

Letter: Recognizing those who volunteer

To the community,

Volunteering is a very special gift given by men, women and youth at Barton Memorial Hospital. Whether it be with their own personal time or a monetary donation, I am constantly humbled by these volunteers' generosity and how greatly they help patients. Some are retired, wanting to stay active with their community, and some are youth volunteers just starting out in the working world to build their knowledge and resume.

April is National Volunteerism month. Volunteering sets a great example and reflects an empowering reason to give back, while offering a variety of health benefits. In a recent study, researchers found evidence that volunteers had lower blood pressure, lower levels of depression, increased life satisfaction, an enhanced well-being and were less likely to get dementia.

Barton is incredibly fortunate to have a dedicated team of volunteers working across many different departments. The community might not be aware of how many interactions with volunteers they may have from the moment they walk through our doors.

See those smiling faces at the information front desk? They are volunteers. Those friendly folks that will sit with you in the emergency department? Also volunteers. The men and women helping at discounted community wellness Lab days and blood drives? They are volunteers as well. If you were offered a magazine, snack, game or toy from our comfort cart, it was offered by a volunteer. From helping with important fundraising efforts to reading to residents in the Skilled Nursing Facility, the strong work ethic and deep sense of

caring from volunteers at Barton make a tremendous impact with patients and our community as a whole.

As I have gotten to know Barton's volunteers personally, I enjoy learning about their decision to get involved. Many of Barton's volunteers have a personal tie with the hospital and choose to volunteer not just here, but at other non-profit organizations in our community as well. These folks have hearts of gold and I am constantly humbled by their service and selfless giving.

Patti Cobel, guest relations coordinator at Barton Health

Opinion: Electric cars by Draconian decree

By Larry Weitzman

Electric cars seem to be all the rage, at least that would appear to be the case if your only source of news was mainstream media creating the hype. The only way EVs have a chance in the "free marketplace" is by government decree, which becomes another government created oxymoron.

Most of Europe has done that by simply banning the internal combustion engine some 20 years into the future using insignificant global warming (another mainstream media hype) as the excuse. China is on the same course, allegedly banning internal combustion cars by 2040. Even in California, there is a move afoot and proposed legislation to remove conventional cars from our highways.



Larry Weitzman

It describes life in socialist/communist countries. The insanity just never ends, it continues to grow with no cure in sight. Orwell was a genius.

The real purpose for all these new restrictions on your freedoms is more control of you and your movement. It's similar to gun control. It's just another control and limitation on your life and freedom as criminals will never give up their guns. Autonomous cars are part of this Orwellian plan as well. Access to roads will be controlled by the government, just like the air traffic control system. You will have to obtain a time slot for freeway access. Your speed will be tightly controlled as will be your route of travel. Driving Highway 1, "fuhgeddaboudit."

And EVs are part of this plan as EVs have the freedom curtailing issues of limited range and refueling. You will also be limited as to who and where you buy your "fuel."

Two recent articles on EVs were published in the *Mountain Democrat*, one of a couple loving their EVs. That's great, they had the freedom to choose, but they were heavily and directly subsidized by federal, state and maybe even our county through either tax credits or direct payments of about \$10,000 per vehicle and continuing utility credits. One of their vehicles was bought used so some of those credits may not apply, but car pool lanes preference should be available. In case you're interested, used Tesla Model S cars are plentiful and can be bought for prices about half of new with reasonably low miles as the average Tesla S appears to be driven less than an

average of 10,000 miles a year, many halve that number.

In the second article, published March 26, staff writer Laura McCutcheon interviewed and quoted Placerville resident Bruce Bila who laid out all of the direct subsidies received by EV buyers from federal and state tax credits amounting to about \$10,000 to rebates and reduced electrical rates received from PG&E. Bila even touched on the issue of reduced registration fees and the fact that EV owners don't pay road (gas) taxes which are collected for supposed road maintenance (about two-thirds of the new gas taxes go to the bullet train to nowhere and a few other pet projects) and get car pool lane access. Bila also remarked about people who acquire solar power also getting sweet deals (lower energy rates) being subsidized by other energy users. There is also a huge direct solar subsidy of a federal 30 percent tax credit paid for by you and me. Well done Mr. Bila.

