Placer County has money to contend with Indian gaming

By Ed Fletcher, Sacrament Bee

A Placer County committee charged with distributing funds aimed at mitigating the effects of Indian gaming has been allocated $66,694 to distribute to local government agencies.

The Placer County Indian Gaming Local Community Benefit Committee receives the money from a special state Controller's fund aimed at offsetting the impact of Indian gaming.

Agencies impacted by gaming must apply to the committee by April 4 for grants.

Separately, Thunder Valley casino gives $100,000 annually to local charitable organizations, said Doug Elmets, a spokesman for the United Auburn Indian Community, which own and operates the casino. Additionally, the tribe's community giving fund has contributed $9 million since 2004, Elmets said.

LTCC president balancing state regs, community desires

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Vision. It's what has kept Lake Tahoe Community College going for nearly 40 years.

President Kindred Murillo credits those who four decades ago created the college – which started in a motel on Highway 50 – as well as those who brought it to its current location off Al Tahoe Boulevard. But she is well aware the work is not done if the college is to be operating in another 40 years.

In a talk March 13 to Soroptimist International South Lake Tahoe at Harrah's Lake Tahoe, Murillo spoke of the challenges facing the two-year college that are being handed down by Sacramento as well as the vision she, the board, staff and the community have for the next 40 years and beyond.

Online classes, aka distance education, are a double-edged sword for LTCC. With 22 percent of the enrollment last year coming from this segment of the population, it helped LTCC. But with a bill introduced into the Legislature last month, it would alter distance ed. It could hurt institutions and help students based on mandating California's public colleges and universities accept faculty-approved online college courses for credit.

LTCC President Kindred Murillo is plotting the college's future. Photo/Kathryn Reed

The other issue on the horizon is what's called "massive online open course" where students don't have to be enrolled at a university but can take an online course and other institutions must accept those credits.

“That could flip our world upside down,” Murillo said.

Another issue affecting LTCC is the state limiting how many times a student may take a class. For an area like South Lake Tahoe, many people in the community repeat physical education, art and culinary classes.

The state wants community colleges to focus on getting students to transfer to a four-year college, training them for a job or helping them with basic skills.

The life-long learning classes that community colleges came to be known for are going by the wayside. LTCC, though, is trying to keep many of them alive through Connect Ed. No grades are given, but some classes are more expensive than what they would have been through LTCC.

“It’s feeling like the state of California is raining down challenges on us. It’s harder on a small, rural college,” Murillo said.

Gov. Jerry Brown also wants to limit the total number of credits a community college student can obtain. So instead of floundering to find themselves, they’ll need direction faster.

Another issue for all colleges is that the high school population across the country is declining. Murillo said looking farther down the education chain there is good news with growth in grades 1-3 in Lake Tahoe Unified School District.

A bill introduced by state Sen. Ted Gaines, R-Roseville, would allow Whittell High School students to attend LTCC at the California rate. This would be a pilot program just for LTCC.

Sacramento is also likely to change how community colleges are funded. Now it is based on full-time equivalent students. There is talk of it changing in the next five years to be based on the number of students who complete a program.

"LTCC is going to have to make choices in the next two years," Murillo said. And she isn't shy about saying the community is going to like all of them.

Class sizes are likely to grow. Her goal is to be effective and efficient.

Murillo and the board are setting a path for LTCC to be a four-year college, a destination college, creating an international program, erecting student housing.

In the next two years, Murillo said LTCC needs to turn around the declining enrollment, deal with repeatability of classes and work with South Tahoe High on matching curriculum.

In May, the college will be inviting the community to give input about it envisions for the future.

Report: Little sunshine in California government

By Brian Joseph, Orange County Register

Two new reports released in conjunction with Sunshine Week, a national initiative to promote open government, have found that it ain't exactly sunny in California.

The Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit Sunlight Foundation gives the California Legislature a "D" grade for its efforts to make bill and vote data available online. Meanwhile, the Golden

State reform group California Forward is sharply critical of both state and local governments in its report "The State of Transparency in California: 2013."

California Forward, which has started referring to itself as CA FWD, finds the Legislature's transparency efforts a joke and lambasts local governments for releasing financial data that is essentially incomprehensible to average citizens. The report also asks why the home of Silicon Valley can't seem to use advances in technology to provide better government transparency.

