

Letter: Appreciation, stats from homeless coalition

To the community,

On behalf of Tahoe Coalition for the Homeless, I would like to thank our community for its support during the third winter season of the South Lake Tahoe warm room project. Our organization received donations from over 150 individuals and businesses and benefited from 64 volunteers who provided over 675 volunteer hours in the warm room.

In its third winter, the warm room was open 98 nights, serving 109 individuals (81 men and 28 women stayed in the warm room, and two families with children were provided temporary shelter in motels) and providing 1,809 shelter-bed nights. On average, 19 guests (15 men and four women) stayed at the warm room per night. Service animals were provided with 15 shelter-bed nights. Thirteen veterans stayed in the warm room, with two finding housing, one finding employment, and two reconnecting with out-of-state family to whom they chose to return. Twenty-seven percent of our guests were employed during their stay in the warm room. This season we were able to provide 250 showers and 25 haircuts to our guests.

Since inception, the warm room has been open 337 nights, providing 7,370 shelter bed-nights. Nineteen guests found long-term housing with TCH's support this winter, and only six individuals have used the warm room all three seasons. In 2017-18, the average stay was 14 nights.

This season, the warm room operated out of two locations. The warm room began the season at Lake Tahoe Community Presbyterian Church, before moving to a space on Rufus Allen Boulevard owned by the city of South Lake Tahoe. I would like to thank Pastor Bob Kelley and the congregation of Lake Tahoe

Community Presbyterian Church for welcoming us into their facility over the holidays, as well as the city for leasing us the space on Rufus Allen and being a great partner at that location. In addition, I would thank our fantastic staff and volunteers – without their incredible dedication, we would not have a warm room.

Although the warm room is closed, I am pleased to announce that we have scheduled a staff member to engage with the homeless community year-round to assist with housing options and provide access to resources.

The success of this program is reliant on the collaboration of donations from our generous community. Special thanks to the El Dorado Community Foundation, Sierra Health Foundation, Reliapro Painters, Caesars Foundation, South Lake Tahoe Endowment, Soroptimist International of Tahoe Sierra, American Century Golf, Knights of Columbus, South Shore Christian Assembly, Our Lady of Tahoe, St Theresa Catholic Church, and many more for their support. We are grateful for partnerships with the city of South Lake Tahoe City Council, Parks and Recreation, and the South Lake Tahoe Police Department; Barton Health; Darke Marketing; El Dorado County Services; High Sierra Patrol, Live Violence Free; Only Kindness; Tahoe Youth & Family Services; Heavenly Valley Seventh-day Adventist Church; Hope Lutheran; Temple Bat Yam; and Unity at the Lake. Our supporters are too numerous to name but we do appreciate all of your support in opening and operating our area's first overnight emergency winter shelter.

Marissa Muscat, executive director Tahoe Coalition for the Homeless

Opinion: Capitalism won't cure China's authoritarianism

By Stein Ringen

The decision by China's legislature to scrap the term limit of 10 years in the country's presidency pulls the curtain aside on Xi Jinping's radical transformation of the regime.

The world looks to China and sees an economic giant. But the China we ought to see is a political giant. Xi inherited a regime of pragmatic authoritarianism under collective leadership. Now that pragmatism has been superseded by ideological fervor, Xi's project is to make his totalitarian "China Dream" of national rejuvenation and greatness a reality. For that he needs a strong and growing economy, but in his project the economic is in the service of the political. What always comes first is the perpetuation of the regime itself.

China is an economic giant, and governments and corporations obviously want to do business. But when you do, you should know that you are dealing with a dictatorship, inspired by nationalistic ideology, with a confident one-man supremo at the helm. By acting as if this kind of state is a cuddly teddy bear of benevolence, Europeans and other democratic governments have not learned much from history. Dictatorships can be soft or hard. China's dictatorship is getting ever harder. When democratic governments want to engage with China, they should do so in ways that halt the hardening of its dictatorship.

To understand how China's mission has changed in the last decade, look no further than Xi's career. Elevated to party boss in 2012, he has since tightened all the reins of dictatorship. Any semblance of opposition has been

crushed—even small feminist groups that were organizing protest against sexual harassment on public transport. Their sin was not in their cause, but in the act of organizing outside of the party system. Human rights lawyers have been detained or put out of business en masse. Censorship and internet control are more penetrating than ever. Internally in the party, discipline is the mantra. All potential opposition has been silenced with the help of the anti-corruption campaign.