Bila goes on to say that "the government has to step back and let the industry stand on its own two feet." Well said. The bottom line is the solar and EV industry can't, as it is too expensive when compared to the competition. Another huge indirect EV subsidy not mentioned in the story created by the feds, paid for by the consumer and given to the manufacturers of EVs are zero emission vehicle credits amounting to a theoretical value of about \$5,000 per credit. Tesla has sold about a billion dollars of these credits to other car manufacturers so far, meaning that it raised the price of conventional cars by a cumulative total of a billion dollars.

In addition, Obama early in his presidency authorized \$2.4 billion in EV development with the goal of having 1 million EVs on the road by 2015. Well, that didn't happen as by 2016 only half a million were sold and the 1 million mark was moved to 2020. More money down a rat hole, never mind the half a billion-dollar Solyndra scandal and the demise of A123 battery company leaving the government holding the bag for over \$100 million. Through 2012, the federal government had wasted a

billion dollars trying to force the impossible.

Within all these credits is an El Dorado County subsidy of an additional \$1,000 funded by California legislation AB2766, in a program described by our county public information officer, nee spin doctor, Carla Hass, called Drive Clean. Add that to the \$10,000 of direct federal and state incentives and the buried ZEV credits and you have about \$16,000 in incentives and subsidies paid for by taxpayers. Hass went on to say in the same article that “there’s far more taxpayer money that has historically gone and currently goes into supporting gasoline powered cars as well. Estimates vary. They range from \$10 to \$55 billion each year. When the federal government came up with the EV tax credit they based the amount (\$7,500) on how much of a taxpayer subsidy they figured goes into supporting each gasoline powered car.” And this statement is from a county official who works directly for the CAO. Please tell me what government program sends money to new gasoline car purchasers? Is she talking about the failed “cash for clunkers” program?

Hass promised me an explanation to her statement published in the *Mountain Democrat* as to what her sources were and the back up data for the statement which I finally received after a week. It was as expected, complete and utter malarkey. Here is a portion of what Hass sent me: “Oil Change International estimates United States fossil fuel exploration and production subsidies at \$20.5 billion annually. Other credible estimates of annual United States fossil fuel subsidies range from \$10 billion to \$52 billion annually – yet none of these include costs borne by taxpayers related to the climate, local environmental, and health impacts of the fossil fuel industry. Fossil fuel subsidies in the United States also include massive military expenditures to acquire and defend fossil fuel interests around the globe.” Oil Change International is a far left wing “Red” group which claims to be green. And this county official, Carla Hass, who is paid

\$150,000 a year was hired by our Board of Supervisors.

There is no basis in fact of the \$20 billion number and the \$10 billion to \$52 billion numbers (used by Hass) as they are made up numbers. As to our Navy and Coast Guard protecting the shipping lanes and maintaining freedom for all international commerce has been required throughout history, whether from U-boats, Somalian pirates, terrorists or penny-ante third world dictators or others who want to attack our freedom.

I also did an analysis of oil tax credits which include depletion allowances and those allowances and credits amount to about \$100 per new vehicle, not the \$11,000 per vehicle given to EV buyers in El Dorado County. We need to remember oil isn't just for cars, it is the predominant substance of so many other products, especially tires which EVs still use.

My arguments against her hiring (or any spin doctor hiring) have been proven to be true. Carla Hass has become a government propagandist and we get to pay for it.

Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.

Opinion: Feds redefine endangered species protections

By Maya L. Kapoor, High Country News

In March, Susan Combs became temporary assistant secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, in charge of overseeing both the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Parks Service. Combs, a Texas rancher and politician with a history of

hostility toward protected species, fought to avoid protecting dwindling Texas species when she served as comptroller.

Her appointment happened quietly on a Saturday and had been not announced on the department's website as of this writing. Environmental advocacy groups believe her appointment invalid, because Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, not President Donald Trump, appointed her. The nonprofit Natural Resources Defense Council commented, "In typical Trump administration fashion, (Combs) now oversees what she hopes to dismantle."

Combs' controversial appointment comes as the Fish and Wildlife Service is quietly but radically altering its approach to the Endangered Species Act, from species protection to habitat management.

Read the whole story

Opinion: South Lake Tahoe mayor's DA investigation request may be just another violation of the law

By Kathryn Reed

Naiveté, ignorance, secretiveness, vindictiveness and complacency have no place in government. Not if the work of the people is going to be accomplished in a transparent, thorough, well thought out manner.

The South Lake Tahoe City Council appears to have hit an all-time low. Lower than the Kathay Lovell-Bill Crawford juvenile

behavior, lower than Bruce Grego having to defend himself at the podium as Jerry Birdwell verbally accosted him, lower even than the JoAnn Conner censure.