"Technology is not a cure for the accountability issues in California, but it is the most expedient vehicle for engaging the public and encouraging honest evaluation of its performance," California Forward writes. "From top to bottom, California's public sector is lagging in the adoption of tools that were invented by the private sector right in its backyard."

The folks at Sunlight essentially came to the same conclusion. Sunlight developers recently launched an innovative Web application called Open States, which allows users to track pending legislation in every state legislature. While they were building the site, the developers found themselves "struggling with the often inadequate information made available. Impossibly difficult to navigate sites, information going missing and gnarly PDFs of tabular data have become daily occurrences for those of us working on Open States. People are always curious to know how their state stacked up compared to others – in fact one of the most frequent questions we have been asked has been 'so which state was the worst?' That question got us thinking: How could we derive a measure of how 'open' a state's legislative data was?"

The result was Sunlight's Open Legislative Data Report Card, which gave a letter grade to each state legislature for efforts made to post information online. Sunlight says "each state was evaluated in six categories based largely on the Ten Principles for Opening Up Government Information," standards based on an October 2007 meeting of 30 open government advocates and expanded by Sunlight itself.

Six other states joined California in receiving D grades (Indiana, Louisiana, Maine, Oklahoma, Rhode Island and Wisconsin). Nine states received A's (Arkansas, Connecticut, Georgia, Kansas, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, Texas and Washington). Five flunked (Alabama, Colorado, Kentucky, Massachusetts and Nebraska).

The only positive thing Sunlight could say about the California Legislature is that its bill data is "machine readable." Sunlight was especially critical of the California Legislature under the "Ease of Access" principle, stating that California's site "is rendered entirely inoperable without Javascript. Site was considered slightly more difficult than average to use."

California Forward was equally critical of open government efforts in the Golden State.

"The harried nature with which state budgets – and indeed many laws – are passed in the Legislature is more or less a punch line in Sacramento," California Forward wrote bluntly. "But it is a pox on our democracy."

California Forward was specifically critical of a common Sacramento practice known as "Gut and Amend," in which legislators remove the contents of a bill and replace the language with an entirely new proposal, often completely unrelated to the previous one. Gut and Amends can and often do dramatically change the intent of a bill and they frequently happen in the waning days or even hours of the legislative session, resulting in lawmakers approving legislation that hasn't been vetted at all.

Last year, an initiative sponsored by California Forward, Proposition 31, would have required all bill proposals to sit for 72 hours before an official vote, but it failed. Currently, the Legislature can vote on proposals that aren't even in print.

California Forward also questioned in its transparency report why state and local governments release budget information that is beyond the comprehension of all but a "handful of Capitol insiders and watchdogs."

"Perhaps the worst example of lack of information is related to property tax," California Forward writes. "Depending on the number of local governments that provide services, a homeowner's tax payment may be split among a dozen or more entities, including the county, the city, school districts and a basket of special purpose districts. From the property taxpayer's perspective, it is difficult if not impossible to find out which of the many local governments that provide services get the money. Californians should care about this since property tax is still the single largest tax financing local services."

The report also notes that "little if any actionable data is available on pension and debt obligations." This echoes an August 2011 report by the Orange County Register that found that the state law prohibits the release of key pension data. In all, the Register found at least 500 provisions of the California Government Code that exempt specific records from disclosure and another 16 code sections that prohibit the release of broad categories of documents.

Sunshine Week, which runs through Saturday, was established in 2005 to specifically shed light on these kinds of issues.

Embassy backpedals – employees will be fired

By Kathryn Reed

Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel, aka Embassy Suites South Lake Tahoe, has changed its tune. Instead of keeping all 220 employees, there will be about a 5 percent reduction in staff.

On March 1 all employees were told how the 400-room hotel was dropping its affiliation with Hilton and instead the owners would fly solo, change the name and keep everyone employed.

Ten Embassy Suites employees will lose their job in two weeks. Photo/LTN file

A week later that message changed – at least about their employment status.

General Manager John Steinbach told *Lake Tahoe News* four managers and six line workers will be out of work starting April 1. That's when Hilton is out of the equation.

But an employee who will be retained told *Lake Tahoe News* the number being fired is higher than that. "Some have been with the hotel for 15-plus years," the person said.

The reason for the ousting of the 10 workers, according to

Steinbach: “Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel is initiating a few different procedures – attributable to specific service needs, more operational independence and streamlined reporting.”