Xinjiang, the predominantly Muslim province in the west, has been turned into a surveillance state laboratory, with the deployment of the most advanced electronic tools of the trade. The political activist Yang Maodong was right when, in his trial in 2014, he defied the court with an eloquent defense statement in which he compared today's China "blow by blow" to the nightmare state of George Orwell's "1984." But there's no real need to reach for fiction to describe what's occurring: With both pragmatism and collective leadership gone, Xi stands on a pedestal of power previously occupied only by Mao.

In keeping with this transformation, China is no longer engaging in balanced collaboration, but rather pursuing domination. It is undermining the rule of law in Hong Kong. It is threatening Taiwan with annexation, and thus taking the position that the will of the people of a democratic country is to count for nothing. It has de facto turned 3 million of the South China Sea's 3.5 million square kilometers into its own territorial waters, in contravention of international law and a ruling by the Tribunal of the Law of the Sea. Australia and New Zealand are on the forefront of China's purchase of influence abroad, through persistent interference in politics, media and universities, described in a recent Australian book as a "silent invasion."

Beijing may not be imposing its model on others, but it is imposing something else: silence. If you want to collaborate,

be you a business, an organization, or a government, you are not allowed to say or do what the men in Beijing regard as unfriendly.

Recently, Mercedes-Benz happened to mention the Dalai Lama in promotional material outside of China, met criticism in China, and quick as a flash removed all reference to His Holiness and apologized for “hurting the feelings” of the people of China.

If you cross the regime, you will be in danger of retribution, such as exclusion from operations in China. Environmental NGOs like Greenpeace, the World Wide Fund for Nature, and Conservation International are silent on China’s environmental destruction in the South China Sea.

To see how much norms have changed recently, consider what happened when China and Norway “normalized” relations last year. (Relations had been on ice for six years after the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the human rights activist Liu Xiaobo.) What Norway had to pay for “normalization” was a promise to undertake no action that could disturb the new harmony between the two governments. Since then, a Norwegian government whose global identity rests on its championship of democracy and human rights, has had not a word to say about human rights abuses in China.

The problem this new China poses for democracies is not the standard one of a shift in world power. Instead, the problem is the character of the rising power—repressive towards its own population and hostile to others’ liberty. A state that has annexed vast territorial waters and is threatening to annex a neighboring democracy is able to use its economic clout to buy silence on the part of countries that claim to live by democratic values and international law.

What to do? First, we must acknowledge that in China we are dealing with a totalitarian state with immense powers behind it. We must free ourselves from Western wishful thinking that,

with economic growth and opening up, China will become more like us and more benevolent at home and collaboration abroad. That has not happened. Xi's regime is exercising totalitarianism with more strategic discretion than any before it—smart totalitarianism, I have called it—but totalitarian it is.

Secondly, the democratic governments of the world need a coherent strategy for meeting the challenge of China. The liberal democracies, says the German sinologist Kai Strittmatter, must find their voice against assertive autocracy. China deals as much as it can with each country on its own, in which case most countries are small fry next to the giant. We need a collective strategy. Currently, the hope, if distant, is for the European Union to mount such a strategy, since President Trump has placed America on the sideline.

This collective strategy should have three components: engagement, affirmation of human rights, and pushback against aggression.

First, democratic institutions should engage with China on all levels, politically, economically, in science, and culturally. Non-engagement is impossible, and engagement gives some strategic leverage. There is not much other countries and outsiders can do to influence Chinese policies, but it does count that when Chinese institutions are pulled into an exchange, they are exposed to the influence of international law and standards of collaboration.

Second, we should speak up in clear language, to Chinese authorities and in public, against repression and breaches of human rights in China. This we should always do with reference to the Chinese State Constitution and to Chinese law, which are in these respects sound (although ineffective).

Third, we should speak up in clear language against Chinese

aggression internationally, notably in its neighborhood, and against interference in politics and civil society in other countries. When we do this, we should refer to the many relevant international treaties and conventions that China has signed.