Mayor Wendy David is duplicitous in her comments that she is shocked by what **Councilwoman Brooke Laine had to say in her column** on *Lake Tahoe News*. In my **March 27 column** Laine said she was “discouraged by the lack of transparency.” *Lake Tahoe News* has repeatedly cited times when the Brown Act has been violated.

David in her rebuttal column to Laine took issue that her colleague had not warned the other four about the column. But then David did the same; just sent her response to the media.

Knowing Laine, one can be assured she first took her concerns to David privately before addressing the public. But why shouldn't Laine go to the public? It is the public who she works for, not any other elected official, not any staff member of the city. She – and all elected officials – should be talking to the public.

Councilman Tom Davis told *Lake Tahoe News*, “I stand behind Brooke and her letter.”

The other two guys on the council had nothing to say. Maybe they will Tuesday when the council has its regular meeting at Lake Tahoe Airport starting at 9am.

While David wants credit for initiating an investigation into the council's alleged wrong-doings, *Lake Tahoe News* reached out to El Dorado County District Attorney Vern Pierson earlier this spring about the perceived Brown Act violations.

David in her column said she is recommending the police chief contact the DA. On the one hand, great, on the other this is so incredibly wrong. No council member individually has the power to direct any staff member to do anything. Collectively, the council may tell only the city manager or city attorney

what to do. There has been no discussion by the council to initiate such an investigation.

The only power the mayor has over another council member is the ability to call a special meeting.

One of the reasons former Councilwoman Conner was censured is because she was telling code enforcement what to do. One has to wonder if there might be a case building to censure David; after all, she is telling staff what to do and far exceeding her job. The mayor is a title with the same power as any council member.

David met with acting City Manager Jeff Meston on April 16 to discuss opening an investigation.

Meston told *LTN*, "I had been thinking for a while this needs to go to the grand jury or at least the district attorney. There is no way we cannot not investigate." He further said, "In my discussion with the mayor she recommended that we need to take some form of action. I agreed with her and said I would direct the police chief to get in contact with the district attorney."

Police Chief Brian Uhler spent the day gathering information for the DA based on Laine's comments. Here is **the letter** he sent to the DA.

The letter, instead of just providing facts, is full of Uhler's opinion; he essentially admonished Laine for going to the public and not to law enforcement with her concerns. Then he left out the most important part for the DA, which is the Mary Egan contract that to this day has not been brought out in the open. It is an illegal contract that is a misuse of public funds that interim City Attorney Nira Doherty condoned.

Misuse of public funds could be a felony. Laine brought that whole contract up in her public column, but Uhler ignored this alleged crime in his letter.

Laine and Davis prior to seeing Uhler's letter said they support the investigation.

"The only way we will find out is with an outside independent investigation," Davis told *LTN*. "I don't see why the council would not want to seek the truth."

Laine told *LTN*, "I am thrilled that the city is taking my claims seriously. I do not make those assertions lightly. I look forward to a thorough and independent investigation."

David also sent out a statement April 16 via Tracy Sheldon, the city's public information officer. Both were asked who reviewed the letter before it was sent. Sheldon was asked more than once, and then got snippy and unprofessional with her reply to *LTN*. Neither answered the question.

Meston told *Lake Tahoe News* he had seen it before it was sent.

The release said, "Because of the gravity of Ms. Laine's allegations, I, as mayor, believe I have a duty to ensure that the claims that the City Council, city clerk, previous city manager, acting city manager, previous city attorney, interim city attorney, and indeed any city employee has violated the law are fully and adequately investigated."

It's ironic she is asserting this authority when she repeatedly was critical when Austin Sass as mayor tried to claim power that he didn't have. Now David seems to think by holding the gavel she has special powers. She doesn't. No one does. South Lake Tahoe is not a strong mayor form of government.

Then the fact she lists people, at least by position, that Laine never mentioned is suspect. It also could get the city into a world of hurt because the settlement agreement between the former city manager and the council states that neither can say anything against the other. David is walking a precarious legal line that could open the city up to potential

litigation.

Opinion: Taking issue with council colleague's accusations

By Wendy David

The last few months have been some of the most difficult for our City Council, for our city and for our community. Similar to the national conversation, with immediate access to social media in many forms, controversial opinion pieces go immediately out to the public, even before the accused have an opportunity to hear the allegations. Soon after, public comment and “opinion” on the opinion begins with little interest in whether there is truth.