Employees will receive a severance, but to what amount is not known. Hilton, according to Steinbach, is helping find the displaced workers jobs. But that would require moving out of Lake Tahoe.

LTUSD expanding two-way immersion program

The class of 2019 is dictating, to some extent, the curriculum that is being offered in Lake Tahoe Unified School District.

Some of today’s fifth-graders back in 2007 were the first two-way immersion class at Bijou Community School.

What started as a parent movement led by Kathy Haven turned into a much sought-after program. Parents have since lined up to get their child enrolled in the program that has a goal of teaching students in Spanish and English.

But when it started it was just supposed to be a Bijou offering. Since the inception of the program there have been 11 TWI classes.

On March 12, the school board voted to expand the program to South Tahoe Middle and High schools. The first class will be in middle school in the fall.

To expand the program a teacher will need to be hired to teach a social science class in Spanish. In the following two years a native Spanish 1 class will be added at STMS.

At the high school by the time these students arrive there will be several course offerings taught in the TWI format for lab science, history-social science, and visual and performing arts.

— Lake Tahoe News staff report

U.S. trying to lure foreign tourists

By Kevin Sullivan, Washington Post

The Obama administration, along with the U.S. travel and tourism industry, is spending millions of dollars this year to lure foreign visitors. A “Discover America” campaign includes television commercials in nine nations; ads on the Tokyo subway; banners in London and Vancouver, B.C.; Facebook pages in Portuguese and German; and Tweets about the charms of the Dakotas.

The United States has Hollywood, the Grand Canyon, the Statue of Liberty, Hawaiian surf, Maine lobsters, Florida beaches and the neon dreams of Las Vegas. We have Graceland, the Golden Gate Bridge, Disney World and the bright lights of Broadway.

The Golden Gate Bridge is a huge draw for foreign visitors. Photo/LTN file

But as global travel and tourism has boomed to historic levels, tourism industry officials said the U.S. share of those visitors has shrunk by almost a third in the past decade. That’s partly because of increased U.S. security after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, but industry analysts say it’s also because China, Turkey and other nations have become huge tourist magnets.

So the United States is now doing what once seemed profoundly unnecessary: shelling out millions of dollars to promote America as an international travel destination. It’s an investment, U.S. officials said, in growing the economy and creating jobs in hotels, restaurants, stores and anywhere else where tourists spend money.

“The more folks who visit America, the more Americans we get back to work,” President Obama said last year in announcing an executive order designed to increase visitors by marketing America abroad and cutting red tape for tourists seeking visas.

The Obama administration, in partnership with the travel and tourism industry, is spending $150 million this year on its promotional effort. Part of it is a “Discover America” campaign that includes television commercials in nine nations, ads on the Tokyo subway, banners in London and Vancouver, Facebook pages in Portuguese and German, and tweets about the charms of the Dakotas.

U.S. officials also have added to staff and offices in China and Brazil to speed the visa process for millions of new visitors.

Some Republican members of Congress have criticized Brand USA, the partnership between the federal government and the travel industry that is coordinating the effort, as a waste of taxpayer dollars that benefits mainly wealthy companies in the travel business. But supporters say that promoting tourism benefits the U.S. economy as a whole.

“Travel and tourism is the quickest way back to economic development and jobs,” said Christopher Thompson, chief executive of Brand USA. “9/11 changed the world and changed the way people look at us, so we had to up our game.”

Record numbers of tourists are coming to America; last year more than 66 million came, and they spent more than $168 billion here, according to the Commerce Department. But tourism officials said those statistics mask the fact that growth in tourism to the United States has not kept pace with growth in global tourism.

Officials at the U.S. Travel Association, a private industry group, said that a more revealing look at the state of U.S. tourism comes when visitors from Canada and Mexico are removed from the statistics. That leaves “long-haul” tourists, those who travel from one world region to another — say, Europe to Asia or the United States. Those tourists are the most sought-after: They tend to invest more to get here and spend more when they arrive, so they are widely considered a better indicator of the strength of the U.S. market.

Geoff Freeman, a top executive at U.S. Travel, said the number of long-haul travelers to the United States has grown 1 percent in the past 10 years, while long-haul travelers globally are up 40 percent. So the U.S. share of the global market has sharply decreased.

Freeman describes a “lost decade” after 9/11: Long-haul tourists in America did not return to their 2000 levels until 2010. In that decade, the nation lost 460,000 jobs and more than $600 billion in total travel-related spending by foreign tourists, his group estimates.