The sad truth is that China is and will remain a dictatorial state and that the democratic world can do nothing to prevent that. Democratization is, for the foreseeable future, not on the agenda. But we do have the capacity to hold the Chinese regime to account. The leaders are sensitive to how others criticize their regime. It is effective to stand up to the Chinese leadership with words. By holding the regime to account, we can halt or slow Xi's transition of the regime towards irreversible hardness. We can encourage the preservation of an element of pragmatism in the PRC dictatorship.

That may not seem like much but it matters to the many in China who live in fear of repression and to activists who engage in the struggle for some more openness in Chinese society.

Stein Ringen writes on democracy at ThatsDemocracy.com. He is visiting professor at King's College London and the author, most recently, of "The Perfect Dictatorship: China in the 21st Century."

Opinion: America's decline is relative but real

By Manlio Graziano

Is the United States in decline? The debate on the subject lacks content and context. To take the conversation about American decline away from arbitrary and subjective claims, we require an indisputable criterion. And the only criterion that really counts in international relations is comparison: How does the United States stack up as compared to other powers?

By that measure, the United States has been in relative decline since at least the 1960s. Yes, the economic strength of America has grown, and continues to grow, in absolute terms. But its rivals and competitors—China, East Asia, Europe, Latin America—have grown at a stronger and more sustained rate.

This is the nature of relative decline: power in the world is a finite quantity (even if power is expanding), so the greater the power of others, the more the power of the United States decreases. Between 1940 and 2014, in terms of gross national product, the United States grew 12.5 times bigger. But the rest of the world has grown 26 times in gross product—more than double than that of the Americans.

Much of that gap in growth is from recent decades. In 1987, when Yale historian Paul Kennedy published his famous book “The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers” (which inaugurated the debate on American decline), the gap between U.S. and global growth was barely perceptible: Since 1940, U.S. GDP had grown six times in size, while the rest of the world’s GDP had grown seven and a half times. This slight difference did not prevent Kennedy from identifying the phenomenon with precision.

One can reasonably ask whether the growth differential of GDP can, by itself, give an account of the decline of a country, especially when it is only relative. Many other elements should be taken into account when comparing powers: variable economic factors, such as access to raw materials and their price; transport, research and development, productivity, finance, trade, investment; and then geography, military

strength, demography, health conditions, education, the solidity of institutions, political stability. Finally, there are factors that are unmeasurable, but no less important: historical heritage, traditions, social psychology, ideologies, and religions.

Paul Kennedy wrote that, in examining the last five centuries of history, some “generally valid” conclusions can be drawn. The first is that there is a relationship between relative decline in economic power and shifts in the international political system.

The U.S. situation can be seen more clearly in this historical context. The country, said Kennedy, made “a vast array of strategic commitments” when the nation’s political, economic, and military capacity, as well as its ability to influence world affairs, was more assured than it was in 1987. The United States thus faced what Kennedy called “imperial overstretch,” with its obligations and interests adding up to more than its capacity. That’s a characteristic of relative decline.

Kennedy is sometimes dismissed because his predictions of American decline were based on the rise of Japan, and Japan’s rise was later impeded by its decades of stagnation. Still, this doesn’t undermine Kennedy’s historical analysis of decline. In more recent years, other voices have echoed him. In 2008, in its four-year report on international trends, the U.S. National Intelligence Council wrote that “owing to the relative decline of its economic, and to the lesser extent, the military power, the United States will no longer have the same flexibility in choosing as many policy options” as it once had.

In writing about relative decline, Kennedy took up again a concept formulated by political scientist Robert Gilpin: that over time, different levels of growth in power within a system eventually cause a fundamental redistribution of power within

the system itself. State Department official Richard Haass later used that very same conclusion in order to argue that the United States needed to be ahead of the game so that any “new” balance of power in the world can be balanced from the United States’ perspective.

That argument has in turn been used to justify—and to explain—the theory of “preventive war,” applied later in Iraq. In one 2011 study, Paul MacDonald and Joseph Parent argued that there are only two possibilities to deal with “a decline in relative power”: retrenchment or preventive war. The authors defined retrenchment as “redistributing away from peripheral commitments and towards core commitments” for the purpose of “economizing expenditures, reducing risks, and shifting burdens.”

But in the history of the United States, there is also a third possibility for responding to decline, embodied today by Donald Trump: isolationism.