Wendy David

I have very seldom felt the need to respond publicly, but Ms. [Brooke] Laine invites and demands this public response by making her concerns and opinion very public, while stating that she is providing information. I would like to respond to a few of her opinions, accusations and allegations.

I would like to address the truth in reference to the minutes that were approved at the April 3 meeting. Ms. Laine was absent. Very often the minutes of a meeting have corrections made to them after review by council, the city manager or department heads, before they are formally adopted by the council. In this case, Ms. Laine noticed a transcription error in a motion that had been made which added additional language that was not part of the motion. She contacted our city clerk the day before our meeting, who then took action and publicly amended the minutes during the public meeting before they were adopted. She gave credit to Ms. Laine for advising her of the error. It is common to have the minutes corrected, often in public. I have done it myself on a few occasions.

I take great exception to the comment of secrecy taking place in local government. Ms. Laine states, "If one councilmember is not privy to the same information as other councilmembers the question is why?" All information is equally available to every councilmember. Calls to the acting city manager, interim city attorney, city clerk, and city staff do not go unanswered. The mayor and the mayor pro tem do meet and confer on the proposed agenda one week before the meeting, but these meetings in no way preclude any councilmember from being provided the same information.

Surprisingly, although Ms. Laine alleges that transparency is lacking, in a stunningly secretive display, she let no one know in advance of her decision to publicly accuse her fellow council members, her acting city manager, city clerk and interim city attorney of breaking the law.

Her accusation of decision-making taking place outside of the public's view could not be further from the truth. As a council, we very publicly discuss, deliberate and reach decisions at our meetings in front of the public. For anyone that has attended a meeting, this should be obvious as you watch the council debate, sometimes vigorously and with passion our most controversial topics. We have tough decisions

that take many meetings of discussion to thoroughly and thoughtfully vet through all of the options. This can be frustrating for the public and for the council, but is an integral part of public government. I am offended and devastated to learn that this is Ms. Laine's belief.

Ms. Laine further accuses the council of engaging in a power struggle, one that is for personal gain and is selfish, creates hostility and purposely keeps many in the dark. I do not know who she is referring to, but her statement is false and unfounded. She speaks against our city's public servants that step up and out to serve the public in today's polarized culture. For me, this elected position certainly is not one that has provided any personal gain. In fact, quite the opposite is true. The sleepless nights, the huge weight of knowing that I must always act in the best interests of the entire city's community, not just one person or one opinion, before supporting any action, the lack of being at liberty legally to comment on any item that is confidential and restricted to closed session all take a considerable toll for any responsible and professional person.

Because of the gravity of Ms. Laine's false accusations, as mayor, I have made a recommendation to our chief of police to initiate conversation with the El Dorado County district attorney to investigate Ms. Laine's numerous allegations that "multiple violations of the law have occurred."

I am saddened and disappointed that Ms. Laine has taken this path and holds these damaging opinions. I hope that we can find a path back and provide the community, the City Council, city staff and other elected and appointed officials facts and truth as opposed to opinion and biased conjecture. I believe a thorough and independent investigation will provide this.

Wendy David is mayor of South Lake Tahoe.

Letter: S. Lake Tahoe needs to alter pensions

To the community,

In November, after Measure C failed to pass, I did research regarding pension reform in California. I found that the California courts were ruling in favor of reducing pensions. There were precedents in the courts that allowed municipalities to reduce pensions.

I then proposed to our City Council here in South Lake Tahoe that we need to reduce the pensions of city employees. I did this in writing at the last City Council meeting in November of 2017, and I followed that up with an oral explanation why this must be done. With use of tax increases, the problem will return in the near future and once again overwhelm our city budget. The City Council ignored me.

Today, I once again see in your news report that city of Santa Cruz is near bankruptcy .

Nancy Kerry understood that I was correct and began by removing the retirement benefit of paid medical expenses for retirees, beginning January 2019. Subsequently, Nancy Kerry was forced out of her city manager job.

People need to start listening to me or we're headed for bankruptcy.

The solution is reduce city employee pensions to a reasonable and sustainable level. This is exactly how the courts in California have ruled. I know that the issue is pending in the California Supreme Court. But as we wait for that decision, we

are losing millions of dollars, perhaps \$3 million to \$5 million per year that is not recoverable. This needs to be done.

There is no avoiding this with new taxes.

Daniel Harvey, South Lake Tahoe

Editorial: Sandoval's voice of moderation is appreciated

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the April 11, 2017, Las Vegas Sun.*

For opting not to heed President Donald Trump's call to send National Guard troops to the U.S.-Mexico border, Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval deserves a hand.