“There was a perception that America didn’t want their business,” Freeman said, noting that heightened security and stricter visa laws created a “Fortress America” image that deterred many potential tourists.

Other countries have flung open their doors. From Southeast Asia to South America to Eastern Europe, countries have pumped up their tourism marketing budgets. Some, including Australia and Mexico, are spending more than $100 million a year promoting themselves, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization.

Brand USA is quickly expanding its marketing campaign. It began last year with advertising blitzes in Britain, Canada and Japan. In the coming months, it will restart ads in those countries and add Mexico, Brazil, South Korea, Germany, Australia and China.

“Those nine markets represent 75 percent of all inbound travel to the United States,” said Anne Madison, a Brand USA spokeswoman. “We want to fish where the fish are biting.”

She said that Brand USA has offices in nine countries to pitch U.S. travel to tour operators and the travel press, and it is about to open six more, including ones in China and India.

The marketing campaign features TV ads with a tune called “Land of Dreams,” written and performed by singer Rosanne Cash, and inviting scenes of American life – picnics, beaches, weddings, ballroom dancing. There also are ads in the Tokyo subway, billboards in Vancouver and even a banner near London Bridge.

On Twitter, Brand USA staffers Tweet about everything from Zion National Park in Utah to “the gentle rumbles of the Old South at the Mississippi Delta.” Brand USA also is about to launch a partnership with ESPN to deliver advertising and promotional programming to TV viewers and Web users in Britain.

In October, DeMint and Sen. Tom Coburn, R-Okla., issued a report accusing Brand USA of waste and political patronage. The report said Brand USA threw an needlessly lavish launch party in London last year and has a board stocked with major Democratic donors.

Brand USA officials said the launch was held at the world’s largest English-speaking travel trade show and made “good business sense.” They said all board members are experienced travel industry leaders appointed by the secretary of commerce in a “politically neutral process.”

The report criticized what Brand USA was claiming as “in-kind” contributions when seeking matching federal funds. It said Brand USA had claimed that newspaper stories or television interviews about Brand USA’s activities had a value that could be used to claim matching funds. For example, it said, Brand USA claimed a segment on Travel Channel International had an in-kind value of $4.9 million.

Madison, the Brand USA spokeswoman, said all such in-kind contribution requests have been withdrawn. She said Brand USA officials are working with the Commerce Department, which approves the organization’s requests for matching funds, to create clearer guidelines for in-kind contributions.

“I think clearly there are hiccups that the Brand USA team went through in the early stages,” Sorenson said. “I think if we could start the whole thing all over, some of those hiccups would have been avoided. I don’t think they’re monumental.”

Beyond Brand USA’s activities, the State Department is spending millions of dollars to make the visa process easier for foreign tourists, especially in China and Brazil, where demand is growing fastest. It has added two consulates in Brazil and one in China, and several more are planned. Others are being renovated and expanded, and the department has added more staff to process visas.

Edward Ramotowski, the State Department official in charge of visa services, said improving services in Brazil and China was the best way to get “bang for our buck.”

U.S. officials said that in 2011, the number of Brazilian tourists increased 26 percent, to 1.5 million, and that they spent and estimated $8.5 billion. The number of Chinese tourists increased 36 percent, to nearly 1.1 million, and they spent an estimated $7.7 billion. The average tourist from Brazil or China spends more per visit than tourists from any other nation, industry officials said.

A visa process that often took just days before 9/11 took weeks or months after the attacks when Congress mandated that almost all foreigners applying for visas be interviewed personally by U.S. consular officials abroad.

Average waiting times have now been cut from almost five months to less than a week in Brazil and from 72 days to less than three weeks in China, Ramotowski said.

Gamestop fraud has connections to Tahoe

By Rachel Weber, Game Industry International

Frank Christopher Olivera, former vice president of corporate communications and public affairs at Gamestop Texas, has been sentenced to 51 months in federal prison for defrauding the company.

Olivera invented a company, Cloud Communications LLC, and used it to steal over $1.7 million from GameStop, using fake invoices and a fictitious employee.

“Olivera directed Gamestop to send the payments from Gamestop’s offices in Grapevine to Cloud Communications LLC in Las Vegas and Lake Tahoe, Nevada and in Canada,” said a statement from the U.S. Attorney’s Office.