Isolationism is not retrenchment, since retrenchment distinguishes between “peripheral commitments” and “core commitments.” Retrenchment is not therefore a matter of abandoning the commitments, but of making choices, however painful, on the basis of a well-defined political strategy. In Henry Kissinger’s words, “to find a sustainable ground between abdication and overextension.” The difference between retrenchment and isolationism is the difference between ordered retreat and a catastrophic rout.

Isolationism in the United States today is fueled by fear of worsening conditions. A fundamental misunderstanding of the world has led many people to believe that the United States is being plotted against externally and betrayed internally. But such fears and such misunderstandings are not the product of Trump and his ideologues. Indeed, these fears, particularly around globalization, were cooked up in the intellectual laboratories of the far left in the late 1990s and brought to

the public square by the Seattle protestors against free trade in 1999. A matrix of isolationism and *petit-bourgeois* anti-capitalism has always been found in Jeffersonian democracy, passing through Andrew Jackson, the 19th-century populist movement, and the Catholic critics of the far right and far left during the time of Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Trump's isolationism predates Trump. It's a product of the end of the Cold War, when many Americans believed the time had come to finally "return to normalcy" and retreat to their island to enjoy the dividends of victory. In the 1990s, the United States refused to sign the Kyoto Protocol on climate change, to participate in the treaty to ban anti-personnel mines and nuclear experiments, or to vote for the creation of the International Criminal Court. Before Sept. 11, George W. Bush was openly isolationist and unilateralist, proclaiming his intention to withdraw the United States from some of the institutions it had created and which had guaranteed the continuity of its world order.

Sept. 11 and its aftermath suspended this isolationist tendency only temporarily. The anxieties from the 2008 economic crisis, multiplied by the harmful effects of reckless interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, have restored it. During the presidency of Barack Obama, the United States adopted 317 protectionist measures on average each year—representing 20 percent of all trade restrictions adopted in the world, almost six times more than the second most protectionist country, India. And during the 2016 election campaign, both candidates called for the withdrawal of the United States from new strategic free trade treaties in the Pacific and the Atlantic.

The idea of "making America great again" is absurd. History does not walk backwards. When Americans talk of their greatness, they generally think of a bygone era in which their country dominated the economic, political, and military balances of the world, solitary and undisputed. It also was a

time when unparalleled material superiority fueled their alleged moral superiority. Many of the most dramatic mistakes made by the United States during the Cold War derived from exactly this sense of moral superiority, and the corresponding conviction that Americans could shape reality without taking into account the annoying tangible and intangible constraints that exist in the real world. The absence of historical depth that characterizes the American ideology, combined with the rootlessness and the heterogeneity of the population, allows Americans to believe that the recipes that were successfully applied in the past—like deficit spending and protectionism—are reproducible under any circumstances.

Neo-Keynesians, for example, argue that they can overturn current trends by restoring the New Deal recipe of deficit spending, as though this were 1929. But public debt has changed with the times. Before the Great Depression began in 1929, the American public debt amounted to 16 percent of GDP. In 1941, it had reached 45 percent; in 2008, during the recession, the public debt was 68 percent of GDP; at the end of Barack Obama's tenure, it was at 106.7 percent.

Today, the United States seeks to make itself great again on credit: In 2017, of the \$20.245 billion of debt, almost one third (\$6.349 billion) was in the hands of foreign governments—including Beijing (\$1.189 billion) and Tokyo (\$1.094 billion). In other words, in 2017 China and Japan funded more than 10 percent of U.S. public spending.

And yes, while the United States has been protectionist for most of its short history, and had great success under protectionism, that does not mean that today protectionism is a policy that could make the country great again. In a world of more shared power, where growth is based on the exchange of raw materials, financial products, ideas, and people, almost every type of production is linked by a thousand threads to the world market, and breaking one means breaking them all.

What gets left out of these protectionist discussions is that now, even the making of a hamburger—which involves cultivation, storage, transport, refining, production, packaging, and distribution—ties together 75 centers of activity from 15 different countries. According to a Boston Consulting Group report from 2017, an attack on NAFTA would be primarily an attack on the United States, given the country's economic integration with its neighbors. Gordon Hanson of the University of California stated that if NAFTA had not existed, the entire American automotive industry would have already disappeared, swept away by competition from countries with lower wages, social protection, and public deficits.

In the future, Americans will no longer be able to afford to live as they have lived in the past. Such a reality has caused disquiet in all countries that once dominated world markets. But the anxiety has been much more intense in the United States, whose brief history has been marked by the promise, almost always maintained, of a constant improvement of the living conditions of most of its citizens.

