events – which seemed to take place both inside and out.

“Why is an El Nino happening in a non-El Nino year?” meteorologist and Weather Channel anchor Jim Cantore posed the question to *Lake Tahoe News* after the conference. The question could have been on the minds of everyone in the room after Mother Nature dumped a deluge of floodwaters and multiple feet of snow on the Sierra Nevada region.

Climatologists have long warned that climate change would be most noticeable with extreme weather events.

And despite a new Congress and administration filled with climate change deniers taking residence in Washington, D.C., this month, those on the frontline in forging the science to monitor man’s fossil-fuel impacts on the natural world see the lights at the end of the tunnel.

Sen. De Leon assured the attentive crowd that his state government would do everything in its power to hold back the weight of a changing federal government that has positioned human-caused climate change as a hoax at the very top spot in elected office.

“California is not waiting for Congress to pull its head out of the desert sand,” de Leon said, while reminding those in attendance that the state alone represents the sixth largest economy in the world.

This economy is discovering the financial benefits of converting dirty energy into clean, renewable technology. He even made the case that clean energy is becoming more cost efficient, as well as one that protects the livelihoods of current and future generations.



California Senate President Kevin de Leon won't let the feds change state policy. Photo/Denise Haerr

"Clean energy is already out competing dirty energy on prices – even without subsidies," he said. "With (President-elect Donald) Trump, there's nothing he can do to make the case for coal."

At one point, de Leon theorized that the reason why coal miners fight to hold onto the method of resource extraction is because it's part of their culture – a way of life that past generations have come to rely on to put food on the table.

Further, he made it clear that he understands the pain of losing one's way of life, an overwhelming abyss that may lead to divorce, loss of home, children and job and even suicide in some cases.

So de Leon advocated using a simpler way of talking about global climate, minus the massive statistics, to have a reasonable discussion with those who doubt the science.

He also urged believers to involve the human factor in the discussion.

"Climate change is not about polar bears. It's about people," he said. "A majority of Americans don't understand the risk (of not acting)."

In California, the senator's goal of building a new, low-carbon economy hit a major milestone with Senate Bill 350, which essentially dictates that half the electricity in the state will be generated through renewable energy by 2030.

"That's a big step," he said.

California has always been on the forefront of emissions control compared to other states. But with a perceived threat from a new federal government, de Leon pledged the state would not only refuse to halt efforts, but would "double down" on its initiatives to change the tide of looming global danger.

"We're not going to let one election change our values. Our biggest threat to our state is our (federal) head of state," he said.

So how do we double down?

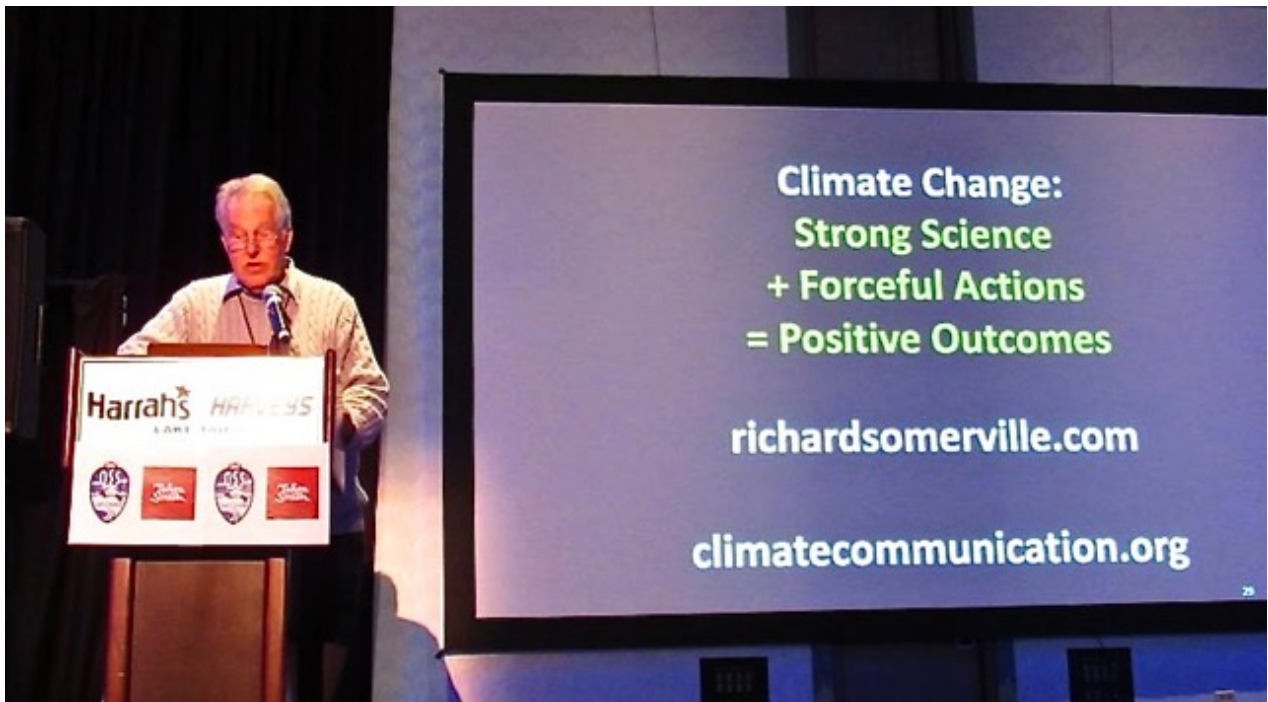
When asked by *Lake Tahoe News* if California should build its own wall becoming isolationist or reach out in a consortium of other states, de Leon replied that efforts are already under way for the latter.