“In addition to creating a fictitious company, Olivera also created a fictitious person, ‘Jennifer Miller,’ to serve as the point of contact at Cloud Communications. Upon receipt of payments from Gamestop, Olivera would deposit the checks into a bank account held by Cloud Communications and then would transfer the fraudulently obtained funds into his personal bank account.”

Olivera pleaded guilty to the charges last November and was sentenced by Judge Boyle last Thursday. As well as the jail time he’s been ordered to pay $134,651 in additional costs. He has already returned “most of” the $1.7 million to GameStop.

Orthopedic center at Kahle Park proposed

By Anne Knowles

MINDEN – Barton Health and Douglas County are in talks to locate an orthopedic center of excellence in Kahle Park.

Barton approached the county with the idea and this week the Douglas County Board of Commissioners approved a letter of intent allowing county personnel to explore a possible project in Stateline, according to Steve Mokrohisky, Douglas County manager.

Any deal would likely involve a long-term lease of the property and include county use of a Barton building for a library, senior services or some other public use, Mokrohisky told *Lake Tahoe News* after the inaugural Financial State of the County meeting on March 11 at the Carson Valley Inn in Minden.

Douglas County is considering Barton's proposal to build an orthopedic center at Kahle Park in Stateline.

For Barton, a central facility would consolidate four doctors' offices and bring seven physicians into the same building with a surgery center, radiology, sports performance center and other services, said Jonathan Finnoff, a doctor of osteopathic medicine and the medical director of rehabilitation and sports medicine with Barton’s Tahoe Center for Orthopedics.

“All different parties with a vested interest under one roof,” Finnoff said, would enable the practice to integrate various programs and better consult with and refer patients to one another.

Barton looked at 17 sites on the South Shore, but found no existing structures that could accommodate their plans, according to Chris Proctor, director of the Tahoe Center for Orthopedics.

Barton is still considering several sites, but if Kahle Park worked out, the health facility would be built near the existing parking garage and all other structures already in the park would remain. Initial concept designs have been rendered for partners and potential investors, but Proctor cautioned that it’s early in the process and many factors, such as site and cost, will determine the final plan.

If all goes to plan, Barton is expecting to have the new center completed in two years.

The possible Barton deal was talked about at the county meeting as part of Douglas County’s plans to cut costs and increase revenue in order to deal with a lingering $3 million budget deficit.

“If we fix it one year at a time, we won’t fix it structurally,” Mokrohisky said during his presentation to about 100 attendees.

To do that, the county now is using priority-based budgeting. Instead of instituting across the board cuts to meet goals, said Mokrohisky, the county is reassessing what it spends on everything and reallocating money where it is most needed while reducing overall costs.

For example, the county decided its permit requirement for home-based businesses was a waste of staff time and is now spending some of that money on better enforcement of vacation home rentals, mostly at Lake Tahoe.

It is also taking some property tax money to help pay the annual $4 million road maintenance tab.

The county says it wants to work with and support businesses wherever possible. The potential Barton deal may be the most ambitious, but the county is also making zoning changes and reviewing sign ordinances to better accommodate businesses. And in a first, it filed an amicus brief in support of Sierra Colina, the proposed housing development in Stateline that is being sued by the League to Save Lake Tahoe.

The county is also working with other area municipalities to generate revenue and outsource services. Douglas County has added $330,000 to its general fund by providing geographical information services to Carson City and Storey and Lyon counties, and saves about $50,000 a year contracting with Carson City to supply signal light maintenance.

Since 2008, about 60 staff positions in the county have been eliminated and in 2011 salaries were reduced 5 percent. Since 2010, employees have absorbed all of the annual 10 percent increases in health insurance costs.

The county’s projected budget for 2013-14 is $39.9 million, about $1 million above its projected revenues of $38.9 million.

Carson City bounty hunter faces charges in S. Tahoe

Five misdemeanor charges have been filed against a Carson City bounty hunter in regards to his actions in South Lake Tahoe.

Ty Robben

Douglas Lewis with Justin Brothers Bail Bonds has been charged with unlawful arrest, aggravated trespass, vandalism, battery and damaging a vehicle.

The incident occurred in October at the South Lake Tahoe home of Ty Robben. Robben wanted felony charges filed against the suspect. He said the bounty hunters broke down his door and used a Taser on him.

Robben has since filed a civil suit against the Carson City firm.

It was the delay in action that led Robben in January to protest near the South Lake Tahoe Police Department.