Kissinger wrote that the art of demagoguery consists of the "ability to distill emotion and frustration into a single moment." But demagoguery cannot solve its problems; it only will aggravate them. In July 1971, when President Richard Nixon took note that the United States was no longer in a position of complete pre-eminence, he was merely stating the obvious: that international relations are always multipolar. The question is the relative strength of the poles of power, and today, the relative strength of those poles is shifting at rapid pace. The distance between the United States and the rest of the world continues to shorten. According to the IMF World Economic Outlook of October 2017, the pace of growth of the so-called emerging countries (4.3 percent in 2016, 4.6 percent in 2017, and 4.9 percent in 2018) is more than double that of the United States (1.8, 2.1, and 2.3 percent). China's growth is about three times higher (6.7, 6.8, and 6.5

percent).

There is no general law establishing how, when—and if—a country in relative decline enters a phase of absolute decline. And theoretically, at least, since decline is relative, it could reverse. Fareed Zakaria has argued that the world is becoming more “post-American” not because of the United States’ failures, but because of “the rise of everyone else.” If China or India or Germany were to enter a deep crisis, the United States could quickly be in a state of relative rise. But that presumes that the United States would not itself be infected by a deep crisis in the other powers. And such a prospect is very unlikely.

It is much more plausible that America will continue its relative decline, and will thus be obliged to surrender some of its global commitments and interests, creating imbalances in different places. Of course, things would be far worse if the United States were to withdraw from all commitments and interests in one fell swoop.

Politics, like nature, abhors a vacuum. If America were to abandon the field, it would create a kind of black hole, into which all the world would be drawn. America’s insular illusions would soon be overwhelmed by the tsunami of disruption. Such an uproar would turn today’s relative decline into absolute decline; it would mean, in the worlds of Bismarck, a “suicide from fear of death.”

Manlio Graziano teaches geopolitics and geopolitics of religion at the Sorbonne, the Geneva Institute of Geopolitical Studies, and La Sapienza University in Rome. His books include “Holy Wars and Holy Alliance” (Columbia University Press, 2017), “In Rome We Trust” (Stanford University Press, 2017) and “What Is a Border?” (Stanford, 2018).

Opinion: Calif. fire agencies need state money

By Daryl Osby and Mark Lorenzen, Sacramento Bee

The many tragedies during the terrible wildfires and mudslides California experienced recently have taught us many lessons we cannot ignore or neglect.

First, our weather patterns are changing and natural disasters are getting worse, due in large part to climate change. California suffered its deadliest and largest wildfires ever in just three months last year. Second, the growing frequency and ferocity of these events creates more strain on our disaster preparedness and response systems.

Read the whole story

Letter: Tax help a success on South Shore

To the community,

Kudos to the South Lake Tahoe Taxaide Team. Despite the harsh March weather, we helped our fellow residents file a record number of complete and accurate returns (640 – a 6 percent increase over last year).

Refunds of \$795,646 were processed, with \$235,913 balance due.

That means that over a half million dollars was returned to our community.

So, thank you Tahoe. We look forward to serving you again next year.

Bob Niedermeier, advertising volunteer for the AARP Taxaide Program

Opinion: USFS faces century-old call for equality

By James G. Lewis, High Country News

The third applicant was “no gentleman,” the U.S. Forest Service ranger wrote to his boss, but would still make a first-class fire lookout on the remote Klamath National Forest. He thought little of the first applicant’s abilities, and the second had poor eyesight, though that didn’t prevent him from frequently violating the local game laws. Yet the third candidate was so unusual, ranger M.H. McCarthy cautioned, “I hope your heart is strong enough to stand the shock.”

For the shocking third applicant was a woman, Hallie Morse Daggett, though McCarthy added that she “is absolutely devoid of the timidity which is ordinarily associated with her sex.”

McCarthy told his supervisor not to worry about being overrun by female applicants in the future “since we can hardly expect these positions to ever become very popular with the Fair Sex.” What is telling in light of recent news about the systemic problem of discrimination throughout the Forest

Service is that this was written 105 years ago.