The Republican governor was absolutely right in saying that the border assignment wouldn't be an appropriate use of the state National Guard, which has more important duties here at home and doesn't need to be put in harm's way hundreds of miles south.

Besides that, the fact is that troops aren't needed from any state.

Read the whole story

Opinion: SLT needs to stop breaking the law

By Brooke Laine

I am providing the following information because I can no longer be a party to the violations of law, secrecy, manipulation, lies, and power struggles that are rampant at the city today.

There appears to be a complete disregard on the part of politicians and appointed officials for state law, transparency, and honesty to the public. The interim city attorney has admitted to many that a recent contract she oversaw violated the Brown Act – think Mary Egan contract. To this day, that contract has never been addressed, corrected, or publicly acknowledged.



Brooke Laine

Multiple violations of law have occurred in closed session, often relating to discussions involving personal attacks on non-agenda issues. The interim city attorney and the politicians engaged in the violations refused to cease the unlawful discussions, even when asked to do so to avoid continuing the unlawful conduct.

In addition, the minutes of the March 20, 2018, meeting seriously misstated the facts by asserting an action occurred at a prior meeting, but the council never took that action.

The law requires the city to tell the public the truth, follow the law explicitly, and provide accurate public records. This absolute failure at the very top is a violation of law, injures the public's trust, and is currently crippling the city.

Secrecy has no place in local government. If one councilmember is not privy to the same information as other councilmembers, the question is "why?" If one, two, or worse, three councilmembers discussing information the others don't have, not only is that also a violation of the Brown Act, it creates distrust. It results in decision-making taking place outside of the public's view (another violation of law) and it literally has no place in our city. The only purpose of such secrecy is to shift the balance of power from the council as a whole to a few electeds and appointed staff. Worse yet, blindsiding some people through this type of manipulation, fuels the public's distrust of process, transparency, and government in general.

Power struggles, when the struggle for power is not for the benefit of public policy, but rather for personal gain, are selfish, create hostility, and purposely keep many in the dark. The public is a witness to this, which creates confusion and increases distrust. Further, the media that buys into the incomplete and inaccurate information they are fed, unwittingly become tactical participants in this sport to gain personal power. Most important, the public's business is not a priority.

I care deeply about this community. I always endeavor to hold myself to strong ethical and moral standards, as I feel every elected official should. I respect and hold in high regard the law that dictates how we as local leaders are to govern. It is my belief that the only way to address these serious violations, which illustrates a fundamental and complete breakdown of legal process, is to bring this information to the attention of the community. I can no longer be a party to

this unethical, hostile, distrustful environment that currently exists. I have opposed these tactics both publicly and privately, and tried to stand against the illegal and improper actions I have witnessed. However, this burden has become so heavy.

Today, I am choosing to shine light where it is necessary because I believe our community deserves better. Together, we can do better.

Brooke Laine is a South Lake Tahoe City Council member.

Opinion: Taxes won't solve the CalPERS problem

By Larry Weitzman

Another California city, Santa Cruz, is about to go under. It won't be from a Pacific tidal wave, but an overwhelming tidal wave of pension costs from CalPERS, which is a direct result of government employee unions and the politicians they buy off.

As reported by the very respected Dan Walters, Santa Cruz pension costs will have risen from 28 percent of General Fund salary in 2004 to 43 percent in 2015 to 58 percent in 2020. It is unsustainable. Most long-term government workers earn more in retirement than they did during their working years.



Larry Weitzman

If you haven't noticed, the solution has been new and more taxes. El Dorado County is starting to float the idea of a new sales tax and our smaller fire districts have recently done some polling to see if the public would tolerate a sales tax increase to keep those fire districts afloat.

Our fire districts are funded by a portion of our property taxes, about 8 percent, except for the El Dorado Hills Fire District which has a 17 percent property tax funding rate. That rate was set in stone shortly after the passing of Proposition 13 passed in 1978 via a piece of 1979 legislation known as AB8. It turned out the more frugal districts got less of the property tax base and the more wasteful ones got a bigger share as it was based on past history. Typical of wasteful bureaucracy. Consequently, EDH Fire is one fire district that is flush with cash.

A few years ago, in a column, I reported EDH Fire had \$13 million of uncommitted cash in the bank. But the other districts rely on funding from the county General Fund to make up their shortfall, which has been a lessening amount. Some "experts" think consolidation is the answer as there are too many chiefs, literally. Also, some feel that there is too much duplication of administration. There might be something to be said for that and perhaps that is part of the answer.