— Lake Tahoe News staff report

Boy Scouts ask members detailed questions about gays

By Kirk Johnson, New York Times

The Boy Scouts of America is reaching out to parents and scouts as it decides whether to continue or rescind the group's ban on gay members and leaders. Surveys went out in recent days to 1.1 million scouts and their families around the nation.

The questionnaire goes far beyond a simple yes or no, gays in or gays out. Even sleeping arrangements are addressed.

Should gay and straight scouts, for example, be allowed to share a tent on a camping trip? What role should faith play in scouting, if a church sponsoring a local scout troop has taken a position on the inclusion or exclusion of gays and lesbians in its congregation? Does the scout oath, with its language about staying "morally straight," declare a value about sexual orientation or just a general, admirable code of conduct?

The Boy Scouts said in January that it was considering lifting the ban and allowing local sponsoring organizations to decide membership policies for themselves, but then quickly changed course and said that leaders needed more time and would take up the issue at the national annual meeting in May.

The survey offers possible outcomes should the Boy Scouts decide to keep or change its policy. Some address the widespread fear that the scouting movement could fracture or face an exodus no matter what it does.

"If the Boy Scouts of America makes a decision on this policy that disagrees with your own view, will you continue to participate in the Boy Scouts, or will you leave the organization?" one of questions says. The suggested answers, fittingly, read like responses to a course on map reading: “I believe I can find a way to continue” is one choice. “I do not believe I can find a way to continue” and “I have not yet made up my mind,” are the others.

A spokesman for the Scouts, Deron Smith, said the answers to the survey would be provided to national leaders before the May meeting. A second round of surveys, he wrote in an e-mail, will be sent soon to about 325,000 people in scouting alumni groups, including members of the National Eagle Scout Association. The survey was developed by a third-party research provider, North Star Opinion Research, with assistance from volunteers and professionals, Mr. Smith said, with “diverse viewpoints.”

“No specific weights have been assigned to any particular element, and the report will be reviewed as a whole,” Smith said.

Some polling experts said the population being sampled — those with a connection to scouting, in the past or present — could create a bias in the findings, since people generally tend to support the status quo of voluntary institutions they are involved with. That could perhaps tilt the results toward keeping the ban on gays if change is perceived as a threat to the organization.

But Christopher P. Borick, director of the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion, who has two sons in the Scouts, said he thought the wording of the questions seemed relatively neutral and not intended, as he put it, “to provide a certain outcome.”

Borick said that as a scouting father, he is strongly opposed to the ban on gays and hopes to see it lifted. He said that what the survey appears to be looking for is less what course to take than what impact a change, or a continuation of the status quo, might have.

Some questions, for example, address freedom of religious expression. The Scouts organization says that more than 70 percent of all Scout units are chartered by faith-based organizations.

“A troop is chartered by an organization that does not believe homosexuality is wrong and allows gays to be ministers,” one question reads. “The youth minister traditionally serves as the Scoutmaster. The congregation hires a youth minister who is gay. Is it acceptable or unacceptable for this youth minister to serve as the Scoutmaster?”

Another question takes on that same issue from a different perspective.

“David, a Boy Scout, believes that homosexuality is wrong. His troop is chartered to a church where the doctrine of that faith also teaches that homosexuality is wrong. Steve, an openly gay youth, applies to be a member. Is it acceptable or unacceptable for this troop to deny Steve membership in their troop?”

Respondents are asked to provide their opinions on a scale ranging from totally acceptable to totally unacceptable.

But even before May’s national meeting, some donors are already voting about the membership issue — with their wallets.

Last fall, for example, the United Way of Greater Cleveland announced that it would no longer make grants to the Scoutreach program — which works with urban and rural boys — because the ban on gays was in conflict with the organization’s diversity and inclusion policy.

Since then, about $200,000 in donations to the Cleveland United Way has evaporated, a spokeswoman said. But in a reflection of divided local opinion, a $20,000 increase in donor-directed contributions to the Boy Scouts arrived as well

— an 11 percent increase from the previous year.

The money question is widespread, as families pledge to withhold further donations or increase them depending on how things go.

“I made a modest $50 donation to Friends of Scouting this year,” Susan Buchanan, the mother of a 16-year-old scout in Bethesda, Md., wrote in a letter to her local scout council. “I am prepared to quadruple that donation as soon as the ban on gays is lifted.”