Read the whole story

Editorial: Defending Calif.'s right to clean air

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the May 2, 2018, Los Angeles Times.*

World leaders may negotiate their climate change accords in foreign capitals, but the efforts to stem global warming may succeed or fail based on what happens in United States courtrooms, where the state of California is leading the charge to block the Trump administration's anti-environment, anti-science agenda.

On Tuesday, Gov. Jerry Brown and state Attorney General Xavier Becerra announced that they have filed the state's 10th, and potentially most consequential, lawsuit against the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Joined by 16 other states and the District of Columbia, California is trying to preserve a planned increase in vehicle fuel-economy standards, which were designed to make passenger cars more fuel efficient and less polluting.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Census count of same-sex couples not enough

By Akiesha Anderson, The Conversation

Although LGBT people are becoming more visible in society, federal data reveal little about the U.S. LGBT population and its needs.

In a first in U.S. history, the U.S. Census Bureau will explicitly count same-sex couples living together in the 2020 census.

The decision to ask about same-sex relationships, announced this spring, is an important change that will improve the quality of the data.

Yet the 2020 census and most federal surveys don't ask people to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity. That means there's no official count of LGBT people in the country, and most government data sets cannot be used to assess the LGBT population at the national, state or local level. Such information would help policymakers, researchers and advocates understand the particular needs of this population and design effective policies and programs.

As a legal scholar who studies federal sexual orientation and gender identity data, I know that currently there are many unanswered questions about LGBT people's employment, housing and family circumstances; their health and well-being; and the discrimination and disparities they face.

If the census and other federal surveys included sexual orientation and gender identity, we would know so much more.

What the 2020 census will capture

The decennial census is one of the nation's most important

data collections. It's the constitutionally mandated official headcount of people living in the U.S. and is the principal way to determine political representation throughout the nation.

Although the census is collected only every 10 years, the U.S. Census Bureau regularly conducts numerous other surveys, including the American Community Survey and the Current Population Survey. The data from these and other federal surveys are often used in conjunction with decennial census data to influence law and policy. These data also determine the annual distribution of more than \$675 billion of federal funding.

In the past, demographers analyzing U.S. Census Bureau data had to use complicated and imperfect systems to estimate the number of cohabiting same-sex couples living in the U.S. The current estimate is that there are 646,500 same-sex couples living together in the U.S.

The 2020 census will allow respondents to describe their relationship to members of their household using the categories "same-sex husband/wife/spouse" and "same-sex unmarried partner." In the past, this was not the case.

The 2020 census will better count the number of married and unmarried same-sex couples living together. Respondents' answers will provide a wealth of information about same-sex couples' diversity, their children and living arrangements, employment rates and incomes.

Gaps in the data

By capturing distinct data only on same-sex couples living together, however, the 2020 census will tell us nothing about the entire LGBT population, including LGBT people who are single or bisexuals in different-sex relationships. Nor will it capture specific data on transgender youth and adults.

During the Obama administration, the Department of Justice and other federal agencies asked the U.S. Census Bureau to collect sexual orientation and gender identity information. However, the Trump administration withdrew these requests, against the objection of members of the U.S. Senate, LGBT rights groups, researchers and others.

The U.S. Census Bureau's director stated in a blog post that "there's no federal data need" nor any statutory requirement to collect sexual orientation and gender identity data.

It's true that Congress has failed to pass legislation that would require the census to add sexual orientation and gender identity questions. However, as the U.S. Census Bureau has acknowledged, various questions are included on the decennial census or other surveys because "the data are needed for program planning, implementation or evaluation" even though "there is no explicit mandate or requirement." Moreover, the Department of Justice and other agencies' requests to the U.S. Census Bureau clearly articulated the federal need for this data.

Only a few federal surveys currently capture information about sexual orientation and gender identity. That suggests that such items could easily be added to the census and other federal surveys that ask about people's demographics.

Beyond the decennial census, the Trump administration has rolled back sexual orientation and gender identity data collection in other federal surveys.

Why it matters

Businesses, government agencies, journalists, researchers and others use U.S. Census Bureau data to understand the socioeconomic characteristics of the nation. Without an accurate count, many public and private programs and services may not effectively reach vulnerable LGBT populations.

Moreover, there are federal laws and programs in place designed to increase access to employment, housing, health care and other services. But without inclusive data, policymakers, social service providers and others can't know if these activities meet the needs of LGBT people and help them thrive. Without this information, stereotypes and myths may drive policies that impact LGBT people.