Of course, no small district fire chief wants to lose his/her kingdom or job. Being a fire chief isn't a bad paying gig. In 2016 for example, Michael Hardy, fire chief of the El Dorado County Fire Protection District had total compensation of

about \$243,000. Dave Roberts, the retiring, embattled chief of El Dorado Hills Fire earned about \$287,000 in 2016 and Robert Combs, chief of the Diamond Springs Fire District, made a paltry \$170,000 in 2016. But Combs retired and the new chief, Bryan Ransdell, earned \$229,000 for 2016, for a combined \$400,000 in fire chief pay for 2016. And the people near the top in our fire districts are not too far behind. Yes, they have a risky, responsible job, but so do roofers.

Instead of fixing the root problem of government pensions running amuck, the easy answer is more and new taxes. That will not fix the problem and neither will new taxes and here is why. The proposals that have been floated by the fire districts are a sales tax increase of about half a percent. For a general sales tax increase it requires majority voter approval. But it would go into the General fund and it would be up to the Board of Supervisors to pass it on to the fire districts of which the board would have no requirement to do so. They could use the money to solve general county fiscal problems or maybe hire another public information officer (spin doctor) to tell its voters why they couldn't pass it on to the various fire districts. With such a tax there is no guarantee it would benefit the fire districts.

A special sales tax which requires two-thirds voter approval can be earmarked for the fire districts but getting two-thirds voter approval on a new tax is about as likely as Elon Musk flying to Mars next year. Hey, that's not a bad idea (Musk to Mars).

But there is perhaps a better solution that would protect the fire districts and that is a special parcel (property) tax increase, a flat fee of say \$25 on unimproved property parcels and maybe \$50 on improved parcels. The money would go directly to the districts and each district would have their own election. Maybe it could be tied to a salary freeze or even reductions of up to 5 percent.

This column is not advocating for a new tax. Fiscal problems should be remedied by eliminating their cause. Until we get a handle on the salary and pension problems in California, new taxes in an attempt to temporarily alleviate the problem does not fix the problem. It only makes it worse by masking the problem. And it is an ugly, scary mask.

Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.

Opinion: Scripted news could become the norm

By Amanda Lotz, The Conversation

On March 31, *Deadspin* produced a video showing a chorus of local news anchors delivering the exact same scripted speech to viewers.

The message – denouncing media bias and fake news, calling it a problem that is “neither politically ‘left nor right’” – might seem innocuous enough.

But I study the media industry, and it really does represent a radical departure from how local television news has traditionally operated.

These news anchors all work for the same parent company, Sinclair Broadcast Group, which owns 193 local broadcast stations across the country.

You might think that your local television stations – with names like WXYZ-TV, KXAN or KM0V – are owned by national networks like ABC or Fox. But that’s often not the case; they are merely affiliated with the national network. Most are

owned by companies called “station groups” that have purchased a portfolio of stations in different cities with different network affiliations.

Tribune Media, Nexstar and Tegna are examples of station groups. Sinclair is the biggest.

It was once the case that most stations were local, independently owned businesses. But during the 1970s, these individual stations started to be absorbed by station groups, which were able to take advantage of new technologies to achieve economies of scale. Instead of performing all operations at the local level at every station, they found they could save money by centralizing many tasks, from buying and selling advertising, to designing the computer graphics that air during news segments.

Today, owning many stations and centralizing these back-end tasks are common in the broadcast business. What isn't common is what the *Deadspin* video shows. As far as I know, no other station group has written news scripts and required local stations to deliver them.

In fact, it's a practice that directly goes against U.S. broadcast policy, which asserts that local stations should serve their geographic communities and be allowed to refuse content offered by national networks. Sinclair, however, has dubbed these scripts “must runs.” The company also produces complete news stories and commentaries that it requires local stations to air.

The script in the *Deadspin* video has fueled a partisan backlash, and many have pointed out that Sinclair's “must-run” content often advances a conservative point of view.

However, the most important part of the story isn't the question of partisan bias. It's that a national station group is forcing content on local stations. To many, what Sinclair is doing is precisely what U.S. broadcast policy is supposed

to protect against: a single company advancing an agenda to a majority of the country using the public good of broadcast spectrum.

With Sinclair's pending purchase of Tribune Media's 42 stations, the company's reach is only poised to grow.

Amanda Lotz is a fellow at the Peabody Media Center and a professor of media studies at University of Michigan.