"We're reaching out to other like-minded states to reach agreements in MOUs," the keynote speaker said, listing Oregon, Washington, Nevada, Illinois and the cluster of New England states as kin to the cause.

The first Latino leader of the state Senate also revealed that state representatives have met with federal authorities in Mexico to pool their resources and support each other's causes.

"In Mexico, climate change is not controversial. It's not left wing or right wing," he said.

Mexico's empathy to California's plight was a crucial point in the underlying theory mentioned through the morning that climate change denying is rooted in politics, not science.



Scientist Richard Somerville speaks Jan. 12 in Stateline about climate change. Photo/Denise Haerr

Climate change – right or wrong?

Scientists like Somerville are in good company in California.

In a stern rallying cry, Gov. Jerry Brown pleaded with thousands of scientists last month at one of the largest international gatherings of its kind to mobilize for the climate fight.

“The time has never been more urgent or your work never more important,” he said, promising the “truth-tellers” that the state and its main cause will persevere. “We will pursue a path of collaboration and bold political advancement – whatever they do in Washington – and eventually the truth will prevail.”

To climate experts like Somerville, the evidence is overwhelming as he placed image upon image of revealing data on a screen that supports the notion that the climate is changing and humans are the main cause.

“CO₂ levels are rising conclusively. Each new decade is

getting warmer," he told the hushed audience. "This isn't a string of evidence. This is a thick rope of evidence."

At one point, he turned to the evidence going on outside as an extreme weather event supporting his claim.

Somerville broke his explanation down to sport.

"Carbon dioxide is the steroids of our climate system," he said.

The analogy is: Do we ask 'do the steroids of the (baseball) slugger cause the home run?' Or, 'does it increase the odds?'

"There's no silver bullet that solves this problem. It's silver buckshot," Somerville said, mentioning more use of solar power and reducing our dependency on resource extraction energy methods as things to do.

"We have to change the lack of political will to act," he said.

Somerville turned to France – the world's largest producer of electricity – as an example of a nation that has turned around its method of operation in energy use. In just a quarter century, it's now dominated by nuclear power.

"Those who claim we can't change from fossil fuels are just wrong. It's been proven. France did it," he said.

The prospect of the silver buckshot has a slight silver lining – but much work in store.

Somerville noted he's encouraged by the majority of Americans accepting the science of climate change.

"However, when the entire Republican leadership doesn't accept the science, then we have a long way to go," he said.

The scientist proposed that even if Trump doesn't believe the science, he may cave to averting becoming "a laughing stock"

in front of other world leaders who overwhelmingly have supported the global climate action plans as recently as the Paris Agreement signed last November, days before the election.

Somerville believes the truth-tellers should make an economic argument since the climate change deniers use that as a way to spur inaction.

During the question-and-answer session, attendees even asked for tips to convince climate change deniers to see the science differently.

“What’s worked for you?” longtime environmentalist Karen Fink asked Somerville.

He suggested more empathy and open minds to have a meaningful discussion.

“People tend to trust people who share their values. You could say: ‘Let’s (at least) agree on this,’” he said.

Somerville uses a cute analogy of the “Uncle Pete” in the room, the naysayer that ruins the family dinner with his refusal to refute climate myths. Uncle Pete is the inspiration for developing a website www.skepticalscience.com to combat closed-mindedness.

“We found the enemy. And the enemy is us,” he said.