For example, despite the popular stereotype of LGBT affluence, studies suggest that some LGBT people are more likely than their non-LGBT counterparts to be in poverty. Also, despite the belief that marriage equality would result in full societal acceptance, many LGBT people throughout the nation continue to face persistent and pervasive discrimination.

What's more, the LGBT population faces numerous health disparities compared to the non-LGBT population, such as higher rates of substance use, depressive symptoms and suicide attempts.

Existing data show that the LGBT population is remarkably diverse and that the experiences of LGBT people are shaped by many factors, including race, age, socioeconomic status and education level. But existing data are not enough. The U.S. Census Bureau's failure to ask sexual orientation and gender identity questions makes it hard to know much about the intersections between LGBT status and other characteristics.

In my view, if policymakers want to truly understand and attempt to meet the diverse needs of LGBT people, then more inclusive data ought to be collected. And the U.S. Census Bureau – with its vast surveys, strict confidentiality and expertise – is the ideal agency to lead the way.

Akiesha Anderson is a law fellow at the Williams Institute, UCLA.

Opinion: Protect public records requesters

By David Snyder

The First Amendment Coalition supports a bill to be heard next week in the California Senate Judiciary Committee that would help prevent abusive litigation by public agencies against members of the public who request records under the California Public Records Act (CPRA).

SB1244 would amend the CPRA in two important ways. First, it would make clear that a public agency cannot bring a lawsuit against a member of the public in order to force that person to return records the agency inadvertently released. Second, it clarifies that—with one narrow exception—a public agency is not entitled to recover its attorneys fees against a member of the public after CPRA litigation.

Both changes are necessary to protect the public against efforts like that of the Newark Unified School District, which recently sought a court order requiring a member of the public to pay almost a half million dollars in attorneys fees. Fortunately, that effort failed because, as FAC and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) explained to the court, the CPRA explicitly protects the public from efforts by public agencies to seek financial revenge for the act of seeking information about the government.

The CPRA is designed to protect the public from efforts like that of the Newark school district, but unfortunately there is language in the current law that has been exploited in order to attempt to intimidate the public. SB1244 helps clear up this language, and so the Legislature should not hesitate to

pass this bill.

Public agencies in recent years have brought lawsuits against records requesters seeking to “claw back” records the agency inadvertently released, thus exposing those requesters to costly and time-consuming litigation.

FAC strongly believes that members of the public should not have to shoulder the burden of litigation brought on by the mistakes of public agencies and, thus, supports SB1244. If you agree, we urge you to contact your legislator and tell them to support protection for public records requesters.

SB1244 is set to be heard on May 8 at 1:30pm in the Senate Judiciary Committee. Don't know how to contact your legislator? Enter your address to find your representative's contact info [here](#).

See [here](#) for a copy of FAC's letter in support of SB1244.

David Snyder is executive director of the First Amendment Coalition. The First Amendment Coalition is an award-winning, nonprofit public interest organization dedicated to advancing free speech, more open and accountable government, and public participation in civic affairs.

Letter: LTCC group helps at Bread & Broth

To the community,

The LTCC ADVANCE Adult Education Program is a recently implemented program at the college whose focus is to train local adults with workforce skills aimed to lead to higher

wages and greater employment options. ADVANCE is a collaborative network of local businesses, government offices and the K-12 LTUSD which offers the free instruction to local residents. In addition to helping adults improve their earning skills, the ADVANCE program wanted to help locals have access to a hot, nutritious meal by sponsoring a Bread & Broth Monday meal.

On April 30 the dinner served at St. Theresa Grace Hall was funded by a donation from the ADVANCE program.

"We are serving today to help our community members. We're honored to serve our brothers and sisters in the Tahoe basin and we are grateful to Bread & Broth for providing a much needed service," was the collaborative quote of the ADVANCE sponsor crew.

As the ADVANCE crew was volunteering with the dinner's setup, it was very interesting to hear from the team's crew members Taylor Bartlett, Melanie Chu, Nancy Harrison, Lisa Shafer and Lori Thorne all about the program. This group of hard working ladies was not only enthusiastic about the ADVANCE program but also about feeding those in need. B&B would like to thank LTCC for its ADVANCE Adult Education Program and wanting to help our community members at many levels from training to easing hunger.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth